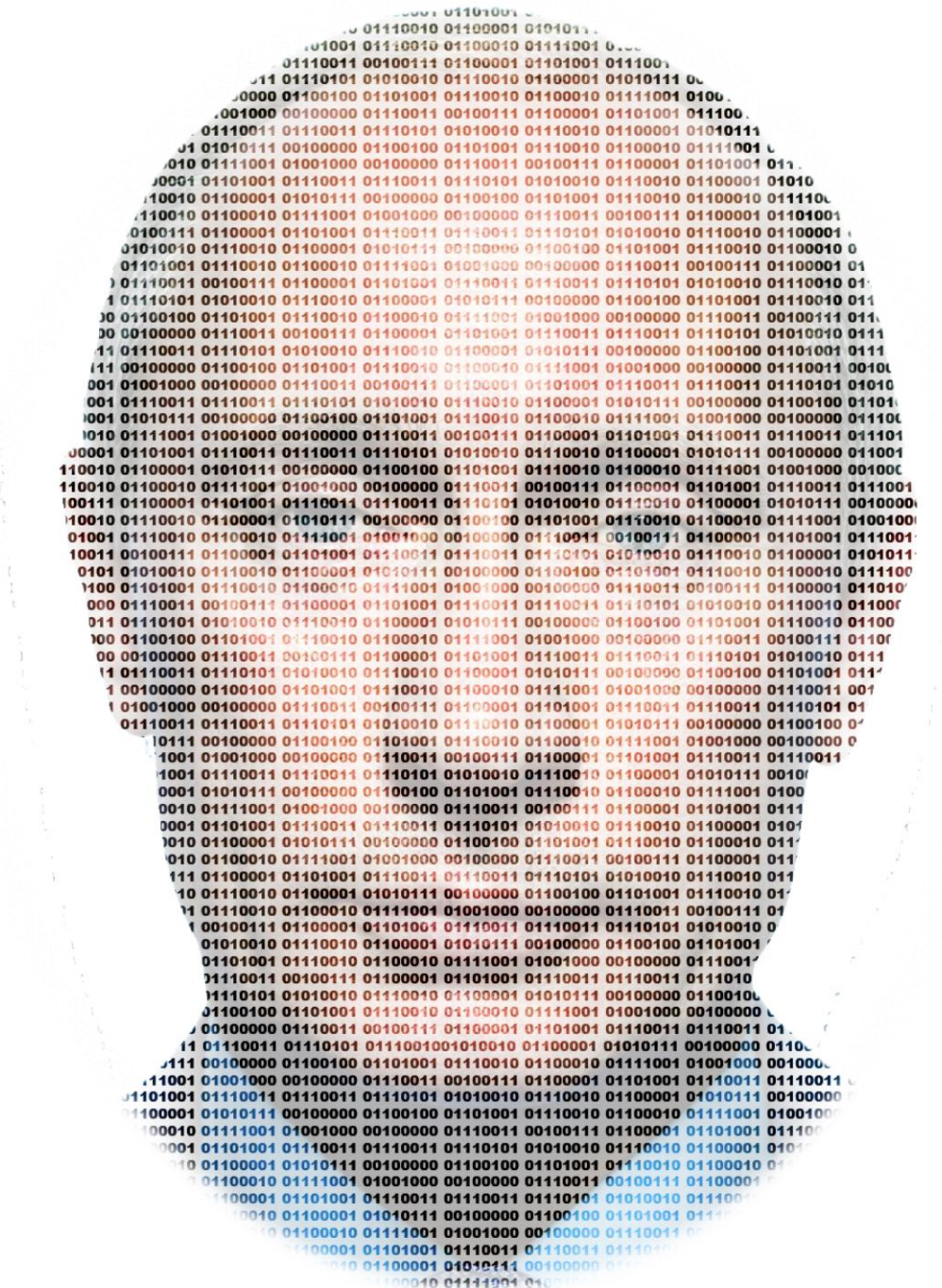# RUSSIAN 'HYBRID POWER'

A Case Study on Russian Power Projections through Hybrid Warfare in Eastern Ukraine

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Abstract

Multiple developments including the proliferation of technologies, the rise of democracies and transnational actors, and economic interdependence have reduced the primacy of military power in the contemporary security environment. Whilst conventional wars are still waged, the phenomenon 'hybrid warfare' has been proclaimed as a military doctrine for the 21st century and captured the attention of scholars, decision-makers, and military strategists. This master's thesis aims to contribute to a greater understanding of the phenomenon 'Russian hybrid warfare' through a case study centered around Russian intervention in the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Conventional wisdom in the West asserts that Russia employed an array of informational, diplomatic, economic, social, and military instruments in order to achieve desired political outcomes in Ukraine. Through a case study of the conflict I identify actions that constitute hybrid warfare, and through application of analytical concepts, I answer the research question: what types of power did Russia apply through instruments of hybrid warfare, and how were these applied?

The purpose of this thesis is not to establish causality between select variables or to test hypotheses, but instead to generate academic insights on Russian hybrid warfare through identifying instruments of hybrid warfare and determining how and which type of power was applied. The methodological approach followed a strict process where I generated empirical findings through document analysis and took an inductive approach to the connection between theory and research. Drawing upon a broad selection of literature, including news articles and reports, I constructed a chronological narrative of developments in eastern Ukraine. Focusing on this chronological narrative, I identified instances of Russian intervention in Ukraine that constitute hybrid warfare. Finally, I applied Joseph S. Nye's analytical concepts of power to observed instances of Russian hybrid warfare.

Through this analytical process, I documented that Russia employed a broad array of hybrid power-creating instruments that projected both soft power and hard power – or smart power - towards the common goal of securing and maintaining influence in eastern Ukraine. Russia's extensive use of soft power seemed to indicate cognizance of the declining primacy of military force in the contemporary security environment. Analytical results also indicated that Russia grasps the concept of soft power appropriately, demonstrated through adaptation of soft power foundations according to the target demographic upon which soft power was projected. Furthermore, Russia's information campaigns targeting the West were over time largely

phased out, indicating an awareness that projections of soft power must be perceived as credible by their intended target, or they may be detrimental to the objectives pursued.

Beyond conventional military projections of hard power, Russia projected hard power through a variety of instruments. Curiously, beyond deployment of the Russian Armed Forces and material support for separatists, hard power was largely used to contribute to Russia's 'narratives' or information warfare campaigns. Furthermore, both projections of hard power and soft power demonstrated the dynamic interactions between these types of power - hard power was able to generate soft power, and soft power was able to generate hard power. The extensive use of hard power and soft power to achieve military objectives seemed to support Nye's assertion that both 'stories' and armies are important in 21st century conflicts. Finally, it was not possible to observe a transition from soft to hard power as the conflict escalated, however, direct military power was first exercised by Russia late in the conflict, seemingly as a 'last resort' in the face of Kiev's increasingly successful military campaign.

Contents

List of Abbreviations

ACA	Anti-Corruption Agency
ATO	Anti-Terrorist Operation
DDoS	Distributed Denial-of-Service
DPR	Donetsk Peoples Republic
EU	European Union
EW Systems	Electronic Warfare Systems
GRU	Main Intelligence Directorate of the Russian Federation
Hybrid CoE	The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IW	Information Warfare
LPR	Luhansk Peoples Republic
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
UAF	Ukrainian Armed Forces
UAS	Unmanned Aircraft Systems
Ukrainian CEC	Ukrainian Central Elections Commission
UN	United Nations

Map of Ukraine[1]

Eastern Ukraine with cities Kharkiv (north), Luhansk (east), and Donetsk (south) marked.

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[1] Courtesy of Michael Meuser at MapCruzin.com.

1.0 Introduction

"In the information age, it's not just whose army wins, but whose story wins."[2]

-Joseph Nye

For millennia, civilizations and states have waged war upon their adversaries, with military capacities being the benchmark for power, and the militarily strongest and most capable states emerging as victorious. Whilst measuring power through military capacities was commonplace throughout millennia of human history, a number of later developments have shifted the foundations of power in the present-day international system. Importantly, the exponential advancements in technology; confirming Moore's law, have reduced the cost of technology over thousand-fold in the last quarter of the twentieth century[3]. Today, the number of mobile devices exceeds the global population count[4] and half of the world enjoys internet access[5] - creating a globally interconnected world that transcends national borders. In congruence with technological advancements and opportunities for globalization, states have become further economically interdependent, transnational actors have risen in power, and democracy has prevailed as the universal gold standard for political systems[6]. As a result of these developments, the characteristics of the world order and the foundations of state power have shifted. Today, the power of states is no longer monopolized in their military capacities, and in many instances relational power[7] is considered equally, if not more important, than material power[8]. This transition in foundations of power is the crux of Nye's assertion - war is no longer exclusively a battle between armies, but a battle of narratives shaped through beliefs, perceptions, opinions, and preferences.

In order to account for the increasing importance of relational power over material power, Nye developed

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[2] Nye, Joseph S. (2011a) *The Future of Power*. Public Affairs.

[3] Nye, Joseph S. (2011b) *Nuclear Lessons for Cybersecurity*, pp. 18. Strategic Studies Quarterly 5(4): 18-38

[4] Boren, Zachary Davies (2014) *There are officially more mobile devices than people in the world*. Independent. https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/news/there-are-officially-more-mobile-devices-than-people-in-the-world-9780518.html

[5] Internet World Stats (2019) *World Internet Usage and Population Statistics*. https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm

[6] Nye, Joseph S. (1990) *Soft Power*, pp. 160. Foreign Policy, Vol. 80, Autumn 1990.

[7] Relational power is "the power to change others belief's, attitudes, preferences, opinions, expectations, emotions and/or predisposition to act" in Treverton, Gregory F., et al. (2018) *Addressing Hybrid Threats*, pp. 10. Swedish Defence University.

[8] Treverton, Gregory F., et al. (2018) *Addressing Hybrid Threats*, pp. 10. Swedish Defence University. https://www.hybridcoe.fi/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Treverton-AddressingHybridThreats.pdf

several analytical concepts of power, of which 'soft power'[9] is the most well-known. Curiously, resonating with Nye's assertion that the ability to achieve desired outcomes with exclusively military strategies has been impaired, the modalities of modern warfare have changed, with the concept of 'hybrid warfare'[10] being driven to the fore of military strategy. Since the Ukrainian crisis starting in late 2013, the concept hybrid warfare has overwhelmingly been exemplified through Russia's array of informational, diplomatic, economic, social, and military instruments employed to achieve desirable political outcomes in Ukraine[11]. Markedly, Russia's use of hybrid warfare seemingly indicates an understanding, that the means to achieve desired outcomes in conflict are no longer monopolized within the state's military capacities. Given this transition, this thesis aims to determine what types of power Russia employed through hybrid warfare and how these were applied.

Through this thesis, I provide a nuanced and stringent examination of Russia's hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine, grounded in Nye's analytical concepts of power. With the purpose of furthering academic knowledge by providing an in-depth account of this phenomenon, research follows a carefully devised process. Through a factual and chronological account of events in eastern Ukraine, I identify instances of Russian hybrid warfare, based upon the definition of hybrid warfare constructed through a triangulation of sources defining this phenomenon. Once instances of Russian hybrid warfare have been identified, I apply Nye's power concepts to these observations, to understand how, and what type of power Russia exercised through hybrid warfare instruments in eastern Ukraine. Furthermore, because the account of events is chronological, I seek to identify change and continuity in the types of power, and how these are applied under changing circumstances. Guided by this research process and focus, I answer the research question:

- **What types of power did Russia apply through instruments of hybrid warfare, and how were these applied?**

1.1 Relevance

As made evident through the research questions proposed, the purpose of my research is neither to identify causal relationships between select variables, nor to generate hypotheses that may be accepted or rejected. Rather, the purpose of this thesis is to further academic knowledge on Russian hybrid warfare, through

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[9] Soft power is the ability to achieve desired outcomes through shaping the preferences of other actors through co-option (attraction) rather than coercion (force), in Nye, Joseph S. (2004) *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs.
[10] Hybrid warfare refers to the coordinated and synchronized use, of covert and overt military and non-military instruments of power, to achieve specific objectives whilst maintaining ambiguity and operating below the threshold for war. For a more comprehensive definition of this term see section 3.2-3.2.2 on Hybrid Warfare.
[11] Treverton, et al. (2018) pp. 21.

providing a greater understanding of facts, that is grounded in Nye's analytical concepts of power. Whilst Russian hybrid warfare has piqued the interest of policy-makers, scholars, and defense experts in the West, works detailing this phenomenon have centered around factual accounts of hybrid warfare, and how 'lessons learned' can bolster resiliency and limit the threats posed to Western democracies. Clearly, such studies have a strong raison d'être, for at least two reasons. First, Russia is typically perceived as the vis-à-vis other to the West, and Russia's foreign policy behavior has compelling implications for the European security environment. Second, the European Center of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (Hybrid CoE) concludes that hybrid warfare will become more prevalent, and therefore also the greatest security challenge for Western countries in the 21st century[12]. However, in the midst of focus upon resiliency to hybrid threats, a more comprehensive understanding of the types of power, and how these are employed through specific hybrid instruments has been lacking. The relevance of my research, whilst not establishing causality or testing hypotheses, is to contribute to academic literature on Russian hybrid warfare, through providing deeper insights and understandings of this phenomenon.

Acknowledging the Hybrid CoE's assessment that hybrid warfare will become more commonplace and the greatest security challenge for Western countries in the 21st century, whilst noting that Russia's use of hybrid warfare has been the "the most active and most brazen"[13], indicates that hybrid warfare has become a central power-creating approach for Russia. Reflecting upon theory, Nye has written extensively on foundations of power, their significance in the contemporary security environment, and the decline in the primacy of military force. Given the purpose and characteristics of hybrid warfare, it may be perceived as a modality of modern warfare that accounts for the declining effectivity of exclusively military force, by incorporating multiple instruments of non-military power towards a common purpose. These factors; the increasing prevalence of hybrid warfare, and the simultaneous use of multiple instruments of power in face of the declining primacy of military power, gives contemporary relevance towards achieving better understandings of this phenomenon. In essence, it is important to understand both what types of power are wielded through hybrid warfare, and how these are exercised.

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[12] Treverton, et al. (2018) pp. 1.
[13] Ibid, pp. 10.

