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## **STRATEGIES AND TOOLS FOR HYBRID CONFLICTS RESOLUTION IN XXI CENTURY**

### **Abstract**

The system of international relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century increasingly redefines several key geopolitical concepts. The global geopolitical model today is also being reshaped on international level. Along with these new geopolitical trends, new interpretations of concepts such as war, conflict, and use of force have emerged. The main purpose of this paper is to analyze the tools and strategies for resolving the so-called "hybrid conflicts". The main thesis of the research is that in order to resolve such a conflict it is necessary to apply the whole set of instruments at both military and strategic level. Otherwise, this type of conflict can be a serious threat to the national security of each country. To prove his thesis, the article sets the following tasks. First, to analyze the concept of hybrid conflict and clarify its essence. Second, to systematize the main geopolitical aspects of the hybrid conflicts. Third, to launch possible techniques and strategies for the resolution of hybrid conflicts. From a methodological point of view, the article builds on empirical data acquired on the basis of exploring different practices in resolving hybrid conflicts.

*Key words: conflicts, resolution, hybrid, strategy, tool*

### **Introduction**

The end of the Cold War led the international relations to the state of a unipolar model, dominated by a single superpower - the United States. Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, this domination has been seriously challenged by the cross-border terrorist networks. Several years later, China's economic rise and the new Neo-Eurasian doctrine of Russia questioned the Western liberal model. The international system today is in the state of global transition to a new multipolar model. The main thesis of the article is that within this future multipolar system, the subjects of international relations face a new challenge to their national security – hybrid conflicts. The main purpose of the research is to analyze how international actors are able to resist and effectively counteract hybrid threats. In order to prove this thesis,

the study will focus on several key aspects. First of all, it will clarify the concept of "hybrid conflict" by giving a working definition. Second, the article will analyze all main models and dimensions of the hybrid conflicts – political, military, economic, cultural, etc. Third, an attempt will be made to analyze possible strategies to contain hybrid threats. From a methodological point of view, the paper focuses on qualitative methods of analysis, with the help of empirical data illustrating techniques and strategies for conducting hybrid military actions.

## **1. What is “hybrid conflict”?**

There is no single definition of “hybrid conflict” in the academic debate. The first theory, which examines this new generation of conflicts in detail and is Hoffman's theory: in hybrid conflicts "the opponent simultaneously and adaptively uses a combination of conventional weapons, incoherent tactics, terrorism, and criminal behavior on the battlefield to achieve its goals"<sup>1</sup>. It is clear that Hoffman emphasizes on the strategies that global terrorist networks use to perpetrate different acts of violence. His theory is therefore applicable to those groups but is not fully applicable to state entities. Thus, his definition has been widely used in relation to those cross-border networks that still maintain terrorist activity.

Following the Ukrainian revolution (Maidan) of 2014 a number of new definitions for “hybrid conflicts” emerged. United States and EU used those definitions to prove that Moscow’s annexation of Crimea was a result of a “hybrid warfare”. Meanwhile, the Russian academic elite conducted a series of researches to prove that hybrid conflicts are part of the Western foreign policy and aim to destabilize the Russian political regime in order to establish control over the Ukraine's political life.

### **1.1. The Western concept of “hybrid warfare”.**

From the western side, hybrid conflicts were defined as "the new Russian art of warfare stemming from its inability to lead a conventional war, and which poses a significant challenge to the West"<sup>2</sup>. In this definition, for the first time, there is an attempt to explain why Russia has developed a new concept of warfare. The main argument in favor of this definition is that after the end of the Cold War, the Russian state has neither the economic nor the military-strategic potential to conduct a conventional warfare<sup>3</sup>. The only deterrent resources remain the nuclear warheads, the use of which, however, would not leave anyone in the position of a winner. In these conditions, the Neo-Eurasian circle around the Russian philosopher Alexander Dugin

