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Spreminjajoča narava vojskovanja v sodobnih mednarodnih odnosih: primera Rusije v Ukrajini in Kitajske v Južnokitajskem morju.

Magistrsko delo

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Abstract

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Globally, interstate warfare is declining. Yet, nations are still able to obtain certain objectives, such as more territory, that were previously achieved through interstate warfare. This research will examine this phenomenon and will focus on the changing nature of warfare in contemporary international relations. Its goals are to find out how international relations, the geo–political landscape and the international community are affecting warfare and vice versa, and how nations are applying different forms of warfare to achieve their goals.

To do so, two case studies have been selected: Russia in Ukraine and China in the South China Sea. The international relations theories of offensive realism, revisionism and gray zone strategies are then applied to these two case studies in order to link both case studies, find patterns and answer the research question.

The key findings of this research are that Russia and China are not content with the current geo–political landscape and that they wish to obtain certain objectives/changes. However, they are not able to achieve these through traditional military methods (interstate warfare) nor diplomacy. They therefore need to use a method that is a mixture of the two. This method is called gray zone warfare.

Key words: international relations, changing nature of warfare, gray zone strategy, China and Russia.

Povzetek

Spreminjajoča narava vojskovanja v sodobnih mednarodnih odnosih: primera Rusije v Ukrajini in Kitajske v Južnokitajskem morju

Na svetovni ravni se zmanjšuje število meddržavnih vojn. Kljub temu pa države še vedno lahko dosežejo določene cilje, kot je povečanje ozemlja, ki so jih prej dosegle z meddržavnimi vojnami. Ta naloga bo preučila ta pojav in se osredotočila na spreminjajočo se naravo vojskovanja v sodobnih mednarodnih odnosih. Njeni cilji so ugotoviti, kako mednarodni odnosi, geopolitično okolje in mednarodna skupnost vplivajo na vojskovanje in obratno, in kako narodi uporabljajo različne oblike vojskovanja, da bi dosegli svoje cilje.

S tem namenom sta bili izbrani dve študiji primerov: Rusija v Ukrajini in Kitajska v Južnokitajskem morju. V teh dveh študijah primerov se nato uporabljajo teorije mednarodnih odnosov ofenzivni realizem, revizionizem in strategija sive cone, z namenom povezave študij primerov, odkritja vzorcev in odgovora na raziskovalno vprašanje.

Ključne ugotovitve te raziskave so, da Rusija in Kitajska nista zadovoljni s trenutnim geopolitičnim okoljem in želita doseči določene cilje / spremembe. Ker tega ne moreta doseči s tradicionalnimi vojaškimi metodami (meddržavnimi vojnami) in diplomacijo, morata uporabiti metodo, ki je mešanica obeh. Ta metoda se imenuje vojskovanje v sivi coni.

Ključne besede: mednarodni odnosi, spreminjanjoča narava vojskovanja, strategija sive cone, Kitajska in Rusija.

Table of Content

1 Introduction

1.1 The research question and hypothesis

This research aims to find out how nations obtain objectives that were previously achieved by waging war without entering a state of war whilst simultaneously navigating the contemporary geo–political landscape and dealing with the international community. Such objectives can be more territory or access to resources but also more abstract ones such as an increase of international power and the ability to assert influence. For this research two case studies have been selected: The Russian Federation (Russia) and Ukraine and the People's Republic of China (China) and the South China Sea.

The research question is: *How are the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China able to obtain objectives usually associated with victory in war while avoiding a state of war and its negative consequences?* Three themes are to be distinguished within this question: *if* Russia and China are pursuing certain objectives that were historically achieved through warfare, *why* they are pursuing these objectives and *how* they are chasing these objectives without entering a state of war.

The hypothesis is that, because of the contemporary international community and geo–political landscape including international organizations such as the UN as well as the regional hegemony of the US, and the international (economic) interdependence, Russia and China cannot obtain certain objectives by waging war because the costs would simply be too high. They are therefore finding ways that are not excluding the usage of military capabilities but also do not entail entering a state of war with another nation.

1.1.1 Justifying the choice for these two case studies

The two case studies have been chosen because they show many similarities that allow this research to establish certain links. Such similarities include the status of both Russia and China as regional powers (Yilmaz, 2017). Both are not as powerful as the regional hegemon the US However, they are vast nations with a large population and they have significant economic, political and military means. They have therefore influence and power within the international community (Yilmaz, 2017). This shows that firstly, they have the capabilities to use gray zone strategies. Secondly, because they are significant powers in their own right, the usage of gray

zone strategies by these countries is successful. If other, less powers were to use gray zone strategies, the threshold to undertake action (by the international community and specifically the US) might be significantly lower since the cost for upsetting a relatively weaker nation would be a lot less costly.

