"Injection of war":

disentangling the Donbas war.

A case study informed by Actor-Network Theory

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Abstract

The following thesis presents an empirical investigation of hybrid war in eastern Ukraine, drawing on the insights from Actor- Network Theory and New Type Wars theory. Taking a different route in studying a complex phenomenon of hybrid war, this study focuses on the social-material networks which constitute the hybrid war. This thesis aims to identify the actors and analyse their interactions at different stages of war. Actor-Network Theory will be used in this research to ask the questions, what role do the non-human actors play in hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine, and how do they affect the dynamics of war. Highlighting the significance of non-human actors, this thesis aims to contribute to the existing literature on hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine and thus shed light on the peculiarities of this phenomenon.

Key words:

Ukraine, hybrid war, Actor-Network Theory, non-human agency, interactions

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List of abbreviations and glossary

ANT   Actor-Network Theory

Donbas   The Donets [river] Coal Basin

(economic or geographic region in eastern Ukraine which includes Donetsk and

Luhansk regions). Donbas is an area of 53.000 km^2 with a population of over 6

million people. Ukraine doesn't control an area of 46.200 km^2 (7% of the

territory of Ukraine) with a population of over 4 million people

DPR   Donetsk People's Republic (self-proclaimed "republic" in eastern Ukraine)

FSB   Federalnaya Sluzhba Bezopasnosti

(Federal Security Service — Russia's secret service)

GRU   Glavnoye Razvedyvatelnoye Upravlenye

(Main Intelligence Directorate — Foreign Intelligence Agency)

ICRC   International Committee of the Red Cross

LPR   Luhansk People's Republic (self-proclaimed "republic" in eastern Ukraine)

NATO   The North Atlantic Treaty Organization

(A Political and Military Alliance)

NGW   New Generation Warfare

(Russian conceptualization of the changing character of warfare)

NTW   New Type War theory

OHCHR   Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Odnoklassniki Russian social media platform

OSCE   Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

OSCE SMM   Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine

PACE   Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

SBU   Sluzhba Bezpeky Ukrainy

(Security Service of Ukraine)

Vkontakte   Russian social media platform equivalent to Facebook

1. Introduction

"Student: But I can't imagine one single topic to which ANT would apply!

Professor: Beautiful, you are so right, that's exactly what I think.

Student: That was not meant as a compliment."[1]

Emphasizing the necessity to theorize and problematize the phenomenon of war even at its fundamental level, and thus calling for a new "critical war studies" discipline, Barkawi and Brighton have provoked the debates on the ontology of war.[2] In its turn, the tradition to focus on Clausewitzian notion of war as fighting, as the only ontology of war, was questioned by Nordin and Öberg which have emphasized the importance to understand war through the "notion of plural ontologies".[3] Indeed, different modes of warfare and different contexts provide a wide range of ontologies: from Baudrillard's war as processing, Nordin's and Öberg's war as disappearance, Holmquist's war as a "branding exercise", to McSorley's predatory wars, or Sylvester's war as a form of "collage-making" of people experiences.[4] And while theorists of the "Revolution in Military Affairs" have been preoccupied with anticipating the future of wars described by Luttwak as the era of "post-heroic warfare"[5], the year 2014 has drawn the considerable attention to the Russia's military operations in Ukraine which took the world by surprise. While the operation in Crimea presents a case of traditional occupation and subsequent annexation of the peninsula with some unique features, a wide range of Russia's activities in eastern Ukraine, labelled as "hybrid

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[1] Latour, 2005:156
[2] Barkawi and Brighton, 2011
[3] Nordin, Öberg, 2015: 397-398
[4] See, Baudrilard, 1995; Nordin and Öberg, 2015; Holmqist, 2013; McSorley, 2017; Sylvester, 2013
[5] Luttwak, 1995

warfare"[6], has provoked a wave of disputes[7] in academic community regarding the novelty of this term, and its interpretation by Russia and Western states. And despite the fact that over the last four years this term has been frequently used in relation to Russia's actions in eastern Ukraine by professional military personnel, politicians, military experts and journalists, the ongoing debate around this label reflects the confusion about its content.

Challenging the traditional notions of war, the Ukrainian case has raised a lot of questions regarding not only the blended methods and instruments of this type of warfare, but also domains of operating and a place of information warfare in this combination of activities. In other words, the question "what does constitute the war in eastern Ukraine?" has presented and intellectual challenge, and, still, remains open. Thus, this thesis aims to investigate the new form of warfare in eastern Ukraine and contribute to the understanding of its peculiarities by applying Actor-Network Theory which provides means to explore this modern war as a complex assemblage of heterogeneous elements and their dynamic relationships.

1.1.   Rationale for research

Theoretical development of the concept of hybrid warfare in military theory mirrors the peculiarities of conflicts, analysis of which has enriched the original definition. The study of conflicts in Chechnya, Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon contributed to the development of this concept by highlighting new features of this complex phenomenon in each of these contexts. In this regard, unique aspects of hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine such as its evolving character, the shift from physical battlespace into cognitive, and the fact that the

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[6] In this thesis, the term "hybrid warfare" is used in relation to the Donbas war since it dominates the discourse about Russia's actions in Ukraine
[7] For example, see McDermott, 2015; Kofman and Rojanski,2015;

hybrid war is waged not by the non-state actors, but by the state, present an interesting case for exploration.

Secondly, a substantial body of research regarding Russia's hybrid warfare in Ukraine is devoted to the theme of the Crimean military campaign[8], and considerably smaller number of works are focused solely on the war in the Donbas region. Moreover, the analysis of previous research shows that existing literature has neglected the role of the non-human factors in this conflict. However, more than in any other sphere of human activity, the role of "the material" in war, its complex interactions and interdependency with "the social", requires rethinking and in-depth examination. Besides, the exploration of the "volume-ontology"[9] of the phenomenon, in Schouten terms, which takes into account both human and non-human elements, can reveal unexpected details and compositions of relationships which make up the war machine.

Thus, the application of Actor-Network Theory, as an alternative ontological perspective in the study of war, can help filling this gap in the existing research on the hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine, as well as to contribute to the expansion of this theoretical and methodological approach into the field of war studies.

1.2.   Aim, objectives and research question

The aim of this thesis is an empirical examination of hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine informed by Actor-Network Theory.

To examine hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine, three objectives can be delineated:

1) To interrogate the assumptions about hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine;

2) To identify the actants of hybrid war in eastern Ukraine and their interactions;

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[8] For example, see Renz, 2016; Galeotti, 2016- hybrid warfare in relation to Crimea
[9] Schouten, 2013: 553-574

3) To relate the empirical findings to the new- type warfare theory.

Thus, from the aim and objectives that have been outlined, this thesis seeks to answer the following question:

What role do the non-human actors play in the hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine?

1.3.   Thesis outline

This thesis is divided into five separate chapters with subsequent sections structured in the order that corresponds to the logic of the conducted research.

The second chapter *"Theory"* discusses the existing literature on hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine, highlighting how this thesis can contribute to this literature. This chapter also presents theoretical framework used in this thesis, particularly New Type Wars theory and Actor-Network Theory, the tenets of which will be detailed and explained. Chapter 3 *"Method"* introduces and motivates the chosen research design — a single case study, method used in this research — textual analysis, material and strategy of data collection. Chapter 4 *"Empirical analysis"* is divided into four sections following the key events in the chronology of war. Lastly the chapter *"Conclusions"* discusses the findings of the empirical analysis and suggestions for future research.

1.4.   The case: hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine 2014- 2015

This research has a limited time frame which covers the period from March 2014 till February 2015: from the seizure of regional administrative buildings by anti-government protestants and pro-Russian groups till the battle of Debaltseve which is considered the last decisive battle in this war. Despite the continuing minor skirmishes and human losses, the situation, nevertheless, has been labelled "a frozen conflict". Thus, the chosen period is characterized by the most important developments and key events in this conflict.

