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Russia's Hybrid War with Ukraine: Determinants, Instruments, Accomplishments and Challenges

Introduction

The objective of the present paper is to define the determinants and instruments associated with the information (hybrid) war between Russia and Ukraine. The paper focuses on measures taken by Russia, between 2013 and 2015, in relation to Ukraine. The paper does not aspire to discuss the issue comprehensively, but constitutes an attempt at outlining the problem, indicating determinants and characteristics of the hybrid war (information war as an element of hybrid warfare).[1] The consolidated

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[1] So far, Russia's hybrid war with Ukraine has been discussed in the most comprehensive manner in: A. Rácz, *Russia's Hybrid War in Ukraine: Breaking the Enemy's Ability to Resist*, FIIA Report, no. 43, Helsinki 2015; A. Grigas, *Beyond Crimea: The New Russian Empire*, Yale University Press, Yale 2016; R. Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands*, London–New York 2015; S. Yekelchyk, *The Conflict in Ukraine*, Oxford University Press, New York 2015; see also: A. Umland, *Russia's Pernicious Hybrid War Against Ukraine*, "Atlantic Council", February 22, 2016, http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/en/blogs/new-atlanticist/russia-s-pernicious-hybrid-war-against-ukraine (last visited 30.03.2016); L. Delcour, K. Wolczuk, *Spoiler or Facilitator of Democratiza-*

Russian information space is subordinated to the interests of authorities and draws heavily from the tools characteristic for propaganda, frequently relying upon the Soviet model. In addition, this is done with the view of re-establishing the "Russian World" (*Русский мир*), which would be wholly subject to Russia's political interests. Moreover, Russian propaganda goes hand in hand with military actions – a conventional conflict in South-Eastern Ukraine. First of all, the paper will briefly focus on establishing terminology – hybrid and information war as an element of hybrid warfare. Next, political determinants of Russia's policy towards Ukraine, and the policy's evolution will be outlined. Then, the paper will discuss methods and means of Russia's information war against Ukraine and their evolution in time. In addition, errors and failures of Russia's policy towards Ukraine will be presented.

Hybrid War – General Remarks

Euromaidan public protests broke out in Ukraine towards the end of 2013. The protests proved turbulent for Ukrainian political scene.[2] In their aftermath, President Viktor Yanukovych was deposed,[3] and the conflict in South-Eastern Ukraine broke out (*de facto* Russia- Ukraine war). However, this conflict is not a typical war, but a hybrid one – assuming the character of military operations against Ukraine conducted by Russia, without the fact being officially acknowledged (on record, Ukrainians face Donetsk and Luhansk separatists), and accompanied by other operations conducted simultaneously – information (propaganda), cultural, historical, etc. warfare.

The literature of the subject frequently features statements that Russia – Ukraine war constitutes a classic example of a hybrid conflict. Therefore, making a brief reference to the meaning of the term seems worthwhile. The term was popularised by Frank Hoffman, who stated: „Any adversary that simultaneously employs a tailored mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism, and criminal behavior in the same time

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tion?: Russia's Role in Georgia and Ukraine, "Democratization", 2015, Vol. 22, No. 3, pp. 459–478.

[2] A. Dolya, *The annexation of Crimea: Lessons for European security*, "Policy Paper", no. 382, 23 February 2016, Robert Schuman Foundation, http://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/doc/questions-d-europe/qe-382-en.pdf (last visited 30.03.2016).

[3] Cf. A. Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis. What it Means for the West*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 2014; T. Kuzio, *Ukraine. Democratization, Corruption and the New Russian Imperialism*, Praeger, Santa Barbara 2015.

