

Putin's Miscalculation: The Effectiveness of Russia's New-type Warfare in Ukraine

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Abstract

This chapter focuses on whether Russian authorities used new-type warfare prior to and during the invasion of Ukraine. First publicly announced in 2015, this concept is the practical implementation of the Russian doctrinal concept of strategic deterrence. New-type warfare assumes that an opponent is initially disrupted by non-military means; should that not be enough to take over a country then it scales up to classical methods of warfare with military means. In the period leading up to the physical invasion of Ukraine, which began on February 24th, 2022, the Russian authorities had tried to hit Ukrainian society with political and energy restraining measures as well as with distorted information. The Russian authorities also caused many incidents, including coup attempts and covert, deceptive intelligence activities, but to no avail. The Ukrainian authorities responded appropriately, and it forced Russia to escalate further. On February 24th, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine with four different physical ground attacks, assuming it could conquer Ukraine within 10 days, but that was not the case. Putin would have liked things to be different and made a major miscalculation. The effectiveness of Russia's new-type warfare, as applied in Ukraine, turned out to be quite disappointing for the Russian authorities.

Keywords: New-type warfare, Gerasimov, Manipulation, Disruption

1. Introduction

February 24th, 2022, 04:15 in the morning, Moscow time, President Vladimir Putin declared war on Ukraine in a specially pre-recorded, televised statement and labelled it a 'special military operation.'¹ Hostilities began at 05:00 that morning with a serious jamming of all Ukrainian military frequency bands and provocation of Ukrainian early warning system radars by Russian UAVs posing as Russian air strikes. Meanwhile, a few Russian hackers linked with the Russian authorities launched cyberattacks on Ukrainian government websites, while others attempted to disrupt electricity distribution stations and to make communications, facilitated

¹ Matthews, *Overreach: The Inside Story of Putin's War Against Ukraine*, 2022, 214.

by U.S. satellite provider *Viasat*, impossible within Ukraine. Soon after, waves of ballistic missiles aimed at Ukrainian airfields followed. Although Ukraine's air defences were not on high alert, only a portion of the missiles hit their targets. Several Russian missiles malfunctioned, as they did earlier during Russian operations in Syria. In addition, Ukrainian authorities had moved a substantial portion of their air fleet and air defence assets in the days leading up to the Russian invasion, leaving much of Ukraine's fighter aircraft and air defence systems intact. The tactical fleet of the Russian Air Force carried out attacks on the capital Kyiv and on Ukrainian command posts located near the Russian border. The Russian Ministry of Defence indicated that in total 75 aircraft had participated in the attacks.² That early morning of February 24th, marked the first time since World War II that sirens sounded in Kyiv to warn of air strikes, and residents had to seek refuge in basements of houses and subway stations.³

The cyber- and jamming attacks were also intended to create a secure air corridor through which troops could be quickly flown in to stage a coup. Russian authorities planned to infiltrate the Kyiv government quarters as quickly as possible with Special Forces to eliminate the Zelensky government. Russian Airborne Forces were to take control of the airfields around Kyiv, while units from *Rosguardia*,⁴ were to move rapidly from Belarus across the road to Kyiv to take control of the necessary infrastructure in and around the city, and where it would wait for the link-up with mechanised units arriving from Belarus and Russia. A very bold plan for which Russia was short of troops from the start.⁵

The attack on *Hostomel* Airfield, a cargo airbase north-west of Kyiv, was initially successful for the Russians. The Ukrainian response was slow and a Ukrainian counterattack at 4 p.m. that afternoon was repelled by Russian airborne units although the airfield runway became unusable.⁶ Simultaneously, the first units of Russian 35th Combined Arms Army (35th CAA) began to advance from Belarus toward Kyiv, but almost immediately encountered a major problem: only one major road was available. Shortly after the start of the operation, a non-moving Russian traffic jam of more than 60 km became a desirable target for dispersed

² Cooper et al., *War in Ukraine, Volume 2: Russian Invasion, February 2022*, 37-38.

³ Arutunyan, *Hybrid Warriors: Proxies, Freelancers and Moscow's Struggle for Ukraine*, 247.

⁴ *Rosguardia* was established in 2016. It is the National Guard of Russia whose focus in peacetime is border control and terrorism and crime-fighting and operates under the authority of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

⁵ Sabbagh and Koshiw, "The battle for Kyiv revisited: The quick litany of mistakes that cost Russia a quick win"; Cooper et al., *War in Ukraine, Volume 2: Russian Invasion, February 2022*, 39.