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<sup>1</sup> Hoffman, F. G., *Hybrid vs Compound War, the Janus Choice: Defining Today's*, Armed Force Journal, vol. 1, 2009, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Jones, S., *Ukraine: Russia's New Art of War*, The Financial Times, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> NATO Framework for future Alliance operations, NATO unclassified documents section, Brussels, 2018, pg. 4.

formed ideological doctrines that are dressed in the political ideas of the Russian administration. This politico-ideological mixture was still defined as "the concept of a fourth generation of asymmetric wars against other subjects in the international relations, wars that differ from the classic definition of conflict"<sup>4</sup>. This definition contains two important elements – "asymmetric" and "fourth generation". Both testify to the fact that hybrid wars are really a new generation of wars. This definition reflects the long-held US argument that after the collapse of Soviet Union, Moscow has realized how expensive it is to participate in conventional conflicts, so it has changed its warfare methods, adopting hybrid warfare as a key part of Russian foreign policy<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, it appeared that hybrid wars was characterized by a lack of strategy or, as the following definition points out, "hybrid wars are non-strategic, and they have no strategy but merely a combination of operative actions"<sup>6</sup>. In this sense, the non-strategic nature of hybrid wars is perhaps their most dangerous weapon because it makes them particularly unpredictable and very difficult to analyze. Their goal is to confuse the opponent without resorting to any direct action. For this purpose, the attacker uses different methods – cyber-attacks, propaganda, etc. This is also the main reason why NATO is trying to prove that Russia is using hybrid methods of warfare – lately, one of America's biggest weaknesses is cyber-attacks. The United States does not have a well-developed system to counter cyber-attacks despite their attempts to build it.

Among the many definitions, one emerges that explains that hybrid wars are not subject to strategic analysis and are primarily designed to influence decision-making and strategic planning in the long run<sup>7</sup>. This is also the main reason why they are perceived as a particularly serious threat from the US and the EU. In democratic political regimes, the cornerstone of the political process has always been the decision-making process. If it is paralyzed, then the state itself will not be able to defend its security and interests, but will enter a period of latent political instability. At the same time, however, hybrid conflicts can also be used to influence the geopolitical orientation of international entities by creating an attractive image in the face of another geopolitical doctrine<sup>8</sup>. Similar attempts are being made in many NATO member states. Russian strategy is based the idea of the common historical

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<sup>4</sup> Berdal, M., *The "New Wars" Thesis Revisited*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2011, pp. 109 – 110.

<sup>5</sup> Gniazdowski, M., *NATO Member States and the New Strategic Concept: An Overview*, The Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warsaw, 2010, pg. 59.

<sup>6</sup> Strachan, H., *The Direction of War: Contemporary Strategy in Comparative Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> Echevarria, A. J., *How we should think about "gray zone" wars*, Infinity Journal, vol. 16, 2011, p. 43.

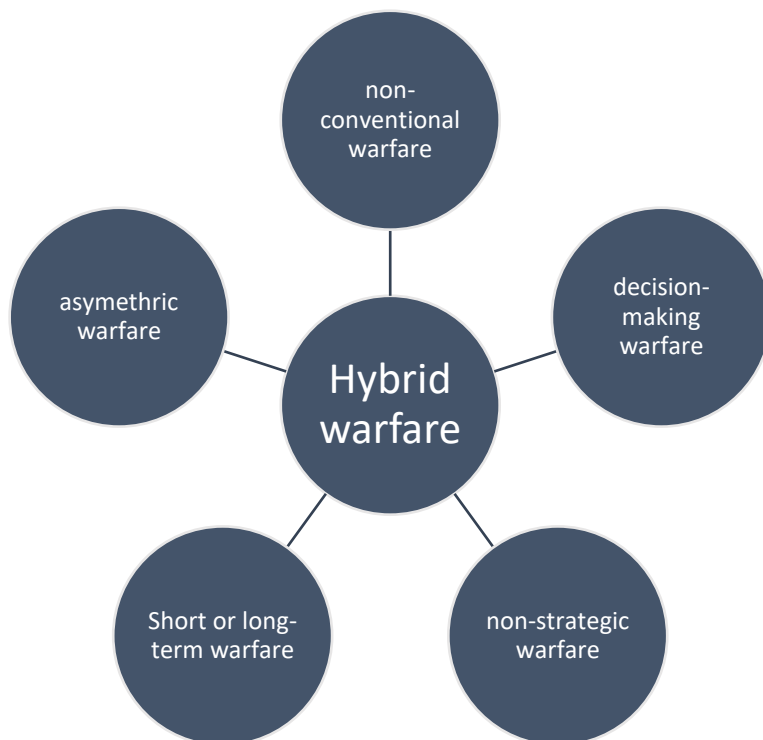
<sup>8</sup> Thomas, T., *Russia's Military Strategy. Impacting 21<sup>st</sup> Century Reforms and Geopolitics*, Foreign Military Studies Office, Fort Leavenworth, 2015, pg. 64.