and battlespace to obtain their political objectives"[4] is in fact conducting a hybrid war. The issue of hybrid war is nothing new as such conflicts have been emerging worldwide since the antiquity. The conflict itself can rage on various planes: political, military, economic, socio-cultural, psychological, information (propaganda), etc. The complexity and elements constituting a hybrid war are outlined below.
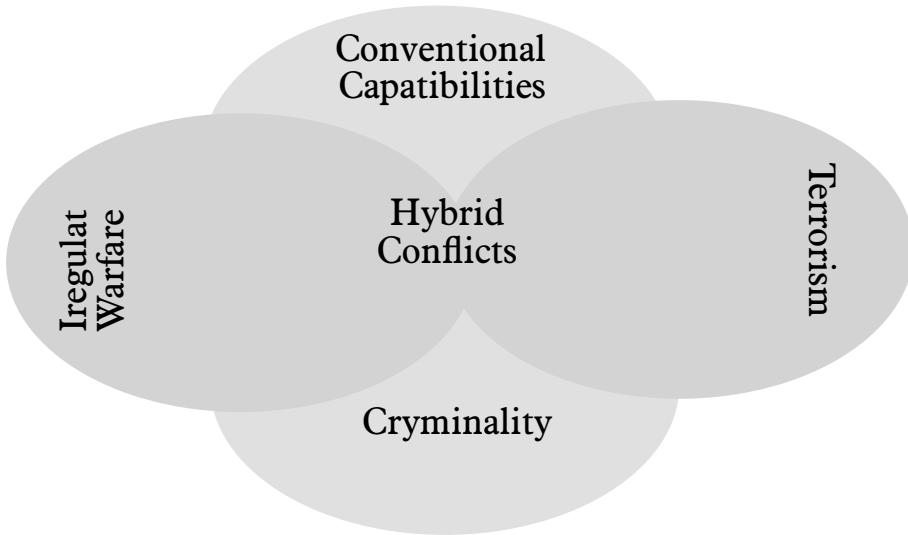

Figure 1. The span of hybrid conflicts as outlined by Frank G. Hoffman (2009)

Source: F.G. Hoffman, *The (Re)Emergence of Hybrid Threats*, presentation, Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory, MCB Quantico, May 2009.

Russia after the Fall of USSR

According to present Russian authorities, the fall of USSR, a totalitarian state where freedom of speech was considered a severe crime, constitutes one of the greatest tragedies in the 20th century geopolitics.[5] Following a Russian doctrine, the post-Cold-War state of affairs, with the

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[4] F. Hoffman, *On Not-So-New Warfare: Political Warfare vs Hybrid Threats*, "War on the Rocks", 28 July 2014, http://warontherocks.com (last visited 20.12.2015).

[5] *Выступление и дискуссия на Мюнхенской конференции по вопросам политики безопасности. 10 февраля 2007 г. Мюнхен* [Presentation and Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy Issues. February 10, 2007 in Munich], http://archive.kremlin.ru/appears/2007/02/10/1737_type63374type63376type63377type63381type82634_118097.shtml (last visited 25.10.2015).

dominant position of the West, especially USA, became unacceptable. The victory in the Second Chechen War, Putin's elimination of oligarchic networks ruling the country during Yeltsin's reign, soaring prices of energy resources, contributed to the emergence of a new political system, totally subordinated to Putin and his entourage. In such conditions, freedom of speech has been restricted yet again: media inconvenient to the Kremlin are eliminated, and so are troublesome reporters, especially those who undermine the president and government's policies. All-important television and radio stations, and newspapers became subordinated to the ruling party, and in turn, became one with the interests of the state.

In order to take into account efficiency of the newly emerged and fully controlled information space, as well as new geopolitical challenges, the government developed a new doctrine of information security, which presupposes „the development and improvement of the infrastructure of Russian Federation's single information space".[6] It will be tasked with delivering "reliable information to both Russian citizens and foreigners" among other.[7] The task will be realised by means of a television platform, which will be controlled by the state. In the framework of such activities, the All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company, supervises five state-wide television stations, including 80 regional networks, and five radio stations. Moreover, Russia finances a television station broadcasting in English, Spanish and Arabic (Russia Today). Russian media also feature television stations controlled by state-owned corporations, e.g. Gazprom, and by people in authority or those associated with them, e.g. National Media Group, controlled by Yuri Kovalchuk.[8] In principle, all the media present Putin's and the government's actions as positive. In order to do so, they apply propaganda mechanisms rooted in the Soviet era, and improve these by the application of modern ICT. By manipulating symbols, using half-truths or flat lies, they aim at influencing the "collective attitudes"[9]. Following the Federation's information doctrine, such actions aim at eliminating the threat of some countries aspiring for

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[6] *Доктрина информационной безопасности Российской Федерации, 9 сентября 2000 г.* [Information Security Doctrine of the Russian Federation, 9 September 2000], http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/6/5.html (last visited 25.10.2015).