⁶ Sonne, Kurshudyan, Morgunov, and Khudov, "Battle for Kiyv: Ukrainian valor, Russian blunders combined to save the capitol"; Cooper et al., *War in Ukraine, Volume 2: Russian Invasion, February 2022*, 39.

Ukrainian units equipped with small commercial, unmanned aerial systems (UAS), armed with explosives.⁷

Russia's invasion of northern Ukraine soon began to lose its effectiveness. How different the 2014 annexation of Crimea had been for Russia, when Russian troops, in cooperation with Russian security services were able to seize an entire peninsula in a few days without a shot being fired. This swift and non-violent takeover by the Russians kept minds churning. Many Western nations no longer expected that war would still be waged in such a massive and physical manner within Europe today. It is equally striking how Russian authorities misjudged their 2022 invasion, even though Russian military authorities had thoroughly analysed the annexation of Crimea. As a result of this scrutiny, the director of operations of the Russian armed forces, Lieutenant General Andrei Kartapolov, published in 2015 about Russia's new-type warfare, which aimed to eliminate the opponent initially by non-military means and deception. Should this fail, measures would be intensified, and, in an ultimate case, Russian authorities would switch to classical methods of warfare and use the military to conquer territory on the one hand or defeat enemy forces on the other.

Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to examine whether Russia has indeed applied this new-type warfare during their invasion of Ukraine. It leads to the following central research question: Did Russian authorities effectively apply the concept of the new-type warfare prior to and during their 2022-2023 invasion of Ukraine?

This chapter is structured as follows: the first section explains the origins and construction of Russia's new-type warfare. The subsequent sections will discuss Putin's considerations and Russian activities prior to the invasion of Ukraine. And, although the introduction has already briefly indicated what took place in the first hours and days of the 2022 Russian invasion, the succeeding section will outline what took place during the entire first year of the war. The chapter ends with a conclusion answering the main research question.

2. Explaining new-type warfare

This section elucidates Russia's new-type warfare in more detail, and for that it is necessary to go back to the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Indeed, after this annexation, most political and military leaders in the West had no idea what exactly had happened. Lots of confusion and deception had taken place, creating a distorted picture of the whole annexation. It was a stealth take-over of the peninsula by Russian green men,

⁷ Meduza, "An uncertain fate: Was Russia's entire 35th Army destroyed near Izyum?"; Cooper et al., *War in Ukraine, Volume 2: Russian Invasion, February 2022*, 41-45.

while President Putin claimed, for almost two months, that the Russian Federation had nothing to do with it. The question that soon arose was how this rapid annexation could take place without a shot being fired in Crimea.⁸ Western specialists initially thought they would find an answer in a 2013 article by General Valery Gerasimov, Chief of Staff of the Russian armed forces, but in this very article Gerasimov described how the West, led by the United States, had been conducting military operations for 25 years, including in Kosovo and Iraq. Gerasimov considered the article a starting point for a discussion on renewed Russian action during conflicts.⁹

From a reconstruction by Timothy Thomas, an analyst at the Foreign Military Studies Office at Fort Leavenworth, KS (USA), it is known that the Russian General Staff developed a penchant for so-called 'new-type warfare.' In a 2015 speech, Lieutenant General Andrey Kartapolov expounded on Russian new-type warfare. He is convinced that the United States and NATO are undermining global stability with their high-tech weapons systems. America's anti-Russia campaign should lead the United States to superiority that will keep it the only superpower in the world for a long time. In doing so, the United States primarily uses hybrid methods, seeking to create perceptions and information-psychological effects. Kartapolov called on the Russian Federation to also start developing advanced weapons systems soon, as the West was already way ahead of them. Moreover, according to Kartapolov, the Russian armed forces should start thinking about a creative deployment of these new weapon systems, the changed nature of armed conflicts, and the use of non-traditional methods during confrontations, which rest on a combination of direct and non-direct actions.¹⁰

According to Kartapolov, indirect actions should include covert activities aimed at stirring up internal problems among an opponent's population and the use of so-called 'third forces,' a cloaking term for organised and trained civilian cells that allow riots and demonstrations to spiral out of control, creating polarisation that slowly becomes unmanageable and threatens to tear societies apart. Kartapolov also called for an in-depth study of the West because Western nations often apply some form of what he called 'information pressure' by constantly accusing others of 'human rights violations, suppression, developing weapons of mass destruction and acting undemocratically.' These campaigns are supported by manipulated information to create a confrontation where an opponent and public opinion are fed with falsified, substituted, or distorted information. Kartapolov believed that the West creates ambiguity about who is fighting and for what reasons, making it difficult to distinguish truth from lies.¹¹

⁸ Galeotti, *The Weaponization of Everything*, 4-9.