past, revival of previously existing ties, common cultural and religious traditions. There is also a definition that points out two main goals of hybrid warfare: to shorten the resolution of the conflict or to extend it<sup>9</sup>. In the first case, results similar to the outcome of the Ukrainian Maidan – establishing spheres of influence. In the second case, it is a combination of different instruments – ranging from manipulation of public opinion through the media, to the creation of educational programs and patriotic initiatives.

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<sup>9</sup> Scheipers, S., *Winning Wars without battles: hybrid warfare and other “indirect” approaches in the history of strategic thought*, International Relations Research, vol. 4, 2016, p. 26.

**Figure 1. Matrix of the Western concept of hybrid warfare.**



### **1.2. The Russian concept of “Гибридная война”.**

What was the answer of Russia? Despite the many definitions that exist in the academic literature, one of them differs from others as it has the potential to develop into a comprehensive political doctrine. This is the theory of the Russian General Gerasimov<sup>10</sup>. According to Gerasimov’s doctrine hybrid war is a phenomenon that can be used against the West and has the following tools:

- conducting military action in peacetime without official war declaration;
- no large-scale collisions;
- neutralizing the military strategic and economic potential of the enemy by successive attacks on the military and civilian infrastructure;

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<sup>10</sup> Gerasimov, V., *The Value of Science is in the Foresight: New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying out Combat Operations*, Military Review, vol. 24, 2016, pp. 1 – 3.

- use of new generation weapons and the continued deployment of new technologies such as laser targeting weapons and psychotronics;
- use of armed civilians for military action;
- simultaneous attacks against subdivisions and military facilities throughout the opponent's perimeter;
- coordinated actions at the level of drought, sea, air, cyberspace, space, information environment;
- asymmetric and indirect methods of influencing the decision-making process;
- manipulation of the opponent's informational environment through external financing.

Gerasimov's strategy has several main points. First of all, it represents a radical revision of all Soviet military and political doctrines. It is tailored entirely to the post-Cold War security environment and in particular to the 9/11 attacks on the United States. Second, this doctrine reduces in half the presence of "hard power" in Russian foreign policy doctrines – military action is minimized so as to be maximally supportive of the attacker's economy. It emphasizes much more on preventive rather than on operative action. Third, the doctrine "corrects" the USSR's mistakes in new technologies – they are mentioned as a priority. Finally, the Russian strategy requires concerted action in all spheres – political, energy, economic, cultural, etc. With this statement, the doctrine conclusively testifies to the fact that it is much more focused on soft power.

In addition to Gerasimov's definition, there is another definition, which describes hybrid war as a set of actions aimed at destroying the overall geopolitical reality of the enemy<sup>11</sup>. This explanation of the hybrid conflicts was at the root of the Russian response. More and more often, political speeches began to emerge as the West wanted to fully control the political process in Russia and change the geopolitical realities in the country<sup>12</sup>. Important historical analogies have been made with the period of former Russian President Boris Yeltsin's rule, when the U.S. actually had a huge influence on decision-making in Moscow. These analogies have prompted many Russian analysts to believe that the West is also leading a hybrid war against Russia<sup>13</sup>.