Both nations are also a permanent member of the Security Council and have therefore access to the highest level of international political decision making and the right to veto (Archer, 2014, pp. 19–20). This is important, because it strengthens the argument that nations use gray zone strategies because they cannot achieve their objectives through international political processes. It could be argued that other countries that do use the strategies described in this research do so because they not have access to the same level of international decision making. However, both Russia and China do and they still do apply gray zone strategies.

Finally, both nations are measured revisionist states that function within the international community and do not wish to upset it too much but simultaneously try to alter said international community in their benefit (Mazarr, 2015, p. 11). They strive to change the status quo but do not want to use extreme measures (such as war) that would alter the system too much.

The two case studies show differences as well. Russia used to be a regional hegemon but now has to deal with a diminishing sphere of influence. China however is increasing in power; its sphere of influence is ever–expanding and it is expected to surpass the United States of America (the US) in economic and military power in the future (Yoshihara en Holmes, 2011, pp. 52–53). Both are also behaving very differently in both cases. China is conducting itself very patiently and hardly uses any military means to achieve its goals (Karka, 2015, China "Minds the Gap" in International Law). Russia on the other hand is acting very suddenly and direct and does not shy away from using its military forces (Chivvis, 2017, p. 2). These differences allow this research to look at the issue from different angles to see if there are any links that can be made that occur even though the two case studies differ.

Other case studies have been considered. One was Iran and its usage of gray zone strategies in the Middle East (it's usage of propaganda and proxy forces in contemporary conflicts such as Iran but also in the past during the Iraq–Iran) and Hezbollah (arguably the inventor of modern hybrid warfare during the invasion of Lebanon by Israel) (Mazarr, 2015, p. 44). However, these case studies were dismissed because the actors in questions do not have the same international (economic, political or diplomatic) powers as Russia and China and therefore not the same

array of options, they do not have access to the same level of international decision making, they do not have the same military capabilities as Russia and China, and in Hezbollah's case because it is not a nation–state. Furthermore, they do not use all the different facets of gray zone strategies within the same battle space such as Russia in Ukraine and China in the South China Sea do (Mazarr, 2015, pp. 44–45).

1.1.2 Relevance to the studies of international relations

This research is relevant to the studies of international relations because it studies the conduct of nations within the international community. It helps explain why certain countries are acting/reacting in specific ways to one another and their environment. The geo–political landscape with all its facets is continuously changing which means that the ways nations interact with each other change as well. It furthermore researches one of the most fundamental and dramatic elements of international relations: war. As the geo–political landscape, military technology, international institutions and norms as well as the global (economic) interdependence and connectiveness change, so does the way nations interact with warfare. This research will scrutinize the role warfare plays within international relations, how the actors of the international community adapt their style of warfare to the changes within the geo–political landscape and offer answers that will link the changing of the geo–political landscape and international relations as a whole with the altering nature of warfare. What this research aims to find out is how nations adapt to contemporary international relations by changing the way they wage war in order to obtain certain objectives.

1.1.3 The set–up of this research

This research will start by explaining how warfare has changed in recent times and what possibilities/limitations the waging of a war offers within the international community. It will establish a link between international relations, the international community and war, and how each element affects the other. Chapter 2 then continuous by established a theoretical framework that will form the basis for this research. This theoretical framework is made up by the theories of *offensive realism*, *revisionism* and *gray zone strategies.*

Chapter 3 will then scrutinize the first case study, namely Russia's actions in Ukraine. It will use the theoretical basis established in chapter 2 to argue that Russia is pursuing certain

objectives within Ukraine such as the increase of its own sphere of influence and hindering other actors from asserting their influence within the country. These objectives will start very broad (on a geo–political level) and will become more detailed the further the chapter goes. It will then claim that Russia is doing so because it aims to increase its influence and because it is not content with the current status quo. Chapter 3 will finish by using gray zone strategy to explain how Russia is aiming to fulfil its objectives in Ukraine without entering a state of war.

Chapter 4 will look at the case study that revolves around China and the South China Sea. These objectives will start very broad (on a geo–political level) and will become more detailed the further the chapter goes. It will point out that China has certain objectives in these waters such as increasing its sphere of influence and diminishing the power of its competition, the access to valuable resources and the attempt to diminish the influence of the US. It will conclude by applying the gray zone strategy theory to the case study in order to explain how China is chasing its objectives. The research will end by summarizing the finding in the conclusion.

1.1.4 The limitations of this research

The limitations of the research can be found in the theories used. International relations theories always limit the scope of the research and force the researcher into a certain way of thinking. Although this helps to create a framework that can explain certain behavior and find and answer to the research question, it also does not take into account that this type of behavior might have another explanation. Furthermore, this research will use sources written in English or translated into English. The researcher does not speak Russian or Mandarin and can therefore not use sources written in these languages. The sources might therefore be biased. The researcher will try to be as unbiased as possible and use the theoretical framework to establish findings and analyze them. Furthermore, the research and its case studies are bound by time. China's actions in the South China Sea are still ongoing and they might not yield the results expected. Finally, only two case studies will be mentioned. Other case studies could have been used but this would have significantly increased the volume of this research.

