

# Nonviolent Civilian Defense to Counter Russian Hybrid Warfare

Maciej Bartkowski, Ph.D.



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## About the Author

Dr. Maciej Bartkowski is a scholar of civil resistance. He is the editor of *Recovering Nonviolent History: Civil Resistance in Liberation* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013) which highlights relatively unknown stories of nonviolent resistance as part of the national struggles for self-rule and independence. His most recent writings on civil resistance have focused on democratization, the conflict in Ukraine, and the struggle against ISIS in Syria.

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The views expressed in this study are his own.



## Preface

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It is comforting to believe that history marches in one direction toward progress and a brighter future. One specific example of such a belief might hold that through the application of non-violent people power, Central and Eastern Europe has reached a place of enduring peace, prosperity, and democratic pluralism. Sadly, history does not move in such a gratifyingly linear fashion and non-violent people power can, it turns out, be used for purposes of aggression and repression.

The present paper by Dr. Maciej Bartkowski—a noted analyst and historian of strategic non-violent conflict and an adjunct member of our faculty—acknowledges these facts. In this paper, Dr. Bartkowski lays out the well-established tenets of strategic non-violent conflict and documents their effectiveness in resisting and rolling back oppression. Then he describes how President Vladimir Putin's Russia has found ways of turning this form of struggle to offensive ends most notably in Ukraine but also in other countries on Russia's periphery. He concludes with some policy recommendations on how Ukraine and NATO can resist this aggression using wholly or partially non-violent means.

This paper is easily accessible and should be instructive for readers coming from several different intellectual and professional backgrounds. For readers steeped in the theory of strategic nonviolent conflict, this paper represents an interesting application of the theory they know well. However, people coming from a traditional strategic studies or military background will find that the theory of strategic non-violent conflict has much in common with military thought. For instance, they will find themselves thinking about centers of gravity, friction, and theories of insurgency and counterinsurgency. They will also be challenged to consider the limits on the effectiveness of their military tools. Finally, readers with a background in intelligence studies will be reminded of some aspects of covert political action but find them applied overtly.

Dr. Bartkowski's work draws on history, political science, and strategic studies and melds theory and practice to offer solutions to an important real-world problem. In these ways, it exemplifies the approach of our MA program in Global Security Studies (GSS) and, indeed, that of the Center for Advanced Governmental Studies of which the GSS program is a part. We at Johns Hopkins are lucky to have Dr. Bartkowski teaching for us and we all have a great deal to learn from this paper.

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## Executive Summary

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In January 2015, the Lithuanian Ministry of Defense published a manual for the Lithuanian people to use in case of a foreign invasion. It notes that “citizens can resist aggression against their country not only through armed [struggle]. Civilian-based defense or nonviolent civil resistance is another way for citizens’ resistance against aggression. (...) This method is especially important for threats of hybrid war.”

The Lithuania manual statement captures the essence of this study: recognition of the threat to European countries of unconventional warfare launched by Russia, understanding of the limitations inherent in armed response, and acknowledgement of the potential of nonviolent resistance in countering aggressive hybrid war.

This study has been directly informed by the ongoing conflict in Ukraine where Russia and Russian-backed rebels have waged a hybrid war of territorial conquest. This hybrid warfare has included elements of nonviolent collective actions. In response, the Ukrainian government launched an armed counterinsurgency with predictably costly results. Ukraine would have been better served by an approach similar to that outlined by Lithuania.

Russia has exploited civilian nonviolent actions in Ukraine and elevated them to the status of instruments of contemporary warfare in its latest military doctrine. For their part, NATO and its democratic member states need to give a serious consideration to the idea of genuinely grassroots, civilian nonviolent defense strategies. This study offers suggestions on how this can be done and what relevant nonviolent strategies might be.

Civilian nonviolent defense offers important short and long-term strategic advantages over traditional military strategies in defending people and territory. It exploits the political vulnerabilities of the adversaries. In particular, it looks for ways to undermine the essential pillars that sustain opponents and their war machinery while minimizing costs for the society under attack. Furthermore, national civilian nonviolent defense can instill a significant degree of civic empowerment, self-organization, decentralization, and civic solidarity—elements necessary for a successful post-war democratization.

# Nonviolent Civilian Defense to Counter Russian Hybrid Warfare

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Far too often scholars, experts, the policy establishment and mainstream media ignore or dismiss the power of popular nonviolent actions instead focusing on more attention-grabbing violence or the actions of government officials. They do this despite a great deal of evidence that nonviolent movements propelled by disciplined and organized citizens can successfully challenge entrenched political powers. In fact, a path breaking quantitative study shows that historically nonviolent movements have been more than twice as successful in defeating brutal regimes as their violent counterparts.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, authoritarian regimes have been paying attention to the power of nonviolent actions and have started to adopt them in pursuit of their territorial objectives. For example, instead of using its navy, China has mobilized thousands of its fishermen to fish in the disputed waters of the South China Sea. Chinese authorities offer these fishermen heavily subsidized fuel and pay for the satellite communications equipment that allows crews to call the Chinese coast guard in case of trouble.<sup>2</sup> There have been similar moves on another Chinese border, as well. At the beginning of September 2014, unarmed Chinese civilians, including Chinese nomads, entered the village of Demchok controlled by India in the disputed zone between the two countries.<sup>3</sup> There they engaged in protests, erected tents and led sit-ins that blocked locals from continuing work on an irrigation project to which the Chinese government objects.<sup>4</sup>

However, it is Russia which seems to have made the most extensive use of collective nonviolent actions in support of its geopolitical and military objectives. As we shall see, this occurred in the course of its so-called “hybrid conflict” against Ukraine in 2014. However, the Russian state also appears to have used this tactic in lesser-known campaigns to preserve, for example, its energy dominance (and with it its political influence) over Central Europe. Specifically, the sudden but well-organized civilian-led, anti-fracking protests in Romania were linked with Russian Gazprom’s efforts to mobilize a domestic grassroots campaign against exploratory drillings for gas in the north-east part of the country.<sup>5</sup> In an ironic way, all these developments reconfirm the significance of nonviolent techniques of civic mobilization though used by a state rather than authentically by ordinary people.

Russia’s reliance on nonviolent collective action also expands the traditional definition of hybrid warfare that is usually understood as “all forms of war” in which “a tailored mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism, and criminal behavior” are deployed simultaneously on the battlefield.<sup>6</sup> *The Oxford Handbook of War* is typical, describing hybrid conflict as a combination of regular and irregular violent warfare.<sup>7</sup> However as Frank Hoffman, of the National Defense University — a pioneer of the concept — notes, hybrid warfare has come to be equated only with violence and “fails to capture other non-violent actions.”<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, even Hoffman’s understanding of “a political warfare” conducted by non-violent means is confined to traditional diplomatic, economic, financial, informational, and cyber actions. Left out of this approach are collective nonviolent actions led by unarmed civilians: men and women of all ages in public spaces, the importance of which will be highlighted below.

Russia’s new form of hybrid warfare has called into question the effectiveness of NATO deterrence as well as the utility of traditional military-centric strategies in national security and defense. Russia’s new type of conflict calls for renewed attention to the concept of nonviolent civilian defense. Such a defense strategy can be an effective weapon in countering a new generation of hybrid warfare.