In conclusion, hybrid war can be defined as a serious threat to national security. It is a set of tools and strategies that can be used by all international actors who are struggling for global supremacy. Hybrid conflicts are a complex

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<sup>11</sup> Комлев, Н. А., *Гибридная война: сущность и специфика*, Философия Политики и Политология, vol. 13, 2016, p. 130.

<sup>12</sup> Kofman, M., *A Closer look at Russia's "Hybrid War"*, Wilson Center and Kennan Institute, vol. 7, 2015, pg. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Renz, B., *Russia and Hybrid Warfare – Going Beyond the Label*, Aleksanteri Papers, vol. 1, 2016, pg. 14.

phenomenon that cannot be analyzed and solved by using the traditional tools for conflict resolution.

Finally, this article also launches its own definition about hybrid conflicts. They can be defined as fourth-generation non-strategic and asymmetric conflicts that combine conventional and unconventional methods, hard and soft power to shorten and prolong conflict to paralyze the opponent's decision-making process and its informational, economic, military and political elimination. This definition does not claim universal character. It is just a working explanation that helps the article to prove that hybrid conflicts are one of the most serious threats to international security today.

**Figure 2. The Russian concept of “Гибридная война”.**



## **2. Hybrid tools and strategies.**

Hybrid conflicts have many dimensions, which can be pointed out by analyzing the Western and the Russian theories of hybrid conflicts. Thus, there are two approaches, which can be used to explain the hybrid tools and strategies: Eurasian and Euro-Atlantic. This article considers it necessary to focus on both approaches in order to more clearly and accurately formulate all strategies and tools, used in hybrid conflicts.

### **2.1. The Eurasian approach.**

A starting point for the Eurasian approach to hybrid conflicts is the Eurasian geopolitical concept. It has several basic elements<sup>14</sup>. The first is based on the understanding that the best possible scenario for the development of the international system is the so-called multipolar globalization: the establishment of a multipolar model, where every state will have the freedom to choose what political and cultural pattern to follow without being imposed by other international actors. Under such a model, Russia will be able to follow its Eurasian path of development and to fulfill the “Eurasian dream”, which is to successfully reclaim the status of a world superpower. The second pillar concerns the role and place of Russia as a dominant "land civilization". Land civilizations have a settled character and expand their influence on land. Their political regimes have a strictly centralized nature, and society is clearly hierarchical. This is the Eurasian type of political model, dominated by Russia. Third, Eurasia is not only a geographical area, but also a unique cultural and political entity, with a single center – Moscow. It has its own culture that does not belong to either Europe or Asia. This is the reason why the Russian state has the right to pursue its own political and cultural model. Last, but not least, Russian geopolitics has one main purpose: to form a cultural and political Eurasian bloc that can effectively defend the Eurasia from the West. The center of this bloc must be Russia.

The Eurasian approach to hybrid conflicts is based on this geopolitical theory. It takes into account several basic tools that are used in hybrid warfare. The first group of tools refers to the forms a hybrid conflict can accept. These are three main types: resource conflict, color revolutions, and separatism<sup>15</sup>. There are many examples of such conflicts. Africa has always been a subject of interest because of its resources. In the last few years, the continent has become an object of economic competition between the U.S. and China, due to the rich oil reserves. Beijing has bent on the economic instruments in this conflict and has significantly strengthened its position.

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<sup>14</sup> Ivanov, I., *Geopolitics of Russian Orthodoxy as an instrument in the hybrid war on the Balkans*, Social Change in the Global World, vol. 4, 2017, p. 890.

<sup>15</sup> Майноло, А.В., *Роль цветных революций в демонтаже современных политических режимов*, Национальная безопасность, 2014, pp. 406 – 414.