2.0 Methodology

The methodological approach is exploratory as I seek to further academic knowledge on Russian hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine through providing an in-depth account of this phenomenon, to which there exists a superficial or limited understanding today. In pursuit of answering the proposed research questions, I adopted a case study approach and generated empirical findings through document analysis. Furthermore, I imposed a strict demarcation on the scope of research, and analytical tools were selected with critical reflections upon applicability and explanatory power. In the subsequent section I review the research process and elucidate the reasoning behind, and significance of, these methodological choices upon the following research questions:

- **What types of power did Russia apply through instruments of hybrid warfare, and how were these applied?**

2.1 Research Process and Analytical Strategy

My research process began through collecting a broad amount of earlier research on the hybrid warfare phenomenon. The purpose of this process was both to develop a greater personal understanding of this phenomenon, and simultaneously determine where knowledge was lacking, to ascertain where contributions best could be made. During this process it became apparent that Russia's use of hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine was both the most factually well-documented and comprehensive example of this phenomenon, due to the abundance of empirical evidence detailing events that occurred. The decision was therefore made to focus upon Russian hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine, and I subsequently initiated a factual and chronological documentation of events in eastern Ukraine spanning between November of 2013 and September of 2014. The purpose of this factual documentation was to identify instances of Russian hybrid warfare; however, this process presupposed a definition of hybrid warfare for this purpose. I constructed a definition of hybrid warfare through a triangulation of definitions for this phenomenon adopted by NATO, the EU, and the Hybrid CoE. Through cross-referencing factually documented actions and events, with the definition of hybrid warfare constructed, a number of actions consistent with hybrid warfare could be identified.

Following the process of identifying instances of Russian hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine, it became clear that Russia, beyond conventional military power, also employed a broad array of economic, informational,

social, and diplomatic instruments of power. Interestingly, the use of these instruments seemed to echo Joseph Nye's assertions, that the present-day foundations of power have reduced the emphasis on military power. Through studying the works of Nye produced over the last three decades, I adopted a number of analytical concepts to guide my understanding of power and identify its foundations. These analytical concepts are soft power, hard power, negative soft power, sharp power, and cyberpower[14].

The analytical strategy is best described as taking the identified instances of Russian hybrid warfare and applying Nye's analytical concepts of power to these. Through this process I critically discussed the type of power observed, and how power was applied within independent actions that constituted hybrid warfare. Because events in eastern Ukraine were detailed chronologically, transitions in the types of power used under changing circumstances could be also identified.

2.2 The Case – Russian Hybrid Warfare in Eastern Ukraine

As formulated in the research question, my research is focused specifically upon Russian hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine. Typically, case studies are associated with the study of locations – however, it is important to differentiate between the study of locations and studies undertaken in a singular location. Case studies must use location as the "apparent object of interest" rather than "a backdrop wherein studies are made", the distinction therefore lies in the object of analysis[15]. Reflecting upon the nature of hybrid warfare, it is apparent that hybrid tools are specifically tailored and adapted to achieve specific effects in particular contexts. As such, eastern Ukraine is not merely a backdrop wherein hybrid warfare may be understood on a general level, but rather provides a locational context that impacts how Russia tailors and adapts hybrid tools for this specific context. Given that hybrid tools are tailored for specific contexts, using a case study approach helped explicate the unique features of Russian hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine. More practically stated, the specific national characteristics inherent to Ukraine impacts which types of power are used, and how these are used.

When adopting the case design approach, it is critical to reflect upon research design criteria. Given the predominantly qualitative nature of research, I do not tackle questions of measurement validity, ecological

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[14] These analytical concepts are defined and expanded upon in section 3.1-3.1.1 on Nye's power concepts.
[15] Bryman, Alan (2012) *Social Research Methods*, pp. 68-69. Oxford University Press, 4th Edition.

validity, reliability and replicability[16]. Questions of internal validity are also disregarded, as I do not seek to establish causality between independent and dependent variables[17]. Nonetheless, due to the locational focus of the case study, the question of external validity – the ability to apply research conclusions in different contexts – has been reflected upon[18]. Naturally, the conclusions presented in this thesis cannot be uncritically or directly applied to other contexts. Nonetheless, whilst not directly applicable, the conclusions arrived at may contribute to a greater aggregate understanding of how Russia applies and perceives of power.

2.3 Use of Document Analysis

The vast majority of sources are qualitative and include news articles, reports, publications, speeches, and academic works. I also use a limited selection of quantitative documents, consisting of public opinion polls and statistics, to support analytical arguments. Document analysis is well-adapted for application in case studies, as this approach facilitates the use of both qualitative and quantitative documents in varying degrees[19]. Using news articles, reports, and publications, and through following internal references between these, I constructed a detailed chronological sequence of events in eastern Ukraine. During this process I made sure to consistently cross-reference and corroborate information presented in various documents. The vast majority of sources contributing to the account of events in eastern Ukraine are Western, which had several implications for research. Naturally, Western sources provided a largely one-sided account that may be biased by the agenda or pre-conceived understandings of the author. In some cases, this is a non-issue, as various events have been well-documented, photographed, or recorded, which establishes credibility. However, when documenting Russia's use of hybrid tools these sources may present credibility issues. Hybrid warfare is by design ambiguous and covert, and Russia vehemently asserts that the notion of Russian hybrid warfare is a myth[20]. As such, accounting for Russia's use of hybrid warfare requires non-Russian sources as these are the only sources documenting this phenomenon. Resultingly, the account of Russia's actions is from a Western perspective which may not reflect an objective account of events. This means that

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[16] Ibid, pp. 69.
[17] Ibid, pp. 47.
[18] Ibid, pp. 69.
[19] Bowen, Glenn A. (2009) *Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method.*
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/240807798_Document_Analysis_as_a_Qualitative_Research_Method
[20] Monaghan, Andrew (2016) *The 'War' in Russia's 'Hybrid Warfare'*, pp. 67-68. Parameters 45(4) Winter 2015-2016.

conclusions reached through analysis are based on Western accounts of Russia's intervention in eastern Ukraine and must be recognized as such.

Given the predominantly qualitative nature of empirical documents for analysis, I adopted an inductive approach to the connection between theory and research[21]. Through gathering data on a large scale, a chronological narrative of events in eastern Ukraine was constructed. Given the sheer number of developments in eastern Ukraine since November of 2013, a filter to disseminate between relevant and irrelevant developments was applied already at this early stage. Accounting for day-to-day events in eastern Ukraine would have been both detrimental and practically impossible given the scope of research feasible for this thesis. Given the inductive approach to research, this initial filter remained atheoretical and was instead based upon the perceived importance of developments. Important events such as the seizure of government buildings, changes in separatist leadership, or escalations in conventional fighting were deemed relevant and important developments. Conversely, individual instances of small-scale firefights between pro-Russian separatists and Ukrainian forces, as well as minor territorial gains or losses were considered irrelevant for the larger narrative of developments in eastern Ukraine.

2.4 Delimitation

The most significant delimitation imposed on the scope of research was the choice to use the conflict in Ukraine as a case study for analysis. Abundant examples of what is popularly (in the West) deemed hybrid warfare, such as influencing of the 2016 United States presidential election[22], the 2007 cyber-attacks in Estonia[23], "Lisa" the Russian-German girl claimed to have been raped by Arab migrants[24], or the provision of monetary support to far-right and far-left parties in Europe[25], were all considered as potential cases for

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[21] Bryman (2012) pp. 69.
[22] BBC News (2018) *Twelve Russians charged with US 2016 election hack.*
 https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-44825345
[23] Traynor, Ian (2007) *Russia accused of unleashing cyberwar to disable Estonia,* The Guardian.
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/may/17/topstories3.russia
[24] NATO Review (2016) *The "Lisa case": Germany as a target of Russian disinformation.*
https://www.nato.int/DOCU/review/2016/Also-in-2016/lisa-case-germany-target-russian-disinformation/EN/index.htm
[25] Noack, Rick (2017) *The European parties accused of being influenced by Russia,* The Washington Post.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/11/17/the-european-parties-accused-of-being-influenced-by-russia/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.036e04df5abb

analysis. Nonetheless, because Russia's actions in Ukraine present "the most active and most brazen"[26] example of hybrid warfare, the case of eastern Ukraine took focus in my research.

A further delimitation on the scope of research was imposed on the conflict in Ukraine. Typically, the conflict in Ukraine is divided between developments on the Crimean peninsula and in eastern Ukraine. Through early research it became clear that Russia's annexation of Crimea "was more a conventional military take-over than hybrid operation"[27], and I therefore chose to focus research on Russian hybrid operations in eastern Ukraine. Given the focus upon eastern Ukraine, I limited research temporally from November of 2013 to September of 2014, and geographically to the Donbass Oblast.

2.5 Choice of Theories

Initially, mainstream theories of international relations; realism, liberalism, and constructivism, were critically assessed for their relevance and explanatory power. However, given that hybrid warfare employs a variety of tools ranging from military force, to economic interdependence and values and culture, it became clear that the theoretical framework selected necessitated an ability to account for the complexity inherent to the combination of multiple power instruments across multiple domains. In essence, mainstream theories of international relations, in isolation, fail to grapple with the complexities of the contemporary security environment and the nature of hybrid warfare.

Realism falls short because force is neither the only, nor always the best instrument to achieve desired outcomes, and internal differences between states are significant[28]. Furthermore, realism fails to account for the importance of democracy, economic interdependence, and international institutions inherent to liberalism, whilst also failing to account for the significance of values and culture inherent to constructivism. Conversely, liberalism and constructivism underplay the importance of military power and the significance of the anarchic nature of the international system[29].

In order to overcome the shortcomings of individual theories, whilst recognizing their individual emphasis, and maintaining a resource-appropriate theoretical scope, I adopted Nye's analytical power concepts. Nye

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[26] Treverton, et al. (2018) pp.10.
[27] Ibid, pp. 18.
[28] Nye (2011a) *The Future of Power*, pp. 14.
[29] Gomichon, Maxime (2013*) Joseph Nye on Soft Power*, E-IR.
https://www.e-ir.info/2013/03/08/joseph-nye-on-soft-power/

proposes that both soft power and hard power are important instruments of power, and therefore discredits the largely one-sided understandings of power proposed by individual mainstream theories of international relations[30]. Nye's soft power concept illustrates the importance of values, policies, and culture, typically associated with liberalism and constructivism. Simultaneously, Nye's hard power concept captures the importance of military force and capacities inherent to realism. Given the combination of power-creating instruments inherent to hybrid warfare, Nye's power concepts provide a suitable theoretical framework to explore and generate knowledge on the variety of power-creating instruments that comprise hybrid warfare.

2.6 Thesis Structure Outline

The following image provides a graphic representation of the structure of this thesis. Notably, the analysis is divided into three sections or 'phases' that are temporally defined to provide a chronological structure.

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[30] UCTV (2011) *Conversations with History: Power with Joseph Nye*, YouTube.
https://youtu.be/keO8yJAbfhg

3.0 Theory

In the following section I present and describe Nye's analytical power concepts, whilst addressing the most significant critiques of these. Furthermore, I present the definition of hybrid warfare guiding my research, whilst addressing the most serious criticisms of this concept.

3.1 Nye's Power Concepts

Over the last three decades American scholar Joseph S. Nye has developed and refined a framework for understanding power and its sources. The cornerstone premise in Nye's understanding of power rests on the decreased effectiveness of "hard power" – the use of rewards, threat, or force to achieve desired outcomes – in the present-day international system[31]. Nye attributes the depreciation of hard power to a number of developments that he formulates as; deterioration of the Westphalian system, economic interdependence, the rising importance of non-state actors, and the proliferation of technology[32].

In response to the decreasing effectiveness of hard power, Nye puts forward the concept of "soft power" which he defines as co-opting rather than coercing in pursuit of desired outcomes[33]. Soft power hinges on the ability to shape preferences of other actors, through the power of attraction. Nye proposes that the soft power of states is composed of culture, values, and policies. However, for these elements to produce soft power they must conform to several requirements. Culture must be perceived as attractive by others, values must be acceptable and exercised consistently, and policies must be perceived as justifiable and legitimate. Nye argues that soft power, when practiced correctly, increases the prospects for achieving desired outcomes through co-opting based on attraction[34].

Although Nye tends to firmly differentiate between the functions of soft and hard power, he proposes at least two caveats in his distinction between the concepts. First, hard power may be used to produce soft power. Hard power may be used for disaster relief and peacekeeping missions, thereby producing soft power through application of hard power instruments. On the other hand, the room for maneuver of hard power may be constrained by soft power. If the use of hard power is deemed unacceptable by others, the application of hard power may be limited by soft power[35]. This interaction can be exemplified through the 2003 invasion

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[31] Nye (2004) *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, pp. 5.
[32] Nye (1990) *Soft Power,* pp.160.
[33] Nye (2004) *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, pp. 5.
[34] Ibid, pp. 11.
[35] UCTV (2011) Time segment*:* 16:20-17:30 minute.

of Iraq, where Turkey refused US troops access to Northern Iraq through Turkish territory[36].

Furthering his original work Nye coined the term "smart power" which he defines as the ability to merge hard and soft power to craft strategies better capable of producing desired outcomes[37]. According to Nye, achieving desired foreign policy outcomes cannot solely rely on either hard or soft power. If soft power is employed effectively it can reduce the need for coercion through bribery, threats or force, through agenda-setting and shaping the preferences of other actors. Nonetheless, Nye contends that neither soft or hard power in isolation provide an approach that best secures desirable outcomes[38]. Rather, states should combine hard and soft power tools in a constellation that is context appropriate and most likely to achieve desired outcomes. As framed by then U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, smart power incorporates the "full range of tools at [one's] disposal"[39].

In more recent works, Nye has developed the concept of "negative soft power" and adopted the concept of "sharp power". Through various means, states may attempt to intentionally reduce the soft power of others through attacking culture, values, and policies of the target[40]. This process, if successful, creates negative soft power. Sharp power is a concept originally developed by Christopher Walker and Jessica Ludwig at the National Endowment for Democracy, that was later adopted by Nye[41]. When states attempt to attract or shape the preferences of others, they must actively evaluate how to frame information. When framing of information is intentionally deceitful in order to limit the targets perceived choices, power becomes coercive rather than co-optive. Transparency and limiting deliberate deception are the characteristics that differentiate soft power from sharp power. As a result, Nye characterizes sharp power as a brand of hard power, as the approach to achieving outcomes is coercive rather than co-optive[42].