1.2 Methodology

This research will be a theoretical one. Existing literature and theories will be used, mostly from the experts or main contributors of the theories in question. It will try to establish connections between these theories in order to shed new light on them. This research will also be a comparative case study. Two case studies have been chosen in order to find the previously named connections.

1.2.1 Theories used

This research uses three theories as its starting point. They are used to establish a theoretical framework that will form the basis for this research. These theories are not meant to 'solve' the two cases. The study of international relations is never black and white and almost always deals with complex matters that have too many dimension and facets to be explained by a theory. However, they do offer a framework in which this research tries to explain certain behavior. It helps to find patterns in the two case studies and establish links between the geo–political landscape and international relations, the behavior of Russia and China and the changing nature of warfare. The first theory used will be *offensive realism*. This theory will establish a broad theoretical framework. The second and third theories are the theories of *revisionism* and *gray zone strategy*. The theory of revisionism will narrow the broad generalizations established by the theory of offensive realism for both case studies. It will be linked to the theory of *gray zone strategy* which explains how the two case studies are using different types of warfare.

1.2.1.1 Literature review offensive realism

Firstly, Mearsheimer's (2014a, 2014b, 2014c) theory of *offensive realism* is used to establish a general basis that helps explain why Russia and China are pursuing certain objectives. In his work, Mearsheimer argues that every nation will try to increase its relative power within the international system in an attempt to achieve regional hegemony. Once regional hegemony is established, a nation will try and meddle in the sphere of influence of other nations to prevent them from achieving regional hegemony in their region. Russia's annexation of Crimea can be explained via this perspective, since Ukraine (and so Crimea and the strategic Russian port of Sevastopol) were drifting out of the sphere of influence of Russia and into the sphere of influence of 'the West' (BBC News, 2013). China's actions in the South China Sea enable it

to establish an extra periphery along its coasts that can prevents other nations (e.g. the US) from projecting influence and to increase the influence of China in the region (Hurst, 2016, pp. 2–3).

1.2.1.1.1 Offensive realism vs defensive realism

Mearsheimer's theory has a lot in common with Waltz' theory of *defensive realism* (Lobell, 2010). Within this research, it is easy to confuse the two with one another. What is seen as an act of offensive realism by one actor, can be seen as behavior more in line with defensive realism from the point of view of its adversary. The invasion of Crimea by Russia can therefore be seen as an aggressive act (in line with offensive realism) in order to obtain more power or as a defensive act (in line with defensive realism) aimed to defend the influence Russia has within the region. This research has chosen for the former one for several reasons. Firstly, as Lobell (2010) explains, defensive realism claims that nations will refrain from trying to conquer more territory because it will rarely be worth the cost. Offensive realism claims that nations will always aim to acquire more power (such as more territory) because it is in their interest. In both case studies, Russia and China do try to obtain more territory. Defensive realism also states that nations are interested in keeping the status quo (Lobell, 2010), offensive realism writes that nations always seek to change the status quo and increase their power (Mearsheimer 2014a, p. 2). In both the case studies, Russia and China attempt to change the status quo. Also, offensive realism is focused on spheres of influences and claims that nations will always try to mingle in the sphere of influence of other nations in order to increase their own sphere and weaken the competition's (Mearsheimer 2014a, p. 2). For these reasons does this research use offensive realism as its framework and not defensive realism. Any behavior described in this research that may seem like acts of defensive realism must therefore be seen in light of offensive realism.

1.2.2 Literature review revisionism and gray zone warfare

Literature review: the work of Mazarr (2015) and van Jackson (2016) regarding revisionism will be used to further zoom in at the goals of Russia and China vis–à–vis their respective conflicts. The work of both authors is contemporary and links the goals of revisionist states to the abilities and limitations of gray zone conflict. Mazarr uses the work of other authors such

Modelski (1978), Zionts (2006), Wolfers (1962) and Schweller (1994) to come up with a contemporary definition that describes Russia and China as *measured revisionist states*. This is important, because this definition further specifies the objectives of both Russia and China and it explains why these nations use gray zone strategies (e.g. Mazarr (2015, p. 20) writes that measured revisionist states use gray zone tactics because it allows them to pursue their goals without destabilizing the international system).

The work of Mazarr (2015), van Jackson (2016), Altman (2015), Brands (2016) and Pierce *et al.* (2015) on gray zone conflict will be used to define grey zone conflict, strategies and tools. These authors have written work that is contemporary and therefore applicable to the current situations in Ukraine and the South China Sea, connect the usage of gray zone strategies to the struggle for influence between the US and Russia and China and write about how grey zone strategies are replacing traditional warfare tactics. Authors such as Hoffman (2007), who is an expert on hybrid warfare, will be used to further explain certain grey zone strategies/tools that are important for this research.