The context of the case:

Protests in eastern Ukraine began from early March 2014 — in the aftermath of the Revolution of Dignity[10] and the unforeseen fall of President Yanukovych's regime. Since the Donbas region has been a political power base for the Party of Regions for almost two decades[11], the loss of power by the local political elites (together with the memory about the loss in 2004) , controversial legitimacy of the new Government according to the local population, the growing fear of threat posed by nationalists in the Donbas region multiplied by Russian mass-media statements of a "fascist junta in Kiev"[12], as well as a regional identity of Donbas residents with the idea of the Donbas's exclusivity (based on the myth of its economic power) exploited by the Party of Regions in the series of election campaigns in the past ten years[13] — all these factors are considered the causes of the unrest in eastern Ukraine. Protest, being provoked by the Government's decision to repeal the official status of the Russian language, as well as by the annexation of Crimea which encouraged pro-Russian leftist and right-wing organizations,[14] nevertheless, had their own characteristics in each region. The range of their claims was broad and sometimes uncertain: from supporting the fighters of "Berkut"[15] unit who were accused in committing violence and killings against the Ukrainian citizens during the Revolution of Dignity — to giving the Russian language the official status, or federalization of a particular region and its subsequent joining to Russia. However, despite the general sympathy for Russia in this region, the opinion polls

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[10] Also known as "Euromaidan" ("maidan" is the Independence square in the center of Kiev)

[11] Yekelchyk, 2015: 140

[12] Kudelia, 2017: 217-219

[13] Ibid: 219

[14] RAND, 2017: 33

[15] "Golden Eagle"- special police unit in Ukraine. The organization was dissolved by the decree of the new Interior Minister.

indicated that only a minority of the Donbas population would support the separation from Ukraine and joining to Russia.[16]

Chronology of events

- 3 of March 2014: the first storming of the Donetsk Regional Council building by pro-Russian activists and self-proclaimed "people's governor" Pavel Gubarev[17] who announced the formation of "the interim government of Donetsk". Occupying the building till the 6th of March, the separatists have been removed by the police and SBU.[18]

- 6 of April 2014: seizure of SBU regional headquarters by pro-Russian protesters with subsequent access to the building's armory in Luhansk.[19]

- 7 April 2014: seizure of Donetsk Regional Council building. Hanging the Russian flag, the protesters proclaimed the creation of "Donetsk Independent Republic" within Russia.[20] The second decision was to conduct a referendum on the independence of the region no later than May 11 (supposedly to ruin Ukraine's plan to hold a presidential election two weeks later).[21]

- 12 April 2014: seizure of the city administration building and the SBU building in Slovyansk by a group of armed men in camouflage uniforms led by the former FSB officer Igor Girkin (Strelkov).[22]

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[16] See Kiev International Institute of Sociology
[17] Pavel Gubarev was a former member of the neo-Nazi organization "Russian National Unity" and a small-time businessman. See Snyder Timothy for *The New Republic*, Halya Coynash for *Human Rights Protection Group.*
[18] Charlie D'Agata, CBS News
[19] See Reuters
[20] For example, see BBC
[21] For example, see The New York Times
[22] Kudelia, 2017: 221

Similar occupation occurred in about a dozen cities of the Donbas region, thus, all cities' administrations and key institutions were seized by the end of April, and the Government lost control over much of a region.

- 14 April 2014: signing a decree by Ukraine's acting president Alexander Turchinov on the beginning of the Anti-Terror Operation (ATO) against separatist movements in eastern Ukraine.[23]

- 11 May 2014: following the "status referendums"[24], the two "republics", DPR and LPR, proclaimed its independence from Ukraine.

- 24 May 2014: signing of the agreement between the two separatist republics to form a union of republics — Novorossiya.

- 14 June 2014: armed groups shot down a Ukrainian military transport plane with 49 soldiers on board. Valeriy Bolotov, the 'people's governor' of the so-called LPR, acknowledged the responsibility of the "South Eastern Army" for the shooting down of the plane.[25]

- 5 July 2014: battle of Slovyansk — an operation conducted by Ukrainian armed forces to recapture the third most important city in the Donbas region.[26] Ukraine regained control of the city.

- 17 July 2014: downing of a passenger airliner, Malaysia Airlines MH17, in an area controlled by pro-Russian separatists from the Russian Buk-surface-to-air missile system.[27]

- 7 August – 2 September 2014: battle of Illovaisk, "Illovaisk pocket". After being attacked and encircled by Russian regular forces, a decision was taken to withdraw

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[23] For example, see The Teleraph
[24] The results of the referendums were not officialy recognised by any government
[25] See OSCE SMM report
[26] Karber, 2015: 35
[27] For the details see the report of the Dutch Safety Board and status of the criminal investigation conducted by Joint Investigaton Team (JIT)

Ukrainian units from Illovaisk. Nevertheless, while passing through the so called "humanitarian corridors" (withdrawal corridors), agreed with Russian military leadership and approved by Russian President Vladimir Putin[28], Ukrainian columns have been shot and destroyed by Russian regular and separatist forces.

- 5 September 2014: signing of the Minsk Protocol[29] by the representatives of Ukraine, Russia, DPR and LPR under the auspices of OSCE. The main point of the protocol, such as an immediate bilateral ceasefire, has been afterwards violated by both parties to the conflict.[30]

- 28 September 2014 – 21 January 2015: the second battle of the Donetsk airport. Despite the ceasefire agreement, heavy fighting and shelling[31] between separatist forces and Ukrainian government forces continued till January 2015. The defenders of the airport, in mass media often referred to as "cyborgs" for their ability to defend the airport for 242 days under the constant attacks and heavy shelling, have become part of Ukrainian national mythos. [32]

- 12 February 2015: signing of the Minsk II agreements[33] — the new package of measures to resolve the ongoing war.

- 14 January – 20 February: battle of Debaltseve, "Debaltseve kettle". Despite the new ceasefire agreement, the pro-Russian forces, commanded by Russian military staff,[34] began an offensive on the city of Debaltseve, a vital railway hub between Donetsk and Luhansk, forcing the Ukrainian government forces to withdraw, which marked the final strategic victory for the Russian-backed separatist forces.[35]

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[28] See the full text of President's address
[29] See OSCE main website for the text of the protocol
[30] See OSCE reports
[31] For example, see Alan Taylor's photo report for The Atlantic
[32] For example, see Deutsche Welle
[33] See the full text on the OSCE website
[34] Karber, 2015: 41
[35] For example, see The Guardian

From 14 April 2014 to 15 November 2017, OHCHR recorded 35,081 conflict-related casualties: 10,303 people killed and 24,778 injured.[36] There are 1,414,798 internally displaced persons registered by the Ministry of Social Policy since April 2014.[37]

The current state of the conflict is considered a stalemate.

2. Theory

This chapter will present and discuss previous research in relation to the war in eastern Ukraine. The theoretical framework presents a New Type Warfare theory supplemented by additional literature, and Actor-Network theory which provides the opportunity to look at the phenomenon from a different perspective. The literature is presented in such a way that will show how this thesis can contribute to the study of hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine.

2.1 Previous research

Taking different approaches to examining this war whether as intrastate or inter-state, the authors, nevertheless, elucidate different components of this complex conflict. Therefore, the chosen literature on the Donbas war is particularly interesting for this thesis.

One of the interesting works is Matveeva's profound, well-informed study of war in the Donbas region from the perspective of pro-Russian rebels.[38] Approaching the events as a civil war, the author sought to explore the endogenous factors that resulted in the outbreak of this war. Admitting that war doesn't arise "from pre-war cleavages, but also from interactions during conflict gestation where actors start to populate the stage", her research is however focused solely on human actors driven by set of motivations and polarized identities which are

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[36] OHCHR, report 2017: 17
[37] OCHA, report 2015: 2
[38] Matveeva, 2018

considered as roots and driving forces of the conflict.[39] Kudelia also stresses the role of human factors exploited by Russia, such as position of the local political elites, oligarchs and members of security forces, regional identity of Donbas residents, associated themselves rather with the region than with the whole state, and the role of a former FSB officer in the formation of armed struggle.[40] Bowen analyses the mechanism by which Russia sought to influence Ukraines' political course towards the EU and NATO, namely the creation of two autonomous republics in eastern Ukraine. In doing so, he investigates the role of state's subcontractors — proxy groups and illegal actors in combination with coercive diplomacy as a strategy.[41] Bukkvol's attention in the investigation of hybrid war in Ukraine is focused on the role played by special operation forces (SOF) — both in Crimea and Donbas.[42] Interestingly, in his view, the use of SOF in the context of hybrid warfare in Donbas is strengthened by application of non-military tools, such as propaganda, however the author doesn't elaborate on the distinguishing features of this combination in eastern Ukraine.