## The Kremlin's New Hybrid Warfare

Russia's hybrid warfare depends on many elements. Physical force is certainly one of them. Others, however, include propaganda, *maskirovka*, plausible deniability, and civilian-led collective nonviolent action.

During the conflict in Ukraine, the Kremlin has excelled in promulgating propaganda with an effectiveness not seen since the heyday of the Soviet Union. This information warfare conducted in social and mainstream media is designed to deceive adversaries, blur the line between reality and fantasy, drive a wedge between Western allies, and keep the Russian population itself in the dark. It became a crucial instrument in a larger strategy of the Russian government's "*maskirovka*." This Russian term refers to a broadly defined "action plan" deployed as a form of "camouflage, concealment, deception, imitation, disinformation, secrecy, security, feints, diversions, and simulation" against an adversary.<sup>9</sup> The Russian state has deployed *maskirovka* on the strategic, operational and tactical levels of its military and nonmilitary campaigns to disguise its actions going back to the Napoleonic Wars. It particularly honed these skills during the Soviet period.

In the Ukrainian conflict, *maskirovka* is manifesting itself as a type of camouflaged warfare that attempts to hide the presence on Ukrainian territory of regular Russian soldiers and their military equipment, and prevent the publication and dissemination of reports on soldiers' deaths in Ukraine.<sup>10</sup> Some observers have noted that this deception strategy eventually became ineffectual given that the Russian military's armed involvement in Ukraine became clear in the West.<sup>11</sup> However, the *maskirovka* efforts were designed not only to divide the Western public but also to maintain the support of Russians themselves for the Kremlin's position on Ukraine. The latter has more than succeeded, with Putin's approval rating hovering at the beginning of fall 2014 at 88%.<sup>12</sup> It did drop slightly thereafter but it was still at 81% in December even after the financial crisis hit Russia.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, more than 70% of the Russian citizens expressed support for Putin's policies in Ukraine.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to its camouflaged nature, Russia's hybrid war has also depended on Putin's strategy of plausible deniability. This deniability shows itself in many questionable claims: there is no interstate war to which Russia is a party, merely internal ethnic conflict; Russia is not shipping weapons to parties in Ukraine, they are sold, bought or stolen by private parties; there are no Russian troops on the ground, merely unaffiliated local militias; if there are Russians with military backgrounds engaged in combat fighting, they are off-duty army personnel, retired army veterans or armed civilian volunteers.

Beyond "*maskirovka*" and plausible deniability there was another, no less significant, component of Putin's hybrid warfare that was generally disregarded. This was the Kremlin's cynical use of collective nonviolent, civilian-led mobilization and actions in support of its military campaigns. The popular nonviolent uprisings in Serbia (2000), Georgia (2003) and finally the successful 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine all made the Kremlin worried about the possibility of a similar outburst of popular discontent in Russia and encouraged Putin to borrow from the repertoire of nonviolent organizing to beef up his own defenses.

In order to mitigate the possibility of people's revolution, the Russian regime created a seemingly grassroots civic movement of pro-government youths known as "*Nashi*" ("Ours"). It was subsequently deployed whenever the Kremlin needed to organize protest, counter-demonstrations, anti-opposition rallies, disruption of opposition events or harassment of pro-opposition figures or diplomats. The Kremlin has used the loyal crowds of unarmed civilians to organize what became to be known as "*Putingi*" (a neologism combining "Putin" with "*mitingi*," the Russian opposition's word for protest). In 2012, the Kremlin convoked its *Putingi* when the opposition held demonstrations to protest rigged parliamentary elections.<sup>15</sup> It did it again during the 2014 peace marches and rallies in Moscow and elsewhere in the country.<sup>16</sup> After the Euromaidan revolution in Ukraine, seemingly grassroots groups of citizens and "patriotic groups" in Russian launched an "anti-maidan."<sup>17</sup> This took on a more institutionalized structure with an "anti-maidan council" and "anti-maidan" patrols in addition to "anti-maidan" demonstrations and protests that were directed against anti-government activists and in support of Putin.<sup>18</sup>

In 2014 the Kremlin took another important step when it elevated civic nonviolent actions from an arguably defensive domestic asset for propping up the regime to an aggressive foreign policy and military tool. In doing so, it took lessons from the Euromaidan revolution in Ukraine. The Euromaidan was a popular upheaval that after 92 days of largely nonviolent mobilization and campaigns led to significant loyalty shifts within regime's political, business and security pillars. These defections combined with ongoing massive civil disobedience sealed the fate of the pro-Russian president Victor Yanukovych who fled Kyiv on February 21, 2014.<sup>19</sup> The two main lessons for the Russian security services were that the Ukrainian military would rather disobey orders than shoot unarmed civilians and that at least a semblance of popular grassroots support would be important for the ultimate success of the subversive operations that Russia planned in Ukraine.

Russian operations in Crimea began soon after Yanukovych's departure. In an interview on March 4, 2014, a week after arrival of Russian troops in Crimea, dressed in green uniforms without insignia who Ukrainians sarcastically referred to as "little green men," Putin openly discussed the strategy of using nonviolent demonstrations led by local civilians to neutralize the Ukrainian military.

Listen carefully. I want you to understand me clearly: if we make that decision [to send Russian army to Ukraine], it will only be to protect Ukrainian citizens. *And let's see those [Ukrainian] troops try to shoot their own people, with us behind them – not in the front, but behind. Let them just try to shoot at women and children!* I would like to see those who would give that order in Ukraine" [Emphasis added].<sup>20</sup>

Russia used the unwillingness of Ukrainian troops to fire on the fellow citizens to stage successful occupations, sit-ins and seizures of Ukrainian army garrisons in Crimea. This also created favorable conditions for desertions and defections among the members of the Ukrainian army. Instead of facing an overt armed assault that would have killed Ukrainian soldiers and raised their feelings of unit cohesion and battle spirit (as happened later in the conflict in the eastern part of Ukraine) the troops faced unarmed civilians. Moreover, the Russian side offered financial and institutional incentives to Ukrainian soldiers. For example, they were promised that they could keep their ranks and receive higher salaries if they switched sides.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, less than 25% of the Ukrainian troops stationed in Crimea stayed loyal to their state; 50% defected to Russia and the rest deserted.<sup>22</sup>

Collectively, these measures allowed the armed "little green men" to take control of the Ukrainian military sites without facing much resistance. In fact, the relatively peaceful takeover of Crimea earned Russian soldiers in Putin's media and among Russian public a nickname of "the polite people."<sup>23</sup> At the same time, Putin publicly acknowledged that seemingly nonviolent actions were in fact an effective cover for a lethal force. According to the Russian president, "you can do a lot more with weapons and politeness than just politeness."<sup>24</sup>