2 The contemporary international community and gray zone warfare

This chapter will take a brief look at the current geo–political landscape. It will observe how war has transformed over the last century, what the current legal state of the international community is and how the two affect each other. It will then scrutinize the various international theories this research will use. These international theories offer a framework on which the rest of this research will be built upon. These respective international theories are the theories of offensive realism, revisionism and gray zone strategies.

2.1 The changing of the geo–political landscape and its effect on warfare

Carl von Clausewitz (Howard 1983, p. 87), a Prussian general and military strategist from the 19th century, wrote that "war is the continuation of politics through other means", meaning that armed attacks are only one of the many options to achieve one's goals. Therefore, war is not an end but a means to an end. Pettersson and Wallensteen (2015, p. 537) add that the nature of such wars in the 21st century differ from previous conflicts in their absence of interstate wars, which prevailed during Clausewitz' era. Historically, wars were mainly fought between states for reasons such as acquiring more territory or power. However, after the Second World War and the devastating effects it had, measures were taken that would greatly diminish the potential for inter–state war.

However, according to Smith (2006, pp. 130–131, 147, 152, 190, 197), the mind–set of most military professionals and governmental officials around the world, but especially in the western world, is still stuck in the same pattern that has existed since the First World War. This pattern is based on what he calls 'interstate industrial war'. These are wars in which war is 'total'. States wage war with other states and the entirety of said states is affected. The government takes over all aspects of life in pursuit of victory, and weapons are manufactured and soldiers are conscripted on a massive scale. However, he argues that this type of warfare became irrelevant after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Interstate industrial or total war became impossible to wage since weapons of mass destruction could easily destroy the sources (the cities with their densely concentrated manpower and manufactories, and the mass deployment of troops in the field) that enable industrial war. Yet, the threat of total war remained during the Cold War and states on both sides continued to build and improve their

military capabilities based on industrial warfare. Wars were still fought, but these were non–industrial in nature (e.g. the Vietnam War). He argues that these types of wars that are non–industrial in nature have been becoming and currently are more common than traditional interstate industrial warfare. However, militaries are still formed according the interstate industrial warfare pattern, including relying on weaponry such as tanks. When the Cold War ended, these military structures survived on both sides. Conflicts still occur, but the military structures are not suitable to deal with them since the conflicts are not interstate or industrial in nature.

Furthermore, the international community has changed as well, making interstate warfare less likely. Archer (2014, pp. 19–20) argues that the United Nations (UN) was erected after the Second World War to prevent interstate wars by continuing the cooperation of the five victorious allied powers: the US, the Soviet Union (currently Russia), The People's Republic of China (China), the United Kingdom and France. He argues that it gives these countries considerate international influence in the form of a permanent seat on the Security Council and the right to veto decisions made in the Security Council. This allows them to prevent any potential aggression by the defeated Axis power and decrease the change of interstate wars. However, this also meant that any conflict in interest between these states that would threaten the international peace and security cannot be resolved through the organ (the Security Council) which main responsibility is just that. Any resolution or decision that would be undesirable for any of these five states with a permanent seat in the Security Council would get vetoed. It decreased the change of interstate war globally, but it did not offer another (political) method through which these five states could effectively manage any disputes between them, since they could all veto each other decisions.

This leads to three conclusions. Firstly, that war is not an end on its own. War is a method to achieve a political goal. Throughout history, it was often the preferred and default method to achieve these political goals. However, within the current international system the risks of interstate (industrial) warfare are too high. Many states have weapons of mass destruction that would make an interstate war too costly. Furthermore, the international order that is made up by the United Nations and the Security Council is unable to resolve all issues, confrontations or conflicts. As a result, neither a purely political or military solution can help states achieve their political goals.

2.2 Offensive Realism

This research will use Mearsheimer's theory of offensive realism to explain why the two case studies (Russia and China) are behaving the way they do within the international community. Mearsheimer's (2014a, 2014b, 2014c) theory argues that every nation tries to increase its relative global power within the international system. It does this in an attempt to achieve regional hegemony status. This will increase its power over its neighbors, effectively coercing them into following the regional hegemony's strategies and wishes. By doing to, the regional hegemony creates an effective and exclusive sphere of influence around its borders in which it is the dominant actor. Once regional hegemony is established, a nation will try and meddle in the sphere of influence of other nations for two reasons. It could try and prevent another rising power from achieving regional power status, or it could try and diminish the power and the sphere of influence of another, already established regional power. At the same time, it tries to prevent other (regional) powers from meddling in its own sphere of influence. Although Mearsheimer does not believe it to be feasible, he argues that all nations should strive to become the global world power after achieving regional hegemony status.