Information warfare as a distinct feature and a crucial component of hybrid warfare in Crimea and the Donbas region have been identified by a great variety of authors. Adamsky touches upon Russia's military operations in Ukraine proposing a new definition- the art of cross-domain coercion, of what is usually referred to as "hybrid warfare" or "New Generation Warfare". Nevertheless, the meaning of his term coincides with the description of hybrid warfare concept: a skilful application of military and non-military tools, synchronised with the activities in political, economic, diplomatic spheres, where information warfare plays a crucial role.[43] The information sphere as "an integral to hybrid warfare" in eastern Ukraine is also

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[39] Matveeva, 2018: 5
[40] Kudelia, 2017: 217-221; the EU's Council Decision 2014/145/CFSP, however, identifies Girkin as a GRU officer
[41] Bowen, 2017: 1-32
[42] Bukkvoll, 2016: 25-32
[43] Adamsky, 2015: 22-37

stressed by Bachmann and Gunneriusson.[44] In their account, Russia's use of disinformation in relation to the war in the Donbas region is a powerful weapon of manipulation of the public opinion about this conflict in the West which made possible the disregarding of this war.[45] In his detailed analysis of the development of Russia's "propaganda machine", Van Herpen points at its central role not only in hybrid war in Ukraine, but also at its place in Russia's foreign policy in broader sense.[46] Regarding the disinformation and ongoing conflict in Ukraine, Mejas's and Vokuev's work deserves a special attention. The authors emphasize the role of Internet not only as a positive agent of social change which raises awareness about wrongdoings, but also as a space where users of social media themselves are able to generate and spread false information.[47] Roy Allison's analysis of Russian intervention in Ukraine is based on the deconstruction of Russia's legal rhetoric. In his account, the role of identity and the "Novorossiya" concept are not convincing explanatory frames for Russia's conduct, and serve rather for the domestic political consolidation.[48] Finally, in the article "Ukraine and the Art of Limited War", Freedman argues that the increasing role of Russian forces entailed the change in the character of this conflict from an externally sponsored insurgency into limited inter-state war.[49]

Providing different accounts for war in the Donbas region, authors however are mostly focused on the role played by humans, neglecting the material mediation and the contribution made by nonhumans for the emergence of such phenomenon as war.

2.2 Theoretical framework

This section presents the latest Russian conceptualization of changing character of war – New Type Wars. Since Russian military thought on modes of warfare is constantly evolving, it is

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[44] Bachmann and Gunneriusson, 2015
[45] Ibid: 203
[46] Van Herpen, 2016
[47] Mejas and Vokuev, 2017
[48] Allison, 2014: 1255-1297
[49] Freedman, 2014: 15-17

necessary to understand its roots and foundations. Therefore, this section begins with the most consistent hybrid warfare theory developed by one of the leading military experts on hybrid warfare Frank Hoffman, whose theory serves as a basis for Russian conceptualization. Further, the concept of New Generation Warfare will be presented as a Russian response to hybrid warfare theory, and finally the New Type Warfare theory which is rooted in the previous two theories. Thus, it will be possible to trace the latest developments in Russian military thinking regarding contemporary warfare.

"Student: But that's not what my supervisor wants. He wants a frame in which to put my data.

Professor: ... But have you ever seen a painter who began his masterpiece by first choosing the frame?"[50]

2.2.1 New Type Wars theory

Hybrid warfare theory

Despite that Hoffman's theory of hybrid warfare, developed on the basis of the case study of the war between Israel and Lebanon in 2006, has entailed the division into its opponents and advocates, nevertheless, his definition is the most consistent and widely accepted one. Moreover, arguing that "the future does not portend a suite of distinct challengers with alternative or different methods but their <u>convergence</u> into multi-modal or Hybrid Wars", Hoffman highlights rather the uniqueness of this modern mode of warfare than its novelty, thereby ending the controversy over this issue.[51] Hoffman's understanding of "hybridity" is valuable since it captures the organization, the means and the forms of application of these means, thus providing more coherent theoretical basis:

"Hybrid threats incorporate a full range of different modes of warfare including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including indiscriminate violence

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[50] Latour, 2005: 143
[51] Hoffman, 2007: 28

and coercion, and criminal disorder. Hybrid wars can be conducted by both states and a variety of non-state actors. These multi-modal activities can be conducted by separate units, or even by the same unit, but are generally operationally and tactically directed and coordinated within the main battle space to achieve synergistic effects in the physical and psychological dimensions of the conflict. These effects can be gained at all levels of war."[52]

In Hoffman's view, the characteristic features of hybrid wars are following:

- Multiplicity of actors – states, state-sponsored groups, self-funded actors[53]

- Multi-modality – variety of activities[54]

- Synchrony – simultaneous application of all means and methods[55]

- Criminality – "to sustain hybrid force or to facilitate disorder of the target nation"[56]

- Exploitation of modern media – for mobilization of masses and gaining support[57]

- Blending character of war – "convenutal/irregular, physical/kinetic and virtual dimensions of conflict are blurring"[58]

Additionally, drawing attention to the importance of culture-centric warfare, Hoffman emphasizes the necessity to understand the historical and cultural contexts "that have generated the conflict from the beginning".[59]

New Generation Warfare

Developments of Russian military thinking regarding the changing character of war are reflected in the work written by the Russian Chief of the General Staff Valeriy Gerasimov,

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[52] Hoffman, 2007: 8
[53] Ibid: 28
[54] Ibid: 28-29
[55] Ibid: 29
[56] Ibid: 29-30
[57] Hoffman, 2007: 52
[58] Ibid: 33
[59] Hoffman, 2007: 51

which demonstrates Russian understanding of modern modes of waging war under the title "New Generation Warfare". Developed on the basis of observations of military conflicts in North Africa and Middle East, the concept NGW presents a set of lessons learned from Western states' experience and Russian reflections upon the changing character of war that definitely shape Russia's military practice.

Drawing on some principles from hybrid warfare theory such as multi-modality and synchrony, Gerasimov's NGW theory, nevertheless, presents a set of some novel ideas and priorities.

The distinguishing features of NGW are the following:

- Blurring the lines between the state of war and peace[60]

- The leading role of non-military means in achieving political and strategic goals "which exceed the power of weapon"[61]

- The focus on the broad use of political, economic, informational, humanitarian and other measures applied in coordination with the protest potential of the population[62]

- Non-military methods supplemented by military means of concealed character including informational warfare and the actions of special operation forces[63]

- The interaction of forces: the use of special operations forces and armed formations of internal opposition to create a permanently operating front on the entire territory of the enemy state[64]

- The important role of technological developments: such as the use of automated complexes of military equipment, drones[65]

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[60] Gerasimov, 2013
[61] Ibid
[62] Ibid
[63] Ibid
[64] Ibid
[65] Ibid

In addition, stressing the importance of new ideas and non-standard approaches in military science, Gerasimov agrees with the ideas of some Soviet military theoreticians such as "undeclared war"[66] and "each war as a unique case" which requires the establishment "of a particular logic and not the application of some template".[67]

Bogdanov and Chekinov have further developed the concept of NGW, providing a more detailed description of its components. Underlining the necessity to minimize the kinetic encounter between the adversaries, the authors emphasize the role of non-military means. Since the ratio of military and non-military measures is 1 to 4, the informational struggle, which comprises technological and psychological components, is playing a key role, hence switching the battlefield into a zone of consciousness.[68]

Thus, the fundamental difference between the Western concept of Hybrid warfare and Russian New Generation Warfare is the leading role of non-military measures (also mentioned in hybrid warfare theory but not dominant) aimed at minimizing the kinetic fighting, where information operations perform an important function of blurring war and peace, manipulating of adversary's perception of reality, and affecting the decision-making process on governmental, military and individual levels.

New Type Wars theory

In 2015, Colonel General A. V. Kartapolov introduced the latest Russian understanding of contemporary conflicts based, on the lessons learned, and prospects of development – the theory of new type wars.