After the Crimean referendum held on March 16, 2014—arguably another instrument of nonviolent change to legitimize voting under the barrel of a gun—the Russian regime turned its attention to the eastern part of Ukraine.<sup>25</sup> At issue were the eastern Ukrainian regions of Luhansk and Donetsk that are known as the Donbas. The populations there had largely remained politically passive, and withdrawn from civic activism. People in the Donbas were only half as ready to come out on the streets and participate in political demonstrations as residents of western part of Ukraine.<sup>26</sup> Even regarding a sensitive issue such as a ban on the Russian language that should have raised ire among the Russian speakers in the eastern part of Ukraine, only 15% of the Donbas adult population expressed their readiness to join anti-ban demonstrations.<sup>27</sup> Close to two thirds of the Donbas adult population was not ready to engage in contentious actions in general.<sup>28</sup> The political apathy of the Donbas residents was on display during the Euromaidan revolution in late 2013 and early 2014. The Donbas, for example, did not experience massive demonstrations—pro- or anti-Maidan—on the scale of the mostly anti-Yanukovych protests in the capital and other cities in western and central Ukraine. Subsequently, the separatist minority with Russian backers exploited local political passivity and the civic vacuum, and with the help of the Russian media propaganda, reinforced the fear and existing general mistrust among some

of the Donbas people of the new central government or “violent fascist junta” that deposed president Yanukovich.<sup>29</sup>

As in the Crimea, unarmed civilians played important roles in the Russian and separatists’ strategy to takeover of the Donbas. It was not spontaneous but a planned action undertaken by Kremlin with mobilized pro-Russian minority groups that viewed new Kyiv government as illegitimate.<sup>30</sup> Unlike what had happened in Crimea, this time, the civilians were behind rather than in front of the military operations. First, small groups of disciplined armed men without recognizable insignia captured local government buildings, including Ukrainian police stations and security service headquarters in towns across the Donbas.<sup>31</sup> Then unarmed civilians quickly moved in, erecting barricades and surrounding the seized buildings, staging sit-ins and demonstrations in support of the rebels inside. In this way they became human shields for the armed men. Although they constituted a minority of the local population they were sufficient in number to bestow on rebels a semblance of local legitimacy in pro-Russian reportage.<sup>32</sup> Similar developments, including civilian-led, pro-Russian rallies and demonstrations, attempts to take over administrative buildings, and calls for “popular” referenda to establish “people’s republics” were reported to have taken place in other major Southeastern cities in Ukraine such as Odessa, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Kherson, Zaporizhia.<sup>33</sup> The Russian media, officials and pro-Russian civilians in the Crimea and in the Donbas region began referring to the unfolding events as the “Russian Spring.”<sup>34</sup>

Humanitarian convoys became yet another element of civilian, nonviolent action that Putin integrated into the military campaign in Donbas. Between late August and the beginning of January, 2015, Russia organized at least eleven major humanitarian convoys each consisting of hundreds of trucks that crossed the Ukrainian border without the permission of the Kyiv government and headed to the cities occupied by rebels.<sup>35</sup> (Russia has also employed the same tactic in Transnistria, a Moscow-controlled breakaway province of Moldova, sending its first “humanitarian convoy” there on December 3.)<sup>36</sup>

Nonviolent tactics are often intended to present an opponent with a dilemma such that no matter what the response toward a nonviolent action, it will harm the responding party.<sup>37</sup> Thus, the Ukrainian authorities faced a dilemma when Russia dispatched its “humanitarian convoys.” Bombing clearly marked and well-publicized white convoys could have helped Russia score an important propaganda victory. It could give the Kremlin additional cover for more overt military responses against the Ukrainian army that would certainly gain considerable support among ordinary Russians. Sensing that the latter option was worse than allowing convoys to pass through, the Ukrainian government generally refrained from attacking them. The Ukrainian government’s decision to let the convoys pass meant that Russia established *de facto* “humanitarian” corridors through parts of Ukrainian territory. Russia could then use these corridors to bring in military hardware in addition to civilian aid. On the way back to Russia, trucks were reported to be filled with machine parts stolen from Ukrainian industrial facilities in the Donbas.<sup>38</sup>

The new Russian military doctrine adopted by the Russian Security Council and signed by Putin on December 26, 2014, highlights the new characteristics of the “military conflicts” that the Russian government so skillfully engineered in Ukraine. According to the new document the modern conflicts include now “the use of indirect and asymmetric modes of actions” including “nonmilitary measures implemented with the extensive use of the protest potential of the population (...)” and externally funded “political forces and social movements.”<sup>39</sup>

In short, Putin and his security establishment have created a hybrid of armed and unarmed warfare in order to annex Crimea and destabilize southeast Ukraine. The unarmed aspect of the Kremlin’s campaign rested on the attempt to pull the loyalty of a mobilized minority away from their national government, exploit people’s mistrust, fear or outright hostility toward their government which in the past had failed to provide for them, and manipulate genuine yearnings for major political change. The Kremlin’s campaign in Ukraine benefited handsomely from civic demobilization, particularly in the Donbas region. There were several aspects to this demobilization. These included apathy, passivity and an overall lack of political awareness among the majority in the eastern part of Ukraine where people were

unaccustomed to independent organizing and insufficiently skeptical of information delivered to them by the sophisticated Russian propaganda.

## The Theory and Practice of National Nonviolent Civilian Defense

The Russian hybrid warfare against Ukraine relied on political mobilization of a loyal and vocal minority on the targeted territories. It provided an effective nonviolent cover for rebels and Russian special forces, bestowing on them and their actions a façade of grassroots legitimacy. This instrumental reliance on artificially (i.e. externally) propelled civic mobilization in support of military seizure of territories exposes the political vulnerabilities of this kind of hybrid warfare. A national civilian defense based on strategic nonviolent actions and an authentic grassroots mobilization is uniquely positioned to exploit these vulnerabilities.

More concretely, the logic of civilian national defense against the state that launches hybrid warfare rests on the assumption that the success and failure of a hybrid insurgency (as well as of a counterinsurgency) are determined by political mobilization both on the disputed territory and beyond. To paraphrase Colonel C.M. Woodhouse, the World War II soldier-scholar who helped lead Greek resistance against the Nazis, the mastery of defeating the opponent in hybrid warfare is the mastery of turning the populace against the adversary.<sup>40</sup> In other words, both foreign-inspired insurrections and subsequent counter-insurgency actions are likely to fail if they do not muster enough political organization and grassroots support on the occupied or contested territory. In this context, the “populace” must be understood broadly as encompassing the general public of the state under attack, as well as citizens of the invading power, and also civic networks and groups in other countries that have the ability to throw their support to one side or the other.

National defense that is strictly limited to nonviolent strategies can be confusing for the violent opponent. After World War II, British military historian Basil Liddell Hart noted that the occupation of Denmark and Holland created a major challenge for the German military when the population resorted to nonviolent resistance to fend it off.