2.3 Revisionism

To further explain the conduct of the two case studies, the theory of revisionism will be used to explain how the two case studies are limited in their methods to obtain their goals. Mazarr (2015, pp. 9–16) writes that although states do share common interests and threats, this does not imply that all states are content with the 21st century international order and he argues that certain (rising) states are seeking ways to change it. They do so to acquire more regional or global power, to increase their influence on international constitutions and rules and to shape them to their will, and to question or erode the US' hegemony. Often such states have nationalistic tendencies, experience that the current international system works against them, and feel that they deserve a more important global role. He calls such states 'revisionist powers'. Zionts (2006, p. 632) writes that revisionist powers are "states not satisfied with the status quo and interested in pursuing goals more expansive than strict defensive–minded security maximization". Wolfers (1962, pp. 125–126) adds that such states have "a preference for changing the international distribution of goods—including, but not limited to, territory—and a willingness to incur costs in pursuing that preference". Mazarr's, Zionts' and Wolfers' views are in line with the theory of offensive realism of Mearsheimer (2014, p. 2), which claims

that states will always try to increase their relative power within the international system with the ultimate goal of becoming the regional hegemony and to prevent other states from asserting power in what it perceives as its exclusive sphere of influence.

This research will use Mazzar's definition that describes states as revisionist if:

> …they aim to substantially transform, to their benefit, significant international rules or norms, the structure or operating procedures of international organizations, the balance of power or influence among states, or the distribution of international goods. Revisionists view existing global rules, institutions, norms, and power balances as insufficient to meet their goals, or unjust, or biased against them, or some combination of all of these. (Mazzar 2015, 14)

Mazzar (2015, p. 20) offers a scale consisting of six variations that measure the degree of revisionism a state has. Passive Status Quo nation are powers that have no vested interest in changing the current international order. Subsequently, they do not invest a lot of resources to preserve it and maintain their security by relying on others and by appeasement (e.g. Sweden). Active Status Quo states are powers that have a vested interest in preserving the status quo. They support the status quo and the current state of the international order actively and are prepared to take defensive security measurements to protect the status quo against any threats (e.g. the United Kingdom). Targeted Revisionist states are powers that are content with the global system but might try and alter some particular issues. They try and protect the current status quo and international order and might use military force to do so, going beyond purely defensive actions (e.g. the US). Measured Revisionist states are powers that are primarily concerned with preserving their own powers. They are generally content with the current system and do benefit from it but they do not agree with certain rules, institutions or their own place within the international system. They often have nationalistic tendencies and they try to enhance their relative international power (e.g. China and Russia). Opportunistic Predators are states that are not content with the current system and the balance of power. However, they are too concerned with preserving their own relative (domestic) power to take risks that could potentially lead to an increase of said power (e.g. North Korea). Finally, Reckless Predators are states that are more concerned with increasing their relative international power than their security. They will take any risk to do so and are highly aggressive in nature (e.g. Nazi Germany).

Mazzar (2015, pp. 20–25) places both Russia and China within the measured revisionist category. He claims that they do benefit from the current international system, that they are actively cooperating within it and that they wish to continue to do so. They therefore have no desire to destabilize the current international order to a point at which it would be no longer

able to function. However, they are discontent with the current balance of power and especially the status of the US as the sole great global power. They possess nationalistic tendencies that gives them the feeling that they deserve a bigger role within the international system and a certain amount of entitled to gain regional hegemony status. Hence, they are looking for methods to increase their relative power and are concerned with preserving their current power. They are therefore relatively risk–aversive except with regards to a couple of particular issues they see as vital.

The before–mentioned definitions of revisionism and measured revisionism help define the role states play within the international world order. It offers a framework that allows the actions of both the case studies, Russia and China, to be scrutinized and explained. Furthermore, it is in line with Mearsheimer's international relations theory. Both international relations theories are very much aligned and the theory of revisionist states fit perfectly within the rhetoric of the theory of offensive realism. Both claim that states (although according to Mazzar's theory, not all states) aim to gain more power within the international world order.

2.4 Gray zone strategies

Mazarr (2015, pp. 58, 62, 64, 86) summarizes gray zone strategies as comprehensive and cohesive campaigns that rely mostly on non–military and non–kinetic capabilities to slowly move towards achieving certain political goals without crossing the threshold that would escalate the issue. Conventional armed forces may be used, but this is not necessary. Furthermore, said armed forces often play a subsidiary role to civilian organs within gray zone strategies. The main result of gray zone strategies is the distortion between peace and war and military and non–military means. A continuous feeling of conflict arises that affects society as a whole, including civilians. In order to identify a campaign as a gray zone campaign, it needs to be intentional and have clear political objectives. Furthermore, it has to be deliberately chosen as a substitute to conventional warfare to achieve said political goals. He further emphasizes that gray zone conflict is *not* war. Combat does not necessarily form the critical component of gray zone strategies. Any fighting is not essential and most often there is not a clearly defined battleground. The military does not form the primary actor during the whole campaign and it is often secondary to civilian authorities. States that use gray zone strategies do so primarily to avoid conventional warfare and all of its negative consequences. Finally, gray zone strategies are not new or original. The tools that are part of gray zone strategies, such

as hybrid warfare, political warfare, and unconventional warfare are as old as warfare itself. Ancient and less ancient civilizations and states have used them before. However, what is typical of gray zone strategies is that they use all of the before–mentioned tools within one specific battle sphere that is clearly defined (Ukraine and the South China Sea respectively), serve the same political goal and are used because traditional warfare is not an option.