⁹ Galeotti, 'I'm sorry for creating the Gerasimov doctrine.'

¹⁰ Thomas, "The evolving nature of Russia's way of war," 39-40; Kartapolov, "Lessons of military conflicts and prospects for the development of resources and methods of conducting them," 29-35.

¹¹ Thomas, "The evolving nature of Russia's way of war," 40; Kartapolov, "Lessons of military conflicts and prospects for the development of resources and methods of conducting them," 29-31.

If the resulting disruption of society does not yield sufficient results, the authorities may take further steps. Often, under the guise of preventing 'a humanitarian disaster' and 'stabilizing the situation,' they will then resort to military intervention, ultimately using classical methods of war. The intention then is to use a combination of intelligence, command & control, and means of destruction with the ability to engage the opponent from long distances. Eventually, attacks will also be carried out to destroy the opponent's forces and take full control of the area. Above all, the new-type warfare is mainly aimed at creating images. Kartapolov indicated that new-type warfare is about 80-90 per cent propaganda and influence operations and only 10-20 per cent violence. At the end of his speech, Kartapolov showed the diagram, as shown in Figure 8.1, and stressed again that asymmetrical and indirect actions needed to be implemented quickly in the training of Russian troops.¹²

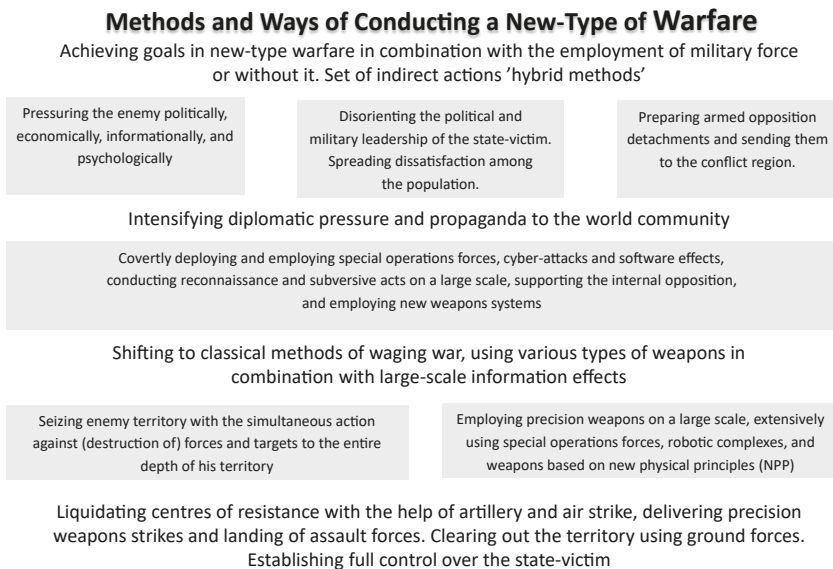


Figure 8.1: Graphic from Andrey Kartapolov's article 'Lessons of military conflicts and prospects for the development of resources and methods of conducting them: direct and indirect actions in contemporary international conflicts.' (Translated by Dr. Harold Orenstein)¹³

¹² Thomas, "The evolving nature of Russia's way of war," 40-41; Kartapolov, "Lessons of military conflicts and prospects for the development of resources and methods of conducting them," 33-36.

¹³ Thomas, "The evolving nature of Russia's way of war," 40; Kartapolov, "Lessons of military conflicts and prospects for the development of resources and methods of conducting them," 35.

This new-type warfare, although not under this notion, can be found in Russia's official strategy. Russia's 2015 national security strategy used the term 'strategic deterrence,' consisting of interconnected political, military, military-technical, diplomatic, economic and intelligence measures to prevent the use of force against Russia, defend its sovereignty and maintain its territorial integrity.¹⁴ Today, the Russian Defence Ministry's official dictionary of military terms defines strategic deterrence as a system of military and non-military measures designed to dissuade the other side from using force against Russia at the strategic level. However, the Russian authorities constantly use strategic deterrence measures, in peacetime not only to deter but also to contain threats, and in wartime as a means of escalation management.¹⁵ In this way, Kartapolov's new-type warfare can be considered as the practical refinement of Russia's strategic deterrence.