[Nazi Germans] were experts in violence, and had been trained to deal with opponents who used that method. But other forms of resistance baffled them—and all the more in proportion as the methods were subtle and concealed. It was a relief to them when resistance became violent, and when non-violent forms were mixed with guerrilla action, thus making it easier to combine drastic suppressive action against both at the same time.<sup>41</sup>

National nonviolent civilian defense is rooted in the idea that the whole population—including all its institutions and formal and informal networks and groupings—comprises the resistance force. Such a force, in addition to deployment of non-military strategies of communication and psychological operations, wages an everyday warfare of a total and targeted noncooperation with the aggressor in all spheres of social, political, economic and cultural life. Such opposition makes any invasion or, later, occupation unsustainable in a long term. National civilian defense aims to raise the costs for the invader by shaking the loyalty of its troops, its crucial domestic supporters, and its public at large while at the same time enhancing internal cohesion, solidarity, and self-organization of the fighting society. At its core, national civilian defense is a political struggle conducted by political means through flexible but integrated local and national networks of civilians that can mobilize hundreds of thousands or millions of people to engage in disciplined, self-organized, agile and flexible anti-aggressor actions.<sup>42</sup>

Scholars of civilian resistance such as Gene Sharp and Adam Roberts have discussed national civilian defense since the 1960s. During the Cold War, however, policy communities in the West largely ignored

the concept. This neglect continues today. This is unfortunate, because the history of violent conflicts is dotted with encouraging examples of civilian defense and nonviolent resistance against more powerful foreign adversaries. The adversary whose strongest suit is military violence prefers being confronted with arms where it holds a clear advantage. Once challenged with the asymmetric response of massive nonviolent actions of disobedience and noncooperation it hesitates, reacts to events rather than initiates them and loses precious time and resources to adjust tactics and strategies to the political battlefield less favorable for the military.

For instance, during World War II, the Danes launched a campaign of total non-cooperation with the Nazi occupiers. This type of resistance helped Danes to realize that they could do something meaningful against a much stronger and brutal adversary. It also helped them to build solidarity and form information and communication systems. The Danes conducted numerous strikes, work slowdowns or “go home early” days as well as boycotts, demonstration and industrial sabotage.<sup>43</sup> These undermined German economic exploitation of the country. The Germans responded with crackdowns and states of emergency—telling evidence that what the Danish actions were hurting them. In its struggle against the occupiers, the Danish population was guided by ten commandments of disobedience:

1. You must not go to work in Germany and Norway.
2. You shall do a bad job for the Germans.
3. You shall work slowly for the Germans.
4. You shall destroy important machines and tools [that are used by Germans].
5. You shall destroy everything which may be of benefit to the Germans.
6. You shall delay all transport [used by Germans].
7. You shall boycott German and Italian films and [news]papers.
8. You must not shop at Nazis’ stores.
9. You shall treat traitors for what they are worth.
10. You shall protect anyone chased by the Germans.<sup>44</sup>

By resorting to what we now refer to as a classic civilian defense, Danes spared their country certain destruction that might otherwise have matched the fate of countries such as Poland. In the process, through their solidarity networks, the Danes saved hundreds of thousands of lives. This included 8000 Danish Jews rescued when Danes refused to collaborate with Germans and hid them in public institutions, such as hospitals and churches and in private house before taking them out on boats headed to Sweden.<sup>45</sup>

Similarly, the people of Czechoslovakia deployed nonviolent actions against invading Soviet troops in 1968. As a result of this resistance the Soviet invasion stretched to months instead of days as was initially planned. Czechs and Slovaks denied the aggressor services, food, water, shelter, and information. They did this with a simple 10-point instruction that was published in the main daily newspaper. When a Soviet soldier wanted something from the residents they were advised to respond:

1. Don’t know.
2. Don’t care.
3. Don’t tell.
4. Don’t have.
5. Don’t know how to.

6. Don't give.
7. Can't do.
8. Don't sell.
9. Don't show.
10. Do nothing.<sup>46</sup>

Civil resistance on the streets of Czechoslovakian capital, Prague, immediately after the Soviet invasion was described by one of the high-ranking Czechoslovak communist party members in the following terms:

Everywhere, building walls were covered with slogans and hand-painted posters. People were reading the newspapers and leaflets that were being turned out by printing presses everywhere, despite the efforts of the occupying forces to stop it. It was the picture of a city whose inhabitants were absolutely united in unarmed passive resistance against alien interlopers. Flags and the Czechoslovak coat-of-arms in various forms decorated the streets and shop-windows, and people were wearing them in their lapels as well. Wherever anyone had fallen a victim to Soviet bullets, there were improvised memorials with masses of flowers and state flags. Street signs had either been pulled down or altered (most often being renamed 'Dubcek Street') [in recognition of the Czechoslovak's reformist leader], and sometimes the signs were simply switched with others [MB: to confuse occupying forces].<sup>47</sup>

This strategy of civilian defense did not expel or defeat the Soviet Army though neither would armed resistance have done so. Instead, the strategy whose objective was to "isolate invaders socially and to deny them the profitable use of national resources – personnel, technology, and goods," significantly thwarted the Soviets' occupation plans. The initial plan of the invading Warsaw Pact troops was to wrest control from the hands of the reformist Czechoslovakian communist leaders and establish unchallenged Soviet military and political control over the country within 4 days. It took, however, 8 months to do so, much longer than would have been the case had the resistance been violent.<sup>48</sup> An armed uprising by Czechs and Slovaks against the invading Soviets would have ensured a complete and bloody defeat as happened in Hungary in November 1956. Once the orders were given to invade it took the Soviet forces only 6 days to crush the Hungarian armed uprising.

Furthermore, nonviolent resistance offered Czechoslovaks the chance to preserve the social and economic fabric of their society and safeguard enough civic strength to continue resistance through self-organization and nonviolent mobilization. This laid the groundwork for the eventual peaceful liberation of Czechoslovakia in 1989 and its smooth transition to democracy, not to mention the unprecedented peaceful divorce of the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993.

In both Denmark and Czechoslovakia, civilian defense protected civilians better than any armed resistance could have. Despite these successes, the idea never gained traction in the West during the Cold War. However, it had a brief renaissance immediately after the end of the Cold War.

After declaring their independence in 1990 the Baltic States began looking for a new security architecture, including closer cooperation with NATO, though membership was not a realistic expectation at the time. While waiting for NATO to open its doors, the Balts considered civilian nonviolent strategies in national defense as they acknowledged that their conventional military capabilities were negligible compared to those of Russia. They recognized that if war came, occupation was inevitable. Therefore, these countries considered plans for total citizens' resistance. After the national independence



referendum at the beginning of 1991 the Lithuanian Supreme Council adopted a resolution that governed the actions of the Lithuanian citizens and institutions in the event of an occupation by the Soviet troops. The resolution called for the adherence “to principles of disobedience, nonviolent resistance, and political and social noncooperation as the primary means of struggle for independence.”<sup>49</sup> This was followed by a government decree that established a Commission of Psychological Defense and Civil Resistance at the Department of Defense.<sup>50</sup> Similar efforts were undertaken in Latvia where the pro-independence Latvian Popular Front at the end of 1990 issued a call that in case of occupation the civilian population was to engage in total noncooperation, as well as “to ignore the attackers’ orders, not to participate in any elections or referendums, and to document all crimes perpetrated by the attackers.”<sup>51</sup> Plans were prepared to defend public institutions by forming chains of unarmed people around them. In June 1991, the Latvian Supreme Council agreed to set up a Center on Nonviolent Resistance. Its concept paper read:

Civilian-based defense in Latvia ought to be a constant supplement to its military defenses, in order to compensate for its comparative military weakness, to enhance self-esteem of its citizens and serve as a possible deterrent in case of a possible aggression. (...) Civilian-based defense in Latvia ought to be used in such cases: 1) as a basic means of defense in case the aggressor’s military might largely surpasses that of Latvian military units, as straight military defense is useless and can even serve as a pretext for violent repressions against civilians; 2) as an additional means of defense—if Latvia is endangered by an aggressor whose forces are approximately equal to the Latvian army; 3) as additional means of defense in case of a coup.<sup>52</sup>