In his most recent book *The Future of Power*, Nye develops the concept of "cyberpower" which he defines as

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[36] Quetteville, Harry de (2003) *US troops pack up and go as Turkey refuses any help*, Telegraph.co.uk. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/1425507/US-troops-pack-up-and-go-as-Turkey-refuses-any-help.html
[37] Nye, Joseph S. (2009) *Get Smart: Combining Hard and Soft Power*, pp. 160. Foreign Affairs, Vol. 88, No. 4, pp. 160-163.
[38] Ibid, pp. 160-161.
[39] Lewis, Paul and Peter Walker (2009) *Hillary Clinton backs 'smart power' to assert US influence around world*, The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jan/13/hillary-clinton-confirmation-hearing-senate
[40] Nye, Joseph S. (2017*) Information warfare versus soft power*, ASPI. https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/information-warfare-versus-soft-power/
[41] Walker, Christopher and Jessica Ludwig (2017) *The Meaning of Sharp Power,* Foreign Affairs. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2017-11-16/meaning-sharp-power
[42] Nye, Joseph S. (2018) *How Sharp Power Threatens Soft Power*, Foreign Affairs. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2018-01-24/how-sharp-power-threatens-soft-power?cid=int-fls&pgtype=hpg

"the ability to obtain preferred outcomes through the electronically interconnected information resources of the cyberdomain"[43]. Nye proposes that cyberpower is capable of producing desirable outcomes both within and outside of the cyberspace domain, and that cyberpower can function as both hard and soft power[44]. The EU's introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation may be seen as soft power in the cyberspace domain, attracting others towards stronger data regulation laws. On the other hand, the use of distributed denial of service attacks (DDoS attacks) may be considered hard power applications of cyber power.

3.1.1 Critiques of Nye's Power Concepts

Nye provides a well-developed framework for understanding power, however, his framework is developed in the context of the United States, and therefore not directly replicable in Russian context[45]. This predicament arises because Nye perceives of the international system as dominated by Western values and norms, and therefore tends to evaluate the soft power capacity of states through their degree of conformance to these. To accommodate this issue, soft power, and the ability to attract must be made context-dependent. As stated by Blanchard and Lu "attractiveness of these components [soft power: culture, values, policy] is partly in the eye of the beholder"[46]. It is therefore critical to application of theory that attraction in global, regional, and local contexts is considered. Practically, this means that power based on attraction rather than force must account for who exercises power, and who the intended target demographic is.

3.2 Hybrid Warfare

Since its conception in the mid-2000's the term 'hybrid warfare' has been an enigmatic concept, taking on varying interpretations and understandings across the international community[47]. Numerous other terms, including 'fourth-generation warfare' and 'non-linear warfare' have sought to describe similar phenomenon, however, the adoption of 'hybrid warfare' by NATO and the EU made this term the most prevalent amongst Western scholars, defense experts, and policy-makers[48]. Nevertheless, not all scholars embrace the concept

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[43] Nye (2011a) *The Future of Power*, pp. 82.

[44] Ibid, pp. 83

[45] Carter, Perry, Anne-Marie Brady and Evgeny Pavlov (2016) *Russia's "smart power" foreign policy and Antarctica*, pp 260. The Polar Journal, 6:2, pp. 259-272.

[46] Blanchard, Jean-Marc F. and Fujia Lu (2012) *Thinking Hard About Soft Power: A Review and Critique of the Literature on China and Soft Power*, pp. 569. Asian Perspective, Vol. 36, No. 4, pp. 565-589.

[47] Caliskan, Murat (2019) *Hybrid warfare through the lens of strategic theory*, Defense & Security Analysis, 35:1, 40-58.

[48] NATO (2019) *NATO and EU discuss defence against hybrid warfare.*

of hybrid warfare, and the term has over time been subject to various critiques. In the following section I will define the term hybrid warfare, whilst addressing the most significant criticisms.

3.2.1 Defining Hybrid Warfare

Hybrid warfare has been subject to various (yet similar) definitions, and I therefore perform a triangulation of the definitions proposed by NATO, the EU, and the Hybrid CoE. Triangulation of these definitions will allow for a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the hybrid warfare phenomenon.

In its 2016 Warsaw Communique, NATO proposes the following definition of hybrid warfare:

> "broad, complex, and adaptive combination of conventional and non-conventional means, and overt and covert military, paramilitary, and civilian measures … employed in a highly integrated design by state and non-state actors to achieve their objectives"[49].

Whereas, in the Joint framework on countering hybrid threats, the EU defines hybrid warfare as a:

> "mixture of coercive and subversive activity, conventional and unconventional methods (i.e. diplomatic, military, economic, technological), which can be used in a coordinated manner by state or non-state actors to achieve specific objectives while remaining below the threshold of formally declared warfare. There is usually an emphasis on exploiting the vulnerabilities of the target and on generating ambiguity to hinder decision-making processes."[50]

Although NATO's definition of hybrid threats is fairly vague, the following central elements are shared by both the definition provided by NATO and the EU:

- May be employed by state and non-state actors.
- Uses a broad range of conventional, non-conventional, subversive, and coercive means and measures (diplomatic, military, economic, technological).
- Means and measures are highly coordinated and integrated to achieve specific objectives.

The definition of hybrid threats proposed by the EU provides further characteristics:

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https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_164603.htm
[49] NATO (2016) *Warsaw Summit Communiqué,* para. 72.
https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm#hybrid
[50] Eur-Lex (2016) *Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats a European Union response.*
https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52016JC0018

- Remains below the threshold of formally declared war.

- Emphasis on exploiting vulnerabilities of the target.

- Ambiguity of actions that provides plausible deniability and hinders decision-making of target.

Through combining the characteristics of hybrid warfare presented above with the understanding of hybrid warfare adopted by the Hybrid CoE, I propose the following definition of hybrid warfare:

Hybrid warfare entails a state or non-state actor employing a range of conventional, non-conventional, subversive, and coercive instruments, simultaneously and complimentarily, to achieve specific objectives. Instruments are military and non-military, typically categorized as; economic, social, military, informational, and diplomatic. More specifically, these instruments typically take the shape of propaganda, fake news, funding organizations, supporting political parties, organizing protest movements, economic leverage, proxy war, support for paramilitaries, and cyber espionage, attacks, and manipulation[51]. In order to constitute hybrid warfare these instruments must be employed in a "simultaneous and complementary [way] … to achieve a common objective"[52]. Furthermore, hybrid warfare seeks to achieve desired outcomes without formal declarations of war, and the target of efforts is typically societies rather than combatants[53]. Finally, hybrid warfare is ambiguous, providing plausible deniability for the perpetrator and hindering the decision-making of the target. The ambiguity of hybrid warfare circumvents formal declarations of war and draws advantage of the 'fog' of war[54] that hinders decision-making of the target through creating uncertainty about 'what is happening', and therefore also how to respond.

3.2.2 Critiques of Hybrid Warfare

The most common critique of hybrid warfare is that the term captures nothing new and is "best understood as warfare" [55]. Proponents of this position typically emphasize that history is ripe with examples of hybrid

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[51] Treverton et al. (2018) pp. 4.

[52] Ibid, pp. 29.

[53] Ibid, pp. 10.

[54] Often attributed to Clausewitz, fog of war denotes the uncertainty, haziness, and unreliability of information upon which decisions are made in war. As stated by Clausewitz, "war is the realm of uncertainty; three quarters of the factors on which action is based are wrapped in a fog of greater or lesser uncertainty". Clausewitz in Reed, James (n.d.) *Modern Fog and Friction*, Small Wars Journal. https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/modern-fog-and-friction

[55] Monaghan (2016) pp. 67.

warfare – ranging from Sun Tzu's military tactics to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979[56]. This position is not necessarily mistaken, but it dismisses a central aspect of hybrid warfare. Most hybrid tools such as propaganda and economic leverage have been used extensively throughout history, with exception of the cyber-realm. However, what differentiates hybrid warfare from simply using non-military instruments is the "simultaneous and complementary use of many of these instruments to achieve a common objective"[57].

Critics of the hybrid warfare term also tend to emphasize that the hybrid warfare term is misguided by the contextual misinterpretation of the so-called 'Gerasimov Doctrine' and empowered by the subsequent annexation of Crimea and conflict in Donbass. Gerasimov's statements were interpreted as a state-of-the-art blueprint for Russia's renewed understanding of warfare in the twenty-first century, however, in reality Gerasimov was relaying the Kremlin's understanding of how the Arab Spring and color revolutions overthrew Moscow-aligned governments[58]. The critics are right in-so-far that the Gerasimov Doctrine does not provide a blueprint for Russian hybrid warfare, and that this term should be discarded. However, the fact that some scholars misinterpreted the Gerasimov Doctrine and applied these understandings to hybrid warfare should not lead to dismissing this term. Rather, I have made efforts to avoid associations between hybrid warfare and the Gerasimov Doctrine through choosing to discard literature with such associations.

The most important critique of the term hybrid warfare, as it relates directly to the case study of eastern Ukraine, is the tendency to dismiss the importance and use of conventional military forces[59]. Whilst focus on non-military instruments of power may divert attention away from the use of conventional forces, this issue may be actively accounted for. If the use of conventional forces satisfies the following conditions they must be recognized as an element of hybrid warfare: conventional forces must both be deployed covertly to provide plausible deniability and must figure as one element in an array of power-creating instruments employed towards achieve a common objective.

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[56] Maigre, Merle (2015) *Nothing New in Hybrid Warfare: The Estonian Experience and Recommendations for NATO,* pp. 2. GMFUS. http://www.gmfus.org/publications/nothing-new-hybrid-warfare-estonian-experience-and-recommendations-nato

[57] Treverton et al. (2018) pp. 29.

[58] Galeotti, Mark (2018). *I'm Sorry for Creating the Gerasimov Doctrine*. Foreign Affairs. https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/05/im-sorry-for-creating-the-gerasimov-doctrine/

[59] Monaghan (2016) pp. 68.

4.0 Analysis

In the following sections of analysis, I present a chronological narrative of events in eastern Ukraine and identify instances of Russian hybrid warfare within this narrative. Upon identifying instances of Russian hybrid warfare, I apply Nye's analytical power concepts to observations to answer the research question:

- **What types of power did Russia apply through instruments of hybrid warfare, and how were these applied?**

Seeking to provide a stringent and chronological account of events, I divide the conflict in Ukraine into three temporally defined phases. Phase I spans from November of 2013, where Yanukovych accepted Russia's alternative deal to the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, and until the 22nd of February 2014, where President Yanukovych was ousted from power. Phase II spans from the 23rd of February 2014, where pro-Russian demonstrations in eastern Ukraine began, and until the 25th of May 2014, where the Ukrainian presidential elections were held. Phase III spans from the 26th of May 2014, where the first Battle for Donetsk Airport began, and until September of 2014, where the first Minsk Protocol was signed.

Phase I	Phase II	Phase III
November of 2013 Russia offers Yanukovych alternative deal to the Ukraine-EU Association Agreement.	23rd of February 2014 Pro-Russian demonstrations erupt across the Donbass Oblast in eastern Ukraine.	26th of May 2014 The First Battle for Donetsk Airport begins.
22nd of February 2014 Yanukovych ousted from power.	25th of May 2014 Ukrainian presidential elections are held.	September of 2014 Russia employed the Russian Armed Forces.

4.1 Phase I: November of 2013 – 22nd of February 2014

Developing political and economic relations between the EU and Ukraine was initially proposed in 2006 and led to diplomatic talks on the issue by 2008. In March of 2012 both parties reached an agreement, and the resulting EU-Ukraine Association Agreement was set be to be signed in November of 2013. However, under

mounting pressure from Russia, then president Viktor Yanukovych failed to sign the proposed agreement[60]. Shortly after Yanukovych's failure to sign the agreement protests erupted in Kiev's Independence Square (Maidan Nezalezhnosti or Maidan square), with over 100,000 protestors taking to the street and calling for Yanukovych's resignation[61].

4.1.1 Moscow's Alternative Deal

Russia's attempts to influence Ukrainian leadership towards dismissing the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement began early in 2013 and culminated in then president Yanukovych's decision to favor an alternative deal with Russia over political and economic association with the EU. In pursuit of influencing Ukraine's decision on closer cooperation with the EU or Russia, Moscow employed both economic and informational power-creating instruments. Moscow offered to purchase $15 billion in Ukrainian government bonds and to lower the price of gas delivered to Ukraine by a third[62]. Since 2012, Ukraine's economy had been in dire straits, with negative growth in GDP, and overwhelming government debt including $3.492 billion owed to the state-run Russian energy company Gazprom[63]. Moscow's alternative deal offered to alleviate government debt through purchasing bonds and curtail the accumulation of energy debt through reducing the price of energy supplied by Gazprom. In essence, Russia's alternative deal was a bribe, using economic leverage as hard power to coerce Ukraine towards closer economic and political ties with Russia.

4.1.2 Information Warfare (IW) Discrediting the EU and IMF

Beyond hard power wielded through economic leverage, Russia also employed an informational campaign to generate support for Ukraine's stronger ties to Russia. Moscow's informational campaign propelled the narrative, that the EU and International Monetary Fund (IMF) would force Ukraine to address national debt issues through unattractive austerity programs[64]. This approach can best be described as creating negative

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[60] Gardner, Andrew (2014) *The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement: a potted history*. Politico.
 https://www.politico.eu/article/the-eu-ukraine-association-agreement-a-potted-history/
[61] Langlois, Jill (2013) *More than 100,000 protest in Ukraine over EU agreement delay.* Public Radio International.
https://www.pri.org/stories/2013-11-24/more-100000-protest-ukraine-over-eu-agreement-delay
[62] Walker, Shaun (2013a) *Vladimir Putin offers Ukraine financial incentives to stick with Russia*, The Guardian.
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/17/ukraine-russia-leaders-talks-kremlin-loan-deal
[63] IENE (2014) Ukraine's Overall Debt for Russian Gas Grows to $3.492 Billion.
https://www.iene.eu/ukraines-overall-debt-for-russian-gas-grows-to-3492-billion-p596.html
[64] Treverton et al. (2018) pp. 29.

soft power - making Kiev's pivot towards the West less attractive in the eyes of Ukrainians - through attacking the economic policies of the EU and IMF. Austerity policies have previously been implemented by the EU in both Italy, Greece and Spain, and are naturally unwanted and unpopular amongst the target population of these policies[65]. Through attacking these broadly unpopular policies, Russia generated negative soft power to co-opt Ukrainians towards deeper ties with Russia through making ties with the EU and IMF seem less attractive. It is, however, important to note that Russia's use of negative soft power does not constitute a sharp power approach, because information was not framed deceptively. Given that austerity measures were introduced through the 2015 Ukrainian government budget, Russia's claims that deeper ties with the EU and IMF would force austerity measures were in fact correct[66].