Remarkably, armed forces and security services from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Poland, and Lithuania supported the transformation and training of the Ukrainian armed forces and intelligence service from 2014 and in subsequent years.¹⁶ These states already had their wake-up call with the annexation of Crimea in 2014, and their primary goal was to reorganise Ukraine's armed forces. Before the annexation, Ukraine still had outdated armed forces organised along Soviet lines. Moreover, there was still a highly hierarchical Soviet culture in which submission prevailed. Especially in the way junior commanders dare to take more initiatives and responsibilities and thus seize opportunities on the battlefield, referred to within NATO as 'mission command,' the Ukrainian army has made great strides.¹⁷ There was another reason why the nations had been supporting Ukraine since 2014, as Putin had hinted several times that if fighting was inevitable, Russia would strike first. Against this threat, Ukrainian armed forces, in their 2014 capacity, would be no match. Indeed, Russia intervenes by all means as soon as its interests are threatened and does not wait. The concept of 'pre-emption' occupies an important place in Russian conflict thinking today.¹⁸

European continental nations were particularly unwilling to recognise that the Russian authorities had been improving their armed forces over the last decade and a half, in terms of organisation, equipment, training and renewed doctrine to still be able to conduct classical combat operations as well, as shown in Figure 8.1:

¹⁴ Kremlin Website, "Президент России. Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 31.12.2015 г. № 683, О Стратегии национальной безопасности Российской Федерации."

¹⁵ Kofman, Fink, and Edmonds, *Russian Strategy for Escalation Management*, 7.

¹⁶ *Українська трибуна*, "US, UK, Canada, Lithuania, and Poland reaffirm support for Ukraine amid Russian military activity."

¹⁷ Detch, "How Ukraine learned to fight"; Gady, "Ukraine must shed its Soviet legacy, says a military expert."

¹⁸ Thomas, *Russia's Conduct of War: How And With What*, 13-15.

shifting to classical methods of waging war. It should be noted that these European continental nations suffered immensely from two world wars and, moreover, during the Cold War, West Germany was the intended theatre where another bloody battle might be fought. The population and politicians did not want another unnecessary conflict with countless casualties. Moreover, these European nations and the Russian Federation were economically intricately intertwined, the European states being dependent on Russian gas. It did result in political, military, and economic leaders of these European continental nations mostly looking away from the latest steps in new-type warfare, physical warfighting.

Meanwhile, in a 2018 speech, General Valery Gerasimov endorsed the contours of Russia's new-type warfare by noting that the operational art had changed significantly since 1991, when an international coalition led by the United States fought against Iraq. Looking at this 1991 conflict, Gerasimov became convinced that the contribution of air power to destroying troops had become significantly more important and that deep encirclement of defensive positions and conducting the main attack around defensive lines were indispensable. According to Gerasimov, the 1991 conflict included a prolonged non-contact phase and a vigorous, short-term phase of so-called 'ground contact operations.' In his speech, Gerasimov attributed particular importance to this way of warfare. Unlike the rest of the Russian General Staff, he used the term 'new generation warfare' and labelled the Russian activities in Syria as such.¹⁹ Since then, the terms 'new-type warfare' and 'new generation warfare' have frequently been used interchangeably in publications. To avoid confusion, this chapter continues to use the term 'new-type warfare.'

3. Putin's rationale

This section looks at the reasons why Putin decided to invade Ukraine. And while it is always difficult to fathom a person's mind to accurately determine his considerations, Putin's worldview should be considered very carefully. Putin had long coveted large parts of Ukraine and simply did not want to accept Ukraine as an independent state. Putin believed that parts of northern, central, eastern, and southern Ukraine belonged to his 'Russian Empire.' For centuries, many Russians have referred to this area as *Malorossiia*, Little Russia. The western part of Ukraine, which includes the regions of Volhynia and Galicia, has undergone different cultural development, and has also been part of the historical Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.²⁰

¹⁹ Orenstein, "Russian General Staff Chief Valery Gerasimov's 2018 presentation to the General Staff Academy: Thoughts on future military conflict," 130-134.

²⁰ Davis, "The forgotten history of Poland and Ukraine; Ukraine was part of Poland for longer than it was inside Russia – and it is key to understanding Ukrainian nationhood."

Malorossiya, on the other hand, was in the Czarist era part of the Russian Empire. Currently, many Russians consider it a part of the Greater Russian Empire and have always had a difficult relationship with Ukrainians. For instance, in the 18th century, on the orders of the Czar, Ukrainian language and culture were banned to create a dominant Russian identity in this region and to prevent *Malorossiya* from degenerating into an independent Ukraine.²¹

Today, these views still prevail. In early 2008, for instance, Putin's spin doctor at the time, Vladislav Surkov, managed to rekindle the discussion that Ukraine would not be an independent state. Putin promptly adopted Surkov's statements, repeatedly claiming at the April 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest: 'Ukraine is not even a state! What is Ukraine? A part of its territory is in Eastern Europe, but another part, a considerable one, was a gift from us!'²² In July 2021 the Kremlin published an article by President Putin himself in which he gave his version of the history and the relationship between Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, a 'triune nation' as Putin called it. In the same article, he also notes that Russians and Ukrainians are one people, a single whole.²³