Similarly in January 1991, officials in Estonia devised a plan entitled “Civilian Disobedience” that advised the Estonian people:

to treat all commands contradicting Estonian law as illegitimate; to carry out strict disobedience to and noncooperation with all Soviet attempts to strengthen control; to refuse to supply vital information to Soviet authorities and when appropriate to remove street names, traffic signs, house numbers, etc.; to not be provoked into imprudent action; to document through writing and film Soviet activities and use all possible channels to preserve and internationally distribute such documentation; to preserve the functioning of Estonia’s political and social organizations, e.g. by creating backup organizations and hiding essential equipment; to implement mass action when appropriate; and to undertake creative communication with potentially hostile forces.<sup>53</sup>

After the failed coup in Moscow in August 1991 neither Latvia nor Estonia undertook further work on national civilian-based defense. Only Lithuanians continued the work and in 1996 adopted a Law on the Basics of National Security of Lithuania that stated: “in the event of [foreign] assault (...), the citizens and their self-activated structures shall undertake actions of civil defense - non-violent resistance, disobedience and non-collaboration with the unlawful administration, as well as armed resistance.”<sup>54</sup> Then in 2004 Lithuania (together with the other Baltic States and four additional Central European countries) joined NATO.<sup>55</sup> This created the perception that the asymmetry between the Lithuanian armed force and its likely enemy to the east was no longer relevant. Accordingly, the civilian defense strategy was dropped from the 2005 iteration of Lithuania’s national security law. Thus NATO inadvertently killed the interest in non-military and nonviolent strategies of civilian defense among the Baltic States’ political and military establishments.

## Missteps and New Civilian-based Strategies in the Ukrainian Struggle

Given the virtual absence of civilian-based strategies and concepts from the security scene in recent years, it is not surprising that Ukraine made many mistakes in its recent confrontation with Russia. What were the major missteps in Ukraine’s campaign against the rebels and Russian forces in the country and

what could Ukrainians do that would be effective against the Russian hybrid war?

Ukraine has made some efforts to implement a civilian defense but these have been deeply flawed. In late June 2014, Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko called on the people of the Donbas to “become allies” and engage in “civil disobedience to the so-called people’s republics.”<sup>56</sup> Unfortunately, Kyiv gave no detailed advice as to what their civil disobedience should look like. Moreover, the call for nonviolent actions was combined with a renewal of Ukraine’s armed offensive against the rebels which became Kyiv’s main effort. The Ukrainian government’s armed campaign had the tragic effect of providing Russia a pretext for the military campaign in the region and eventually shattered any possibility for pro-Ukrainian popular mobilization in Donbas. People who were shelled by both sides were more preoccupied with saving their lives than organizing a collective response to Russia’s aggression. As a result of the armed actions by the Ukrainian government, many in the region were also reinforced in their views that Euromaidan really had been a violent *coup d’état* that brought to power warmongers destined to kill those who did not support them. Finally, Kyiv’s military response allowed Russia to accuse Ukrainians of killing their own civilians and present the Ukrainian government in Russia as “bloodthirsty putschists.”<sup>57</sup>

In mid-September, an imperfect ceasefire was announced in the Donbas which led to a substantial decrease in civilian and military casualties. Despite ongoing skirmishes in autumn 2014, the losses among the Ukrainian military and voluntary battalions dropped more than five times in comparison with the open military campaign during the summer months.<sup>58</sup> From the time the ceasefire was announced until December 2014, an average of 13 people were killed each day but this figure was nowhere near the estimated number of 45 people that perished every day during the 2014 summer offensive.<sup>59</sup> In the few weeks following the ceasefire a relatively peaceful and secure space was created for the locals to reemerge, go out on the streets and demand that the rebels stop plundering and start delivering basic services, including running schools and hospitals on the territories they occupied.<sup>60</sup> This might have been a fruitful approach given that the provision of services has not been rebels’ strongest suit.

Then fighting intensified again in the second half of January 2015 when the rebels backed up by the Russian military pressed an offensive on the Ukrainian positions along the ceasefire line. The Ukrainian military, often holding indefensible and strategically insignificant fighting positions—like the Donetsk airport that eventually fell into the rebels’ hands with the loss of Ukrainian lives and morale—responded with its own artillery bombardments. Shelling by both sides made it unlikely that the civilians in rebels’ controlled territory—most of whom trusted neither the insurgents nor the Ukrainian military—would blame the rebels for their social ills and lack of security and rally to the side of the government.

The killing of 30 civilians in late January 2015 in Mariupol by rocket fire from rebel-held territory was a tragedy that prompted international condemnation and brought ordinary Ukrainians into the streets in several cities to protest. On the other hand, no killing of Ukrainian soldiers has generated such a level of domestic and international response—yet another indication of the potential for civic mobilization and international outrage had unarmed Ukrainian civilians been at the vanguard of the conflict from its inception.

The anti-terrorist campaign in Donbas forced Ukrainian authorities to redirect scarce resources toward the war effort thus undermining the economy and making democratic transition more difficult. It also gave the new Russian regime in Crimea a propaganda coup. Crimean officials could now plausibly claim that had not been for a decisive intervention and annexation of Crimea by Russia, Crimean residents would have suffered a horrible fate at the hands of the Ukrainian army. At the same time, the Kyiv government became too distracted and bogged down in violence in the eastern part of the country to be able to devote significant resources to developing nonviolent strategies for the Crimea.

Nonviolent civilian defense also considers the fact that its adversary is not monolithic. Here again Kyiv



has missed opportunities. On a very fundamental level, the adversary consists of the Russian regime's elites, their political, business, cultural and religious allies, security and armed forces and, finally, the society at large. Splitting the aggressor regime's society is a paramount objective of nonviolent civilian-led defense. A related goal is to divide the aggressor regime from its foreign allies and supporters. Because societies tend to rally around the flag in the face of actual or impending casualties, these goals are most easily accomplished when the resistance is nonviolent. This is why it was useful for the Russian regime to use a small violent minority that emerged from Ukraine's Euromaidan revolution to paint Ukrainians as violent fascists bound on killing Russian speakers. Then the "anti-terrorist operation" (ATO) that the Ukrainian government launched in spring 2014 in Donbas fed into the Kremlin's propaganda of the violent Ukrainian state and inspired Russians to rally around Putin. As a result, Ukrainians have missed an opportunity to drive a wedge between Putin's regime and its own society by demonstrating their forceful but benevolent mobilization in the face of Putin's warmongering.