The U.S. government has lost key areas of influence in the region. Similar is the situation with Russia's natural resources, which have long been subject to the Western companies because they are able to provide energy security for Western Europe. Many interpretations can be made about color revolutions. The pro-Russian protests during the Ukrainian revolution in 2014 were actively supported by the Russian government. Eurasian-style separatism has always been linked to the attempts by the West to influence the territorial integrity of the post-Soviet space. This is not just about Ukraine, but also about other former republics like Georgia and Moldova. Removing these regions from the Eurasian Belt by integrating them into NATO is being interpreted by the Russian government as a major challenge to the Eurasian dream.

The second set of instruments that determine the Eurasian approach to hybrid conflicts can be defined as economic. First, this is the imposition of economic sanctions on a single sector of a state's economy. Depending on the situation, the sanctions can be imposed on the agricultural sector, heavy industry, etc. The Western sanctions on Russia are the perfect example for such strategy. Second, it is about imposing sanctions on the whole economy of a country. In the Eurasian approach, this is perceived as an economic blockade or open aggression<sup>16</sup>. Russia interprets U.S. sanctions against Iran and Syria as economic aggression. Third, the imposition of sanctions against key personalities from the diplomatic staff and the political elite. This is the case around the "Skripal affair". The expulsion of Russian diplomats by London, Washington and their allies was perceived by Moscow as conducting of a hybrid war against Russia.

The third group refers to the information security of the affected party. Eurasian geopolitics defines the following areas of influence: propagating and replacing values found in society with other, foreign constructs and ideals; planting of historical mythologists; attempts to desacralize and undermine trust in the religious institutions of the affected country; planting vicious practices in society. The War of Values is perhaps one of the decisive battles in the hybrid war. According to the Eurasian doctrine, Russian society finds itself in a deep value crisis, which is a result from the penetration of Western influence and values in Russian society<sup>17</sup>. The Russian political elite has also always perceived western values as incompatible with the Eurasian. Western attempts to impose them usually lead to division among people and clashes that often lead to violence. Similar is the situation with the formation of historical myths about the role of Russia in the international system. It has always been perceived by Moscow as a deliberate campaign against its history. The de-

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<sup>16</sup> Хейвек, Б., *Трансрегиональное переформатирование глобального экономического пространства. Вызовы для России*, Институт Экономики РАН, vol. 1, 2017, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Дугин, Ал., *Евразия преемие всего. Манифест современного евразийского движения*, ОПОД „Евразия“, Москва, 2000, p. 2.

sacralization of religious institutions and the inculcation of vicious practices in society go hand in hand. According to the Eurasian geopolitical concept, Russian Orthodoxy is one of the bearing constructs of the Eurasian identity, and the Moscow Patriarchate occupies a particular place in the Orthodox world as the largest and the most numerous. At the same time, it is often depicted as extremely conservative and closed, and in some Western media – even as a propitiatory for the use of violence. Such assertions are a blow to the idea of Eurasian exclusiveness and the messianic role of Russian Orthodoxy as a unification of the Slav-Orthodox people.

In conclusion, the Eurasian approach to hybrid conflicts defines three sets of instruments that can be used in a hybrid war. All of them are characterized by a common feature: they lack the use of hard power. The main goal for the opponent to be defeated by a complete replacement of the geopolitical reality in the country.

## **2.2. The Euro-Atlantic approach.**

The starting point for the Euro-Atlantic approach to hybrid conflicts is the concept of the unipolar world. This idea also has several basic pillars. The first one is the thesis of the American scientist Francis Fukuyama about the end of history. According to this thesis, liberal democracy is the final point in the ideological evolution of mankind, and therefore the U.S. victory in the Cold War means an end to history<sup>18</sup>. This theory became extremely popular in the 1990s, but after the terrorist attacks of 9/11/2001 it was a subject to considerable criticism. However, America has not given up on Fukuyama's idea that neo-liberal values are universal, and therefore the "export of democracy" must be one of the main goals of U.S. foreign policy. The second pillar is the doctrine of U.S. President George W. Bush about America as a world policeman. This is a foreign policy doctrine, whose purpose is to defend the U.S. national interests and to preserve the unipolar model. This doctrine is essentially a clear statement that America wants not just to keep its role as a pole in international relations, but also to impose the unipolar model in the international relations system. The third pillar is the neo-liberal doctrine of the universal nature of liberal values. It is this pillar that is in a most serious conflict with the idea of multipolar globalization, belonging to the Eurasian approach. The proclamation of certain values as valid and the attempts to enforce them as such, the international system inevitably provokes conflicts.