To offer an even more specific framework for this research, a distinction between the terms confrontation and conflict have to be made. Smith (2016, pp. 181–182) writes that "In confrontations the aim is to influence the opponent, to change or form an intention, to establish a condition and, above all, to win the clash of wills. In conflicts, the purpose is to destroy, take, hold; to forcibly attain a decisive outcome by the direct application of military force". He further argues that in confrontations the political and diplomatic institutions work together with the military and are often leading, whereas in a conflict the military is solely responsible for achieving a certain goal once it has given the authority by the political and diplomatic institutions. Gray zone strategies therefore more often than not fall within the category 'confrontation' and are not stipulated as 'conflict' or 'war'. Even though most tools that make up gray zone strategies use the term 'warfare', they are not used to facilitate conflict but quite the opposite, they are used to make sure the dispute stay within the 'confrontation' limitations.

2.4.1 Strategic gradualism, salami–slicing and fait accompli

2.4.1.1 Strategic gradualism

One of the tactics that define gray zone strategies is the usage of strategic gradualism. Mazarr (2015, pp. 33–34) writes that strategic gradualism involves long–term campaigns that are made up by a series of phases designed to only show results after an extended period of time and are comprised of many different subsequent actions. They are orchestrated in such a way because it limits the risk of escalation. A strong and comprehensive campaign that is very intense would most likely invoke a sever international response. Furthermore, the state only has limited capabilities to its disposal. Therefore, the incentives for more rapid and more intense action are not high enough. He reasons that these types of conflicts are the opposite of the US' foreign and security policies, which are traditionally based on short–term and decisive campaigns. He then names two concepts related to strategic gradualism: *salami–slicing* and *fait accompli*.

These tactics enable nations to apply pressure and take aggressive measures against other nations without breaching the threshold that would invoke a sever international response.

2.4.1.2 Salami–slicing

Schelling (2008, pp. 66–68) defines salami–slicing as a practice that encompasses a nation trying and probing another nation's defenses through non–traditional ways such as the (supposedly by accident) trespassing of military units within the defending nation's territory. The defending nation is unlikely to respond (severely) to such incident and the attacking nations can consequently take further aggressive measures that would remain under the threshold that would force the other nation to response. The gradual imposition of such small but still aggressive moves, which on their own would not constitute a sever breach and would not reach the threshold that would result into a sever international response, could eventually still lead to a significant change without allowing the issue to escalate. Haddick (2014, par. 2) describes salami–slicing as "…the slow accumulation of small changes, none of which in isolation amounts to a casus–belli, but which add up over time to a substantial change in the strategic picture".

2.4.1.3 Fait accompli

Daniel Altman (2015, p. 21) defines the term fait accompli as "making a limited unilateral gain at an adversary's expense in an attempt to get away with that gain when the adversary chooses to relent rather than escalate in retaliation". Such an action would be sudden and conclusively and would force the opponent to either accept the results of such an action or to take costly countermeasures. If the taken actions are limited enough, the defending state(s) are likely to not take any counter actions because of the fear of escalation and because of the costs. Smith (2016, 168) calls fait accompli a "strategy of provocation", in which military forces provoke another state for reconnaissance purposes, to check their tolerance for provocations and to undermine the authority of the officials.

Mazarr (2015, p. 37) argues that both salami–slicing and fait accompli strategies are aimed to stay below the threshold that would invoke a response, are not big enough to escalate an issue, and force the defending nation into the uncomfortable decision to either accept the results and their losses or to have the issue escalate and accept all of its subsequent costs. He further writes

that fait accompli strategies differ from salami–slicing in that they can be, but do not have to be, gradual. On the other hand, a fait accompli is often designed to be sudden and swift in nature so to prevent a quick response from the adversary. Finally, fait accompli tactics can be part of a bigger salami–slicing campaign and they do not exclude each other.