The Ukrainian government launched the ATO on the best case assumptions that Russia would not intervene and the West would send lethal aid. Neither of those assumptions actually transpired. As a result, by the end of the summer approximately 3500 Ukrainians were dead, tens of thousands were injured, hundreds of thousands were refugees, and the local economies and infrastructure had collapsed. Meanwhile, the rebels remained in control of the major cities in the region and more Russian troops were present than ever before.<sup>61</sup>

Arguably, nonviolent mobilization and resistance in the region, even if unsuccessful, would be less costly in terms of lives, infrastructure, and communities uprooted than armed defense. The use of civilian defense would also provide more transparency on the battlefield regarding who is shooting whom. The Russian and rebels' propaganda blamed a Ukrainian fighter jet for downing the Malaysian airline flight 17 in August 2014, or a Ukrainian anti-personnel mine for blowing up a bus with civilians near Volnovakha and the Ukrainian armed provocateurs and troops for shelling a trolleybus in Donetsk; both tragedies that occurred in January 2015.<sup>62</sup> Such accusations would have looked highly unconvincing even to the Russian public had Ukrainians conducted a disciplined nonviolent campaign rather than violent warfare. A nonviolent campaign would also have undercut Russia's claim that it had to dispatch its military in order to protect ethnic Russians who were physically threatened. In short, one-sided violence makes the application of *maskirovka* much more difficult. In the fog of war, it is much easier to manipulate the information, divide and paralyze the international community, and undermine the argument of the defending troops that they are protecting civilians.

Furthermore, rather than aiming to retake Donbas by launching the armed offensive – which would prompt an overwhelming Russian response – or preparing for armed resistance in case of further incursion by the Russian troops, Ukrainians could try to develop nonviolent strategies of social communication and actions. These would aim at raising dissatisfaction among the Russian troops and armed separatists in order to create fissures, defections and desertions. In the past, the psychological discomfort of interacting with a rejectionist civilian population that refused to provide services and offered no help not only wore the soldiers down but also increased the costs of the aggression or occupation to unsustainable levels.<sup>63</sup>

Civilian defense has greater chances of splitting the society of the invading country than does the armed resistance. This is significant because the Kremlin has already shown that it is afraid of no one but its own citizens. For instance, it introduced harsher laws against independent civic actions after the winter 2012 protests against the rigged parliamentary elections and the return of Putin to presidency in May 2012. Ukrainians have also substantial strengths in appealing to Russian society. They know the culture, speak a similar language, and have professional, social and family connections in Russia. Using appropriate communication and information-sharing strategies, they could appeal and eventually win

over a majority of Russians or at least make it easier for their potential Russian sympathizers and those Russians who oppose the intervention and war in Ukraine to reach out to the rest of Russian society.<sup>64</sup>

This strategy has been known as “a great chain of nonviolence” or extending the nonviolent battlefield into the societies of the adversaries.<sup>65</sup> It has been implemented in a variety of nonviolent campaigns in the past. For instance, in 1923, French and Belgian troops invaded Germany and occupied the industrial Ruhr in response to the failure of the Weimar republic to pay war reparations. The opinions of the French and Belgian societies about the invasion gradually but significantly changed as the effect of Germans’ nonviolent stance became apparent. One of the contemporaries to the occupation of the Ruhr described the phenomenon of fraternization and shifting loyalties of the occupying forces in the following manner:

The occupation had repercussions which on one had expected. Thousands of Frenchmen who went to the Ruhr as soldiers and civilians became *advocats des boches* intercessors on behalf of the Germans. For the first time they saw the Germans as they really are. They met an industrious people living in neat houses, people who were so very different from what war propaganda had led them to believe. There were even many high-ranking officers who had soon to be replaced as unsuitable because of their friendly attitude towards the Germans.<sup>66</sup>

There are other examples. During his disobedience campaigns in South Africa and India Mohandas Gandhi relied on nonviolent actions to create sympathy among the British public and media. Similarly, the East Timorese students who studied in Jakarta fraternized and created coalitions with the Indonesian students, discovering a common cause in organizing against the repressive regime of general Suharto that brutalized its own people as much as Indonesia’s different ethnic groups, including East Timorese.<sup>67</sup> Some Palestinians also attempt to reach out to Israeli activists who oppose the Israeli government’s occupation policies but their efforts to win over a significant part of the Israeli society are arguably undermined by violence used by other Palestinian groups. In all these cases, the nonviolent strategy rests on (among other things) reducing social distance between the struggling society and the people whose regime is attacking that society.

Ukrainian society has remained highly mobilized after the Euromaidan revolution. Because of this civic alertness and engagement, Russia-provoked destabilization in cities such as Odessa, Dnipropetrovsk, and Kharkiv has been largely avoided. In contrast, passive communities in Luhansk and Donetsk failed to build civic response mechanisms to warn against and thwart externally-fueled tensions in these cities. Consequently, the Donbas region was soon engulfed in the conflict. At the same time, however, Ukrainians devoted their energy either to joining or sending support for the Ukrainian army or volunteer militia while drills and training became focused on guerilla warfare or partisan struggle rather than nonviolent civilian defense which all could join.<sup>68</sup> Consequently, civilian defense in the Ukrainian context would benefit from stronger and closer civic-public partnership. The goal of such partnership would be to promote the idea that resistance is not about how well one shoots, but about individual and collective conduct and strategic planning of unarmed actions with the goal of undermining the power of the aggressor and launching protracted resilience at a time when foreign forces appear.

A partnership between the Ukrainian government and the broader society could be mutually reinforcing. For example, when Kharkiv-based activists called for the creation of an enormous traffic jam to block the Russian “humanitarian” convoy, the Ukrainian authorities could have immediately seized on this idea to promote and promoted it in the mainstream media.<sup>69</sup> This could have also been used to launch a public debate about best strategies and tactics to confront Putin’s hybrid warfare with the more extensive and planned use of collective nonviolent but still disruptive actions. Unfortunately the opportunity was lost.

Finally, civilian defense has greater chances of securing international sympathy, solidarity and technical

and financial aid than violent resistance does. In practice, it is difficult for democracies to decide to supply armaments to a party to a conflict, as Ukrainians, Syrians, and Bosnians, among others, can attest. Furthermore, democratic societies more often than not remain divided on the issue of military aid and even if their governments finally approve that assistance, it renders the societies relatively passive; they feel that their government has acted on their behalf. In contrast, international assistance to civilian defense can often mobilize millions of ordinary people abroad. A case in point is the anti-apartheid nonviolent struggle in South Africa in the 1980s that mobilized the American public and coalesced it around the “Free South Africa” campaign. The movement eventually brought to the streets hundreds of thousands of Americans and generated effective pressure on the political representatives on the state and national levels. Eventually, despite vehement opposition from the Reagan administration, the campaign led to the adoption of the economic sanctions by the US Congress in 1986.<sup>70</sup>

The Polish Solidarity movement during the 1980s is another example. It created an extraordinary level of sympathy and support among citizens around the world precisely because it remained nonviolent. It also helped Solidarity lead its public diplomacy during the first year after its official registration. When the Polish Communist government eventually imposed martial law in December 1981 to crush the Solidarity movement, mutual aid committees in solidarity with arrested Polish activists sprang up in towns and cities and on university campuses around the world. National trade unions as well as associations of doctors, lawyers, academics and artists from the US, Europe and Japan played an important role in mobilizing additional international support, leading fundraising and organizing deliveries of basic staple goods for the Polish society. Underneath the boxes of humanitarian aid—which the Polish communist government allowed—there was banned equipment for underground Solidarity, including dissembled parts of printing machines, ink and toner, or banned literature, smuggled through the network of freight and trucks, and by trusted truck drivers.<sup>71</sup> Such massive assistance and expression of solidarity would have been impossible had the Polish anti-communist movement been violent. In fact, even if some support could have been mobilized it would have been unlikely to find an addressee since most of the resisters would have been killed, displaced, become refugees, or sent to prison.