Under the Euro-Atlantic approach, the first group of tools in hybrid conflicts are the indirect territorial claims to NATO member states and their allies. According to the Alliance, such claims are being made against the Baltic States where Russia has a strategic presence over the Kaliningrad area. Based on its own research from 2017, including several interviews with military experts, this article states there is a clear attitude among NATO member states: Russia is not yet ready to attack the

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<sup>18</sup> Fukuyama, F., *The End of History and the Last Man*, Free Press, New York, 2006, p. 27.

Baltic, but is ready to engage in active hybrid war in the region. It constantly emphasizes that in the three republics there is huge Russian population, which does not support EU and NATO, but they do not want to leave their native places. Therefore, Baltic States must be associated within Eurasia. According to the Western attitudes, this concept in fact expresses Russian claims to these territories.

The second group of hybrid tools according to the Euro-Atlantic vision is expressed in the justification of the hybrid conflicts. For the U.S. and their allies, Russia needs its own thesis to justify its actions against one country. The strongest argument in the hands of the Russian administration is the Neo-Eurasian philosophy of Alexander Dugin. The starting point for Dugin's theory is that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian society needs a new "image of the enemy" to be consolidated in order to overcome the cultural crisis it experienced under President Boris Yeltsin<sup>19</sup>. For Dugin, this enemy is the West, dominated by the U.S. and Western Europe. The first step to Russia's victory over the West is the emergence of a common Eurasian foreign policy. Such policy should consist of three pillars: the liberation of Western Europe from the American presence; enhanced cooperation with China; preservation of the Eurasian cultural tradition, dominated by Russian civilization. The ultimate goal of this geopolitical hybrid scenario is to restore the bipolar model in which the Eurasian Pole, headed by Russia will face the Atlantic alliance, dominated by the United States.

The Euro-Atlantic approach defines the next set of hybrid war tools by as "hybrid methodology". It is a combination of a few methods. The most commonly used method is the informational method. The commonly accepted definition is that this is the method by which Russia uses information sources of communication in NATO member states to influence the political debate<sup>20</sup>. This leads to information blackout, manipulation of the copper space and concealment of the truth. A typical example of this is false statistics on the support for NATO in its potential future members. The Russian strategy in Skopje aimed to divert the country from membership in the Alliance on the pretext that the support for it was very low. The media, however, pulled out the real statistics, according to which more than 60% of a country's population wants it to become a full member<sup>21</sup>. "Cyber-methods" are the second most common instrument of hybrid attacks. In recent years, Moscow has increased its training costs for cyber-specialists, allowing it to develop a self-contained cyberwar program. This program was developed to establish an impact on the political process in the adversary state. This impact can lead to different

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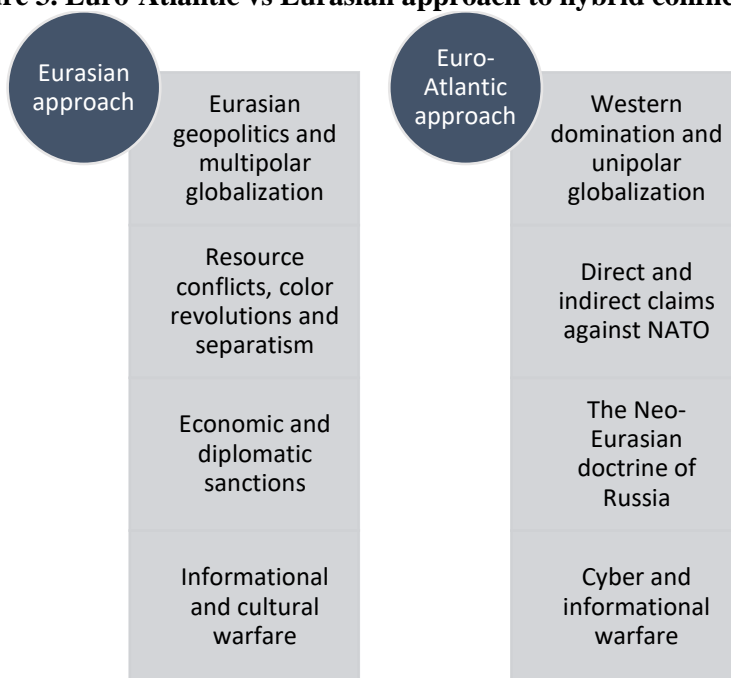
<sup>19</sup> Дугин, Ал., *Евразия пръвие всего. Манифест современного евразийского движения*, ОПОД „Евразия“, Москва, 2000, p. 10.