Examples of fait accompli are abundant in Nazi Germany's diplomacy during the second half of the 1930s. Jablonksy (2014, p. 247) puts forth the Rhineland crisis of 1936 as a clear example of a successful fait accompli. Germany broke the Locarno pact by suddenly and rapidly re–militarizing the Rhineland. According to the treaty, the other European signatures (France, Belgium, Great Britain and Italy) ("Pact of Locarno," 2016a) should have responded severely but did not act because the political climate was not right and because this would constitute war with Germany. Therefore, the costs of acting severely outweighed the incentives and the states did not respond. Another example is the completion of the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Germany. Tarar (2017, par. 1) brings forth the completion of the annexation of Czechoslovakia by Germany in 1939. In 1938, Germany had persuaded the other European states to cede parts of Czechoslovakia in which many ethnic Germans lived to Germany. Although Germany had promised not to demand more territory, it invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia in 1939. This forced the other European states to not do anything, for the only other option would have been war. Finally, Germany did not manage to achieve a third fait accompli. When it invaded Poland in 1939, France and Great Britain declared war.

2.4.2 Unconventional tools: hybrid warfare, unconventional warfare and political warfare

As Mazarr (2015, p. 43) puts it, to enable gray zone strategies states have to employ various tools and apply tactics that allow it to achieve its goals without having the conflict escalate into open war. This means that states cannot rely solely on conventional warfare. Mazarr puts forward three alternative types of warfare that can still achieve the same political goals as conventional warfare could. These three types of warfare are hybrid warfare, unconventional warfare and political warfare. These types of warfare often overlap and the terms are ambiguous, but a distinction will be tried to make.

2.4.2.1 Hybrid Warfare

Hoffman describes hybrid warfare as follows:

> Hybrid threats incorporate a full range of different modes of warfare including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including indiscriminate violence 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 conflict. (Hoffman, 2007, 8)

As Giegerich (2016, pp. 66–67) explains, these hybrid warfare tactics stay below the before mentioned thresholds because they do not solely rely on military capabilities but offer states a wide array of other tools to its disposal. Chivves (2017, pp. 3–4) names six different element of hybrid warfare. Firstly, information warfare. States use media to spread certain (dis)information and propaganda to shape the political narrative in other states in ways that benefits the distributor. Secondly, Cyber warfare. The intelligence services of other states may be infiltrated to extract valuable information. This information could be used for military purposes or to influence the states from which the information originates. Domestic or international proxies can be used to execute actions that the state itself cannot or does not want to, or to influence the political narrative of other states. The economic influence (such as energy or loans) of a state can be used to coerce other states. Finally, a state might refer to mere clandestine measures to achieve its goals. Intelligence services can influence the political narrative of other states. Special forces might get more resources relative to the conventional armed forces, because they can work in secrecy and with discretion. Cederberg and Eronen (2015, par. 4–9) confirm the elements described by Chivves and add traits such as energy and economic blackmailing, buying political will and the attempt to exploit ethnic minorities.

Hybrid warfare tactics therefore primarily focus on non–conventional military tools. They aim to achieve certain political goals without the usage of military force. Alternatively, their goal is to shape a situation that would lower the risks of using limited military force to acceptable levels (e.g. spreading propaganda for the necessity of military interference).

2.4.2.2 Unconventional Warfare

Mazarr (2015, p. 48) writes about unconventional warfare "The concept of unconventional warfare is making a comeback in a context where major powers desire to avoid direct confrontation, while engaging in competition and rivalry over important but ultimately

secondary interests". Hun *et al.* (2015, Table 1) describe unconventional warfare as "activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area". Lindsay writes that:

> Unconventional warfare differs profoundly from warfare in which regular armies are openly engaged in combat. The objective of such conventional combat is to win control of a state by defeating the enemy's military forces in the field. In contrast, the strategy of unconventional forces must be to win control of the state by first winning control of the civil population. For without the disciplined support of the civil population, militarily inferior guerrilla forces can have no hope of success. (Lindsay, 1962)

Lindsay (1962) gives the beginning of the Vietnam War and the Algerian war for independence as examples of unconventional warfare. Mazarr (2015, p. 47) adds the Roman Empire and the support of partisans by the Allies as examples. In these unconventional wars states tried to win the hearts of mind of a side within in conflict. They did so by supporting local forces and other proxy forces. The ultimate goal is to diminish the power of influence of another state without resorting to conventional warfare that would lead to direct contact with said state.

2.4.2.3 Political Warfare

Kennan's definition of political warfare reads as follows,

> Political warfare is the logical application of Clausewitz's doctrine in time of peace. In broadest definition, political warfare is the employment of all the means at a nation's command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives. Such operations are both overt and covert. They range from such overt actions as political alliances, economic measures (as ERP––the Marshall Plan), and "white" propaganda to such covert operations as clandestine support of "friendly" foreign elements, "black" psychological warfare and even encouragement of underground resistance in hostile states. (Kennan, 1948, Analysis)