Ukrainians might have been more successful in gaining such a high level of moral recognition and financial support among the world community had they relied on nonviolent means of mobilization to resist Russian-fueled insurgency and political violence.

Looking forward, a durable ceasefire in Donbas is in Ukraine’s best self-interest even if its part remains under a rebel control. A workable truce would allow Ukraine to focus on reforms, on the fight with endemic corruption, and on consolidating its democratic gains. Furthermore, it would free resources and provide time and space for the Ukrainian authorities to implement population-centric strategies for the Donbas and the Crimea and Russian society in general. Such strategies would aim at increasing trust in Ukraine, at stimulating dissatisfaction with Russian rule among local populations, and encouraging opposition in Russian society against Putin’s authoritarian regime, including its intervention in Ukraine.

Even given the renewed violence of late January 2015, Ukraine, for the reasons outlined earlier, would still be better off long term if it declared a unilateral cessation of violence and withdrew its military from the fault lines. The goal would be to create a wider buffer zone between the Ukrainian army and rebels rather than continue costly and unsuccessful armed engagement. In order to make a unilateral truce work Ukraine could seek a UN Security Council resolution that would authorize deployment of a substantial UN peace-enforcement force to a buffer zone in the Donbas region. Even if Russia were to have its own division under the UN flag, this would not change the situation on the ground with thousands of Russian troops already present in the rebel-controlled area. A UN-enforced truce would however allow the guns to fall silent on both sides and, in turn, create an environment in which local civilians could reassert themselves in the occupied territories. The dynamics of the conflict would then change in favor of nonviolent campaign.

If Russia vetoed a carefully crafted UN resolution authorizing deployment of international troops to Donbas the Kremlin would expose itself to the court of world opinion, face even greater international criticism for derailing peace efforts, further alienating European governments and their societies, and hardening views abroad around the necessity for further sanctions.

## Civilian National Defense in NATO

With the rise of Russia's new type of hybrid war which makes offensive use of civilian action, NATO's traditional military deterrent suddenly looks shaky and unconvincing. The Baltic States and some Central European countries are concerned that NATO is ill-prepared to provide an effective defense.<sup>72</sup> Poles, for example, still remembering broken pledges of the Western countries to come to Poland's aid in case of the German invasion in 1939 are less than fully trustful of the NATO commitments in case of the Russian aggression. As a result, they have begun reviving the Home Army, a World War II-era Polish partisan force (the memory of which is highly romanticized) in preparation for possible guerrilla warfare.<sup>73</sup> The fact that the Home Army was not successful during World War II in liberating Warsaw, let alone the country writ large—as the non-violent Solidarity did—has been entirely lost on the militia enthusiasts. Some NATO members in Western Europe have also been less than ready to approve more robust security measures to protect the newer NATO members which are closer geographically to Russia than they, because of the concern about provoking the Kremlin.<sup>74</sup>

The moment is ripe for NATO members and perhaps the Alliance itself to give more thought and recognition to the concept of a national nonviolent civilian defense and return to the ideas that the Baltic States abandoned a decade ago. National civilian defense offers a more effective potential response to this new Russian threat than does a traditional military buildup, and at far less cost.

It is once again Lithuania that paves the way for rethinking national defense strategies. Motivated by a growing concern about the Russian hybrid war, the Lithuanian Ministry of National Defence released a one hundred page manual on *Things to Know about Readiness for Emergency Situations and Warfare* in January, 2015.<sup>75</sup> The manual has reintroduced a fully-fledged concept of nonviolent civilian defense into the Lithuanian national defense strategy. After the manual discusses the work of state institutions, emergency services, security forces, including measures to increase safety and security of population in case of armed conflict it then offers details about actions that civilians can undertake to challenge external aggression without arms.<sup>76</sup> Implicitly, the manual illustrates the extent to which Lithuanian government has become skeptical of the ability of NATO to deal with the external hybrid threat.

The “198 nonviolent methods” of Gene Sharp, including his three general categories of tactics (protest and persuasion, noncooperation and nonviolent intervention) figure prominently in the text.<sup>77</sup> In fact, the manual borrows from Sharp directly when it states that “in the case of civil defense the whole society becomes nonviolent fighting force”.<sup>78</sup>

The manual calls for the use of any of the categories of nonviolent methods depending on a situation and encourages organized noncooperation, including boycotts and disobedience campaigns in case of occupation. The manual advises people to distribute leaflets, work in underground presses, work slowly, go on hunger strikes, refuse to recognize legitimacy of occupier's organizations by not participating in or joining them, set up a network of information portals that would disseminate information about civil resistance, wear unifying national symbols, stay at home so invaders would be ‘greeted’ by empty streets and buildings, ignore curfews hours, ostracize collaborators, and “refuse to help occupiers in any way.”<sup>79</sup> It also calls for exercises — what might be called nonviolent wargames — in order to prepare and practice the implementation of these measures. According to the manual greater understanding of nonviolent actions among a general population better prepared are the people to use them.

Taking its cue from both Lithuania and Russia's new "military doctrine," NATO would benefit from formally acknowledging the importance of civilian-led actions and people power. The major difference between the Russian and the NATO versions would be in the authentic application of grassroots mobilization of millions of citizens for nonviolent resistance actions, relying on its members' democratic, decentralized and transparent processes of civic preparedness and empowerment.

NATO should also take into consideration recent studies on the effectiveness of nonviolent campaigns against brutal adversaries that show greater robustness of civil resistance in reaching important political objectives in violent environments than armed struggles have.<sup>80</sup> This and other publications cited in this study, could be shared with appropriate state structures and civic organizations tasked with enabling and facilitating civilian defense strategies and actions.<sup>81</sup>

NATO militaries would probably be helpful in the unlikely case of a violent Russian blitzkrieg-style armored invasion. However, in the case of a Ukraine-style hybrid war that would involve local civilian populations NATO's conventional military strategies are unlikely to bring resolution and stability. They might indeed backfire if international media were to broadcast images of NATO soldiers shooting at unarmed civilians protesting against them.

In practice, NATO's nonviolent civilian-based defense efforts could have four goals in countering aggressive hybrid warfare campaign:

1. To prevent or delay the adversary from achieving its immediate campaign objectives on the territory of a NATO member state;
2. To undermine the adversary's capacity and willingness to continue its campaign on the territory of a NATO member state;
3. To build national unity, civic solidarity and discipline by planning organized nonviolent resistance of all citizens in the event of externally stirred domestic unrest, or invasion and occupation;
4. To instill, protect or consolidate democratic practices while waging the struggle.

NATO and its member states should translate these goals into operational plans. For instance, as the Baltic States prepared to do some twenty five years ago, the NATO member states could work with civic groups to develop ground mechanisms for the rapid deployment of thousands of volunteers to create "living walls" of unarmed people to defend local administrations in case of troubles. Citizens could also be trained and mobilized to block major railways, road arteries or runways to slow down the advances of the adversary.