<sup>20</sup> Paul, C.; Matthews, M., *The Russian "Firehose of Falsehood" Propaganda Model*, Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, 2016, p. 198.

<sup>21</sup> Reuters, *Macedonia Seeks Greek Support to Join EU, NATO*, vol. A, 2017, p. 1.

outcomes, with the most destructive ones being associated with blocking political debate, direct interference in the political process agenda, or permanent intrusion into the security system of a NATO member state. The “group method” is often widespread, especially in terms of cultural influence. It is focused on the financing of pro-Russian movements and factions that continually make messages in favor of Russia<sup>22</sup>. In the former socialist countries, the ultimate goal is the return of these countries to the Moscow orbit of influence.

**Figure 3. Euro-Atlantic vs Eurasian approach to hybrid conflicts.**



What are the objectives of the hybrid conflicts? According to the strategic vision of the Alliance, there are several major regions of hybrid warfare.

The first one is West Europe. This region includes developed democracies, including a number of NATO members. From another point of view, Russia's main goal is to stimulate the rise of extreme political factions and movements and to increase their support among the EU member states. Germany is such a case. There are movements in German political life that openly profess neo-expressing ideas.

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<sup>22</sup> Applebaum, A., *The Dutch Just Showed the World How Russia Influences Western European Elections*, Washington Post, vol. 531, 2016, p. 1.

For example the political party Alternative for Germany spreads its ideas of nationalism. Since the beginning of 2018 it has been the second most popular party in the country. In 2017, it succeeded in gaining serious positions in Berlin while maintaining regular contacts with Putin's<sup>23</sup>. Similar is the situation with the nationalists in France. There is clear evidence that the National Front receives regular financial support from Russian banks in the country and therefore stands open behind Moscow's policy<sup>24</sup>.

The second region of action of the Kremlin is the Balkans. Serbia is the main stronghold of Russian influence in this region. However, Belgrade is increasingly turning to Brussels. The country wants to get out of isolation and become a member of the EU. As to NATO, the statistics are quite different: 84% of Serbs still oppose the country's membership in the Alliance<sup>25</sup>. This is the golden card of the Russian administration on the Balkans.

The third region marked by NATO is Central Europe. For the Alliance, hybrid war in this region runs along the following axes: Hungary, Czech Republic, and Slovakia. At the heart of Russian propaganda is the reminiscence of the historical connection between these countries and Soviet Union. Once countries in region grant open access to the Hungarian market, Russian investors could easily master key sectors of the Hungarian economy.

Finally, it is the Anglo-Saxon region. For some, the idea that Russia can influence the political process in the United States and the U.K. seems to be exaggerated. American public opinion, however, is strongly convinced that Russia has intervened in the presidential election in 2016 and has helped Donald Trump to enter the White House. Another example in this regard is Russia's participation in the Skripal case, linked to London's conviction that Moscow poisoned of the former spy. The diplomatic scandal between Russia and the U.K. ended with an organized campaign to expel Russian ambassadors from London and its allies.