Putin became increasingly convinced that large parts of Ukraine belonged to Russia, especially from the spring of 2020. That was when Putin completely isolated himself from the outside world in the presidential residence, *Novo-Ogaryovo*, to avoid being infected by the Covid-19 virus, which he was so afraid of. Putin radicalised during those two Corona years, he was no longer observed in the Kremlin and did not receive any opposition.²⁴ Eventually, in February 2022, Putin ordered Russian troops to invade Ukraine from four different directions, and when, after a month and a half, it turned out that this plan for a full-scale invasion of Ukraine was too ambitious, Putin at most adjusted the plan slightly.

As recently as 2014, Putin had intended to conquer 'only' the south and south-east of Ukraine, including Crimea. At the time, Putin believed in *Novorossija* or 'New Russia.'²⁵ This concept dates back to the 17th century when Czarina Catherine the Great annexed the south and southeast of what is now Ukraine to the Russian Empire.²⁶ Putin believed in 2014 that it was time to reunite the southern and south-eastern regions with Russia and restore history, especially also because many ethnic Russians lived there, Putin reasoned. Although the term ethnic-Russian is difficult to explain, as it is difficult to determine who belongs to this group, there

²¹ Lassin and Channell-Justin, "Why Putin has such a hard time accepting Ukrainian sovereignty."

²² Düben, "There is no Ukraine: Fact-checking the Kremlin's history of Ukrainian history."

²³ Putin, Vladimir. President of Russia, "On the historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians."

²⁴ Zygat, "How Vladimir Putin lost interest in the present."

²⁵ Plokhy, *The Russo-Ukrainian War*, 122-126.

²⁶ Montefiori, *Catherina the Great & Potemkin: The Imperial Love Affair*, earlier published in 2000, 291-293.

were significantly more 'self-identified Russians' in percentage terms living in the Donbas region and southern Ukraine at that time than elsewhere in Ukraine.²⁷

Following the annexation of Crimea, in April 2014, Russian authorities tried to incite sedition in cities in the Donbas region and as far south as Odesa to create polarisation among the population. Russian authorities hoped that self-proclaimed Russians in southern and south-eastern Ukraine would support the uprisings and push for secession from this region, but a *Novorossiia* under Russian control did not emerge. However, the Ukrainian authorities did begin to lose their grip on the region, and discord between Russia and Ukraine began to focus on the Donbas region. Russian authorities have always denied their involvement in the armed conflict in the Donbas region, dubbing it a 'civil war'.²⁸ Even after the conclusion of a second Minsk Agreement in February 2015 with the parties involved, after the first one was quickly breached, the Donbas region remained very unsettled, and a frozen conflict emerged.²⁹ It was ultimately the prelude to the war that began on 24 February, 2022.

4. Russia's activities prior to February 2022

Having explained Russian new-type warfare and Putin's considerations for the invasion in Ukraine, it is now interesting to consider what Russian activities and events preceded the invasion of Ukraine. These earlier activities provide insight into the extent to which new-type warfare was applied by the Russian authorities. In retrospect, in the run-up to the large-scale invasion of Ukraine, over the period 2015-2022, it became clear that Russia was preparing itself for a serious confrontation with Ukraine. It was also the period in which Putin became increasingly convinced that he wanted to put not only *Novorossiia* under Russian control, but also the other parts of Ukraine that were part of *Malorossiia*. Putin managed to use all instruments of power, also known as DIME,³⁰ in this process. It is in line with new-type warfare, in which authorities first apply non-military measures to undermine an opponent and disintegrate society, and if that proves to be not enough, then proceed to deploy military means. Gradually, the Russian authorities tried to dissolve Ukrainian society.

²⁷ Arel and Driscoll, *Ukraine's Unnamed War: Before the Russian Invasion of 2022*, 61.

²⁸ Idem., 143-144.

²⁹ Puri, *Russia's Road to War with Ukraine: Invasion Amidst the Ashes of Empires*, 157-158.

³⁰ DIME stands for Diplomatic and political measures, Information, Military and Economic measures. The armed forces of the United States and NATO regarded the various measures mentioned in this acronym as the instruments of power of a nation or an alliance.