[7] Ibidem.

[8] *Кто владеет СМИ в России: ведущие холдинги* [Who owns the media in Russia: the leading companies], http://www.bbc.com/russian/russia/2014/07/140711_russia_media_holdings (last visited 27.10.2015).

[9] H.D. Lasswell, *The Theory of Political Propaganda*, "The American Political Science Review", Vol. 21, No. 3/1927, p. 627, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1945515?origin=JSTOR-pdf&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents (last visited 25.10.2015).

"dominance and endangering Russia's interests in the worldwide information space, and an attempt to alienate the Federation from the internal and international information markets".[10] The doctrine further ascertains that it is mainly the western states who design information warfare concepts, which aim at influencing information space in other countries, i.e. Russia.[11]

New Threats for the Russia Reborn – an Outline of the Issue

Several analytical institutions, including R&D centres, have emerged in response the threats defined in Russia. These institutions, as highlighted by Jolanta Darczewska,[12] undertake actions aimed at elimination of the threats. The actions encompass information warfare, viewed by Igor Panarin, one of the leading Russian ideologists supporting the Kremlin, as "multi-faceted approach (a series of information operations) targeting the opponent's government, armed forces, political and military command, who, during peace-time, were inclined towards making decisions favourable to the influence initiator, and at the time of a conflict could paralyse the opponent's management infrastructure".[13] The approach encompasses several domains: political, diplomatic, financial and economic, innovative and technological, and military.[14] The fact that information warfare targets "mass consciousness in international rivalry of civilisations in information space" is widely acknowledged. In addition, the rivals draw on methods enabling the control of information resources, which constitute "an information weapon".[15] The control of information ought to be implemented by the following: propaganda, intelligence operations, including media monitoring and the analysis of socio-economic and political situation; and organisational component i.e. coordination and control channels tasked with influencing media and developing favourable public opinion; clandestine operations i.e. diversion, which

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[10] *Доктрина информационной безопасности…*, op.cit.

[11] Ibidem.

[12] J. Darczewska, *Anatomia rosyjskiej wojny informacyjnej. Operacja Krymska – studium przypadku*, "Punkt Widzenia OSW", No. 42/2014, pp. 9–10.

[13] И. Панарин, *СМИ, пропаганда и информационные войны*, Москва 2012 [I. Panarin, *Media, propaganda and information war*, Moscow 2012], http://propagandahistory.ru/books/Igor-Panarin_SMI--propaganda-i-informatsionnye-voyny/ (last visited 27.10.2015).

[14] Ibidem.

[15] J. Darczewska, op.cit., p. 12.

may be conducted on behalf of other entities and with their interests in mind.[16]

According to Panarin, at present, such a war rages between the Third Rome (Russia) and the Third Carthage (London, but also the whole western world),[17] which clearly corresponds with the geopolitical vision presented above. Colour revolutions, which, according to Russia, are instigated by USA, constitute a significant threat for the present world order, and as such ought to be opposed internationally. They pose a significant threat to the "Russian World" (*Русский мир*) – the area of the Orthodox, encompassing countries having the same, Russian, cultural and civilisational core. According to Aleksandr Dugin, the Russian World constitutes the only alternative civilisation/ space offering a counterbalance for the "American World".[18]

Information War against the „Orange Threat"

The "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine resulted from the objections to the authoritarian means of exercising power by the Russia-supported President Kuchma, and falsification of presidential elections in favour of pro-Russia candidate, Viktor Yanukovych, opposed by pro-EU Viktor Yushchenko. The Kremlin decided that the revolution constituted an attempt at the Russian World's domain being entered by the American World. In order to eliminate the West's influence upon Ukraine, which is regarded as a part of the "Russian World", actions characteristic for information warfare were intensified. Russian media drew from the Soviet mythology of "western aggressors" and "fascism" and disseminated information on the rebirth of nationalism and fascism in Ukraine. The media presented the revolution as an organised effort financed by the West and aiming at NATO forces being stationed in e.g. Sevastopol, a city which, in the consciousness of many Russians and post-Soviet societies, epitomises the glory of the Soviet army and a symbol of resistance to fascism. Information on Ukrainian nationalists' training camps emanating the credo "Ukraine for Ukrainians" were also popularised. The Euromaidan

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[16] Ibidem, pp. 15–16.

