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## Information Warfare Between Russia and Ukraine: A Cause of War for the West?

**Abstract:** Experts on information competition between Russia and Western countries are convinced that president Vladimir Putin plans a war against the West as a long-term operation. It is directed on two fronts: internal and the more effective external one. Both can be developed in every country of the World; the opponent may be a compatriot but the ally may be a foreigner. Fortunately, in the West the effectiveness of these operations is lower. Confrontation with the West the Kremlin has many advantages: parental and controlled informational space, technical implements, huge experience based on expert knowledge, likewise a longstanding practice in conducting informational operations. Those actions are strongly concentrated and there are widely used digital platforms and also, they popularise the contents in harmony with Russian Federation politics. Their aim is not only forming internal and external public opinion properly and in line with the Kremlin's interests, because as the annexation of Crimea has demonstrated that their aim is construction of a new reality of the world. Paradoxically, in the Russian Federation's policy, media freedom and political pluralism are considered as a weakness of the West. Many communities which have different benefits are sensitive to the Kremlin's propaganda.

**Keywords:** *Russia, Information warfare, West, Putin*

*The West levied the information war to Russia; presents Russians as aggressor; falsely creates Russophobe lobby (Darczewska, 2015b, p. 71).*

### Introduction

“Information warfare [as the author reminds us] is organised in the violence of the external activity of a country which led to it getting its particular political aims, directed at the destruction or modification of the informational systems of its opponent's communication systems or flowing through their information and activities which ensures protection for

its own informational communicating system and sending the information through them in case of a similar enemy's actions" (Jemioło & Sienkiewicz, 2004, p. 74).

"Russian authors understand the term "information warfare" as an influence on mass conscious in international competition civilisation's system in informational space, using special ways of control of information based on using it as an "informational weapon" (Darczewska, 2004, p. 12).

The key element of information warfare provides fast, hidden operations, both on civil and military targets, with the intention of effective interruption or even disposal of its free usage. Information warfare is generally characterised by striving for getting the primacy above its opponent; the opponent is usually invisible; the pivotal form of fighting are cyber-attacks and diffusing of propaganda; the subject of cyber-attacks is for an important infrastructure of a country and its defence systems; attacks may be conducted from any place in the world and may have unlimited range (Jemioło & Sienkiewicz, 2004, pp. 74–75, Madej & Terlikowski, 2009, pp. 84–85). Their aim is – in a practically invisible way – getting a subordination of elites and whole countries societies by using different channels, both secret and opened (secret services, diplomatic channels and the media) psychological influence, ideological sabotage and political ones.

Information warfare usually has two surfaces: civil and military. Both embraced with their own range each action undertaken for getting informational supremacy but also influencing some processes based on transferring information. The analysing of such issues is constricted mostly because of fact that the main territory of "soft war" actions – how it is described – is a beside – military and secret component (Lelonek, 2016).

The Internal Security Agency (Hybrid war, Introduction, p. 5) presented on its page deep analysis of a hybrid war in a special publication of "The Internal Security Review". So that, how to correctly explain the Russian and Ukrainian conflict conducted in neighbouring countries, which with Poland is connected by a border that is ca. 500 km long. Regardless of this fact, the term „hybrid war" is an American creation or a new defined Russian action that has been used for ages and if it is a new kind of war or just that the techniques are new – the war is just a war or a continuation of politics using different methods.

The leader of the Internal Security Agency, general, brigade leader Dariusz Łuczak in the Introduction, consisted on:

"The term of hybrid war, which started to appear in American publications after the year 2000, was especially spread from the moment of annexation of the Crimea by Russia. From that time, common opinion believes it became the key word which symbolizes this new type of war, the kind of danger, which admittedly was, but was a new defined one. But Russians perceive hybrid wars as a result of the development of American technologies having an aim to weaken strategic USA opponents (...)" (Hybrid war, Introduction, p. 5).

