

Yury Fedorov, **Hybrid War à la Russe**. Kyiv: Center for Army, Conversion and Disarmament Studies, 2016. 160 pages. ISBN 978-966-159-066-8

Yury Fedorov is an independent Russian expert specializing in international security and Russia's military affairs. Prior to moving to Europe, he worked as professor at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations and was a researcher with the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute for USA and Canadian Studies. Later, he served as research fellow at The Royal Institute of International Affairs in London. As a freelance commentator, he regularly contributes to the RFE/RL Russian Service. Fedorov has published extensively on Russian foreign and security policy, arms control, and U.S.-Russia relations. In this book he provides a timely account of Russia's latest war on Ukraine.

In its endeavor to deconstruct what Russian elites call the new generation warfare – commonly referred to as “hybrid warfare” in the West – Fedorov's book is structured in three main parts, each of them analyzing a specific facet of this new kind of war. The first part of the book discusses Russia's aggression against Ukraine in its narrowest sense. It focuses on practical rather than theoretical aspects of Russia's strategy, such as what motivates Russian policy towards Ukraine and what the constituent elements of its strategy are. When analyzing the ingredients in the imperialist recipe for the main dish served up in top Russian circles and to Russian society at large, the author identifies two core elements – megalomania (Russia “rising from its knees”) and paranoia (the West as an inevitable, implacable enemy). These elements shape both Russia's geopolitical discourse and foreign policy. Fedorov argues that Russia's egregious international behavior is characterized not only by a grandiose project of imperial revival devised by President Vladimir Putin and outright hostility towards Western engagement with the post-Soviet (read, “Russian”) space, but also by a mind-set that is governed by a distorted vision of the Russian-Ukrainian relationship and of Russia itself. Both visions, Fedorov says, have very deep roots.

Fedorov analyzes in detail this prevailing Russian mind-set. Amongst the elements of this mentality are the myths of a “triune Russian nation” and a “single Russian people.” There are also broader, but still biased historical narratives that are the ideological foundations of Russia's imperial projects. Within this framework, Ukraine undeniably plays a crucial role. Its absence from the Russian fold makes the restoration of the Russian empire impossible. The scenario of Ukraine's integration within Euro-Atlantic structures would amount to nothing less than a major defeat for the Kremlin, and seriously threaten the end of Putin and his personalized rule.

Next, Fedorov drills down into the concept of hybrid warfare, which he understands as a “mix of conventional military operations with non-military methods of destabilization, corrosion and destruction of an opponent” (p. 8). These tactics are an amalgam of techniques that include, among others, economic pressure, subversion, and massive propaganda campaigns, all of which have been brought to bear on Ukraine.

A substantial number of pages in the first part of the book is devoted to the genesis and evolution of Russia's military campaign against Ukraine. That campaign involves the creation of highly complex "hybrid forces" whose composition the author carefully examines. Although it is accompanied by preparations for conventional conflict, hybrid warfare appears to the Kremlin as the most cost-efficient, and to a certain extent, the most safely covert strategy. It guides Russia's effort to destroy Ukraine's independence. One of the main arguments of the author is that the prolonged prior planning of this scenario in Ukraine by Russia's top circles was simply awaiting a pretext in order to trigger its full-scale implementation. The trigger was pulled when Yanukovich's regime was overthrown. Russia's successful annexation of Crimea was not necessarily attributable to the genius of the Russian military, but rather to the chaos that ensued in the vacuum created by Yanukovich's ouster from power. That success however was followed by the failure of the Kremlin's overly ambitious Novorossiia project. The Kremlin has been unable to sustain a large-scale invasion of Ukraine, and it also faces the inconvenient reality of a population in south-east Ukraine that is not so willing as it should be to stage a widespread popular uprising. This adds to Russia's even bigger failure in securing a friendly government in Kyiv, one that will adhere to Russian dictates.