[17] И. Панарин, *Вторая мировая информационная война. Как в ней победить России?* [I. Panarin, *The Second World Information War. How can Russia win?*], http://www.km.ru/spetsproekty/2015/09/28/mirovaya-ekspansiya-ssha/764831-vtoraya-mirovaya-informatsionnaya-voina-kak- (last visited 26.10.2015).

[18] А. Дугин, *Русский мир* [A. Dugin, *The Russian World*], http://arcto.ru/article/1393 (last visited 27.10.2015).

demonstrations were presented on television as "mass disorders"[19] posing a threat of a civil war and dissolution of the state – in this case, actions characteristic for propaganda were also implemented. Similar content was also broadcast by the majority of Ukrainian media controlled by financial and political groups/ oligarchs whose interests largely depended on Russian economy, and for whom Russia's favouritism constituted a fundament for operation.[20]

In such conditions, implementing the policy of information security and disallowing other countries from entering the "Russian World", with Ukraine being a part of it, Russia, with its single, monopolised information space, undertook systematic actions aimed at taking over control of the Ukrainian information space. The Federation achieved its objectives, first of all, by tightening its grip of pro-Russian oligarchs controlling the majority of Ukrainian media, i.e. by activating the "influence agents". Secondly, the objectives were achieved by flooding the Ukrainian market with Russia-made information products glorifying Russian heroes, Russian public and political way of life. Thirdly, Russia supported such political parties as: Communist Party of Ukraine, Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine, "Rodina", Russian Bloc, and local NGOs: "Rusyczi", "Tusskaya Obszczina Kryma", "Russkij Mir" and "Oplot".

Russia's Information Offensive Targeting the Euromaidan

In the period of Ukraine's pro-European foreign policy, reflected in advanced works on the EU Association Agreement (AA/DCFTA), Russia intensified information warfare in order to prevent the agreement from being concluded. The whole Russian information space was filled with threats for Ukraine ensuing from the document's regulations (AA). Images of the fall of Ukrainian industry, growing unemployment and the bankruptcy of the state were presented. The scare of Ukraine being separated culturally and economically from Russia, a friendly country, and ensuing dissolution of the country were utilised.[21] Conspiracy theories featured in media, and any Ukrainian activity were interpreted as stimulated by "the

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[19] *Авторская программа Аркадия Мамотова* [Authoring program of Arcadiy Mamotov], http://russia.tv/video/show/brand_id/9361/episode_id/108505/video_id/108505/ (last visited 29.10.2015).

[20] J. Hajduk, *Władza i media we współczesnej Ukrainie*, in: *Przemiany w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej. 20 lat doświadczeń*, eds. A. Koseski, J. Wojnicki, Pułtusk 2011, pp. 106–107.

[21] *Евроинтеграция разделила Украину* [European integration has divided Ukraine], http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=1147080 (last visited 27.10.2015).

hand of the West".[22] With the assistance of the influence agents, attempts were made at fabricating media facts, e.g. organising a public demonstration against the EU Association Agreement being concluded.[23]

The demonstration of Ukrainian citizens against Yanukovych declining to sign the Association Agreement constituted another pretext for the intensification of Russian media's activities. Due to the lack of control over the events occurring on the Kiev Independence Square, from December 2013 to February 2014, Russian media, along with a part of Ukrainian ones, favouring Russia's interests for one reason or another, broadcast materials aimed at "dehumanisation and demonization of groups of revolutionaries, delivering false information to viewers (especially to those from the regions) on the objectives and methods of the Euromaidan movement" (Roman Szutow, Ukrainian expert on media and information space).[24] Serhiy Czernenko and Petro Burkowskyj , the authors of a report on Russia's information war against Ukraine, claim that news featured in Russian media were full of "anchors of Russian public consciousness" such as: fascism, nationalism, nationalists, banderivtsi, terrorists, and American agents.[25] The image of "fascists on barricades" and "heroic Berkut" was engineered. Subsequently, the residents of the Crimea were juxtaposed with the images of "nationalist hordes" and "junta", penal battalions of the National Guard and the Right Sector.