4.1.3 Russian Cyberpower and Suppression of the Euro-Maidan Movement

Russia's use of cyberpower began prior to the ousting of former President Yanukovych and consisted primarily of DDoS attacks aimed at disabling pro-Maidan information and support platforms. Pro-Maidan pages on Ukraine's largest social media platforms VKontakte and Odnoklassniki were hosted on Russian servers, and access to these pages was promptly blocked[67]. Through blocking pro-Maidan activity on social media, Russia sought to disrupt communicative and organizational capabilities and activities of pro-Maidan supporters. Whilst cyberpower may adopt a soft power or hard power approach, Russia's objective of denying access to pro-Maidan pages and platforms through the use of cyberpower should be characterized as hard power. As Nye proposes, cyberpower is able to produce favorable outcomes both inside and outside of the cyber domain – a proposition clearly observed through Russia's use of cyberpower. Inside the cyber domain, Russia attempted to inhibit the ability for pro-Maidan supporters to project soft power aimed at recruiting and generating support for the pro-Maidan movement. Limitations within the cyber domain spilled over to the physical environment, as the ability to generate support and effectively assemble and organize pro-Maidan protests was affected by Russia's use of hard cyberpower. Given that 100,000 protestors had assembled in Kiev's Maidan square by November, Russia's success in disrupting communications and activities and pro-Maidan protestors in western Ukraine should at best be described as ineffective. However,

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[65] Ellyatt, Holly and Silvia Amaro (2018) *Are we witnessing the end of austerity – and what does it mean for Europe?* https://www.cnbc.com/2018/12/05/austerity-over-in-europe-greece-what-does-that-mean-for-the-region.html
[66] Fraser, Elizabeth (2015) *Shafted: The Winners and Losers of Ukraine's Austerity Agenda*, Oakland Institute. https://www.oaklandinstitute.org/blog/shafted-winners-and-losers-ukraine%E2%80%99s-austerity-agenda
[67] Treverton et al. (2018) pp. 28.

Russia's efforts also aimed to disrupt pro-Maidan demonstrations in eastern Ukraine, where efforts were seemingly more successful. In Ukraine's second largest city Kharkiv (located in northeast Ukraine) pro-Maidan protests only managed to assemble 300 participants[68].

4.1.4 The Ousting of Yanukovych

Yanukovych's decision to dismiss the Ukraine-EU Association Agreement in favor Moscow's alternative deal catalyzed the Euromaidan movement, and on the 22nd of February 2014 the Ukrainian parliament held a vote that deposed of Yanukovych as president of Ukraine. Upon the ousting of Yanukovych and the inevitability of Ukraine's pivot towards the West becoming clear, Moscow's informational campaign was adapted accordingly. Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov denounced the West for "encouraging a violent breach of law" and accused protesters of an "armed coup-d'état" and "overthrowing the legitimate president"[69]. Similarly, Russian President Vladimir Putin deemed the events in Kiev "an anti-constitutional takeover and armed seizure of power"[70]. Russia pushed the narrative that Ukraine's "legitimate president" was overthrown because he chose to pursue deeper ties with Russia, and that the West encouraged Yanukovych's ousting over this decision. Through this narrative Russia sought to create negative soft power for the West, through pointing towards discrepancies between Western actions and values and policies. Western values and policies place great emphasis on the compliance of governments to democratic principles and the rule-of-law, which are strong contributors to Western soft power foundations. However, in order for values and policies to generate soft power, they must be practiced consistently and be perceived as legitimate. Through implying that the West encouraged a breach of democratic principles and the rule-of-law, Russia questioned the consistency and legitimacy in the West's practice of its values and policies.

4.1.5 Summation of Russia's Phase I Actions

The earliest stages of Russia's hybrid warfare in Ukraine began prior to the ousting of Yanukovych. Initially, Russia attempted to coerce Ukraine towards deeper ties with Russia by bribing Ukraine through a hard power

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[68] Varshalomidze, Tamila (2019) *Kharkiv's pro-Russian protestors still mistrustful of Kiev.* Al Jazeera. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/03/ukraine-pro-russian-city-kharkiv-mistrustful-kiev-190329081248685.html
[69] BBC News (2014a) *Ukraine crisis: Russian FM Lavrov accuses protestors of 'armed coup-d'état'.* https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-europe-26446020/ukraine-crisis-russian-fm-lavrov-accuses-protesters-of-armed-coup-d-etat
[70] ABC News (2014) *Ukraine crisis: Vladimir Putin says force a 'last resort', Barack Obama says nobody fooled by Russia's invasion reasons.* https://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-03-04/vladimir-putin-says-force-a-last-resort-in-ukraine/5298876

economic lever. During this process Russia initiated an informational campaign, creating negative soft power for the EU and IMF through attacking the economic policies these institutions would impose upon the Ukrainian economy. The purpose of this campaign was to reduce the attractiveness of the institutions, and by extension Ukraine's pivot towards the West. Furthermore, Russia employed hard cyberpower to disrupt communications and organizational means of pro-Maidan protestors through blocking pro-Maidan platforms on popular social media sites. After Yanukovych was removed from power, Russia adapted its informational campaign to attack the consistency in the West's practice of democratic principles and the rule-of-law. Whilst the narrative of informational campaigns was adapted, the purpose remained the same. Through questioning the West's consistency in the practice of democratic principles, Russia sought to create negative soft power and question the legitimacy of the post-Yanukovych Kiev leadership.

4.2 Phase II: 23rd of February 2014 - 25th of May 2014

Shortly after Yanukovych's deposal, protests against the newly formed Ukrainian government erupted across eastern Ukraine[71]. Many eastern Ukrainians watched in dismay as pro-Maidan protestors toppled monuments of Lenin[72] and were taken aback by the violent confrontations, armed paramilitary units, and far-right factions that roamed the streets of Kiev[73]. Following Yanukovych's deposal, two developments in Kiev served to further fuel the fire. First, on the 23rd of February the Ukrainian parliament abolished a law providing official recognition to languages spoken in regions with more than 10 percent of citizens speaking the language[74]. This decision sparked outrage in eastern Ukraine where the greater part of citizens in several Oblasts had strong ties to the Russian language[75]. Second, when the Ukrainian interim government was announced on the 26th of February, the Ukrainian far-right nationalist party Svoboda took several important posts including deputy prime minister, chief law officer, and heads of the agriculture and environmental ministries. Svoboda made attempts to distance itself from its earlier Nazi-esque image, however, party membership was limited

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[71] Kofman, Michael et al. (2017) *Lessons from Russia's operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*, pp. 33. RAND.
https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1400/RR1498/RAND_RR1498.pdf
[72] Walker, Shaun (2013b) *Ukraine protestors topple Lenin statue in Kiev*, The Guardian.
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/08/ukraine-opposition-viktor-yanukovych-european-integration
[73] Ishchenko, Volodymyr (2017) *Far right participation in the Ukrainian Maidan protests: an attempt of systemic estimation*. European Politics and Society, 2016. Vol. 17 No. 4, 453-472.
[74] RT (2014a) *Cancelled language law in Ukraine sparks concern among Russian and EU diplomats*.
https://www.rt.com/news/minority-language-law-ukraine-035/
[75] Matviyishyn, Yevhen and Tomasz Michalski (2017) *Language Differentiation of Ukraine's Population,* pp. 185. Journal of Nationalism, Memory & Language Politics.

to ethnic Ukrainians defined on the basis of blood, language, and ideology[76]. Furthermore, as records prove, the majority of eastern Ukrainians had voted for Yanukovych and supported the Party of Regions[77]. Not surprisingly, many of Yanukovych's supporters were aghast by his overthrow and increasingly concerned with the political future of their country.

On the 1st of March largely unarmed pro-Russian protestors seized the regional government headquarters in Donetsk and Kharkiv, and later on the 9th of March in Luhansk[78]. Whilst the pro-Russian protestors depicted their actions as impromptu and self-initiated, the Ukrainian government regarded the protests as affronts orchestrated by pro-Russian reactionaries, supported by elements of Russian intelligence. Nonetheless, several accounts propose that "public agitation and outcry appeared genuine and not disconnected from the country's political divisions"[79]. I propose that the best understanding of events should be found through a compromise between these positions. Clearly, developments in Kiev created genuine discontent amongst eastern Ukrainians with the political direction and future of Ukraine. However, discounting Moscow's involvement in stirring up dissatisfaction and inciting and organizing protests would also be erroneous.

4.2.1 Protests as Staging Ground for Russian IW?

Russia has been accused of sending Russian citizens to protest in eastern Ukraine – either on their own accord or through payment[80]. Furthermore, multiple accounts of the early protests in eastern Ukraine state that protests seemed "choreographed"[81]. Eyewitness accounts of protests describe pro-Russian protestors making short-lived attempts to breach police lines and seize government buildings before advancing to the Russian consulate and requesting intervention[82]. Conversely, when pro-Russian protestors did seize government buildings, they raised Russian flags and requested intervention from Russia[83]. Determining Moscow's degree of involvement in the early protests is infeasible, however, the protests generated images

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[76] Vasilopoulou, Sofia (2014) *Far-right part jeopardizes Ukraine's path to democracy*, The Conversation. http://theconversation.com/far-right-party-jeopardises-ukraines-path-to-democracy-23999

[77] Kireev, Alex (n.d.) *Ukraine Presidential Election 2010*, Electoral Geography 2.0. https://www.electoralgeography.com/new/en/countries/u/ukraine/ukraine-presidential-election-2010.html

[78] Treverton et al. (2018) pp. 22.

[79] Kofman et al. (2017) pp. 33.

[80] Roth, Andrew (2014) *From Russia, 'Tourists' Stir the Protests*, New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/04/world/europe/russias-hand-can-be-seen-in-the-protests.html

[81] Chivers, C.J. and Andrew Roth (2014) *In Eastern Ukraine, the Curtain Goes Up, and the Clash Begins*. New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/18/world/europe/eastern-ukraine.html

[82] Treverton et al. (2018) pp. 22.

[83] The Moscow Times (2014*) In Ukraine's East, Some Beg for Russian Iron Hand*. https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/03/16/in-ukraines-east-some-beg-for-russian-iron-hand-a33002

that became central to Russia's evolving informational campaign.

Russia's informational campaign targeted recipients on three levels, namely; Ukrainians, Russians, and the West or broader international community. The central messages of Russia's information campaign also operated with three central objectives, namely; discrediting the newly established government in Kiev, highlighting dangers faced by ethnic Russians in Ukraine, and emphasizing the broad pro-Russian popular consensus in Ukraine. Naturally, both the narratives employed, and their effectiveness was strongly contingent on the target audience of Russian information campaigns. The information campaigns directed at Russian and Ukrainian citizens were largely similar, appealing to understandings and perceptions of the developments in Ukraine in accordance with Russian culture, values, and policies. These campaigns sought to increase the number of pro-Russian protestors in eastern Ukraine, strengthening the movement through man-power and empowering the popular uprising narrative. On the other hand, the information campaign directed towards the West was adapted to appeal to Western soft power values. This campaign sought to increase the legitimacy of Russian actions on the world stage, through appealing to international law and conventions. In the following section I first discuss the information campaigns aimed towards Russian and Ukrainian citizens and thereafter the information campaigns aimed towards the West.

IW Directed at Ukrainians and Russians

Information campaigns aimed at discrediting the newly established government in Kiev were already set in motion directly after Yanukovych was deposed. As discussed previously, Moscow was quick to attack the legitimacy of the Ukrainian government, labelling the ousting of Yanukovych as "an anti-constitutional takeover and armed seizure of power"[84]. However, in his address to the Russian state on the 18th of March 2014, Russian President Vladimir Putin further sharpened this rhetoric and stated:

> "Those who stood behind the latest events in Ukraine had a different agenda: they were preparing yet another government takeover; they wanted to seize power and would stop short of nothing. They resorted to terror, murder and riots. Nationalists, neo-Nazis, Russophobes and anti-Semites executed this coup."[85]

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[84] ABC News (2014)
[85] Kremlin (2014a) *Address by President of the Russian Federation.*
http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603

The above quote again illustrates the pursuit towards reducing the soft power of Kiev through deployment of negative soft power. Nazism and anti-Semitism are broadly detested by Russian's and Ukrainians (if not universally) as both peoples witnessed atrocities and genocide committed by Nazi Germany firsthand. The Soviet Union suffered approximately 24 million casualties in the struggle against Nazi Germany, and the Second World War known as "The Great Patriotic War" remains a powerful historical element of Russian identity and self-understanding[86]. Similarly, whilst many Ukrainians first welcomed Nazi rule as path towards independence from the USSR, the Nazi's implemented "racial" policies in Ukraine and by 1947, 5-7 million Ukrainians had been killed and 40 percent of national wealth had been lost[87]. Moreover, those positively inclined towards Russian culture, values, and policies naturally carry a negative perception of Russophobes and Ukrainian nationalists. In terms of soft power, both neo-Nazis and Russophobes possess little-to-no soft power in the eyes of Russians and pro-Russian Ukrainians, as the culture, values, and policies associated with these ideologies or beliefs are deemed unattractive. Through portraying the culture, values, and policies of the Ukrainian government as synonymous with the culture, values, and policies of neo-Nazis and Russophobes, the Kremlin's information campaign aimed to produce negative soft power for Kiev. Moscow's negative soft power information campaign was further empowered by the inclusion of the far-right nationalist party Svoboda into Ukraine's interim government, and the televised images of far-right factions and paramilitaries participating in the pro-Maidan protests.

Simultaneously, Moscow's attempts to delegitimatize the Kiev government strengthened the narrative that ethnic Russian's faced great dangers at the hands of their new "illegitimate" government. Once again, the government in Kiev made mistakes that empowered the Russian narrative. Abolishing the language law giving official recognition to secondary languages allowed for Russia to push the narrative that ethnic Russians in eastern Ukraine would become a persecuted minority. Moscow essentially asserted that the history, language, and culture of ethnic Russians in Ukraine was destined to be oppressed by a Kiev government composed of nationalists, neo-Nazi's and Russophobes. Appealing to such values initially indicates a soft power approach, however, I would argue that Moscow's approach is more indicative of utilizing sharp power. Whilst fighting to preserve Russian language, history, and culture appears as co-optive action through soft power appeal, the Kremlin's approach transitions into sharp power due to the deceitful

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[86] Russiapedia (n.d.) *Russian History: The Great Patriotic War*, RT.
https://russiapedia.rt.com/russian-history/the-great-patriotic-war/
[87] Stebelsky, Ihor et.al. (2019) *The Nazi occupation of Soviet Ukraine*. Encylopædia Britannia.
https://www.britannica.com/place/Ukraine/The-Nazi-occupation-of-Soviet-Ukraine

framing of context, manipulating the perceived range of actions available to pro-Russian inclined eastern Ukrainians. Through generating fear, Moscow's narrative sought to incite pro-Russian actors in eastern Ukraine towards acting against the "illegitimate" government that intended to repress Russian history, language, and culture. As such, Moscow's narrative is indicative of sharp power, as it frames the options of eastern Ukrainians as taking action or facing oppression of Russian cultural, linguistic, and historic legacy.