The Kremlin is advancing and actively pursuing its foreign policy goals by fomenting and perpetuating turmoil in Eastern Ukraine that would impede the proper functioning of the entire Ukrainian state. It is relying, on the one hand, upon its ties with extremist and ultra-nationalist parties and organizations all across Europe, which often are anti-establishment and Eurosceptic. On the other hand, it is banking on its powerful foreign propaganda apparatus. Fedorov analyzes these two tools of Russian foreign policy in the second and third parts of the book. He points out that Russia's actual success in engaging European entities to benefit its own interests has been rather modest. First of all, the Kremlin has thus far failed to co-opt the political mainstream in Europe, because the annexation of Crimea substantially damaged its relations with other European nations. Secondly, its attempt to create an ambitious, integrated network of right-wing conservative forces that could facilitate a rapprochement between the European and Russian elites has ended in a fiasco. The Europeans are unwilling to risk their reputations and their electoral bases, and have thus proved to be rather weak tools for influencing European policies vis-à-vis Moscow.

Russian propaganda, the focus of the third part of Fedorov's book, has often been described as one of the most effective instruments of Russian policy in Europe. Its effectiveness is based not only on its scope, i.e., its assault upon a broad audience with messages that are carefully tailored by its propaganda machine for each target group within that audience, but also on its articulation by an impressive, complex array of actors. The weaponization of information, through widespread dissemination of disinformation, is the assigned task of Russian government bodies, Russian state-funded agencies and foundations, its intelligence services, its economic actors, corrupt journalists abroad, and academics, to name a few – the list is far from exhaustive. The targets of Russian

disinformation are no less diverse than the perpetrators of its propaganda war. They include business associations and corporations, particularly those interested in doing business with and in Russia. Those businesses have suffered from their inability to smoothly conduct their affairs as a result of international sanctions and thus have become the main lobbyists for softening them. Russia's targets also include elements of the Western mass-media, the general public, and decision-makers.

Kremlin-sponsored mass-media, notably RT and Sputnik, plays a paramount role in this strategy. The TV networks are key communication channels to the Russian audience both at home and abroad, as well as to the non-Russian public. They benefit from colossal budgets and have a worldwide reach. Meanwhile, the permanent information war in the realm of social media has developed into what amounts to a profession for propaganda trolls committed to performing their abhorrent work 24/7. Of equal, or even larger concern are Russia's so-called "friends" in Europe, particularly personalities who hold key positions of power in European countries and who have been, and possibly still are, being aided by the Kremlin in their business interests and their political endeavors. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban and Czech President Miloš Zeman are only two examples examined by the author.

Fedorov's work is a highly useful read for understanding an inherently complex subject. It also provides intriguing food for thought. As a handbook on "hybrid warfare *à la Russe*," this book largely fulfils its aim. It offers comprehensive insight into not only Russian strategic doctrine, but also the tactics that support what the Kremlin sees as a new generation of warfare. As such, it can be regarded as one of the most clear, straightforward outlines of the Kremlin's current international strategy, and it is helping to raise awareness of the implications of Russia's "hybrid adventurism" for the future. In portraying Russia's experience in Crimea and Donbas as a testing ground for "new means and methods of war," the author not only highlights the opportunities that the turmoil in Ukraine has presented to the Kremlin but also the threats that the West will be facing in the future from an ever more aggressive actor, wielding improved hybrid instruments. Particularly telling is the contrast between Russia's adaptation of its goals and tactics to the dynamic realities on the ground and the West's inflexibility, as well as its failure to properly assess those realities and come up with a firm response. Western behavior has been influenced to a significant extent by a lack of consensus between individual members of the European Union.

All in all, Fedorov's book should be mandatory reading for any person who aims to enhance his or her knowledge about hybrid warfare in general, and about Russia's understanding and implementation of it in particular. The reader will gain insight into Russia's current international behavior. One cannot fail to acknowledge and therefore praise the writing of this book and the substantial research upon which it is based. Both strengths ultimately certify its authenticity. Additionally, the book offers added value and enlightens the ongoing debate and the efforts to devise a strategy for Europe, the U.S., and NATO to handle the challenges that Putin's Russia poses to the very foundations of the rules-based international order. It straightforwardly lays those challenges

on the table. Last but not least, the book is useful for strategic forecasting, because it not only assesses the trends and motivations in the Kremlin's foreign and security policies, but also anticipates its future moves, a task at which the West has largely failed in recent years.

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