The Euro-Atlantic approach to the tools of the hybrid conflicts is a radical opposition to the Eurasian. And if Eurasia perceives the hybrid war as a war of the West against Russia, NATO and the EU perceive this conflict as a war of Russia against the West. The question is – what tools and strategies can be applied to resolve these conflicts?

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<sup>23</sup> Shuster, S., *How Russian Voters Fueled the Rise of Germany's Far-Right*, Times, 2017, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Gatehouse, G., *Marine Le Pen: Who's funding France's far right?*, BBC, 2017, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> BETA, *4 percent of Serbians oppose NATO membership – poll*, vol. 92, 2018, p. 1.

### **3. Hybrid Conflicts Resolution**

While hybrid threats are not subject to analysis, because of their non-strategic nature, the article argues that there are mechanisms through which they can be contained. However, several conditions are needed.

First, hybrid threats should not be sought in just one direction. Hybrid war can be initiated by any country as long as its foreign policy and national interests demand it, and if it has the potential to lead such a war. Second, party efforts should not over-focused on hybrid threats. It is necessary to take balanced decisions. In this way a state government can make a clear judgment what are the real threats for the national security? Third, Balkans in particular are aware of their geopolitical orientation. They have to defend their national interests. Only in this way, Balkan nations will be convinced by the political elite that they should not become subjects to hybrid warfare. The paper offers two group of measures for building an anti-hybrid strategy: military-strategic and resource-based.

First, military and strategic measures. In this direction, it is necessary to ensure above all the technological provision of the national armed forces. This should be performed together with all NATO member states. It is necessary to maintain highly qualified staff who is capable of identifying and neutralizing hybrid threats. The intelligence community should be competent in dealing with special operations and the handling of classified information about fake news and informational warfare. The community has to establish enhanced cooperation with foreign intelligence agencies. Attention should also be paid to side-threats such as the radicalization of certain ethnic communities; the actions of certain foundations and centers that form the ultimate attitudes of citizens, and of course the sponsorship of a number of interest groups using anti-system rhetoric.

Second, resource measures. Hybrid conflicts rely primarily on soft and intelligent power. Here, the following countermeasures may be helpful. First of all, every state has to adopt a National Cyber Security Strategy. It has to be resource-assured. It is also necessary to adopt a unified Strategy to address hybrid threats that will outline these challenges more clearly. This strategy has to be a result of joint efforts between the political elite, the military sector and intelligence. It is also necessary to form a comprehensive state system to counteract the hybrid threats. It may involve the creation of new intelligence sectors to deal only with the localization and resolution of such conflicts. It would be beneficial to conduct special operations in the field of hybrid threats – starting with potential actors in the non-governmental sector – and reaching the illegally functioning actors. An appropriate measure is to perform regular monitoring of the financing of potential hybrid actors in the non-

governmental sector and, if necessary, the dismantling of such networks. All these measures are of particular importance to the national security of the country, so they need to seek support on a political level.

**Figure 3. Hybrid conflict resolution strategy.**



On the basis of this analysis, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- hybrid conflicts are a complex phenomenon that cannot be defined unambiguously – there are many definitions, each of which seeks to clarify one or another aspect of their essence;
- there are two basic approaches to the explanation of the hybrid conflicts – Eurasian and Euro-Atlantic, each with specific understanding of what should be expected of the opponent;
- hybrid war is not a "trademark" of foreign policy of a particular subject in international relations – it can be applied by anyone who has the potential and interest in doing so;



- hybrid war should not be mythologized – it is a threat to the national security of one country, but if the political life starts to spin only around it, it means that the opponent has won;
- the measures to counteract the hybrid threats can be reduced to two types - military - strategic and resource ones;
- every state must defend its geopolitical orientation, but with a clear defense of its national interest;
- hybrid threats cannot have only one source, because there is always more than one active country in a conflict.

How to win a hybrid conflict? The answer of these questions still lies in the future, because the difference between truth and lie is almost invisible. Nevertheless, hybrid conflicts can be resolved. Moreover, to do so, one must know well what he is fighting for.

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