The definition of a 'hybrid war' is unclear and causes disputes among experts. It is difficult to precisely determine if it is a combination of strategy and tactics heading for intermingling different types of armed activities or as a result of convergence of conventional war rules and special operations. Perhaps, it is a combination of symmetrical and asymmetrical war or only a new view for describing traditional ways for eliciting and sustaining conflicts, more than fighting using modern tools like (ex. activities in cyber-space) often without using military means (Hybrid war, Introduction, p. 5)

„The Russian theory of information warfare has a long-term tradition. It directly comes from a special propaganda theory, which was given as a separate subject in 1942 in The Military Institute of Foreign Languages. (...) The theory of an information fight appeared also in curriculums of beside-resorted academies and projects of academicals and research institutes. The coordinating academy is The Academy of Cryptography FSB. (...) In fields like sociology, philosophy and political science such subjects have appeared like situational analysis, netted communication technology, information and netted wars but a problematic aspect of information war is to get the status of academic science (...) The Russian theory of information warfare has also featured as interdisciplinary applied science. (...) For solving more detailed problems there are some constituted research agencies constituted in the last decade” (Darczewska, 2014, pp. 9–10).

The Russian theory of information warfare was built in opposition to the cyber-security theory, developed mostly in the USA and in Western Europe and connected mostly with military and intelligence use of modern information technology that means actions in cyberspace.

## **Information Warfare Between Russia and the Ukraine**

During the Crimean operation, Russia has shown to the world its potential and opportunities for leading current information warfare. Information frays Russia (politics, journalists) explained by necessity: “The countermeasure for informational aggression from the Atlantic civilisation is under the leadership of the USA against the Russian civilisation. Standing up for it and keeping safe its own values, Russia though struggles over a fair multipolar world and the alternative for those countries which would like to be free from ‘American hegemony’. It should prevent a teardown of Russian statehood and the subversion of Vladimir Putin – that according to the Kremlin propagandists is the aim of the West” (Darczewska, 2015a).

Anti-Ukrainian information companies that have been conducted in Russia for many years at the beginning of 2014 started an aggressive stage of information warfare. The main goal was to destabilize the political, social and economic situation in Ukraine and also to

keep Ukraine in the Russian sphere of influence. Those companies also had to “sitting” its own and worldwide public opinion (Darczewska, 2014, pp. 5–6).

At the end the real victims of Russian informational aggression became its own society, ‘*the biggest divided nation in the world*’ that means the Russian-lingual population of countries after the scission of CCCP. This Crimean operation greatly concedes the essence of information warfare.

“Separatist overthrow and annexation of Crimea were done with the participation of the Russian lingual Ukrainian citizens, subjected before to suitable processing (intoxication) both informational and psychological” (Darczewska, 2014, p. 6).

The Informational and psychological Russian war with the Ukraine has taken place perpetually for years. At the beginning it was a war against the “orange plague” (widely used propaganda stereotype) which provided support for Viktor Yanukovich’s camp (within 2003 and 2004) until his victory in the presidential election in 2010. This war has a constantly – widely known – geopolitical background such as conformation of Eurasia as a powerful sphere of Russian impact, the best from the Pacific to the Atlantic with Moscow at its centre – meeting on the way the existence of sovereign Ukraine whose location settled in the situation of characteristic suspension between the East and the West (Darczewska, 2014, p. 20–21).

“During the solemn meeting on the occasion of the incorporation of Crimea to the Kremlin on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2014 president Vladimir Putin said the “unprofessional and cynical” actions of the West which destabilize the situation in Ukraine, withstanding them against ‘peaceful Russian operations’” (Darczewska, 2014, p. 23).

Fortunately, western societies are more resistant (than the Ukrainian) for Russian misinformation. The Russian argumentation never convinced the West that the Crimea annexation guarded it from the inhumanity of ‘radical members supporting Stephan Bandera and fascists from Majdan’. Those societies fully conscious that the popularized by Russian propaganda ‘new project’ of conservative revolution ‘that means de-Americanization of the world’, also Europe, is totally unattractive, not new and imprecates only to marking the co-prosperity sphere (Darczewska, 2014, p. 35).

The Russian calling for “rebellion”, “new revolution” or “subversion of government” were done by specially employed hackers, popular Internet activists, who are active under fictional names, writing more often from Moscow and St. Petersburg, pretending Ukrainian patriots were really responsible. Their popularity is based mostly on aversion to wider social spheres to the government and president. They deal with the criticism of power, accusations and of reckoning. Their haunting is very expensive and time-consuming, comparable with popularization of the knowledge about risks and dangers in this matter (Lelonek, 2016).