Borrowing from one of the successful tactics used during the Euromaidan revolution in Ukraine in the winter of 2013-14, the so-called "automaidan," countries could develop strategies for mobilization of millions of car owners to create obstructions for transportation and movement of the adversaries and to reach out to local communities with information and to assist them with their campaigns.<sup>82</sup>

Such nonviolent actions may involve casualties. However, in contrast to an armed struggle, the killing of unarmed civilians during disciplined civil resistance actions can create a moral and political outrage not only among the troops of the adversary but also among its public and the international community in general. It can clearly demonstrate which side is violent and which side defends itself without weapons, reducing the fog of war and effectiveness of the adversary's propaganda.

Communication and information would be important to such a defensive effort. Authorities on all

levels of government could work with civil society to ensure that information continues to flow to and from them. In addition, the central, regional and local public administrations must play a crucial role in support for and development of specific guidelines for nonviolent actions in case of invasion. The authorities could also establish special funds to support civil resistance, and ask civic actors to do fundraising drives in preparation for the implementation of specific actions.

Much as the U.S. Army says that “every soldier is a sensor,” citizens across the country could collect information about the movements of enemy troops, repressive actions and atrocities they commit, as well as non-violent actions in preparation or underway. Thousands of local communication centers could be responsible to accumulate, verify and retransmit that information to citizens elsewhere in the country and beyond.

Noncooperation towards usurped authorities could be encouraged. It would be important to avoid open rebellion but rather to encourage lower risk actions such as those practiced in earlier times by the Danes and Czechoslovaks. These would include work slowdowns, no-shows in social and political events important to the adversary, wearing national symbols, and ostracizing occupying forces.<sup>83</sup> Next to overt mass resignations from the usurped local authorities, locals could refuse to acknowledge or comprehend orders or instructions from the usurped government and to implement them effectively. They could train to engage in mass inefficiencies in performing day-to-day duties while they run adversary-captured institutions or social services.

Simultaneously NATO and its member states could work on strategies to cause disaffection, internal dissent and mass-based defections among the adversary’s troops and adversary’s allies including business, religious and intellectual establishments as well as military families and the general public at home. The actions would aim at building confidence, increasing fraternization between locals and the adversary’s troops, countering the adversary’s propaganda war, and reducing social distance between ordinary people on both sides of the conflict. The ultimate goal would be to increase uneasiness and eventually an open opposition of the population to its government’s actions abroad. This would be easier to achieve if the attacked population maintained nonviolent discipline. Such a strategy would make it much more difficult for the opponent to rationalize its vilification of the local people and prop-up its domestic support for aggression.

Finally, NATO should emulate the Lithuanian Defense Ministry’s new manual by mounting routine and extensive training exercises in which the civilian population would practice these measures.

NATO member states could develop civil resistance strategies independently of and separated from their strategies for armed defense. Rather than planning for the simultaneous use of both forms of resistance, NATO could wage them at different times depending on whether it faces a hybrid or a conventional assault. They could even use the two different kinds of resistance simultaneously but in different locations. For example, civil resistance could be organized in urban centers while armed resistance could be limited to more rural areas, thus lowering overall civilian casualties.

Ultimately, by supporting the development of a civil resistance infrastructure, NATO would strengthen the defensive capabilities of its members and, indeed, contribute to a strategy of deterrence by denial. Furthermore, it would promote national and local democracy and democratic practices that some of its members like Hungary or Turkey could benefit from. Nonviolent civil defense could indeed produce important democratic dividends for countries that train for and implement it as recent studies have showed that the practice of nonviolent resistance increased ten-fold the chances of a democratic outcome in these countries 5 years after the end of the conflict.<sup>84</sup> In fact, one study has shown that civil resistance against violent regimes in 50 transitions between 1972 and 2005 led to free and open



political systems in 64% of cases compared to only 20% when resistance mixed violence with nonviolent actions.<sup>85</sup> Consequently, nonviolent civilian defense offers an effective means of preserving and even deepening democratic practices at a time of conflict. Effective civilian defense is based on self-organized and decentralized civic networks with substantial social capital. In that sense, any support for the development of national civilian defense strategies will, at the same time, strengthen coalition building, civic engagement and associational life of local and regional communities. In short, protracted preparation for nonviolent resistance is more propitious for the development of democratic culture and practices, including stronger civil society institutions than its armed counterpart.

## Conclusion

The hybrid war that Russia has launched in Ukraine and enshrined in its military doctrine necessitates a rethinking of the West's traditional military strategies. Nonviolent civilian defense has been theorized and its elements have been practiced and implemented throughout numerous conflicts over the last century.<sup>86</sup> Democratic states must not ignore this body of knowledge and practice which could improve their collective and individual defense and security.

The latter part of this study showed how Ukraine, NATO and its members could think about nonviolent civilian defense in the context of concrete strategies and campaigns that can be pursued on the ground. Its effectiveness will ultimately depend on the thorough organizational planning and systemic skills, honing of public and civic institutions as well as ordinary people involved in developing and implementing nonviolent strategies. In contrast, however, to violent popular resistance that is usually carried out by a limited number of physically fit men operating in a clandestine guerrilla network, nonviolent resistance can mobilize and engage the whole society. Everyone can participate in open acts of noncooperation, disobedience and refusal to accept adversary's authority. Nonviolent actions mobilize many more millions of people than armed resistance ever could, bringing a real, hard, power to the resistance.

Arguably, a similar, civilian-based, nonviolent organizing and resistance could be considered in the context of overall insurgency and counterinsurgency warfare. In the long run, the insurgency and counterinsurgency are about a popularity contest for the support of local population. Without that support neither an insurgency nor a counterinsurgency is likely to prevail on the battlefield.

However, far too often, in the contest for a local legitimacy, armed response by a counterinsurgent force backfires. It allows the rebels to blame the counterinsurgents for the suffering of the local population. Insurgents can thus maintain a degree of support among locals or at minimum ensure that local communities will not join the government forces. The mounting death toll among noncombatants that both insurgency and counterinsurgency blame on each other also splits the international community.

Furthermore, a violent conflict allows the insurgency to justify its spectacular brutality and reach out to new recruits while, at the same time, concealing its own ineptitude in providing basic services and effective governance. Such a dynamic is common in war but is undermined when only one side uses violence.

No strategy is without risks. The issue is which strategy lowers the risk for civilians and increases the costs to the adversary. Civilian defense carries with it a number of strategic advantages over the armed struggle, particularly for weaker states that feel threatened by more powerful neighbors. In such struggles, local civilian populations remain safer and their self-organization benefits the country in its eventual transition to democracy after the conflict ends. To this extent, such a strategy is effectively congruent with NATO's political culture and democratic principles.

In general, by alleviating nonviolent civilian defense to a core defense and security strategy of its member states NATO would redefine the *raison d'être* for its military forces, prioritizing their deployment in conventional armed struggles while relying on the mechanisms of civilian nonviolent defense in hybrid and insurgency warfare. As Afghanistan showed, NATO military was ill suited to win war led by civilians rather than a standard army and even worse fitted to build democratic practices in the country. Only people themselves, through their organized actions on grassroots level, in their localities and nationally, would be able to defeat local insurgencies in a long run and create more secure and democratic environments afterwards. International civilian structures that develop a good understanding and knowledge of civic mobilization, collective civil resistance and grassroots organizing in violent environments will be better positioned to help locals deal with insurgency than the traditional military alliances.



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