Kartapolov argues that to achieve its goal, the aggressor-state is putting pressure upon the victim-state using the unconventional model of confrontation which includes co-ordinated

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[66] Ibid
[67] Ibid
[68] Chekinov and Bogdanov, 2013

direct and indirect actions to ensure the legitimacy of the unleashing of a military conflict.[69] Implying though the US and its Western allies, Kartapolov points out that there is a tendency in modern armed conflicts where the goal is not the physical destruction of the enemy or the infrastructure of the state, "but the subordination of the leadership of the state and its elite to the will of the aggressor-state".[70] This can be achieved by using different technologies and means, so called hybrid measures, which include both military and non- military tools.[71] According to Kartapolov, such "all-encompassing approach", which provides for the influencing the enemy state by means of diplomatic, economic, political, military, legal and other instruments, has been developed by the US in response to Russia's "successful peace-enforcement operation in Georgia" with a purpose of Russia's suppression.[72] Moreover, the application of these instruments is accompanied by the information-psychological influence on the population and government of the victim-state, using also the armed detachments of internal opposition and special operation forces.[73] Kartapolov argues, that by means of informational confrontation, it is possible to ruin the foundations of the statehood or to change the regime, hence, the effect of information warfare "can be comparable to the results of a large-scale use of troops and force".[74] Falsification, distortion of information, propaganda, "saturation of the whole information environment with the false content" – are considered to be the most effective methods of waging information war.[75] Stressing that the aim of the indirect actions is the intensification of internal contradictions, thus "the front of the hostile parties is, first of all, in public consciousness and in the head of each person".[76] Hence, in the new war, the entire territory of the state is a front line. However, physically, the front line can be found between

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[69] Kartapolov, 2015: 27
[70] Ibid: 29
[71] Ibid:30
[72] Ibid: 30
[73] Ibid: 30
[74] Kartapolov, 2015:
[75] Ibid: 30
[76] Ibid: 31

the districts of residents of different ethnic, religious and social groups.[77] Further, the internal conflict transforms into a "kind of a "field of attraction" for external forces" with their hidden invasion, such as militants' groups of foreign extremist organizations, anti-government immigrant structures, foreign mercenaries, private military companies, special operations and intelligence forces, criminal gangs.[78]

In Kartapolov's view, the purpose of the actions taken at the initial stage is the unleashing of a full-scale civil war based on national, religious or other grounds between the groups of population in the victim-state.[79] Finally, the country is gradually slipping into a state of total chaos, internal political confusion and economic collapse.[80]

Additional characteristic features of new wars, according to Kartapolov, are non-declaration of war, protracted character of conflicts, and asymmetric measures (such as special operations and intelligence forces, informational, political, economic and other non-military means) aimed at the adversary's the most vulnerable and weak spots, "the influence upon which will give maximum effect at the minimum cost of its own forces and resources".[81]

Moreover, Kartapolov points at the necessity to "design" the set of asymmetric actions for each particular conflict due to its own peculiarities, as well as the completeness, timeliness and coordination in their implementation by "multi-departmental forces of the entire state organization" for their effectiveness.[82]

Finally, the author stresses that the new types of war will continue to emerge, or existing concepts will be modified.

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[77] Kartapolov, 2015:31
[78] Kartapolov, 2015: 32
[79] Ibid: 32
[80] Ibid: 32
[81] Ibid: 37
[82] Ibid: 37

Thus, military thinking on the character of contemporary wars will continue to evolve.

To sum up, the concept of New Type Warfare integrates the principles and components of both hybrid warfare and New Generation Warfare, but also provides the description of the logic of conflict development, its stages, and elaborate on the role of information warfare. In this regard, the author stresses that new type wars consist of 20% of brute force and 80% of informational influence and propaganda.[83]

To illustrate his understanding of "New Type Wars", Kartapolov provides a scheme with the main characteristics of his concept:
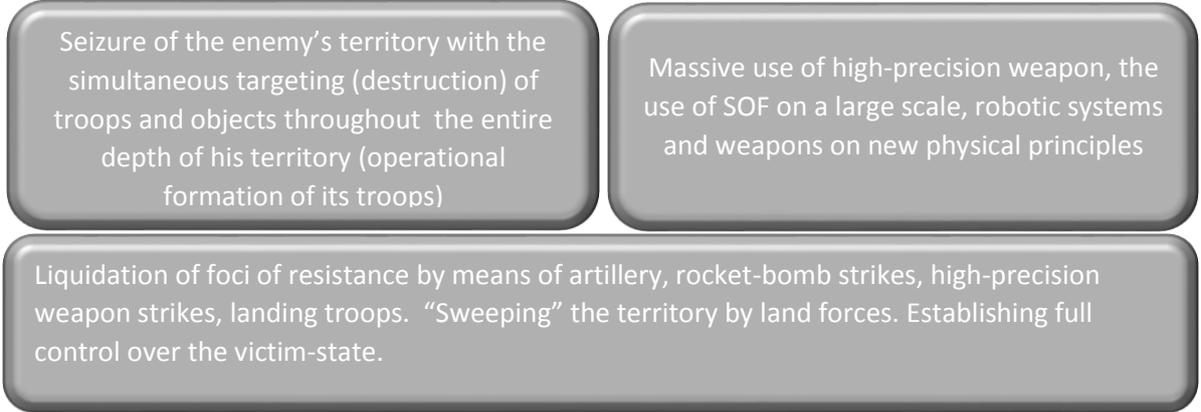
Ways and methods of waging New Type Wars
The goals of New Type Wars are achieved with the use of military force or without it.
A set of indirect actions (hybrid methods)

Putting political, economic, informational, psychological pressure upon the adversary	Disorientation of the political and military leadership of the victim-state. Forcing discontent among the population	Preparation of the armed detachments of the opposition, and their transfer to the zone of conflict

Increasing diplomatic pressure and propaganda influence on the world community

Covert deployment and the use of SOF, cyber-attacks and software-hardware influence; conducting reconnaissance and subversive activities on a large scale, support of internal opposition, application of new weapon systems

Transition to classical methods of warfare using different types of weapons in combination with massive informational influence

Seizure of the enemy's territory with the simultaneous targeting (destruction) of troops and objects throughout the entire depth of his territory (operational formation of its troops)	Massive use of high-precision weapon, the use of SOF on a large scale, robotic systems and weapons on new physical principles

Liquidation of foci of resistance by means of artillery, rocket-bomb strikes, high-precision weapon strikes, landing troops. "Sweeping" the territory by land forces. Establishing full control over the victim-state.

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[83] Kartapolov, 2015: 33 (see the table)

2.2.2. Introducing Actor-Network Theory

Since Actor-Network Theory presents a theoretical perspective of this study, this subsection will shed light on its underpinning principles, main ideas and terms of reference adopted in this research.

Originating in the sociology of science and technology, ANT has drawn a wide attention within the social science of those who recognise and want to explore the role of "nonhuman" in social life. Drawing on various intellectual traditions and disseminating across numerous disciplines, ANT has significantly evolved since 1980s, being broadened, adapted and nuanced by its successors. Nevertheless, ANT is usually associated with the surnames of its three nominal founders – Bruno Latour, Michel Callon and John Law, whose "key texts" compose a nucleus of this unique approach to social theory.

Is it a theory?

The term "actor-network theory" can be misleading since ANT is not a "theory" in the traditional sense. As Bruno Latour ironically remarked, "there are four things that do not work with actor-network theory: the word actor, the word network, the word theory and the hyphen,"[84] proposing instead a more appropriate term "actant-rhizome ontology" or "sociology of associations"[85], which more accurately reflect the essence of actor network approach.