The final dimension of Russia's information campaign at this stage was framing protests as popular uprising through emphasizing broad pro-Russian support in eastern Ukraine. Moscow's approach towards constructing this narrative was twofold in execution. Moscow's information campaign aimed to delegitimize the Kiev government through negative soft power and coerce eastern Ukrainians towards rebellion by framing the imminent oppression of Russian culture, language, and history. These aforementioned elements of Moscow's information campaign interacted synergistically with Russia's narrative of broad pro-Russian support leading to popular uprising in eastern Ukraine. Through discrediting the government and compelling pro-Russian Ukrainians to fear for their future, Moscow increased the number of protestors in eastern Ukraine, and strengthened the narrative of a popular uprising. The second element of Moscow's efforts to construct the narrative of popular uprisings was more practical. As previously discussed, Moscow has been accused of organizing, supporting, and choreographing protests. The purpose of these actions was, fairly obviously, to increase the number of pro-Russian protestors in eastern Ukraine. Protests in eastern Ukraine often resulted in Russian flags being raised above government buildings, as well as protestors calling for Russia to intervene and support eastern Ukrainians in their struggle against the Kiev government. Ultimately, pro-Russian protests propagated media images that supported the Russian narrative of popular uprising. As described by the NY Times Moscow correspondent Andrew Roth, "the protests have served as a grist for Russian state television networks, which hailed the footage of the Russian flag being raised across Ukraine as evidence of a rejection of the new government in Kiev by ethnic Russians"[88].

IW Directed at the West

Whilst Russia's information campaign directed towards the West relayed similar narratives to those aimed at Ukrainian and Russian citizens, both the approach, and outcomes were different. Because the target of information was Western, attempts to project soft power necessitated a reflection of Western values.

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[88] Roth (2014)

Essentially, soft power used to co-opt or attract Western actors must be projected in accordance with Nye's original contextual understanding of soft power. Nye's original conception regards the international system as dominated by Western norms and values, which means that evaluating the soft power capacity of states must be measured through the degree of compliance to these. In pursuit of measuring soft power of states, Nye advocates for the 'Soft Power 30' index that quantifies the relative soft power of states according to compliance with Western norms and values[89]. Notably, Russia failed to make it into the top 30 ranking in 2015, speaking to the limited soft power capabilities of the Russian state in Western contexts[90]. Despite Russia's limited soft power in Western contexts, Russia's informational campaign directed at the West indicated an acute awareness of Western soft power foundations.

Rather than describing the Ukrainian government as consisting of neo-Nazis and Russophobes, Moscow argued that Yanukovych's overthrow breached a power-transfer agreement negotiated by Yanukovych, the Foreign Ministers of Poland, Germany, and France, and Russia's Human Rights Commissioner. Russian President Putin expressed his condemnation for the supposed breach of international law with the following:

> "I would like to stress that under that agreement Mr. Yanukovych actually handed over power. He agreed to all the opposition's demands: he agreed to early parliamentary elections, to early presidential elections, and to return to the 2004 Constitution, as demanded by the opposition. He gave a positive response to our request, the request of western countries and, first of all, of the opposition not to use force … He went to Kharkov to attend an event, and as soon as he left, instead of releasing the occupied administrative buildings, they immediately occupied the President's residence and the Government building – all that instead of acting on the agreement." [91]

The statement made by Putin is suggestive of the attempt to generate negative soft power. President Putin emphasized that a multilateral arrangement dictating power-transition had been reached, and that this deal was breached. Emphasis was placed upon the fact that Foreign Ministers of Western states helped broker the agreement, yet subsequently accepted the legitimacy of Yanukovych's overthrow despite breach of the agreement. Essentially, the Russian narrative attacked the continuity of Western compliance with

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[89] Oxford Union (2018) *Joseph Nye | Full Address and Q&A | Oxford Union*, YouTube.
https://youtu.be/55dITgUUOkc?t=2478
[90] The Soft Power 30 (2015) *Overall Ranking 2015*.
https://softpower30.com/?country_years=2015
[91] Kremlin (2014b) *Vladimir Putin answered journalists' questions on the situation in Ukraine.*
http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20366

international law, as illustrated below:

> "International law should be mandatory for all and should not be applied selectively to serve the interests of individual select countries or groups of states, and most importantly, it should be interpreted consistently. It is impossible to interpret it in one way today, and in a different way tomorrow to match the political goals of the day."[92]

The use of negative soft power became apparent through Russia contesting the consistency of the West in practicing values and policies in accordance with international law. If Western countries apply international law selectively, the attractiveness of such values and policies is diminished, and soft power erodes. Simultaneously, Russia asserted that its actions in Ukraine complied with international law, and through this attempted to increase its soft power by constructing the narrative that Russia was unwavering in its commitment to act in accordance with the values and policies inherent to international law. Whilst Russia demonstrated an awareness of Western soft power foundations, the attempt to generate soft power through underlining Russia's commitment to international law was possibly detrimental to Russia's information campaign. As Nye states, in order for soft power to achieve attraction it must be perceived as credible by the target it seeks to attract. Given the overwhelmingly dismissive or negative reaction amongst Western actors towards Russia's statements[93], this element of Russia's information campaign was discarded as propaganda and damaged Russia's ability to attract Western actors through projecting soft power.

Simultaneously, in response to Western condemnations of Russian intervention in Ukraine, Russia emphasized its commitment to 'The Responsibility to Protect' (R2P) – an agreement endorsed by all members of the United Nations. Simply stated, the R2P agreement asserts that "sovereignty is not a privilege, but a responsibility"[94]. In order for Russia to legitimize its R2P narrative in Western eyes, Moscow stressed the potential oppression of Russian minorities and emphasized the nature of events in eastern Ukraine as popular uprisings. Simultaneously, the notion of popular uprising gave credence to reflections upon the right to self-determination, a core principle of international law[95] that Putin emphasized with the statement:

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[92] Kremlin (2014c) *Conference of Russian ambassadors and permanent representatives.*
http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46131
[93] NATO (2014) *Doorstep Statement by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen before the meetings of the North Atlantic Council and the NATO-Ukraine Commission.*
 https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_107663.htm
[94] UNRIC (n.d.) *Responsibility to Protect.*
https://www.unric.org/en/responsibility-to-protect?layout=default
[95] Diakona (n.d.) *International Law and Self-Determination.*

"I would like to make it clear to all: our country will continue to actively defend the rights of Russians, our compatriots abroad, using the entire range of available means – from political and economic to operations under international humanitarian law and the right of self-defense."[96]

Putin's emphasis on Russia's R2P sought to construct a justification for potential military, political, and economic intervention in Ukraine based in international law. As observed previously, Moscow again employed a narrative centered around Western foundations of soft power, drawing upon values stipulated by international law. Despite Moscow's efforts to align its narrative with Western values and policies, efforts to justify intervention were fruitless, as Western actors dismissed Russian narratives and designated Russia's interventions as a "blatant breach of its international commitments and … a violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity"[97].

4.2.2 Self-Proclaimed Leaders and the Escalation of Violence

Whilst protestors were seizing government buildings in Kharkiv, Donetsk, and Luhansk, a number of previously marginalized political figures from leftist and right-wing organizations began to proclaim themselves "people's majors" and "people's governors"[98]. On the 1st of March pro-Russian nationalist Pavel Gubarev was declared people's governor in Donetsk, and on the 5th of March Alexander Kharitonov was declared people's governor of Luhansk. The cities of Kharkiv and Slovyansk quickly followed, and similarly saw relatively obscure political figures emerge as self-proclaimed leaders[99]. Common to all these figures was their overnight transition from anonymity to leadership positions, which raised concerns regarding external Russian backing of self-proclaimed leaders[100]. Nevertheless, evaluations of Russia's direct involvement in installing the initial wave of pro-Russian 'people's majors' and 'people's governors' indicate poor evidence for this claim. Ultimately, if Russian intelligence was involved in the installment of these figures, the execution

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https://www.diakonia.se/en/IHL/The-Law/International-Law1/IL--Self-Determination/

[96] Kremlin (2014c) *Conference of Russian ambassadors and permanent representatives*

[97] Dews, Fred (2014) *NATO Secretary-General: Russia's Annexation of Crimea is Illegal and Illegitimate*. Brookings. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brookings-now/2014/03/19/nato-secretary-general-russias-annexation-of-crimea-is-illegal-and-illegitimate/

[98] Treverton, et. al. (2018) pp. 21.

[99] Kofman et al. (2017) pp. 36.

[100] Ibid, pp. 37.

and short-term success of this effort was unfruitful, as Ukrainian law enforcement spearheaded a campaign that deposed of, and imprisoned, self-proclaimed leaders in eastern Ukraine[101].

As seen with abolishment of the language law and inclusion of Svoboda in the interim government, actions of the Ukrainian government served to embolden the separatist movement. The arrests of relatively unknown self-proclaimed majors and governors forced a change in leadership, and soon figures with greater experience, military backgrounds, ties to Russian intelligence, and Russian business interests claimed these positions[102]. In Donetsk, Aleksandr Borodai, a Russian citizen with connections to Russian military, intelligence, and political leadership, replaced Pavel Gubarev[103]. Similarly, Igor Strelkov, a veteran of multiple conflicts and alleged operative for the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Russian Federation (GRU) proclaimed himself 'people's major' in Slovyansk[104]. Common for these new leaders was, that they were locals to Donbass or Crimea, had extensive ties to Russia, were increasingly willing to use military force, and possessed the appropriate experience to command a paramilitary unit[105].

The change in leadership emboldened the separatist insurgency in eastern Ukraine, and by early April armed separatists seized regional government headquarters in Luhansk, Donetsk and Kharkiv. Russian flags were hung from seized buildings, and Igor Strelkov announced the establishment of the Donetsk Peoples Republic (DPR), calling for a self-rule referendum to be held on the 11th of May 2014[106]. Similar events later in April called for establishment of the Luhansk Peoples Republic (LPR), with separatists seizing critical government infrastructure and, in the process, acquiring weapons to further arm and bolster the insurgency movement[107]. The experience possessed by Strelkov and Borodai led to greater organization of separatist activities, as a command structure was established. Furthermore, the greater organization and propensity for violence escalated the conflict in eastern Ukraine, and as separatists gained greater foothold, Kiev saw it necessary to

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[101] McElroy, Damien (2014) *Pro-Russian leader arrested in Donetsk as Kiev hits back*. The Telegraph.
https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/10681786/Pro-Russian-leader-arrested-in-Donetsk-as-Kiev-hits-back.html

[102] Kofman et al. (2017) pp. 20.

[103] Reed, John (2014) *Ukraine crisis: Donetsk leader dismisses Kremlin support claims*. Financial Times.
https://www.ft.com/content/802b9b20-eb0e-11e3-bab6-00144feabdc0

[104] RFE/RL (2014) *EU Names 15 New Targets for Ukraine Sanctions*.
https://www.rferl.org/a/eu-sanctions-ukraine-russia/25366276.html

[105] Kofman et al. (2017) pp. 38.

[106] Oliphant, Roland and Damien McElroy (2014) *Eastern Ukraine protests push for Russian rule*, The Telegraph.
https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/10749701/Eastern-Ukraine-protesters-push-for-Russian-rule.html

[107] Higgins, Andrew (2014) *Armed Men Seize Police Station in Eastern Ukraine City*, New York Times.
https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/13/world/europe/ukraine.html

launch a military response.

4.2.3 Kiev's Response to Escalating Violence

Starting in mid-April; in response to escalating violence and formation of a separatist command structure, the Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF) launched a counterinsurgency operation to regain territories in eastern Ukraine held by pro-Russian separatists. The campaign was, however, a devastating failure for the Ukrainian government. Beyond poor training, lacking numbers, and antiquated equipment, the UAF saw a staggering number of defections and desertions amongst their ranks. The high number of defectors and deserters in the UAF was driven by two central factors. First, pro-Russian separatists used bribes, threats, and intimidation to coerce Ukrainian forces into defection or surrender. Second, the fact that many separatists were from eastern Ukraine led many Ukrainian forces to refuse to fire upon what they perceived as their 'countrymen'. In the following sections I further elucidate the significance of each of these factors.

Separatists Employ Bribes, Threats, and Intimidation

Throughout the conflict in eastern Ukraine, pro-Russian separatists and proxy forces used bribes, threats, and intimidation to force the surrender or defection of local politicians, police, and the UAF[108]. According to officials in Kiev this tactic was fairly successful, as by August 2015, over 5,000 police and 3,000 servicemen had defected to join the separatist cause[109]. The use of bribes and intimidation clearly constitute a hard power approach; however, I would argue that this approach should be understood as a complimentary dimension to Russia's Phase II IW campaign. Russia's information campaign sought to diminish the soft power of Kiev and the West, whilst using sharp power and soft power to incite protests amongst eastern Ukrainians and engaged Russian citizens. Whilst Russia's information campaign was sufficient in inciting large-scale protests and empowering paramilitary groups, pro-Maidan protests in eastern Ukraine indicate that a portion of eastern Ukrainians rejected the narrative proposed by Russia[110]. The use of bribes and intimidation should therefore be seen as a projection of hard power, complimentary to Russia's Phase II IW campaign, and designed to coerce the most resistant targets into defection or surrender through economic leverage or the

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[108] Treverton, et. al (2018) pp. 23.
[109] Meduza (2015) *8 thousand Ukrainian officers have defected to the separatists.*
 https://meduza.io/en/news/2015/08/14/8-thousand-ukrainian-officers-have-defected-to-the-separatists
[110] Salem, Harriet (2014) *Deep divisions split Donetsk as tensions simmer across Ukraine*, The Guardian.
 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/04/ukraine-russia-protesters-donetsk-separate-by-force

threat of force.