President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, (during the annual meeting of the Valdai Discussion Club which took place at the end of October 2014 in Soczi, entitled “World order: new rules or game without rules”) gave the details of the conflict genesis between Russia and Ukraine. He explained that it was a result of a dispatch in which the European Union aimed to join with Ukraine. It was unacceptable for Russia, because it reconciled with its interest in the neighbouring country.

The presented illustration of problems shows that Russia did not resign from the leaded information war which became an extension of its aggressive foreign policy. Those actions are a kind of a trial for some compensation of its own military and economic weakness, but simultaneously influence the long-term routine and political will for involution tensions and defence of the sphere understood as “close abroad”, also then deterring potential rivals on their territory.

## **A Cause of War with the West**

“The encumber and the West’s responsibility for unconventional war on Ukraine is only one of many operations of information warfare between Russia and the West. This war did not start with Euromaidan in 2013. (...) Changes in Russian policy took place when, as a result of the rose and orange revolutions new political elites attained power in Tbilisi and Kiev, which desired that their courtiers develop in a contrary direction than that of Russia – wrote Ronald Asmus” (Darczewska, 2015b, p. 61, for: Asmus, 2010, pp. 376).

This transformation began when Russia trespassed on the path of authoritarianism. The main concern for Russian Federation politics became in turn “holding” geopolitical control of the surrounding Russian areas and also reconstruction of co-prosperity spheres which were in the Soviet Union times (Baltic countries: Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, moreover Poland and the Czech Republic, later Georgia and Ukraine) directed into a pro-West direction. Though the reinforced information company from Russia against the mentioned countries were some standing for central and East Europe are always and always will be in the co-prosperity sphere of Russia and each activity of the West, depreciating those influences are unambiguous with an open contest for Russian world power. Understanding its own limitations softened the Russian protest against enlargement of NATO and the UE. Suggested alternatives for the pro-West direction of countries aspiring to NATO and the UE structures became “positive” counter bids “cruciate” safety guarantees for countries of Central and Eastern Europe, creation of a non-nuclear sphere and the conception of transforming into an institution like the Commonwealth of Independent States and Western European Union as being subparts of a wider regional and institutional security system. As can be seen transparently, each of these ways would give to Russia a significant position in shaping the

security of Europe especially in its east and central part (Darczewska, 2015b, p. 61; Gołaś, 2014). A Collaterally built project “Large Eurasia” did not remove such alternatives but it convinced Russia to the new ideas:

“(…) A Eurasian Union with the centre in Moscow has to be separate “civilisation” whose aim is to stop civilizational expansion of the West” (Darczewska, 2015b, p. 61).

Marek Pietraś analysing the evolution of relations between Russia and NATO, proposed the isolation of some stages:

1. The stage of initiating relations –1991–1993,
2. The stage of tensions in the background of enlargement of NATO –1994–1996,
3. The stage of trials negotiating relations –1997–1998,
4. The stage of demonstrative breach of relations –1998–2001,
5. The stage of a new quality of relations – after September 2001 (Pietraś, 2006, pp. 175–188).

The last phase was to be closed with dates between February 10–11, 2007 that means a 43rd Conference of Security in Munich concerned international safety and which for sure passed into history, mostly thanks to an unprecedented performance of the Russian Federation president Vladimir Putin. Vladimir Putin frankly and very critically assessed foreign policy and incriminated America for starting a new ordnance race, but NATO was dependent on the USA mostly in forcing American hegemony on the international scene. He also inculpated Americans that they strive to rule over a unipolar world. NATO instead, according to the Russian president, in defiance to previous claims, enlarged its military spheres on areas boarding with Russia (Bąbczyńska-Jelonek, 2007). It seems to be the apical point of the relations between Russia and the West getting worse, including NATO. Everything began from the not fulfilled Russian expectations. Crimea was convinced that with the prime change in the international situation, in the context of the cold war confrontation, everything will result with the prime reform of NATO. In Moscow it was suspected that the Atlantic Pact may be totally dissolved – like the Warsaw Pact – or transformed into a solely political structure. It was also considered that a scenario in which Russia would get in to the Pact that would transform it into a specific European institutional safety system (Raś, 2005, p. 105).

The Russian policy is continuously and propagandistically touting as an inter-Russian game between two streams of the world: ‘pro-West’ liberal on the one hand and ‘Eurasian’ the conservative on the other hand. Vladimir Putin’s coming back to the presidency role in 2012 had to serve for a continuation of rebuild its powerful position in the old imperial style and also had to serve for creating two big projects ‘Large Eurasia’ and ‘Large Russia’ (Darczewska, 2015b, p. 61).