 ANT is not a static unitary framework which offers causal explanations or predictability, but rather, an "adaptable, open repository of terms and modes of engaging with the world", in Mol's terms.[86] Indeed, Actor-Network theory has been treated in many cases as a toolbox – "a set of concepts or empirical orientations" that are adaptable to a particular case study.[87] Thus, ANT's

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[84] Latour, 1999: 19
[85] Latour, 2005
[86] Mol, 2010: 262
[87] Michael, 2017:3

adaptability is considered rather its strength as it provides tools and techniques to describe particular cases, focusing on their peculiarities, on unexpected, on unnoticed – in other words, helps "to attune to the world" and "get a sense of what is going on".[88] Stressing that actor network approach is not a theory, John Law considers ANT as "a disparate family of material-semiotic tools, sensibilities, and methods of analysis that treat everything in the social and natural worlds as a continuously generated effects of the web of relations".[89] Thus, considering ANT as a version of material semiotics which "describes the enactment of materially and discursively heterogeneous relations that produce and reshuffle all kinds of actors including objects, subjects, human beings, machines, animals, "nature", ideas, organizations, inequalities, scale and sizes, and geographical arrangements", John Law has broadened ANT's toolbox.[90]

To sum up, ANT is not a consolidated theoretical body that offers overarching explanatory framework, but a "fluid set of analytic and empirical practical orientations and sensibilities".[91]

2.2.2.1 Foundations

ANT differs from other scientific approaches to the study of "the social", since it redefines the notion of social itself. For ANT, the "social" is not a "specific type of ingredient different from other material", or a stable construction, which can be used to provide a "social explanation" for a phenomenon, but social itself is a product of connections (associations) between heterogeneous elements – human and <u>nonhuman</u> – which comprise the assemblage.[92] In other words, it is rather necessary to explore the associations of the elements that comprise "the social" and hold it together, than to use "the social" as analytical framework to explain the state of affairs. This leads to the, so called, *principle of irreduction,* according to which the state of

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[88] Mol, 2010: 262
[89] Law, 2009: 141
[90] Law, 2009: 141
[91] Michael, 2017: 3
[92] Latour, 2005: 11- 17

affairs cannot be explained by, for instance, such categories as "class", "power" or "nation-state" since these categories are the <u>outcomes</u> of the interactions between different elements — <u>not the cause</u>. In other words, the established categories cannot be a starting point of the inquiry.[93]

ANT argues that the reality consists of networks of heterogeneous elements, hence, the *principle of heterogeneity* of the network lies at the heart of Actor-Network theory and stands for diversity of actors/elements in the network/assemblage. ANT radically claims that not only humans, but also nonhumans play a significant role in the networks.[94] Moreover, arguing that human and nonhuman components are co-dependent and mutually shaping, ANT shifts its focus from human and nonhuman into "*hybrids*". In this regard, Latour's example is particularly helpful: a combination of a gun and a person, exchanging their properties, leads to the emergence of a "hybrid" — "the citizen-gun" which differs from its constituent elements.[95] For Latour, "society is constructed, but not socially constructed"[96]:

"Humans, for millions of years, have extended their social relations to other actants, with which, with whom, they swapped many properties, and with which, with whom, they form <u>*collectives.*</u>*"[97]*

Thus, the negation of the dichotomy between humans and nonhumans leads to the next principle – *the generalized symmetry*, according to which both human and nonhuman actors within networks should be regarded equally, by applying the same analytical framework for their description and using neutral terminology.[98] This neutrality and impartiality in interpreting different kinds of actors is based on the idea that both people and material objects are relational

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[93] Ibid
[94] Law, 1992: 2-3
[95] Latour, 1994: 30-31
[96] Ibid: 53
[97] Ibid: 54
[98] Law, 2009: 147

effects of networks which also include both the human and nonhuman, hence the analytical distinction between human and nonhuman would deprive them ontological symmetry. ANT's assertion that all entities are effects of associations within heterogenous networks is reflected in the *principle of relationality (relational materiality).* As social practices generate the technical, so do material practices generate the social, thus they are embedded in each other, and gain their attributes in relations and interactions with each other.[99] This relationality is undoing different kinds of dualisms: not only human and non-human, social and technical, but also macro and micro, and as Law emphasizes: "there is no overall social, natural, or conceptual framework or scale within which events take place: as webs grow, they tend to grow their own metrics".[100] In this regard, ANT stresses the importance to focus on the micro-level of interactions/associations instead of macro-level. In order to trace these connections and interactions, ANT renders the social world in terms of *flattened* networks[101], which "cannot be described without recognizing them as having a thread-like, wiry… capillary character that is never captured by the notions of levels, layers, territories, spheres, categories, structure, systems."[102]

2.2.2.2. Vocabulary

The principle of generalized symmetry implies the importance to analyse the heterogenous elements that make up the network in equal terms, therefore neutral terminology and abstract concepts help to adhere to the outlined above principles. Moreover, these categories are being "filled in" during empirical investigation in every particular case, demonstrating thus ANT's adaptability and empirical "sensitiveness". Since ANT cannot be described as a unitary

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[99] Law,2009:148
[100] Law, 2009: 147
[101] Latour, 2005: 28
[102] Latour, 1996: 3

approach, as it is being modified by each case study where it is integrated, this subsection thus will present the terms and concepts that have been used in this research.

The notion of *network/assemblage* presents a "cluster" of heterogenous elements, intermixed humans and nonhumans, which perform activities, and whose complex interactions ANT-informed research seeks to trace. However, for Latour, this term seems to be problematic since it is associated rather with a stable construction and "transportation without deformation", while ANT, on the contrary, emphasizes the actual "work", the flow, the movement, the transformation.[103] Network's formation depends on the associations between actors, hence they exist in constant making. The network comprises heterogenous actors and can be an actor itself. The concept *actor* denotes any entity within a network, human and nonhuman (technical, textual, conceptual), which in their turn are also networks. In Latour's terms, actor is "what is made to act by many others".[104] Thus, the action and the interrelation with other actors are crucial for understanding this concept. However, as Annemarie Mol pointed out, ANT does not provide a clear definition of the term "actor", but "instead it plays with it".[105]

For Latour, the means of producing the social can be perceived in two forms: as *intermediaries and mediators*.[106] *Intermediary* is any entity, no matter how complicated it is, that "transports the meaning or force without transformation".[107] In other words, intermediaries do not make any differences to the state of affairs. *Mediator*, on the contrary, produces the difference, affects the outcome by "transforming, translating, distorting and modifying the meaning".[108] Thus, as Latour points out, it is a constant uncertainty: whether certain entities are intermediaries or mediators.

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[103] Latour, 2005: 143
[104] Latour, 2005: 46
[105] Mol, 2010: 257
[106] Latour, 2005: 38
[107] Ibid: 39
[108] Ibid: 39

The concept of *translation (the process by which "the identity of actors and the possibility of interaction are negotiated and delimited")[109]* is central in ANT, since it is through translation that actors become a part of a network. Through translation the possibility for associations are negotiated, and this process consists of several phases which in reality overlap:[110] *problematization* (identification of a problem that needs to be solved, or interests that actors may have), *interessement* (negotiations or other practices employed by the actor to impose identities to the actors whose problem was identified or identity problematized in order to involve them into a network), *enrolment* (multilateral negotiations with the actors and placing them into designated roles to perform activities in the network, and acceptance of these roles by the actors), the *mobilization of allies* (reassembling the actors at a certain place and a particular time through the designation of spokesmen).[111] A *spokesperson* is the actor within a network that speaks on behalf of all other actors (both human and non-human). During these processes all actors have to pass through the main actor who is considered an *obligatory passage point.*

2.2.2.1 Ontological base

Rejecting conventional ontological dichotomy represented by positivism (reality exists per se, outside of the mind of the observer)[112] and constructivism (reality is an outcome of scientist's interpretation),[113] Actor-Network theory introduces an alternative ontological perspective, so called "realistic realism"[114], which treats reality as an effect generated by interactions of heterogeneous actors within a network. In other words, reality is an <u>emergent</u> phenomenon, the understanding of which can be provided by ANT's basic principles.

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[109] Callo, 1986: 6
[110] Ibid: 6
[111] Ibid: 6-14
[112] Della Porta, 2008: 23
[113] Ibid: 24
[114] Latour, 1999

Thus, in this thesis, ANT will be used as ontological foundation to explore the interactions between the human and nonhuman actants in the hybrid war in eastern Ukraine.

3. Research design and Method

This chapter will present and discuss the research design of this thesis, the methodological approach to the research which is based on the phenomenon under investigation, research objectives and research question, and the strategy of data collection.

3.1 Research design

The following section presents and motivates the choice of a single case study design, as well as discusses its limitations and possible alternatives.

3.1.1 A single case-study

The research design for this thesis is a single case study as this choice resonates with Yin' view that the necessity for a case study research "arises out of the desire to understand a complex social phenomenon".[115] Since this thesis seeks to explore an emerging phenomenon of hybrid warfare, a case study is the most appropriate design for investigating this "contemporary phenomenon in-depth and in real-world context".[116] Furthermore, being a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon, hybrid warfare requires an in-depth examination in every particular case, therefore a single case study is the most suitable method which allows to explore the uniqueness and specificity of every particular case. In addition, in order to achieve the research objectives of this thesis — to interrogate the assumptions about hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine, and to identify the actants and explore their interactions, it is necessary to adopt a holistic perspective, which can be possible within a single case study since it allows the researcher to focus on a "case" and encompass all of a phenomenon.[117]

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[115] Yin, 2014: 4
[116] Ibid: 2
[117] Yin, 2014: 4

Notwithstanding the critique of case studies regarding the lack of generalizability, a case study research can be very useful in expending incomplete or dissatisfactory theories "by combining the existing knowledge with new empirical insights".[118] Nevertheless, seeking to conduct a case study of hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine drawing on the insights from ANT, the goal of this thesis is rather "particularizing" than "generalizing"[119].