Significance of Separatist/Proxy Forces

The use of proxy forces and paramilitaries to project hard power was a central element of Russian hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine. By design, proxy forces allowed Russia to project military power whilst remaining below the threshold of formally declared war. Simultaneously, using proxy forces allowed Russia to conserve its own forces and equipment, illustrating the low-cost, high-reward potential of hybrid warfare. Moreover, the use of proxy forces enforced the 'popular revolt' narrative of Russia 's information campaign. Aside from the strategic advantages mentioned above, the use of proxy forces brought unforeseen advantages for pro-Russian proxies, paramilitaries, and separatists warring against the Ukrainian army. Whilst the use of threats, bribes, and intimidation strongly contributed to the number of UAF deserters and defectors, many failures of the UAF were attributed to the refusal to fire upon fellow Ukrainian 'countrymen'. A large number of separatist fighters were locals to eastern Ukraine, and UAF commanders were unwilling to launch offensives in civilian areas, where separatist forces were often supported by mobs of civilians[111]. Reflecting upon Nye's power concepts, the non-willingness of Ukrainian forces to wage war upon their countrymen is indicative of soft power curtailing the effectivity of hard power. Refusing to wage war against Ukrainian compatriots demonstrates the importance of national cohesion or identity, values that are largely shaped through culture. Because culture is a central element of soft power, national cohesion or identity are central contributors to soft power in this context. Given the desertions and defections amongst Ukrainian troops due to the attractiveness of national cohesion or identity, soft power may be considered a driving force curtailing the capacity and effectivity of the UAF's hard power. Moreover, specifically defections served to increase the hard power capacities of pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine through increasing both the number of forces and equipment available. As such, soft power both limited the hard power of the Ukrainian army through desertions and increased the hard power of pro-Russian separatists through defections.

4.2.4 Kiev's Failed Military Campaign

Despite the large numbers of defectors and deserters, the UAF continued their efforts to reclaim territories in eastern Ukraine from pro-Russian separatists. However, the forces that continued to fight were ineffective,

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[111] Kinstler, Linda (2014) *Why is Ukraine's Army So Appallingly Bad*, The New Republic. https://newrepublic.com/article/117710/ukraines-army-small-sovietized-underfunded-and-poorly-trained

and between April and May Russian separatists in the Donbass region shot down multiple Ukrainian military helicopters and aircraft. Significantly, the weapons facilitating these aircraft shootdowns were short-range surface-to-air missile systems supplied to separatists by Russia[112]. Furthermore, the ground regained by UAF was quickly lost, as Russia deployed 40,000 combat ready troops close to Ukraine's northern border in Kharkiv, sparking fears of a large scale invasion, and diverting Ukrainian forces towards this area[113]. In the following sections, I will further explicate the significance of Russia's supply of military equipment to separatist forces, and the positioning of 40,000 troops on Ukraine's northeastern border.

Russia's Supply of Military Material to Separatist/Proxy Forces

Russia's provision of arms to separatists in eastern Ukraine was primarily a projection of hard power, however, Moscow's actions also projected soft power. Whilst Russia did not apply military force in the kinetic or traditional sense, proxy forces were nonetheless fighting to achieve objectives synonymous with those of the Russian state. Arming separatists increased their military capacities or hard power, which in turn was used to combat the UAF. As such, arming of separatists was a projection of Russian hard power that allowed Russia to remain below the threshold of formally declared war. However, the projection of hard power simultaneously projected soft power through reasserting Russia's commitment to the separatist cause. As reported by the US Army's Asymmetric Warfare Group, "proxy forces are generally idealistic and require very little support except for brief reaffirmations of Russia's commitment to their cause"[114]. Given this understanding of proxy forces, Russia's arming of separatists also projects soft power as Moscow's reaffirmation of support for separatist forces attracts or co-opts proxy towards fighting for Russian objectives. Furthermore, Russia's co-opting of proxy forces demonstrates the ability for soft power to generate hard power. Through applying hard power that generates soft power, Russia aimed to bolster the hard power capacities of proxy forces through recruiting and ensuring the continued willingness to fight. Markedly, the arming of separatist forces demonstrates the synergetic interaction between hard power and soft power. Hard power projected through arming of separatists generates soft power through reaffirmations

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[112] Ibid, pp. 42.

[113] Cendrowicz, Leo, Luke Harding and Alec Luhn (2014) *Satellite images reveal Russian military buildup on Ukraine's border.* https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/10/satellite-images-russian-military-ukraine-border

[114] Asymmetric Warfare Group (2016) *Russian New Generation Warfare Handbook*, pp. 15. http://www.multibriefs.com/briefs/rcaa/Russian_New_Generation_Warfare_Handbook.pdf

of the separatist cause, which in turn generates hard power through securing the continued willingness of separatist forces to fight for the Russian cause.

Russian Troop Buildup on Ukraine's Northeastern Border

Russia's accumulation of 40,000 troops near the Ukrainian border sparked concerns as to whether Ukraine would face a conventional Russian invasion. Whilst the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs addressed the accumulation of forces as "everyday activity of Russian troops on its territory" [115], both NATO and the Pentagon warned that "Russian military activity, ostensibly relating to routine exercises, was abnormal and could be a prelude to an invasion"[116]. In light of earlier events on the Crimean peninsula, the build-up of Russian forces presented a tangible threat to Ukrainian sovereignty, because Russia's annexation of Crimea found place under pretense of a Russian snap exercise[117] involving 150,000 troops close to Ukraine's border[118]. Whilst Russia did not deny the accumulation of troops near Ukraine's border, it denied the offensive posture of these forces. Nevertheless, given the context and situation in eastern Ukraine, as well as warnings issued by NATO and the Pentagon, Russia's troop buildup presented an implicit threat to Ukraine. In response to Russia's implicit threat, the UAF transitioned towards Ukraine's northeastern border, which in turn curtailed the efforts of the UAF to retake the separatist strongholds in the cities of Donetsk and Luhansk[119]. Whilst not employing military forces or making a direct threat, Russia's implicit threat of military invasion used coerce the decisions of adversaries constitutes a hard power approach. Ultimately, Russia's amassment of troops lifted pressure imposed by the UAF on separatist forces in Donetsk and Luhansk and allowed separatist forces to regain their foothold in territories previously captured by the UAF.

4.2.5 Separatist Social Media: Fundraising and Recruiting

Whilst pro-Maidan pages and platforms on VKontakte and Odnoklassniki were shut down prior to the ousting of Yanukovych, pro-Russian pages such as "AntiMaidan", "Donbass People's Militia", and "Fund

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[115] Cendrowicz, Leo (2014)

[116] Tisdall, Simon and Rory Carrol (2014) *Russia sets terms for Ukraine deal as 40,000 troops mass on border*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/31/russia-ukraine-deal-troops-lavrov-kerry

[117]Snap exercises are unannounced (third parties are not informed) military exercises that typically involve a large number of troops. Jankowski, Dominik P. (2017) *The Dangerous Tools of Russia's Military Exercises*. Foreign Policy Association. https://foreignpolicyblogs.com/2017/06/07/dangerous-tool-russian-military-exercises/

[118] Treverton, et. al (2018) pp. 16.

[119] Kofman et al. (2017) pp. 42.

to Help Novorossiya" began to appear and support the activities of pro-Russian separatists through fundraising and recruiting[120]. Several pro-Russian pages encouraged monetary contributions to their cause, seeking to increase the hard power capacities of separatists that in turn could be used to fund separatist activities and bribe political officials, police, and military forces loyal to the Ukrainian government.

Social media pages were also used as a recruiting tool for the separatist cause, projecting soft power through framing their activities positively and highlighting the unwavering support from Russia for their cause. Notably, depictions of graphic violence suffered by separatists and civilians at the hands of the UAF were circulated to project sharp power and create negative soft power for the UAF. Whilst images of civilian and separatist casualties were not 'fake' or manipulated, they sought to establish an image of the UAF as committing atrocities against civilian populations.

Employing traditional guerrilla tactics[121], separatist fighters often blended with the civilian population, and established strongholds in densely populated areas, that led to scores of civilian deaths when the UAF attempted to push into separatist held territories. Separatists employed images of civilian casualties to push the narrative that the UAF was killing civilians with intent, thereby manipulating context of the images to represent intentional rather than collateral bloodshed. This manipulation of context subsequently projected sharp power and functioned as a means of recruiting separatists to combat the supposed atrocities committed by the UAF. Furthermore, the images circulated also sought to create negative soft power for the UAF through portraying the UAF as breaching the rules-of-engagement and committing atrocities punishable under international law.

4.2.6 Referendums and Novorossiya

On the 11th of May referendums on the status of the DPR and LPR were held, with results showing 89% support in Donetsk and 96% support in Luhansk for self-rule[122]. Subsequently, on the 22nd of May, the DPR and LPR established New Russia (Novorossiya) with Russian Orthodoxy as the recognized state religion[123]. Whilst the self-proclaimed leaders Igor Strelkov and Alexander Borodai who facilitated the referendums had extensive ties to Russia, Moscow refrained from giving official recognition to the referendums as the

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[120] Ibid, pp. 51.

[121] Longley, Robert (2019) *What is Guerilla Warfare? Definition, Tactics, and Examples.* ThoughtCo. https://www.thoughtco.com/guerrilla-warfare-definition-tactics-examples-4586462

[122] RT (2014b) *Referendum results in Donetsk and Lugansk Regions show landslide support for self-rule.* https://www.rt.com/news/158276-referendum-results-east-ukraine/

[123] Treverton, et. al (2018) pp. 23.

Kremlin's press service issued the statement:

> "Moscow respects the will of the people in Donetsk and Lugansk and hopes that the practical realization of the outcome of the referendums will be carried out in a civilized manner, without resorting to violence, through dialogue between representatives of Kiev, Donetsk and Lugansk"[124]

Due to Moscow's reluctance to officially recognize the referendum results and the emphasis on "dialogue between representatives of Kiev, Donetsk, and Lugansk" political analysts have largely considered the DPR and LPR referendums as "an instrument to force other parties of the conflict to accept the People's Republic as part of the negotiations"[125]. Under the leadership of Strelkov and Borodai great strides were made towards unifying separatist and proxy forces under a military command structure, however, with the allegedly overwhelming support for self-rule, the DPR and LPR transformed from military to political entities that would hold an important position in future negotiations with Kiev.

Beyond forcing Kiev to recognize the DPR and LPR as political entities, the support for self-rule and subsequent establishment of Novorossiya also empowered Russia's informational campaign targeting Ukrainians and Russians. In order to provide legitimacy for the election results, a central elections commission and a large number of polling stations were established[126], giving the impression that the vote was fair and transparent. The establishment of Novorossiya as a supposedly legitimate political entity provided a platform to project soft power through the creation of a politically established alternative to the Kiev government. Novorossiya as a political entity was centered around support for Russian values, culture, and policies, and for many Ukrainians dissatisfied with the Kiev government, Novorossiya provided a politically established alternative. Resultingly, the founding of Novorossiya projected soft power through attracting those inclined towards the Russian cause by heralding pro-Russian values, culture, and policies behind a political structure.

Conversely, upon the establishment of Novorossiya, Russia did not pursue an informational campaign directed towards the West. Earlier elements of Russia's informational campaigns had focused upon international law, particularly the R2P and the right to self-determination, and had sought to create negative

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[124] Williams, Carol J. (2014) *Ukraine separatist votes draw Kremlin 'respect,' not annexation.* LA Times. https://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-ukraine-russia-referendum-kremlin-20140512-story.html
[125] MacFarquhar, Neil (2014*) Russia Keeps Its Distance After Ukraine Secession Referendums.* New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/13/world/europe/ukraine.html
[126] Galpin, Richard (2014) *Donetsk gears up for independence referendum.* BBC News. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27315605

soft power for the West, by asserting that Western support for the overthrow of Yanukovych broke with the continuity and practice of policies and values stipulated in international law. Furthermore, Russia aspired to increase its soft power through highlighting Russia's commitment to abiding by international law consistently and non-selectively. Ultimately, these campaigns were largely unsuccessful and potentially detrimental to Western perceptions of Russia, as these narratives were not seen as credible, and rather as illegitimate excuses for Russian intervention in Ukraine. Curiously, Moscow's non-willingness to officially recognize self-rule of the DPR and LPR indicates an understanding that Moscow's official recognition of the separatist republics would be damaging for their already weak legitimacy, as referendum results would be attributed to Russian intervention in Ukraine. The United States and the EU immediately labelled the referendums "illegal" and stated that results would not be recognized a legitimate[127]. As such, if Russia gave official recognitions to the referendums, the soft power of Russia in Western context would have been further reduced – essentially producing negative soft power for Moscow.

4.2.7 CyberBerkut's Attacks on Ukrainian Election Infrastructure

Beyond denying access to social media pages and platforms, Russia exercised cyberpower through the state-sponsored hacktivists CyberBerkut[128] that attacked the election infrastructure of Ukraine during the 2014 presidential election[129]. CyberBerkut's attacks were multipronged and consisted of at least three stages. Initially, CyberBerkut infiltrated the Ukrainian Central Election Commissions (CEC) electronic systems, erasing key files, and crippling operability of the vote-tallying systems[130]. Ukrainian officials managed to restore operability of the system within a day, however, shortly before election results were announced, Ukrainian cyber-experts discovered and removed a virus programmed to misrepresent election results. If not discovered, the virus would have announced Dmytro Yarosh, representative of the far-right Ukrainian nationalist party Right Sector, winner of the presidential election. Finally, the data feeds relaying results from Ukrainian election districts to the vote-tallying system were subjected to DDoS attacks, delaying the

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[127] Robinson, Matt and Alessandra Prentice (2014) *Rebels appeals to join Russia after east Ukraine referendum.* Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis/rebels-appeal-to-join-russia-after-east-ukraine-referendum-idUSBREA400LI20140512

[128] Defense Intelligence Agency (2018) *Russia Military Power*, pp. 39. https://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/Russia%20Military%20Power%20Report%202017.pdf

[129] RT (2014b) *'Cyber-attack' cripples Ukraine's electronic election system ahead of presidential vote.* https://www.rt.com/news/161332-ukraine-president-election-virus/

[130] Tass (2014) *CyberBerkut says it hacks into electronic counting system, Ukraine's CEC website.* http://tass.com/world/756503

announcement of the final election results[131]. In the following sections, I will detail the significance of CyberBerkut's multipronged attacks on Ukrainian election infrastructure.

Infiltration and Crippling of Ukraine's CEC Systems

The initial crippling of vote-tallying systems through malicious code, and subsequent DDoS attacks on data feeds relaying election results, demonstrated Russia's use of hard cyberpower by proxy. Rather than steering the election outcome, CyberBerkut's attacks employed hard cyberpower aimed at disrupting and discrediting the legitimacy of the Ukrainian presidential elections. Infiltrating and manipulating the Ukrainian CEC's electronic systems provided pretext to question the legitimacy of election results through sowing seeds of doubt regarding the integrity and potential manipulation of CEC systems amongst key segments of the Ukrainian and Russian population. Yanukovych's deposal in late February cemented Kiev's pivot towards the West, which was largely driven by soft power attractiveness of Western culture, values, and policies. Ukraine has for many years (and to this day) consistently ranked poorly in democracy[132], corruption[133], and media-censorship indexes[134], typically being labelled an illiberal democracy[135] with high levels of corruption and censorship of the press. As such, attractiveness of values and policies of liberal democracy, transparency, anti-corruption, and freedom of speech were central factors driving Kiev's pivot towards the West. CyberBerkut's use of hard cyberpower aimed at disputing the legitimacy of the presidential election sought to question the Kiev's practice and commitment to Western values of democracy, transparency and anti-corruption. In essence, CyberBerkut's attacks set out to create negative soft power for Kiev through the application of hard cyberpower on election infrastructure, to dispute the legitimacy of democratic processes.