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[22] *Украина и евроинтеграция: усилия ЕС пошли прахом* [Ukraine and European integration: the EU efforts crumbled], http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=1161927# (last visited 28.10.2015).

[23] *Протесты в Киеве: украинцы не хотят ассоциации с ЕС* [Protests in Kiev: Ukrainians do not want the Association with the EU], http://www.vesti.ru/doc. html?id=1132773 (last visited 28.10.2015); *Советник Путина: Подписав соглашение с ЕС, Украина нарушит Договор о дружбе с Россией* [Putin's Advisor: By signing the agreement with the EU, Ukraine would violate the Treaty of Friendship with Russia], http://korrespondent.net/ukraine/3201158-sovetnyk-putyna-podpysav-sohlashenyes-es-ukrayna-narushyt-dohovor-o-druzhbe-s-rossyei (last visited 27.10.2015).

[24] Р. Шутов, *Російський інформаційно-психологічний вплив в Україні в контексті збройного конфлікту*, in: *Протидія російській інформаційній агресії: спільні зусилля задля захисту демократії, Аналитичний звіт*, Київ 2015, pp. 14–15 [R. Shutov, *Russian information and psychological influence in Ukraine in the context of armed conflict*, in: *Opposition to Russian information aggression: joint efforts to protect democracy, Analytical Report*, Kyiv 2015, pp. 14–15], https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/30479341/Telekritika_analytics_propaganda_2015.pdf (last visited 27.10.2015).

[25] С. Черненко, П. Бурковський, *Як російські телеканали висвітлювали події в Україні. Моніторинг новин за січень 2014 – березень 2015 рр.*, in: *Протидія російській інформаційній агресії...*, p. 25 [S. Chernenko, P. Burkovskyy, *How Russian TV channels covered the events in Ukraine. Monitoring news January 2014 – March 2015*, in: *Opposition to Russian information aggression...*, p. 25].

Further Examples of Information War

The fact that Russia, in its information warfare, not only manipulates the existing public concerns or myths, but also creates false information is noteworthy. For example, on 5th March 2014, "Rossija 1" aired a feature on 300 armed American mercenaries arriving in Kiev and siding with the Right Sector in order to conduct "ethnic cleansing" of Russian citizens in Odessa and Lvov. On 25th May, the same station informed on the probable victory of Dmytro Yarosh, Right Sector leader, in the presidential election. On 5th December 2014, another Russian television station informed on the intentions of the Supreme Council of Ukraine (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine) to deprive 2 millions of Donbas residents of Ukrainian citizenship.[26]

A further operation of Russian media consists of developing information on the basis of false sources: "Rossija 1", referring to information from the so-called "Cyber-Berkut", claims that the Maidan demonstrations were instigated by public activists sponsored by USA and the oligarchs. Furthermore, the same station, on the basis of information available online, claims that Jews and Kolomoyskyi, an oligarch, are to blame for the Odessa tragedy.[27]

The report by Czernenko and Burkowskyj acknowledged the fact that Russian media consciously pit minority groups against one another, by e.g. highlighting Kiev's new government's anti-Semitism. Russian media's attention is focused on Ukraine's regional differences and draws on different traditions, cultures and economies of the regions. For example, information on Galician heroes and Ukrainian language being forced upon eastern and southern regions is propagated, and the fact that "Donbas must feed the whole Ukraine"[28] seems forgotten.

In the time of the open military conflict, Russian media clearly differentiated between the two opposing sides: "voluntary battalions" (*опольченци*) and "penal battalions" (*каратели*). In this way, Russian mass mentality was reached and associations with WWII made. As a consequence, Russian society, along with other post-Soviet ones who still re-live the myth of the Great Patriotic War, perceive the conflict as the

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[26] Ibidem, p. 27.

[27] Ibidem.