Alternative research design for this thesis could be a comparative case study of hybrid warfare in Ukraine and Georgia, since both countries belong to Russia's "sphere of influence" where hybrid tactics including a broad range of military and non-military means have been applied. Considering the two countries as "unique and complex social configurations"[120], the in-depth empirical investigation could reveal the distinctive features of hybrid warfare in two cases, contributing to the understanding of this complex phenomenon. On the other hand, a thorough description of two cases can reveal unifying features and principles thus providing a basis for generalization that is limited to these cases but "whose relevance could be controlled through further research".[121]

3.2 Method

3.2.1 Textual analysis

The choice of the method of analysis is based on the research objectives to investigate the assumptions about hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine, to define actors in the heterogeneous assemblage and to relate findings to the New Type War theory. In order to pursue these objectives and answer the research question, the textual analysis will be used to analyse the data collected from multiple sources presented in the next section. Specificity of the phenomenon

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[118] Vissak, 2010: 371
[119] Yin, 2014: 21
[120] Della Porta, 2008:206
[121] Della Porta, 2008: 206

under study and the research question of this thesis require a thorough investigation of the facts details and of this case, therefore textual analysis will link the information collected from multiple sources to the theoretical framework of this research. Noteworthy, the word "text" is related to everything that produces meaning: written sources, such documents, reports, monographs, etc., but also television programme and films. Thus, to provide a thorough description of hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine and to identify the human and nonhuman actors, textual analysis will be performed by discussing the findings and drawing conclusions whether the non-human actors played a significant role in the hybrid warfare in Ukraine.

3.1 Material and strategy of data collection

The strategy of data collection for this thesis is driven by theoretical and methodological considerations which impose certain requirements. Firstly, a case study suggests collecting data from multiple sources to provide a thorough description of the phenomenon under study in its completeness and complexity, and thereby to provide validity of the findings. Moreover, in order to explore a multiple ontology of a phenomenon, a unique approach of ANT, it also requires gathering information from multiple sources. However, the main injunction of ANT to "follow the actors" poses a practical challenge for the conducting a research within a war studies field.

Nevertheless, considering the hybrid war in eastern Ukraine as a complex assemblage of heterogeneous elements, the analysis of such assemblage requires "multiple forms of specific knowledge"[122]. Thus, this research has been prepared on the basis of a broad range of academic papers, monographs, reports of international organizations and think tanks, official documents and journalists' reports and articles containing interviews with the key figures.

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[122] Barry, 2013:426 - 428

In other words, such all-encompassing approach as ANT, as well as the complex nature of the phenomenon under study, namely hybrid warfare, require relying on a broad range of sources of information.

Additional set of challenges are posed by the confidentiality of sources due to Russia's official rhetoric of denial to be a party to the conflict, and possible biased character of Ukrainian sources of information. Therefore, the analysis is mainly based on the information provided by international organizations and authoritative European and American think tanks.

Additionally, to provide a careful description following the chronology of the unfolding events — it requires the access to a more detailed information which have been provided by media reports and articles. To address this goal, Ukrainian media sources have been used since they provide a full coverage of the unfolding events. Concerns regarding the possible disinformation and propaganda have been taken into consideration, therefore the sources have been assessed from the standpoint of their affiliation with the certain political groups or oligarchs' ownership. Thus, this research is based on data mostly provided by independent mass media platforms and authoritative journalists.

Alternatively, to trace the interactions between human-and non-human in a particular configuration, and thus to address the research question of this thesis, empirical observations and in-depth interviews could have been conducted – traditional methods of data collection for ANT. In doing so, one particular event/occurrence can be chosen, where actors and networks can be "followed". Indeed, these methods of data collection correspond better to the spirit of ANT- driven research, however the practical challenges and time limit affected the choice of the method of data collection.

4. Empirical analysis

Pursuing the objectives of the research, this chapter will present an analysis of hybrid war in eastern Ukraine. Based on the ANT's ontological assumptions, the hybrid war will be considered as an assemblage which, according to the New Type Wars theory, consist of two domains: cognitive and physical. Thus, this chapter will present the analysis of interactions between cognitive and physical domains, where heterogeneous actors will be identified, and associations between them will be traced.

However, considering that the phenomenon of war is an outcome of a myriad of occurrences, networks and heterogeneous actors, which are difficult to trace and present within a scope of this thesis, thus having established the chronology of events in the "Introduction" chapter, this chapter will focus on a certain number of key events and the role played by nonhumans, analysing them from the ANT perspective.

The analysis will provide a description of hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine using a concept of narrative which is the most frequently adopted approach within ANT-informed studies.

Hybrid war, a child of a Leviathan

4.1 Junta and killed bullfinches

The modern world is characterized by the complicated interplay and co-dependence of the social and the technical, where technical mediation increasingly affects human interactions, and perception of reality. In this regard, the concept of hybrid warfare is of particular interest for research since it implies a combination of military and non-military means with the focus on the latter. Thus, the term "hybrid warfare" is inextricably linked to the informational warfare due to the role played by modern information technology in achieving strategic goals.

In accordance with NTW theory, new type wars consist of 80% of the informational influence and propaganda. Russia's understanding of informational component as a tool of pursuing its political goals is associated also with the concept of soft power and can be found in the two

main documents which define its approach to foreign affairs and defence: The Military Doctrine[123] and "The Concept of Foreign policy of Russian Federation"[124]. These documents should be considered not as simply intermediaries, static embodiment of political and military thought, but as mediators that navigate Russia's actions in the field of international relations, shape its military practice and serve as a source of legitimization of its conduct and decisions taken within these spheres. However, the attention will be paid specifically to the one interesting theme – militarization and weaponization of information. The practical implementation of some of the principles and ideas laid down in these documents has been carried out in Ukraine in 2014- 2015.

Russian mass-media is usually considered as one of the black-boxes "upon which Leviathan rests", in Latour's terms, which includes information agencies, TV-channels, radio, print media, and online media. Russia's media network is characterized by total dependence on state, so called state's "manual control", due to the state- and oligarch's ownership affiliated with the Kremlin.[125] In this regard, the use of mass-media in pursuing its political and military goals corresponds to the NTW theory's direction on coordination of multi-departmental forces of the entire state in waging a new type war. Television traditionally serves as a main source of information for the Russian population, and according to the poll (May,2014) 94% of population received information about events in Crimea mainly from national television.[126] Russian TV- and Radio broadcasting, as well as popularity of *vkontakte*[127] and *Odnoklassninki*[128] – social media platforms equivalent to *facebook* have been instrumentally used in Ukraine during the events 2014-2015.

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[123] The Military Doctrine of Russian Federation, 2014
[124] The Concept of Foreign policy of Russian Federation, 2016
[125] CNA Report, 2018: 1-13, see also Simons and Chifu, 2018:130
[126] DIIS Report, 2017
[127] According to the KAS Policy paper, 2015, 27 million of Ukrainians had profiles on *vkontakte*, and 11 million– in *Odnoklassnik*i accordingly.
[128] Ibid: 33

Against this background, the role of news in this extensive network of war, their influence on the dynamics of conflict, and the interaction of cognitive and physical domains of hybrid war, deserve special attention. Depicting the unfolding events in Kiev as a "coup d'état"[129], "usurpation of power by junta in Kiev " and "fascists in power"[130], demonstrating fake reports of the "atrocities" committed by the protestants during the Revolution of Dignity, spreading myths about "fascist offensive to the east of Ukraine", the threat posed by the organization "Right sector"[131] by Russian mass media — these "injections" of specific themes, narratives and distorted facts — are mediators whose impact changed the course of events in spring 2014. These news- mediators played a crucial role in the translation of interests of local dissatisfied citizens into a network of separatism movement through the process of problematization of their local identities and construction of threat posed by the new authority in Kiev. Moreover, they triggered personal grievances, "solidarity", sense of adventurism, mobilizing thus all these numerous "volunteers" from Russia and other countries to join the movement.[132] In other words, through mass media a conflict zone becomes a "field of attraction", as NTW theory states. It is through material/technical mediation of television, mobile phones, social media platforms, Internet providers, governmental regulations of media sphere, broadcast licenses, broadcast towers, these "injections" reached thousands of people and houses, affecting people's perception of reality, and consequently decisions to act. As Latour pointed out, it is a constant uncertainty whether a certain actor is mediator or intermediary. In this regard, information is even more difficult to define. The most well-known fake news within the period 2014-2015: "the crucified 3 years old boy" (Channel One Russia),[133] "instructions of Ukrainian teachers to