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[131] Clayton, Mark (2014) *Ukraine election narrowly avoided 'wanton destruction' from hackers*, The Christian Science Monitor. https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Passcode/2014/0617/Ukraine-election-narrowly-avoided-wanton-destruction-from-hackers

[132] The Economist (2017) *The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index.* https://infographics.economist.com/2017/DemocracyIndex/

[133] Transparency International (2018) *Corruption Perceptions Index 2018*. https://www.transparency.org/cpi2018

[134] Reporters Without Borders (2019) *Ukraine.* https://rsf.org/en/ukraine

[135] Illiberal democracies adopt democratic structures and processes (elections, parliamentary system), however, rule of law, constitutional limits, freedom of speech, religious freedom, and the freedom to assemble are often repressed to varying degrees. Plattner, Mark F. (2019) *Illiberal Democracy and the Struggle on the Right*, Journal of Democracy. https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/illiberal-democracy-and-the-struggle-on-the-right/

Efforts to Manipulate Election Results

Although the virus embedded in the Ukrainian CEC's electronic systems was discovered prior to activation, the intended function warrants further reflection. If the virus had been activated, the Ukrainian CEC's website would have forecast Dmytro Yarosh, far-right nationalist party Right Sector, as winner of the Ukrainian presidential election, with over 37% of the popular vote - in reality, Yarosh saw sparse support, and received only 0.71% of the total vote[136]. Curiously, Channel One Russia broadcasted electoral projections identical to those that the virus would have relayed on the Ukrainian CEC's website if it had not been discovered and removed[137]. At first glance, the virus appears similar to the use of malicious code and DDoS attacks, as these all demonstrate the use of hard cyberpower to undermine the legitimacy of the presidential election. However, Russia's reporting of falsified projections identical to those of the virus indicate that hard cyberpower was synchronized with informational instruments to empower Russia's ongoing informational campaign targeting Ukrainians and Russians.

Forecasting Dmytro Yarosh as the next Ukrainian president strengthened Moscow's narrative, that the Ukrainian revolution was staged by Russophobes, Nazis, and far-right nationalists. As leader of the far-right nationalist party Right Sector, Yarosh was a prime figure for Russia's informational campaign. Right Sector had participated extensively in Kiev's Maidan protests, oftentimes clashing violently with police and engaging in strong anti-Russian rhetoric[138]. Through purporting popular support for Yarosh, the Kremlin aimed to underline political divides between east and west Ukraine and represent the values and policies of the Kiev government and its supporters as ultra-nationalist and by extension Russophobic. Through attacking soft power elements of values and policies, Moscow aimed to create negative soft power and reduce the attractiveness of the Kiev government and its pivot to the West.

Furthermore, discrediting legitimacy of the Kiev government and its supporters through representing their values as ultra-nationalistic and Russophobic, Moscow empowered the narrative that eastern Ukrainians were in danger of persecution and having their Russian cultural and historical legacy oppressed. However, given that Yarosh received 0.71% of the total vote, rather than the 37% broadcast by Russian media, the framing

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[136] ElectionGuide (n.d.) *Ukraine Election for President.*
 http://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/2338/
[137] StopFake (2014) *Russian First channel informed of Yarosh Victory in Ukraine's Presidential Elections.*
https://www.stopfake.org/en/russian-first-channel-informed-of-yarosh-victory-in-ukraine-s-presidential-elections/
[138] BBC News (2014b*) Profile: Ukraine's ultra-nationalist Right Sector.*
 https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27173857

of information was deliberately deceptive, and therefore constituted sharp power. Through framing vote projections in favor of Ukrainian ultra-nationalists, Russia used sharp power to attract eastern Ukrainians towards protesting or fighting for the Russian cause through generating fear surrounding the new political direction and leadership of Kiev. Because information was framed deceptively, creating and exploiting fear, the approach was coercive rather than co-optive, and therefore hard power exercised as sharp power.

Overall, Russia employed hard cyberpower through the proxy organization CyberBerkut, that consequently empowered informational narratives through creating negative soft power for Kiev and enabling the use of sharp power by Russia to coerce greater support for the pro-Russian cause. In turn, through generating greater support for the pro-Russian cause, Moscow was also able to provide greater credibility to the narrative that events in eastern Ukraine were the result of popular uprising as opposed to Russian intervention.

4.2.8 Summation of Russia's Phase II Actions

Phase II of the conflict in eastern Ukraine most comprehensively demonstrates the array of power-creating instruments employed by Russia through hybrid warfare. Following Yanukovych's ousting, Russia fueled discontent amongst eastern Ukrainians through IW campaigns generating negative soft power for Kiev and mobilizing protests through projecting sharp power. In turn, these projections of power reinforced Russia's narrative that demonstrations in eastern Ukraine were the result of popular uprisings. Simultaneously, Russia sought to generate negative soft power for the West, whilst increasing Russian soft power, through addressing questions of compliance with international law. As self-proclaimed governors emerged, and violence escalated, Kiev employed the UAF to restore order in eastern Ukraine. However, the effectivity of the UAF was limited, as separatists employed hard power through bribes and intimidation to coerce targets otherwise resistant to Russian IW campaigns towards defection or surrender. Concurrently, the hard power of the UAF was curtailed by soft power, as there was poor willingness to use force upon separatists that were largely composed of locals and therefore considered 'countrymen'. Many UAF servicemen deserted, reducing the hard power of the UAF, and others defected, increasing the hard power of separatist forces. As fighting in eastern Ukraine continued, Moscow provided separatist forces with military equipment, bolstering the hard power of separatists, and generating soft power through reaffirming Moscow's commitment to the separatist cause. When the UAF started to gain ground, Moscow used the implicit threat of a large-scale military invasion to provide separatists time to recuperate and retake lost territories.

Whilst Russia blocked access to pro-Maidan pages on Ukraine's largest social media platforms VKontakte and Odnoklassniki through hard cyberpower, pages loyal to the Russian cause continued their activities. Through these pages, separatists solicited donations and recruited for their cause, increasing hard power capacities through framing activities positively to project soft power. Simultaneously, sharp power, in the form of graphic photographs with manipulated contexts were used to recruit and generate negative soft power for the UAF.

The self-rule referendums held by the DPR and LPR transformed these breakaway regions into political entities that would partake in conflict resolution measures. Beyond recognition as political entities, the establishment of Novorossiya projected soft power, as it provided a structured political alternative to the Kiev government. Russia's non-willingness to officially recognize the DPR and LPR indicates an acknowledgement, that Russia's attempts to project soft power towards the West had been unsuccessful and had only served to reinforce the understanding that Russia was intervening in Ukrainian domestic affairs.

Finally, Russia applied hard cyberpower via proxy through infiltrating and attempting to destroy the Ukrainian CEC's election infrastructure. Hard cyberpower was applied to create negative soft power, through raising questions about the integrity and operability of Ukraine's vote-tallying systems. Simultaneously, hard cyberpower was synchronized with an informational campaign intended to misrepresent results of the election. Through declaring Ukrainian nationalist Yarosh as winner of the Ukrainian presidential election, Moscow sought to generate soft power for Kiev, and project sharp power through stirring up fear regarding the future political leadership of Ukraine.

4.3 Phase III: 26th of May 2014 – September of 2014

Ukrainian presidential elections were held the 25th of May 2014, with Petro Poroshenko securing victory in the first round receiving 54.7% of the total vote[139]. Poreshenko took a hardline stance on the conflict in eastern Ukraine and was adamant that there would be no negotiations with "terrorists". Moreover, Poreshenko proclaimed that a vigorous military campaign, to be known as the anti-terrorist operation (ATO),

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[139] Interfax Ukraine (2014) *Poroshenko wins elections with 54.7% of vote – CEC.*
https://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/207146.html

would quench the separatist uprising in a "matter of hours"**[140]**. Without delay, Poroshenko put action behind his words, and the following day, the 26th of May, the First Battle for Donetsk Airport began.

Spanning over two days, Ukrainian forces battled pro-Russian separatists for control of Donetsk airport, with separatists suffering scores of casualties amounting to 50 or more combatants killed in action. Eventually, Ukrainian forces forced separatist forces to retreat from the airport through air strikes and a paratrooper assault[141]. The First Battle for Donetsk Airport became a significant turning point in the conflict in eastern Ukraine as the battle was a military and strategic blunder for separatist combatants who were forced to retreat and suffered heavy losses. The failures of separatist forces combined with the success of Ukraine's ATO led Russia to vertically escalate[142] the conflict. Consequently, from early June until late August, Russia reinforced separatists with armored fighting vehicles, advanced weapons and munitions, EW systems, and air defence systems operated by Russian forces[143].

 As previously discussed under section 4.2.4 of this thesis, Russia's supply of military material to separatists was primarily a projection of hard power that simultaneously projected soft power. The provision of military equipment increased the hard power (military capacities) of separatists and simultaneously projected soft power through reaffirming Moscow's commitment to the separatist cause. Rather than reiterating the nuances of Russia's provision of arms to separatist on a general level, the following sections will focus specifically on Russia's provision of EW systems to separatists. The focus upon EW systems is particularly relevant, because these systems demonstrate the potential for technology to reinvent or empower methods of projecting power on the battlefield.

4.3.1 Russia's Supply of EW Systems

As the conflict in eastern Ukraine escalated, with the Ukrainian army stepping up the ATO, and pro-Russian separatists, proxies, and paramilitaries intensifying their activities, kinetic warfare increasingly became

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[140] Zawadzki, Sabina and Gabriela Baczynska (2014*) Fighting rages in eastern Ukraine city, dozens dead.* Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-fighting/fighting-rages-in-eastern-ukraine-city-dozens-dead-idUSKBN0E70OA20140527

[141] Ibid.

[142] Vertical escalation describes "an increase in the intensity of armed conflict or confrontation, such as employing types of weapons not previously used in the conflict or attacking new categories of targets".
Morgan, Forrest E. et. al. (2008) Dangerous Thresholds: Managing Escalation in the 21st Century, pp.18. RAND. https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.7249/mg614af.9.pdf

[143] Kofman et al. (2017) pp. 44.

commonplace. With the increasing prevalence of conventional fighting, Russia supported proxy forces with weapons systems otherwise unavailable to these forces. Early contributions consisted of surface-to-air short-range missile systems that were largely successful in disabling air supremacy of the Ukrainian army. However, as the conflict escalated further, Russia intensified its material support for proxy forces through providing advanced electronic warfare systems (EW Systems). In line with general advancements in technology, the battlefield of the twenty-first century has made the electromagnetic environment (EME) central to the support and operation of military forces. Within the EME, electromagnetic (EM) devices are used for "intelligence, communications, navigation, sensing, information storage, and processing, as well as a variety of other purposes"[144]. EW systems are designed to hinder access or manipulate information of adversaries within the EME, providing meaningful operational advantages.

Disrupting, Jamming, Spoofing and Geolocating

Practically, the EW systems supplied by Russia allowed proxy forces to disrupt Ukrainian radio communications, jam unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), and broadcast false GPS signals[145]. Using EW systems to hinder access or manipulate information within the adversaries EME is synonymous with the use of hard cyberpower to produce desired outcomes on a non-kinetic and kinetic level. Through disrupting capabilities within the EME of adversaries, Russian EW systems disrupted communications, intelligence gathering, and navigation on the non-kinetic level. However, the disruption of EM devices also hindered the effectivity of Ukrainian soldiers on the battlefield. Through blocking communications and obstructing intelligence gathering and navigation, the effectivity and success of the UAF and ATO's hard power was reduced, generating significant operational advantages for proxy and separatist forces.

Use of Cell-Site Simulators by Russian Proxies

Beyond targeting the geolocation of EM devices for artillery strikes, hard cyberpower exerted through EW systems was also applied synchronously with informational instruments. Obtaining geolocations was

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[144] United States Joint Chiefs of Staff (2007) *Electronic Warfare*, pp. I-1. Joint Publication 3-13.1.
https://fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/jp3-13-1.pdf
[145] Asymmetric Warfare Group (2016) pp. 17.

facilitated through cell-site simulators (IMSI catchers) [146] that provided the means for infiltration, monitoring, and interaction with mobile devices connected to cellular networks. Through obtaining geolocations of EM devices in use by Ukrainian army forces, coupled with a fire direction center[147] separatists were capable of launching precise artillery strikes on Ukrainian army forces[148]. In essence, hard cyberpower was employed to increase the potency and effect of hard military power taking the form of precise artillery strikes.

However, the cell-site simulators were also employed to send text messages to Ukrainian forces, relaying a number of targeted messages intended to intimidate and demoralize Ukrainian forces towards deserting or defecting from their units. Messages received appeared to originate from Kiev, other Ukrainian forces, or pro-Russian proxies, and their content was adjusted according to sender. Given the importance of who applies power, and upon which target, the following section differentiates between messages appearing to originate from Kiev, other Ukrainian forces, or pro-Russian proxies.

Amongst the messages seemingly originating from Kiev, the most common was "Balance of your account was reduced on 10UAH [10 Ukrainian hryvnia). Thank you for supporting ATO"[149]. When sent to Ukrainian forces, the message aimed to impress the idea that Kiev was seizing monetary assets from soldiers in support of ATO. Through impressing that Kiev was supporting ATO via involuntary donations from Ukrainian soldiers, pro-Russian proxies intended to create negative soft power for Kiev, coercing Ukrainian forces to reflect upon and question their commitment to the Kiev government and its military campaign. The key word in this process was the use of coercion rather than co-opting. Because the messages were intentionally deceptive; appearing to arrive from Kiev and fictitious in content, they demonstrate the use of sharp power with the purpose of creating negative soft power.