[28] *Харьков и Донецк не хотят кормить Майдан* [Kharkiv and Donetsk do not want to feed Maidan], http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=1243576&tid=105474# (last visited 27.10.2015); *Доренко: быть нерусским на Украине – коммерческий проект* [Dorenko: be non-Russian in Ukraine – commercial project], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9CVbMNVkxTk (last visited 27.10.2015).

fight of good vs. evil – the "voluntary battalions" vs. the fascist Ukrainian penal battalions.[29]

The fact that Russian media closely cooperate with secret services and assist them in accomplishing their objectives is noteworthy. The kidnapping and imprisonment of the Ukrainian servicewoman, Nadiya Savchenko, may serve as an example of such cooperation. Russian prosecutors accused her of being an accomplice to killing Russian reporters terminated during the conflict in Donbas. The fact that Russian media boasted exclusive rights for informing on the location of the prisoner is highlighted every time the news air. In such cases, viewers are delivered a clear message that anyone suspected of acts of aggression towards Russian citizens will be apprehended and punished by Russian authorities, who possess means and resources to do so. This seems to acknowledge the thesis on Russia's superpowers.

Accomplishments and Failures of Russia's Hybrid War with Ukraine

As a consequence of its interventions, Russian media succeeded in generating a climate favourable to further military and political operations, which resulted in the annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and an armed conflict in Donbas.

In a relatively short time, pro-Russian authorities supported by Russian secret services, managed to organise the so-called voluntary battalions, which assisted in offensive operations of unmarked Russian troops called "friendly men" (*вежливые люди*) or little green men (*зеленые человечки*) by Russian media (the latter term was much more frequently used in Ukrainian and international media).[30] Russian media also played a fundamental role in the organisation of the referendum resulting in, according to statements by Russian authorities, the people of Crimea deciding to secede from Ukraine and join the Federation. The fact that all these operations occurred in the time of general disarray of Ukrainian government institutions is worth mentioning: the lack of president, who fled to Russia; the lack of prime minister, who abandoned his post; the lack of commanders in the General Staff and wide-spread demoralisation of armed and police forces.

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[29] С. Черненко, П. Бурковський, op.cit., p. 29.

[30] *Азбука Майдана: «зеленые человечки» и «вежливые люди»* [The ABCs of Maidan: "little green men" and "polite people"], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s013pdQ5saE (last visited 03.02.2016).

Russia implemented a similar strategy when eastern regions of Ukraine are concerned. In that case, influence agents, in the form of pro-Russia organisations present in the regions, were utilised. The organisations provided support for Russian secret services. With the assistance of Russian media broadcasting there and pro-Russia regional media, anti-government (anti-Maidan) demonstrations were organised. As a consequence, clashes with the police and Euromaidan supporters ensued along with the attempts at taking over control of public authority buildings.

Soon after, paramilitary units composed of pro-Russia residents and Russian volunteers were formed. A large part of the police force, Security Service and military joined these units. When local authority representatives lost their patrons from the Party of Regions in Kiev and for fear of being held accounted for conducting illegal businesses, they joined the paramilitary separatists as well. Subsequently, provisional authorities of Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics were appointed. These authorities were headed by people controlled by Russian secret services.

Such activities were accompanied by a propaganda campaign drawing on fears and demons of the Second Patriotic War – the necessity of good "voluntary battalions" fighting the evil, fascist Ukrainian penal battalions. At this point, the now-famous interview with a woman (brought up in Western Ukraine, but living in Sloviansk) claiming that Ukrainian penal battalions crucified a little child, is worth making a reference to. The interview is well-known and well-circulated in Ukrainian and Russian information space.[31]

In order to destabilise the situation in the region further, the Kremlin and Russian media organised several humanitarian convoys, which, according to unofficial sources, apart from foodstuffs, ferried weapons used for fighting against Ukraine. Russian media widely covered these convoys and depicted the issue not only as material assistance for the unrecognised republics, but also to prove that residents of the regions had a significant and friendly ally, Russia. Media coverage also targeted regular Russian citizens to convince them of legitimacy of Russia's operations against foes. In addition, Russian media, as opposed to Ukrainian or international ones, defined the territories in question as people's republics, thus legitimising the operations in public opinion.