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[129] Simons and Chifu, 2018: 130-132
[130] Ibid
[131] Yekelchuk, 2015: 142, see also Channel One Russia showed non-existent 37% of votes for Yarosh (leader of Right Sector) at the presidential elections in Ukraine
[132] Matveeva, 2018: 96-102
[133] Channel One showed an interview with the eye-witness of "the crucifixion of a 3- years old boy", and his mother who had been "tight up to a tank and pulled 3 circles on the city square".

their pupils to kill bullfinches" (Russia-1),[134] "Participation of Ukrainian Prime-Minister Yatsenyuk in tortures and execution of Russian captives in Groznyj" (Russian Newspaper),[135] can be considered as mediators which affected the Russian population in terms of their perception of Ukrainian reality. Moreover, the "construction" of the external enemy (an image of the fascist-Ukrainians) is a classic way of the consolidation of population around its leader and authorizing him to take unprecedented decisions. In this regard, public polls in spring-summer 2014 demonstrate support for the Russian President at the level of 83-86%.[136]

Cognitive and physical domains are mutually reinforcing and co-constituent, since events in the latter present a resource for interpretation and distortion, and distorted, alternated reality affects psychological state of individuals and thus dynamics of the conflict. Therefore, NTW theory stresses the that the front in new type of wars lies in public consciousness and in the head of each person, hence, the entire territory of the state is a front line. But most importantly, cognitive domain cannot be affected without technical mediation, especially on a large scale.

4.2 Citizen + gun = ~~rebel~~ separatist

ANT's focus on the entanglement of the material and the social can shed a new light on the conflict development, but in understanding the significance of material actors, a crucial question to ask is, what effects do they entail on the war dynamics.

The seizure of the administrative building by a group of rebels in Donetsk in April 2014 had a symbolical meaning: control over the administrative building has symbolized control over the city (of about 1000 000 people). The combination of humans and material infrastructure

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[134] Russia-1 showed a news report where "teachers instructed pupils to feed tomtits (yellow-blue- "representing" Ukraine), and to kill bullfinches (red- "representing" Russia)

[135] Russian Newspaper published an article about Prime-MinisterYatsenyuk, who supposedly was a part of the punitive detachments Argo and Viking, and took part in torture and the execution of captured Russian soldiers in January 1995 in Grozny, and was awarded D.Dudayev's Order of Honor of the Nation. See Center Razumkova, report, 2016: 11

[136]

produced power. Nevertheless, "real" reality was different, the best description of which was introduced by a Russian journalist Oleg Kashin:

"I expected to see the rebellious city, but I saw the usual Donetsk, but instead of the regional administration there was a squat, inhabited by unhappy people, ready to compensate for their dull life by playing an uprising against a made-up problem..."[137]

Meanwhile, the dynamics of the unfolding events in Luhansk – the seizure of the SBU building which is associated with the creation of LPR, is directly interlinked with the access to armoury.

The request of protesters to release from custody in SBU the leader of the organization "Luhanskaya Gvardia" A. Charitonov was satisfied, and the "euphoria" of the "success" provoked to get another trophy – namely control over the SBU building.[138] The control over the SBU building and getting access to its armoury turned into the opening of a "Pandora's box", since the availability of weapons generate a sense of power and freedom of actions, hence the combination of humans and a weapons generated a new type of actors, with other goals, ambitions and ways of achieving them. According to Andriy Nakonechniy, Head of Public Security of the Leninsky district police in Luhansk, the SBU armoury provided rebels with a mass of weapons:

"After seizing the SBU building with armoury, in the hands of people who did this, there were several thousands Kalashnikov rifles, sniper rifles, a mass of ammunition to them, grenades, machine guns."[139]

After the seizure of SBU, "the wave" of other takeovers took place: seizures of regional administrative building, prosecutor's office, Court of Appeal, district police stations. The availability of weapon directly affected human's intentionality facilitating the formation of the

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[137] Slon, 2014
[138] Koshkina, 2015: 386
[139] From the interview of Nastya Stanko with A. Nakonechniy

first militia battalions, and thus the dynamic of the events. As Latour pointed out: "things might authorize, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, render possible, forbid and so on", in other words, affect human's decision-making.[140]

4.3 The obligatory passage point

Nevertheless, the turning point of the history of this war is strongly associated with the city of Slavyansk and the surname of a former Russian GRU officer Igor' Strelkov (nom de guerre, real name- Girkin), who transformed the protesters' movement into the armed struggle.[141] In this regard, material infrastructure played a crucial role in the strategic plans for destabilizing the region and its separation from Ukraine, which will become evident in the following after events.

Following the seizures of administrative buildings and SBU buildings in the two regional main cities – Donetsk and Luhansk, violent seizure of buildings took place in smaller cities of the region. On 12 of April, a professional group of unidentified people led by Strelkov seized the local police station in Slavyansk, capturing policemen, getting access to available weapon and setting up roadblocks at the entrance of the city guarded by people with riffles resembling Crimean "little green men".[142] This episode can illustrate the NTW theory's provision on preparation of the armed detachments of the opposition, and their transfer to the zone of conflict, as well as active role of SOF.

The activities of armed separatists have been observed in a number of other cities: Kramators'k, Gorlivka, Chervoniy Lyman, Krasnoarmiys'k, Druzhkivka, Artemivsk – in 7 cities with Slavyansk. This chain of seemingly insignificant cities nevertheless has one unifying component – a material one: transport hubs and infrastructure: Slavyansk – airport,

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[140] Latour, 2005: 72
[141] See Matveeva, 2015: 95,
[142] See for example, Denis Kazansky's report about the seizure of Slavyansk

Krasnoarmiysk – aviation base used as aeroclub, Druzhkivka and Gorlivka – large railway junctions. All cities created a "visual chain" that cut off the Donetsk region from the Dnipropetrovsk region, fulfilling thus another injunction of NTW theory: targeting objects through the entire depth of the territory.[143]

The figure of Igor Strelkov became the passage point through which the translated interests of other enrolled separatists' groups, gangs and battalions operating in the region, as well as individual persons with attached to them new roles in this new scenario of war, could be realized.

The transformation of occasional riots into a coordinated aggression with unified actions of the separatists and military forces is strongly associated with the personality of Strelkov, however could not take place without material mediation. The local heterogeneous networks have been combined with the "injected" heterogeneous networks: professionals, weapons, instructions, financing, etc., which interflowing have generated two quasi-republics — DPR and LPR and the war.

4.4. Immutable mobiles, concrete-traitor, Minsk black box

The generated network of war, that allows to control a part of the state's territory, requires a maintenance. The human actors alone cannot keep the whole architecture. Non-human actors play an active role in producing and stabilizing the social order. Again, the material is inserted in the social, and especially in the phenomenon of war. Weapon is a constituent element, since without it the whole assemblage of war ruins. As Portuguese ships were crucial to the success of Portugal's imperial control,[144] Russian "humanitarian" cargo trucks[145] are crucial to the

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[143] Koshkina, 2015:392-393
[144] Law, 1986
[145] For example, see OSCE reports; The Huffington Post, 2014: Western journalists (Telegraph and Guardian reporters) "have witnessed that a column of armoured vehicles and military trucks crossed the border from Russian into Ukraine."

maintenance of war network. Crossing Ukrainian border in violation of Ukrainian law and international norms (3 conditions that were not met: to cross the border at the post controlled by the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, escort by ICRC, clear information about its destination, route and what is carried)[146], Russian "humanitarian" cargo trucks are considered a "trojan horse" delivering weapons and ammunition for reinforcement of the separatist forces.[147] Circulating from and to the war zone, these cargo trucks became **immutable mobiles** that "transport power" and "nurture" the network of war.[148]

On the other hand, nonhuman actors can play an opposite role – they can "**betray**" and ruin the whole assemblage. The Donetsk Airport defence-assemblage, which existed from June 2014 till January 2015, illustrates a deep interdependence and interaction of human and non-human actors, where one "betrayal" affects the whole network. During the battles at Donetsk International Airport between the separatist forces of DPR and Ukrainian Governmental forces which controlled airport for 242 days, the word "cyborg" appeared and widely spread in mass-media referring to the airport defenders which managed to hold their position for a long time under the constant shelling and attacks. The role of humans in the defence-assemblage is significant, but the role of non-human can be crucial.