On the political front, Putin deliberately allowed the conflict in the Donbas region to continue to weaken Ukraine's position internationally. Indeed, neither the EU nor NATO, which previously indicated that Ukraine could join their alliance, are willing to accept a new member embroiled in an armed conflict. Russian authorities meanwhile continued to deny any involvement in this conflict, but there are strong indications that operators of the GRU, Russia's military intelligence service, knew how to organise and direct the mosaic of different forces, such as militias, Russian volunteers, foreign fighters and Private Military and Security Companies, including the Wagner group.³¹ On the economic front, Russia had made not only Ukraine but also many other European nations highly dependent on Russian energy supplies.³² And, despite low oil and gas prices, Russia managed to accumulate a substantial financial reserve of about \$600 billion obtained from energy revenues. Although on the other hand, about \$330 billion of Russian state and oligarchic assets were registered with Western financial institutions and frozen after the invasion. Nevertheless, the remaining reserves gave the Russian economy a significant financial cushion prior to the invasion.³³

Seeking justification for an invasion of Ukraine, the Russian authorities not only stepped up their political and economic pressure on Ukraine, but they also spread distorted information worldwide about Ukrainian violations of the Minsk Agreement on the conflict in the Donbas region. Besides, Russian authorities accused Ukrainian authorities of committing genocide among the ethnic-Russian population living in the Donbas region. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was dismissed as a drug addict and Zelensky's government was allegedly made up of Nazis.³⁴ Russian state television regularly showed footage of Ukrainian troops wearing swastikas and drew comparisons to the 'Great Patriotic War,' Russia's notion for World War II, as they did in 2014 during the annexation of Crimea.³⁵ On top of this, Russian authorities were wary of information from outside. Ever since 2014, media with foreign links have had to clearly warn during their broadcasts and in their coverage that they were produced by 'foreign agents,' analogous to a warning on a packet of cigarettes indicating that smoking is very harmful to a person's health.³⁶

And if it were not enough, a series of unexplained explosions took place at major munitions depots in Ukraine during the said period, including at Svatove (Luhansk region), Balakliya (Kharkiv region), Kalynivka (Vinnytsia region) and Ichnia (Chernihiv region). As a result, a large part of the Ukrainian armed forces' strategic

³¹ Blanc et al., *The Russian General Staff: Understanding the military's decisionmaking role in a "besieged fortress"*, 71.

³² Bella et al., *Natural gas in Europe: The potential impact of disruptions to supply*, 7.

³³ Rácz, Spillner, and Wolff, *Russia's war economy: How sanctions reduce military capacity*, 3-4.

³⁴ OECD Website, "Disinformation and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine."

³⁵ Giles, "Information operations," 20-21.

³⁶ Giles, *Russia's War on Everybody, And What It Means for You*, 37-38.

ammunition stocks, especially tank and artillery ammunition, were lost. The Kremlin denied any involvement, while many Western countries previously attributed it to careless actions by the Ukrainian authorities.³⁷ However, it is now strongly suspected that Russian secret services played a prominent role in these explosions.

A succession of events and incidents followed from early 2021, beginning with Margarite Simonyan, who in January 2021 called for the Donbas region to be returned to 'Mother Russia.'³⁸ Russian officials immediately replied that Moscow had no such plans. Still, Simonyan's words had weight. As editor-in-chief of Kremlin's prestigious network RT and international news agency *Rossiia Segodnya*, Simonyan is a front-runner in Putin's news machine. Although Simonyan spoke in a personal capacity, it was highly unlikely that she made these statements without the knowledge of the Kremlin. The timing of the message was also striking. President Biden had just taken office, and it is plausible that Simonyan's comments were intended to test how the United States and the West would react to a Russian annexation of the Donbas region.³⁹

In February 2021, the media platforms of pro-Russian Ukrainian business tycoon Viktor Medvedchuk were taken down by the Ukrainian authorities, citing fraud in these companies as a reason. The television channels, *112 Ukraine*, *NewsOne* and *ZIK*, belonging to these platforms were able to draw strong attention to the interests of the Russian Federation in Ukraine. The Russian authorities were annoyed by this decision and announced the sudden deployment of 3,000 Russian paratroopers along the border with Ukraine. It turned out to be the start of a huge Russian troop build-up along the border with Ukraine in 2021. Russian Minister of Defence, Sergei Shoigu, initially indicated that it was only an exercise near Ukraine.⁴⁰

Likewise, in May 2021, the Ukrainian government placed Viktor Medvedchuk under house arrest. President Putin, a friend of Medvedchuk, took exception, accusing Ukrainian authorities. The US intelligence services, however, applauded the Ukrainian measures because they suspected Medvedchuk of planning a coup against the Zelensky government. It turned out not to be the only coup attempt against the Zelensky government. In the fall of 2021, another pro-Russian Ukrainian oligarch, Rinat Akhmetov, called for a coup attempt and offered a \$1 million reward, which was later confirmed by US intelligence.⁴¹ Cyber operations intensified prior to the war in Ukraine.⁴²

³⁷ Cooper et al., *War in Ukraine, Volume 2: Russian Invasion, February 2022*, 34.