But what happens in Russia? “America and NATO encircle Russia which must defend itself and demonstrate its power. So Russia has to find the answer on the American conception of flashing a global strike, fight for de-militarization of outer-space and global information space, it cannot put the lid on that country and by surrounding it get into the American ‘half occupation’” (Latuhina, 2015).

The information impact of Russia, created on such conceptual fundamentals, is not a trend-setting phenomenon in the world of politics. The thesis (ex. the world cannot be multipolar<sup>1</sup>) has been repeated continuously since the 1990s. For many years in the public space it did not function but it invariably followed the strategic aims of Russia:

- conquest the position of global power,
- enlargement of the empire,
- weakening, and numbing NATO,
- not to Americanise the world,
- „kidnaping” of Europe,
- Extending the circle of Russian allies,
- and moreover, new goals connected with digital technology:
- multimedia channels for repetition information,
- wide scale of influence (suitable to the global power mission of Russia),
- a high level of information aggression (Darczewska, 2015b, p. 62).

Moreover, the view of the geopolitical situation of the world and also a picture of the USA imposing to the world its democratic and liberal values and peculiar development model has been persistent for many years. Accordingly, the Kremlin’s propaganda states that the government of Ukraine (a *junta*) will still be shown as a counter in the geopolitical game of the USA. Poland and the Baltic states are in a difficult position in this war. The Russian game in Syria will be shown instead as a takeover of the initiative to fight with Islamic State, from Barack Obama by Vladimir Putin, because the American tactic in this matter ‘bankrupted’, and became totally ineffective (Darczewska, 2015b, p. 62; for: Baltačeva & Moškin, 2015). “Under the circumstances of leading information warfare, it was redefined risks for Russia. For many years it has been seen as a trial for conquering the Russian Federation’s resources, their utilisation and degradation. In so far as before, the utilisation stock resources were accented, so now ideological and civilizational risks are put into the foreground” (Darczewska, 2015b, p. 63; Darczewska, 2015c).

“In a Russian doctrine and military thinking information warfare has two dimensions: the wider (as a self-reliant kind of war led on different levels: political, economic, diplomatic, humanitarian, military and the narrower (as a supporting element of military actions)” (Darczewska, 2015c, p. 6).

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<sup>1</sup> During the International Economic Forum in Petersburg Vladimir Putin implied that system in which the government dictates conditions to the others did not pass an exam. The President of Russia announced the ending of multipolar world. In the opinion of Kremlin host, those who imposed their point of view to others, do not want to see that world changed.

## Instead of Summary

In front of the world, Russia transformed the Ukrainian and Russian conflict, intervention in Ukraine in a wider conflict between Russia and the West. Relapsing to “a verified’ foreign policy model, based on continuous competition with the USA, Russia without any camouflage demonstrates its geopolitical ambitions and with an energy sets out new borders of “Russian world civilisation”, “giving the challenge to the” “post-cold-war” order in Europe, which in modern history was repeated time and again. Those pulls became causes of many problems and reversals in relations between Russia and the West in the past. Unfortunately the West did not find a good response for revisionist Russian politics or even the idea for minimalizing information action which accompanied it (Darczewska, 2015b, p. 59).

In theory and practice, the information effect is commonly used by the rhetoric of social engineers. Russia constantly essays of getting: journalists, experts, activists, artists or other specialists for special advances on different segments both in the country and abroad. Especially important are some environments which are ablating forms of politics. The important motif for them may be the financial factor but also special foreign departure, to grant or get support and relatively new opportunities in professional careers (Lelonek, 2016). Jolanta Darczewska claimed that: “It is intended to deduce that Russian information battles will be continued. The doctrine of Putin was crystallised. It is political doctrine, Eurasian, anti-liberal, oriented for competition with the West and domination of Russia in Eurasia. On that account, in most recent times the task for rational public debate is and will be to limit the Russian political myths spheres and idealised persuasive actions, explaining their works and goals” (Darczewska, 2014, p. 36).

Time will tell, but every military modern country of the 21<sup>st</sup> century must be able to confront against conventional and information war actions. Today’s Russia is a master in this, but the West? Poland? Polish people? It is necessary to learn it. Unfortunately, there is no solution to the impasse.

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