From the interview with one of the fighters for "Novorossiya":

"I don't know who is protecting Donetsk airport, but we cannot knock them out for three months. We tried to assault — they beat us — we moved away. We started to cover them with "Grad"[149] - they dove into underground sewers. We decided to fill in the sewer with a drain sewage: we covered with "Grad", they went underground, we filled in the sewer. And, like,

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[146] See, official statement of Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign affairs
[147] See, for example, The New York Times; statements of Victoria Nuland, NATO General Secretary Rasmussen
[148] Report, Center Razumkova, 2016:: according to the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine (January 2017), the army of DPR/LPR consists of 40 000 militants, 5 000 of which – regular Russian troops, which have 600 tanks, 1300 IFV, 860 artillery systems, 300 multiple launch rocket systems.
[149] "Grad" – is a Soviet truck-mounted multiple rocket launcher system

seized the airport. They moved through the sewer right up to Avdiivka, went up to the land, returned by land to the airport, and again beat us and pushed us out. Moreover, they took our weapon and a few dozen of prisoners ... I do not know who is sitting there, but these are not people - they are cyborgs ".[150]

Thus, the airport-defence assemblage presents a complex interdependent combination of human and nonhuman actors: Ukrainian Intelligence forces, SOF, Airmobile forces, Ground forces, several volunteer battalions, rotations of troops, bravery, self-sacrifice, courage, singing national anthem, determination, but also buildings, air traffic control tower, terminals, the airport runway, sewer, underground passages. 242 days of success of this defence-assemblage is owed to the interplay of this human and non-human actors: the airport could not be defended without professionalism, skills and personal qualities of humans, but humans could not successfully defend it without the "assistance" of material elements: sewer, underground passages, walls. And finally walls "betrayed". After the heavy shelling and the blowing up of the terminal ceiling by the Russian-backed separatist forces, which collapsed and fell on the Ukrainian forces, the defence-assemblage of the airport ceased to exist. The famous in Ukraine saying, related to the heroism of the airport defenders, "Cyborgs held out, the concrete didn't", illustrates how the material matters.

The material matters. In terms of legal documents, this phrase gains a special meaning. 4 paper pages of the Minsk agreements with 5 signatures of the participants of the Trilateral Contact Group: Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini (OSCE), Second President of Ukraine, Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Ukraine, Zacharchenko (DPR) and Plotnicki (LPR) – 4 pages and 5 signatures save hundreds of lives for all parties to the conflict. The Minsk agreements are the actors themselves in this network of war. However, the Minsk agreements are treated as **a black**

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[150] Ischenko, 2016

box that contains elements that no longer need to be reconsidered or analysed. This simplification of the whole actor-network with the complex relations and interaction between its component, leads to the superficial understanding of the war dynamic. The Minsk agreements are the outcome of the complex network which comprise Trilateral Contact Group (Ukraine, Russia, OSCE), 4 subgroups (on political issues, on security issues, on humanitarian situation, on economic issues) which consist of Ukrainian and Russian representatives competent within relevant sphere, Joint Centre (Ukraine-Russia) for Control and Coordination in ensuring cease-fire agreement (Ukrainian and Russian officers), the decision of Belarussian President to provide a platform for negotiations in Minsk, airplanes that deliver the participants every other week to Minsk, weather, hundreds hours of negotiations, interests, goals, money, quarrels, threats, phones, computers, maps, reports, documents, etc.[151] The understanding of the internal dynamics of this network, the interplay between all its components could shed a new light on the outcome of this network – the Minsk agreements, their legally binding nature (or lack of thereof?), and dependence on the political will of the parties to the conflict.

5.Conclusions

5.1 Concluding discussions

What role do the non-human actors play in the hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine?

In much of the existing literature on hybrid war in eastern Ukraine, the analysis is focused on the social actors reducing the explanation to such categories as identity, cultural context, power struggle or geopolitical forces. Nevertheless, the social categories cannot alone explain the internal dynamics of war, and the presence of macro-actors in the war is always mediated by local networks. Elegant "reductionistic" explanations simplify the phenomenon under study

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[151] The information about the Minsk process and its structure is based on the numerous public interviews of the representative of Ukraine in political subgroup R. Bezsmertniy between 2014-2016.

concealing its complexity, versatility and depth by a "shawl of abstractions", which need to be explained themselves. In the case of modern forms of warfare, such approach would offer only a superficial understanding of a particular conflict, since each and every war presents a unique case with tailor-made tools, methods and measures applied for every particular context, where lines between war and peace, enemy and friend, cognitive and physical are blurred. New Type Wars theory stresses the necessity to "design" the set of actions for each particular conflict due to its own peculiarities, therefore the simplicity provided by social reductionism can shed no light on the phenomenon of modern war. Therefore studying the case through an actor-network perspective, with its sensitivity to social-material interaction, enriched the understanding the phenomenon under study, illuminating areas and aspects not visible or ignored before. Its recognition of the importance to regard the social and the material equally entailed an utterly new understanding of the war in eastern Ukraine. The infrastructural, technical and material components play equally significant role at all stages of the war, mediating, influencing, betraying, translating human interests into a growing and extending network of war. Moreover, without the technical mediation the first (and the most important) phase of new type wars – information-psychological influence would not be possible. In this regard, ANT helped to relate to each other different NTW theory provisions that had autonomous importance, and during the empirical investigation showed how they interact in real life: the dichotomy between cognitive and physical, social and material turned into co-dependence, co-constitution and interrelatedness of both. The outbreak of war, its development, its turning points equally relied on the social and the material actors, whether they were television, buildings, weapon or walls. The case of hybrid war in Ukraine can illustrate the application of New Type War theory in real life: from the initial stage – undeclared character of war, blurred line between war and peace, the information-psychological influence for the purpose of minimizing kinetic encounter, the logic of further conflict development – the use of SOF, preparation of opposition forces and

armed detachments, subversive actions, reconnaissance, to conventional military measures and turning the conflict into a full-scale war. And Actor-Network theory, elucidating the points of interactions between human and nonhuman, helped to understand the dynamics of all the multimodal measures proposed by NTW theory.

The Donbas war is inconceivably complex assemblage of numerous networks which interflowing generated a what is frequently called as hybrid war. The Donbas war is a network of diverse and complicated actors: soldiers, volunteers, criminal gangs, ideological organizations, intelligence forces, SOF, right wing organizations, two black boxes - DPR, LPR – quasi republics, infrastructure of strategic importance, weapons, mining camps, coal trade, black weapon market, oligarch's interests, human incentives, propaganda, lie, political decisions, geopolitical ambitions, financing, symbols, myths, violence, military orders, etc. The Donbas war is also a network emerged from "injections" of human figures, weapons, instructions, military forces. The interactions of all these numerous human and non-human actors entailed the emergence of war.

However, the perception of Donbas war differs depending on the actor: "war as self-defence", "war as projection of power", "war as business", "war as creative design exercise", "war as ruthless millstone", etc. The realities are multiple. The War multiple.

5.2 Suggestions for future research

Hybrid war in eastern Ukraine presents a new type of war, peculiarities of which have not been accurately analysed and articulated. Moreover, the debates around this definition and its content reflect the confusion regarding general understanding of this phenomenon. In this regard, Actor-Network theory, as a unique theoretical and methodological approach, can provide with the tools to investigate this phenomenon to the basic elements and from different aspects. For instance, one of the interesting aspects of hybrid war in eastern Ukraine is involvement of

macro-actors. Considering that Actor-Network theory negates such dichotomy, insisting on their interconnection, it would be interesting to conduct a research on how macro-actors act through local networks: to trace their links and interactions during the war. Another interesting aspect of this war is industrial potential of this region and the role of coal in this war. The coal should be considered as a valuable actor in the network of war, and its impact presents an interesting case for investigation.

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