³⁸ Puri, *Russia's Road to War with Ukraine*, 194.

³⁹ Medalinskas, "Kremlin TV chief: Russia must annex east Ukraine."

⁴⁰ Matthews, *Overreach*, 188-191; Plokhly, *The Russo-Ukrainian War*, 141.

⁴¹ Shuster, "The untold story of the Ukraine crisis"; Hide, "Ukraine's president alleges coup attempt involving country's richest man."

⁴² For more background information see: Paul Ducheine, Peter Pijpers and Kraesten Arnold with their chapter 'Assessing the Dogs of Cyberwar' in this book.

The Russian authorities also committed other anti-Ukrainian activities. According to insiders, the FSB, Russia's largest security service, received orders to prepare for an invasion of Ukraine as early as July 2021.⁴³ Then, in autumn 2021, Russian intelligence operators carried out various sabotage and subversive activities to destabilise Ukrainian society and overthrow the Zelensky government to make Ukraine an easy target. It would give the Russian authorities a legitimate reason to intervene, they believed. Analogous to the 2014 annexation of Crimea, the Russian secret services deployed sleeper agents in Ukraine in the years leading up to the war. Their purpose was to organise and train pro-Russian people in Ukraine to carry out subversive activities. Other Russian sleeper agents had to integrate into the Ukrainian armed forces and Security Services with the aim of pressuring high-ranking Ukrainian officials to secretly work for the Russians.⁴⁴

In the months immediately preceding the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Russian secret services sent some of their operators to eastern Ukraine to carry out false flag operations. These agents were trained in urban warfare and to sabotage Russian-backed separatists waging war against Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region and provoking border incidents involving Russian troops at the border. Meanwhile, Russian authorities, especially through Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, insisted they had no intention of invading Ukraine.⁴⁵ A week before the Russian invasion, Kremlin-appointed leaders of Donetsk and Luhansk, Denis Pushilin and Leonid Pasechnik, published a video message demanding the immediate evacuation of the civilian population due to 'Ukrainian aggression.' Subsequent investigation showed that the videos had already been recorded two days before the publication date, which makes the announced urgency questionable.⁴⁶

In short, President Putin had been preparing for a confrontation with Ukraine for some time. Simonyan's appeal, the entire troop build-up, the sabotage and subversive activities, the glorified coup attempts, along with Pushilin and Pasechnik's video messages appeared to be part of a larger Russian campaign to frighten people in the Donbas and gradually prepare Ukraine for a Russian invasion. They also constitute precisely the first steps in the larger framework of new-type warfare. These first steps, however, did not come to fruition, and therefore the Russian authorities had to start scaling up to 'classical methods' of warfare.

⁴³ Watling, Danylyuk, and Reynolds, *Preliminary Lessons from Russia's Unconventional Operations During the Russo-Ukrainian War, February 2022 – February 2023*, 4.

⁴⁴ Saito and Tsvetkova, "The enemy within"; Sonne, Ryan, and Hudson, "Russia planning potential sabotage operations in Ukraine, U.S. says."

⁴⁵ Saito and Tsvetkova, "The enemy within"; Sonne, Ryan, and Hudson, "Russia planning potential sabotage operations in Ukraine, U.S. says."

⁴⁶ Herszenhorn, "Ukraine and West see false flags flying as pro-Russian separatists urge civilian evacuation."

5. Russia's classical warfare

The introduction has already painted a picture of the battle of Kyiv. Initially, the Russian forces seemed to be successful, but soon things went the other way. As early as November 2021, an accumulation of mistakes and misjudgments occurred. In late November 2021, three months before the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, US ambassador John Sullivan and CIA director William Burns met with Nikolai Patrushev, the secretary of the Russian Security Council in Moscow in which they indicated that they were aware of Russia's plans of attack for Ukraine. The US delegation's remarks inconvenienced Putin, as only a few confidants were aware of Putin's plans. Putin decided to keep quiet about his plans to his own military and most of Russia's political and government leaders. They did not hear what was intended until a few days before the invasion began.⁴⁷