In order to support the generation of negative soft power for Kiev, pro-Russian proxies also employed messaging such as "UAF [Ukrainian Armed Forces] soldier! Stop fighting for the petty interests of the

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[146] Cell-site simulators are an instrument of EW that imitate authentic cell-phone towers and trick mobile devices within a given radius to connect. Connected devices may after successful connection be located, monitored, and manipulated.
EFF (n.d.) *Street Level Surveillance: Cell-Site Simulators / IMSI Catchers.*
https://www.eff.org/pages/cell-site-simulatorsimsi-catchers
[147] The fire direction center "receives target intelligence and requests for fire and translates them into appropriate fire direction."
Military Factory (n.d.) *Fire Direction Center Definition (US DoD).*
https://www.militaryfactory.com/dictionary/military-terms-defined.asp?term_id=2060
[148] Ibid, pp. 18.
[149] IMSI Catchers in Ukraine (2017)
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1wnP1e-SS9_ArGX3M-miimJt-4SgmtSbUTraU10WMJKI/edit#gid=1560509081

oligarchs"[150]. In contrast to the use of hard power - taking form as sharp power - to instill the idea that Kiev was soliciting involuntary donations for ATO, framing the conflict in eastern Ukraine as centered around the interests of Kiev oligarchs was a soft power or co-optive approach for two reasons. First, the sender of messages was clearly pro-Russian proxies, and therefore the origin of information was not framed deceptively. Second, Petro Poroshenko the then president of Ukraine was in fact an oligarch, ranking amongst the ten wealthiest people in Ukraine, and the sole oligarch whose wealth rose throughout 2014[151]. Since establishing independence in 1991, Ukraine has been plagued by rampant corruption with powerful oligarchs pocketing proceeds of state-run companies and exerting political, judicial, and media influence[152]. The fight against corruption was a key message of the Euromaidan movement[153], whose supporters largely agreed that solutions to corruption should be found through anti-corruption agencies (ACAs) and Western experts[154]. As such, beyond trade and free-movement, Ukraine's pivot towards the West through the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement was driven by the determination to curtail corruption through democratic reforms and oversight from Western ACA's and the EU. Through highlighting Poroshenko's oligarchy status, Moscow sought to discredit Kiev's commitment to anti-corruption measures, which had been a cornerstone of Euromaidan protests, and therefore part of Poroshenko and Kiev's soft power appeal.

Messages intended to appear as originating from Ukrainian forces employed messaging such as "The company commander ran away to Kramatorsk. It smells like trouble. Tonight, we are also leaving" or "The natsyky [servicemen of the National Guard of Ukraine] vamoosed. Dnipro [volunteer batallion] was hatcheted. We should run away"[155]. Due to the sender being portrayed as allied Ukrainian forces the messages should not be considered a direct threat, but rather a warning. As such, the messaging does not constitute hard power in the traditional sense, where Russian proxies directly threatened or intimidated Ukrainian forces into defection or surrender. Nevertheless, given that messages received were factually incorrect and intentionally deceptive, this use of informational instruments constitutes sharp power – a form of hard power. Through portraying Ukrainian forces as defeated or deserting their posts, information was framed

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[150] Ibid.

[151] bne IntelliNews (2018) *Poroshenko drops out of top-10 richest businessmen in Ukraine.*
https://www.intellinews.com/poroshenko-drops-out-of-top-10-richest-businessmen-in-ukraine-140533/

[152] Aldershof, Willem (2019) *The EU should back the fight against Ukraine's oligarchs*. Financial Times.
https://www.ft.com/content/6f1fa078-6a67-11e9-80c7-60ee53e6681d

[153] Theise, Eugen (2018) *Five years after Euromaidan, Ukraine's new reformers battle corruption*. Deutsche Welle.
https://www.dw.com/en/five-years-after-euromaidan-ukraines-new-reformers-battle-corruption/a-46384484

[154] Democratic Initiatives Foundation (2018) *The fight against corruption in Ukraine: public opinion*.
https://dif.org.ua/en/article/the-fight-against-corruption-in-ukraine-public-opinion

[155] IMSI Catchers in Ukraine (2017)

deceitfully in order to shape the preferences of targeted recipients towards surrender, retreat, or defection. Given the deliberate and deceptive framing of information, the approach is coercive rather than co-opting and therefore akin to the use of hard power.

Ancient Methods with New Means?

In essence, informational instruments applied deceptively on the battlefield should be considered propaganda; an activity that dates back thousands of years[156]. During the Second World War, Nazi Germany used strikingly similar messaging to that utilized by Russian proxies in Ukraine. Nazi propaganda distributed across the battlefield through aircrafts instilled images of Allied forces as weak, deserting, and marching towards inevitable defeat. Simultaneously, Nazi propaganda sought to discredit the United States government and propose that soldiers were fighting and dying for the business interests of Wall Street. The common purpose of these narratives was to demoralize soldiers and provoke them towards surrender or desertion[157]. Given the historical record of propaganda use in conflicts, the tactics employed by Russian proxies were neither innovate nor original – relaying a common critique of hybrid warfare as nothing novel and "best understood as warfare" [158]. Whilst critics are right insofar that propaganda is an age-old instrument, the simultaneous and complimentary use of EW systems to empower informational instruments with a common purpose present new opportunities captured through the concept of hybrid warfare. The use of EW systems allowed for precise and personal targeting of messaging, whilst also creating confusion regarding the sender. As such, tactics employed by Russian proxies clearly demonstrate the ability of hard cyberpower in empowering the use of informational instruments on the battlefield.

4.3.2 Russia's Employment of the Russian Armed Forces

Despite Russia's vertical escalation of the conflict in support of separatist forces, the ATO campaign was increasingly successful at recapturing territory claimed by separatists. By August, the outlook for pro-Russian separatists was dire, as Ukrainian army forces pushed for control of Ukraine's borders and encircled separatist

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[156] Trabulsi, Andrew (2017) *A Brief History of Propaganda*. Stratfor.
https://worldview.stratfor.com/horizons/fellows/andrew-trabulsi/01122017-brief-history-propaganda
[157] Diaz, Jesus (2012) *These Nazi Propaganda Leaflets Dropped on American Soldiers are Nauseating*. Gizmodo.
https://gizmodo.com/these-nazi-propaganda-leaflets-dropped-on-american-sold-5915305
[158] Monaghan (2016) pp. 67.

strongholds. Through encirclement of separatist strongholds Ukrainian forces sought to isolate the secessionist republics in Donetsk and Luhansk by driving a wedge between them[159]. In response to the mounting pressure on separatist forces, and the military defeats suffered, Russia abandoned its approach of arming separatists and bolstering their ranks with "volunteers", and instead transitioned to conventional military operations. The transition towards conventional military operations was demonstrated at the Battle of Ilovaisk, where Ukrainian forces since early August had made strides at retaking the city of Ilovaisk from pro-Russian separatists[160]. On the 24th of August, several brigades and regiments of the Russian armed forces totaling approximately 3000-4000 troops poured across the Ukrainian border and encircled the Ukrainian military in the city of Llovaisk[161]. By August the 29th Ukrainian forces were defeated, and a negotiation for their unimpeded retreat was organized between Ukraine, Russia, and leaders of the DPR.

Whilst Russia adamantly denied the deployment of troops in Llovaisk, ample evidence demonstrated the presence of the Russian Armed Forces participating in the Battle of Llovaisk[162]. The deployment of the Russian Armed Forces constituted a direct application of military hard power that was decisive in securing the victory of separatist forces at the Battle of Llovaisk. Russia's military capacities that greatly exceeded those of Ukraine led to a swift and overwhelming defeat for the UAF and ATO, in a battle that otherwise spelled impending defeat for separatist forces. As seen previously with Moscow's projections of hard power in support of separatist fighters, the deployment of the Russian Armed Forces and subsequent victory at Llovaisk projected soft power towards Ukrainians sympathetic to or fighting for closer ties to Russia. Through deploying its own armed forces Moscow signaled its unwavering support for pro-Russian separatists, whilst the defeat of the UAF and ATO gave credibility to the strength of the separatist movement.

The term hybrid warfare has been critiqued for detracting attention from the use and significance of conventional forces, however, as demonstrated through the Battle of Llovaisk, conventional forces were significant to Russia's hybrid warfare campaign. Whilst Nye asserts that foundations of power have shifted

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[159] The Guardian (2014) *Ukrainian army closes in on Donetsk as rebel fighters call upon Russia for help*. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/03/ukraine-army-advance-donetsk-russia-rebels

[160] NAOC (2016) The War in Ukraine: The Battle of Ilovaisk, NATO Association of Canada. http://natoassociation.ca/the-war-in-ukraine-the-battle-of-ilovaisk/

[161] The Telegraph (2014) *Serving Russian soldiers on leave fighting Ukrainian troops alongside rebels, pro-Russian separatist leader says.* https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/germany/angela-merkel/11060559/Serving-Russian-soldiers-on-leave-fighting-Ukrainian-troops-alongside-rebels-pro-Russian-separatist-leader-says.html

[162] Grytsenko, Oksana and Shaun Walker (2014) *Russian soldier: 'You're better clueless because the truth is horrible'.* The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/03/ukraine-soldier-youre-better-clueless-because-truth-horrible-moscow-ilovaysk

away from the military domain, Nye does not discredit that military capacities are still an important source of power. Hybrid warfare does not discredit the importance of conventional forces; however, the use of conventional forces should be seen as one element in an array of power-creating instruments that collectively constitute hybrid warfare. Given that Russia projected military hard power in a covert manner that aimed to remain below the threshold for formally declared war and generate plausible deniability, Russia's use of conventional forces should be seen as an element of Russia's hybrid warfare campaign in eastern Ukraine.

4.3.3 Summation of Russia's Phase III Actions

The military defeat of separatist forces at the First Battle for Donetsk Airport led Russia to vertically escalate the conflict through providing armor, weapons, and EW systems to separatist fighters. Given that separatists were fighting for objectives synonymous with those of the Moscow, the provision of arms exerted hard power through increasing the military capacities of separatists. Furthermore, the provision of arms also projected soft power through reaffirming Moscow's commitment to the separatist cause. Additionally, the supply of EW systems allowed separatists to generate kinetic and non-kinetic operational advantages through applying hard cyberpower within the EME. Hard cyberpower was used to inhibit intelligence gathering and communications in the non-kinetic domain, which in turn curtailed the use of hard power by the UAF and ATO in the kinetic domain.

Arguably, the most important EW systems employed by separatists were cell-site simulators or IMSI catchers. Through deploying IMSI catchers, separatists used hard cyberpower to obtain geolocations of UAF and ATO soldiers upon which they projected military hard power through artillery strikes. Furthermore, hard cyberpower was synced with informational instruments to project various forms of power through text messages distributed to EM devices. Messages appearing to arrive from Kiev or the UAF employed sharp power narratives to generate negative soft power, whereas messages arriving from separatists projected soft power to generate negative soft power.

Despite Russia's vertical escalation of the conflict, Kiev's ATO campaign was increasingly successful at defeating separatists and reclaiming territories in eastern Ukraine. With Ukrainian forces nearing victory at the Battle of Llovaisk, Russia projected military hard power directly, through employing the Russian Armed Forces to support separatists. Russia's use of military hard power synchronously projected soft power through reaffirming unwavering support for separatists dedicated to the Russian cause.

5.0 Conclusion

This thesis sought to determine what types of power Russia applied through instruments of hybrid warfare, and how were these applied. To answer this research question, I constructed an account of events in eastern Ukraine in which instances of Russian hybrid warfare were identified and critically discussed through Nye's analytical power concepts.

The findings of the analysis demonstrated that Russia employed a broad array of power-creating instruments towards achieving the common purpose of securing and maintaining Russian influence in eastern Ukraine. Given that Russia bridged soft power, hard power, sharp power, negative soft power, and cyberpower towards a common foreign policy goal, Russia's employment of hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine demonstrates the use of a smart power approach - or the use of the 'full range of tools' at Russia's disposal.

Russian projections of soft power indicate, that Russia has actively pursued opportunities to achieve desirable foreign policy outcomes through soft power, which indicates an awareness of the declining primacy of military force to achieve desirable outcomes. Furthermore, Russia's synchronization of soft power foundations (culture, values, and policies) in accordance with intended targets demonstrates an acute awareness that the attractiveness of soft power foundations is contingent on the 'eye of the beholder'. To attract Russian's and Ukrainians towards Russia's cause, Moscow centered its soft power foundations around historical, linguistic, and cultural ties between the peoples of Russia and Ukraine. Conversely, to diminish the appeal of Kiev, Russia warned of ultranationalist tendencies and employed historical comparisons centered around the Nazi occupation of Ukraine. When appealing to the West, Moscow's soft power foundation transitioned towards international law, centered around the right to self-determination and the R2P. However, Russia's decision to refrain from officially recognizing the referendums of the DPR and LPR indicated that further attempts to project or generate soft power in the West were largely disbanded. The decision to discontinue attempts to legitimize separatist activities or the breakaway republics demonstrates an awareness, that soft power must be perceived as credible to not be ineffective or even detrimental (creating negative soft power for oneself).

Russia's projections of military hard power were limited to material support for separatist forces and the employment of the Russian Armed Forces at the Battle of Llovaisk. Due to the characteristics of separatist fighters, Russia's employment of military hard power also projected soft power through reaffirming support

for the separatist cause. Beyond military uses of hard power, Russia projected hard power in the form of sharp power and cyberpower to generate or empower 'narratives' and information warfare campaigns. Through such narratives Russia facilitated the recruitment of separatists and desertion of UAF servicemen, demonstrating the ability for soft power and non-military hard power to strengthen or weaken military capacities. The ability for narratives to impact military capacities underscores the importance of relational power, providing a first-hand demonstration of Nye's assertion that "it's not just whose army wins, but whose story wins". Markedly, the majority of hard power projections were non-military, indicating Russia's awareness of the ability for hard power to create desirable outcomes without the use of military force. The use of soft power and hard power also demonstrated the dynamic interactions that occur between different types of power employed towards a common goal. Hard power served to generate soft power or negative soft power, and soft power or negative soft power were used to increase or curtail hard power.

Fixing upon the chronological account of events, a transition from soft power to hard power over the course of the conflict could not be observed. Moscow exerted hard power through an economic lever prior to the eruption of violence in eastern Ukraine, therefore precluding a transition from soft power to hard power. On the other hand, a transition in the use of hard power is clearly observable. As the conflict in eastern Ukraine grew increasingly violent, Moscow vertically escalated the conflict through providing increasingly advanced military material to separatists. When separatist forces were facing defeat at the Battle of Llovaisk, Russia deployed the Russian Armed Forces that quickly defeated the UAF and ATO. The success of the Russian Armed Forces demonstrated that military force and capacities are significant, however, Russia's reluctance to use direct military force until prior to the imminent defeat of separatists also indicates that military hard power was used as a 'last resort'. In other words, direct military hard power was first used when previously employed instruments of power proved ineffective.

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