The shoot-down of the Malaysia Airlines flight over the pro-Russia separatist controlled territory, travelling from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur, and resulting in the death of 283 people on board, became a milestone of the conflict. As a consequence, in the eyes of international pub-

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[31] С. Черненко, П. Бурковський, op.cit., p. 29.

lic, hitherto equivocal in their approach to the conflict, Russia came to be perceived as a threat for international security. Consequently, world-leaders were forced to take more decisive measures. USA, the EU, Canada and Japan decided on introducing economic sanctions against Russia. In response, the Federation enforced its own.[32]

The war sanctions along with decreasing oil prices on international markets resulted in considerable problems for Russian economy. The fact has also been noted in Russian media. Due to the severe devaluation of the rouble, Russian public opinion would not understand the fact, if it had not been discussed. However, viewers are presented an enhanced perception of Russian economy with the situation not being severe and the government attempting to reduce the impact of the crisis being acknowledged.

Conclusions

In its war with Ukraine, Russia has undertaken a large-scale and well-planned hybrid war. As a means to an end, Russian Federation draws on the most characteristic tools originating from the tradition of Soviet propaganda. By designing the figure of the great Russian leader and grand Russia which looks after its people, it manipulates and creates information (frequently embellished or downright false) and generates associations with myths still very much alive in the consciousness of the post-Soviet states. Contemporary Russia has strived to reanimate the most effective Soviet Union conspiracy theory propagating the cultural, economic and political threat posed by the West. Such activities significantly contributed to the annexation of Crimea and taking control of Ukrainian Donbas. They also instigated the war of sanctions between the West and Russia, and led to the emergence of the economic crisis in the Federation.

When considering the international situation around Ukraine, it ought to be stated that, first of all, much depends on whether Russia reaches an understanding with the West. Will the Federation succeed in having the sanctions lifted and finding a resolution of the conflict in Syria? If yes, Russia's international situation will change in its favour, which will not remain without influence on its policy towards Ukraine. Secondly, Ukraine's internal situation and a looming political crisis (with the economic crisis already emerging in the country) result in difficulties in

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[32] Cf. T. Stępniewski, *Wojna Ukrainy o niepodległość, pamięć i tożsamość*, "Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej", Vol. 13, No. 2/2015, pp. 153–166; T. Stępniewski, *Unia Europejska, Ukraina i Rosja: kryzysy i bezpieczeństwo*, „Studia Europejskie", No. 4(76)/2015, pp. 11–25.

repulsing Russia's mass attacks (in conventional and information warfare). The more unstable the situation in Ukraine becomes, the better the situation for Russia develops. The fact that Russia, in order to destabilise Ukraine's structures by means of political, economic and social crises further, will procrastinate, cannot be ruled out.

The paper establishes that Russia is conducting a well-orchestrated and thought-through hybrid war against Ukraine. Information war in this conflict constitutes merely one of the hybrid warfare's elements. This is a consequence of a Putin's doctrine developed in Russia. The doctrine is based on geopolitical and anti-liberal thinking, and revolves around rivalry with the West (the EU, NATO, USA, etc.) in the Eurasian space. Russia strives for dominance in the space and aims at diminishing any impact other countries may have on it, especially the impact of the West understood broadly. Therefore, the West (including Poland) faces a demanding challenge of limiting and opposing Russia's information war (targeting Ukraine but also EU member states), counteracting disinformation, and clarifying mechanisms and objectives of Russia's operations.

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Abstract

The objective of the present paper is to define the determinants and instruments associated with the information (hybrid) war between Russia and Ukraine. The paper focuses on measures taken by Russia, between 2013 and 2015, in relation to Ukraine. The paper does not aspire to discuss the issue comprehensively, but constitutes an attempt at outlining the problem, indicating determinants and characteristics of the information war (information war as an element of hybrid warfare). The consolidated Russian information space is subordinated to the interests of authorities and draws heavily from the tools characteristic for propaganda, frequently relying upon the Soviet model. In addition, this is done with the view of re-establishing the "Russian World" (*Русский мир*), which would be wholly subject to Russia's political interests. Moreover, Russian propaganda goes hand in hand with military actions – a conventional conflict in South-Eastern Ukraine.