This deprived Putin's military commanders of proper preparation for the invasion of Ukraine, which soon became clear. The initial plan was to invade Ukraine from four different directions, and Russian authorities expected it to be a 10-day walk-over. The Kremlin continued to believe in their own plan for a long time, but it turned out differently. As said before, after just a month and a half, they had to abandon northern operations targeting the Ukrainian capital. The Russians were not able to properly protect their troops against the Ukrainians who acted in small formations and successfully managed to use miniature commercial UASs. Moreover, they could not logistically support the northern operations.⁴⁸ In addition, the Russians failed to establish effective land-air cooperation, resulting in Russian combat units on the ground lacking essential air support.⁴⁹ In the Russian armed forces, the army is the dominant service, as most of the fighting in Ukraine also shows. Russian doctrine assumes that in a confrontation on the ground, the decisive battle will be fought with artillery to break up the opponent's units and deprive them of freedom of manoeuvre.⁵⁰

Commandship within the Russian armed forces also left much to be desired. Initially, there was no Russian commander-in-chief leading the 'special military operation,' as Russian authorities still officially called the invasion. Putin wanted to take all the credit and was convinced that Ukraine could be taken within 10 days.

⁴⁷ Belton, "The man who has Putin's ear – and may want his job: Russian security chief Nikolai Patrushev is one of the Russian president's few close advisers"; Massicot, "What Russia got wrong: Can Moscow learn from its failure in Ukraine?"

⁴⁸ For more background information see: Thijs Cremers, Paul van Fenema, Gert Schijvenaars and Sieds Haitsma with their chapter 'Russian Military Logistics and the Ukrainian Conflict' in this book.

⁴⁹ Zabrodskiy, Watling, Danylyuk, and Reynolds, *Preliminary Lessons in Conventional Warfighting from Russia's Invasion of Ukraine: February – July 2022*, 34-43.

⁵⁰ Galeotti, *Putin's Wars: From Chechnya to Ukraine*, 326-327.

Following the withdrawal of the northern operations, that changed, and several generals passed through the ranks, all briefly leading Russian forces in Ukraine for a few months, including Alexander Dvornikov, Gennady Zidkho and Sergey Surovikin. From mid-January 2023, General Valery Gerasimov led the operation in conjunction with the post of chief of staff of the Russian armed forces, a position he has held since 2012.⁵¹ Such a quick change of commanders does not guarantee a solid Russian control of the war. After taking office, Gerasimov quickly made it clear that he saw no role for the Wagner Group, a PMSC owned by Yevgeny Prigozhin, even though it was the only unit on the Russian front that was slowly but surely gaining ground in the autumn of 2022.⁵² It is also noteworthy to mention, as the deployment of a PMSC fits perfectly into the new-type warfare model, where fighting with a regular armed force is just one of the options to overpower one's opponent. Until May 2023, the Wagner Group fought fiercely for the town of Bakhmut in Donetsk, a place of no strategic significance, with many casualties, but it has since been relieved. The rest of the Russian attack had lost momentum and the Russian army in south-east Ukraine completely stalled.⁵³

6. Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the following research question: Did Russian authorities effectively apply the concept of the new-type warfare prior to and during their 2022-2023 invasion of Ukraine? The answer is: Yes, they did, but not successfully!

The framework of new-type warfare consists of several steps and builds up from disrupting an opponent by non-military means, such as economic measures, spreading manipulated information and propaganda, and cyberattacks to eventually full-scale war with the Russian armed forces and private military companies. Each time a step proves unsuccessful, the possibility exists for the Russian authorities to then scale up.

Turning specifically to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, it was Putin who initiated planning for the invasion from 2021, although he developed intentions to take control of large parts of Ukraine long beforehand. Already in the period 2015-2022, Russian authorities had put political and economic pressure on Ukraine, meanwhile they built up a large financial reserve from energy revenues, necessary to pay for the war. Then, with emotional evocations from the Donbas made by

⁵¹ Baily and Stepanenko, "Russian offensive campaign assessment."

⁵² For more background information see: Thijs Cremer and Han Bouwmeester with their chapter 'Commercial warriors on the battlefield' in this book.

⁵³ Kurmanaeve, "Russia replaces commander for Ukraine war, as signs of dissension grow."

RT's editor-in-chief Margarite Simonyan, a steady troop build-up under the guise of an exercise, and with all kinds of sabotage and subversive activities and false flag operations, and video messages from pro-Russian Donbas leaders, the Russian authorities tried to disrupt Ukrainian society in the second half of 2021 and the beginning of 2022 but failed. Ukrainian authorities reacted swiftly. Consequently, Russian authorities switched to 'classical methods' of warfare. Commanders were given hardly any time for thorough preparation, which turned out to be an error by Putin. The attack proved unsuccessful and soon got bogged down in south-eastern Ukraine. Putin would have liked this to have been different but made quite a miscalculation. Both the non-military and military parts of the new-type warfare did not work out well during the take-over of Ukraine.

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