Mazarr (2015, pp. 50–51) writes that contemporary political warfare consists of tactics that combine non–violent methods such as political aid, development aid and information operations to achieve political goals. Mazarr (2015, p. 10, 50, 64) then concludes by explaining that these three concepts (hybrid, unconventional and political warfare) are part of a wider set of tactics that make up gray zone strategies. They can be applied to achieve political goals slowly and without upsetting the international community (too much). They are of value especially for measured revisionist states because they want to change to global order without upsetting it too much. Furthermore, they are afraid of losing their role as a legitimate player

within the international community. Because being the aggressor in an inter–state war would severely damage the reputation of any state and could even lead to a diminishing of global power, measured revisionist states are therefore committed to achieving said political goal without entering a state of war, which leads them to use gray zone strategies including hybrid, unconventional and political warfare. Brands (2016, par. 2) agrees with Mazarr and adds that gray zone strategies are primarily used by revisionist states, that they are aggressive in nature but are designed to not come across as such and that their aim is to achieve goals normally acquired through open war.

As mentioned before, the definitions of hybrid warfare, unconventional warfare and political warfare and their actions often overlap each other. Together, they make up the tools that are available to states to implement gray zone strategies. This results in a type of warfare that differs from conventional warfare in several ways. Firstly, they do not rely solely on traditional military actors to achieve a goal but use a mixture of conventional armed forces, special forces, intelligence services, civil society and other non–state actors (such as the media). More often than not, the non–military actors have a more prominent role than the military ones. What makes gray zone strategies unique, is that all these actors operate together in the same battlefield and complement each other. They are part of a larger strategy and synchronized. Secondly, the tools used in gray zone warfare differ from conventional warfare in that there is less focus on traditional military capabilities, and non–military services are more prominently present. Economic pressure can be applied in the form of blackmail, bribery or aid. Information operations that incorporate propaganda, misinformation, the stealing of foreign intelligence and information, and political blackmail or the giving of political aid can be applied. Furthermore, foreign elections, the political narrative and the opinion of the citizens in other countries may be influenced. All of this is done to use as little traditional military forces as possible and to stay below the traditional threshold that once reached, would lead to unwanted attention or measures from other states or international organizations. Whereas throughout history the aim of war was to defeat the enemy's armed forces, the aim of gray zone warfare is to win over the civilian population of the enemy and to break the (political) will of the enemy to start a conflict or to resume a conflict.

This chapter follows the rhetoric and arguments brought forth in chapter 2 and will argue that Russia's main geo–political objectives in Ukraine are to keep the nation within Russia's sphere of influence and alternatively, prevent Ukraine from drifting into the sphere of influence of the transatlantic community (the European Union (EU) and the US). It does so in an attempt to achieve regional hegemony and to tip the global division of power in Russia's favor. Its main goals are to prevent Ukraine from joining the EU and/or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or have these entities assert influence over Ukraine through other measures. Additionally, Russia desires to protect its strategic naval base in Sevastopol and it tries to diminish the power of the sole regional hegemony, the US.

The second part will look at what gray zone strategies (as described in chapter 2.4) Russia is using to obtain the previously mentioned objectives. It will first look at which general strategies Russia applies, such as strategic gradualism and fait accompli. Secondly, Russian usage of gray zone tools such as the usage of unconventional and proxy forces and Russia's information campaign in Ukraine will be scrutinized.

3.1 Russia's geo–political goals in the Ukraine

3.1.1 Prevent Ukraine from joining the EU or NATO

Russia's main objective is to prevent the Ukraine from forming closer ties with the transatlantic community. Freedman (2014, p. 14) writes about the Ukraine crisis and Russia's role in it that: "the crisis generated by the intervention was not confined to Ukraine. It was geared to strengthening Russia's overall strategic position vis–à–vis NATO and the EU while encouraging others to take its interests and concerns more seriously".

Trainer further elaborates on this topic:

> Because Ukraine is one of Europe's larger states and a conveyor of around twenty per cent of Europe's gas supplies, it has immense political and strategic importance, leading some to label its security as a prerequisite for peaceful relations between Russia and Europe. Given this understanding of the importance of Ukraine's security, why has Russia taken actions to destabilise Ukraine? Simply put, Russia sees the destabilisation of Ukraine as preferable to a Ukraine that is part of either the EU or the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). This

outlook moulded Russia's base motive—a desire to keep NATO and the EU out of Russia's 'near abroad'—and played a significant role in determining how Russia would attempt to coerce Ukraine to remain apart from western powers. (Trainer, 2015, par. 4)

Karabeshkin and Spechler (2007, pp. 308–313) write that Russia did not see the initial eastward expansion of the EU as a threat. It hoped that the accession of former Soviet Union members, such as the Baltic States and Poland, would bring Russia and Europe closer together. However, from the moment these former Soviet Union members were save within the EU's fold, they have been generally hostile towards Russia and do not seem to be concerned about Russia's interests. This led to worsening relations between Russia and said nations. The EU started to influence the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), including Ukraine, through its European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). The new members played a big role in this process. The goal of the ENP was to align the members of the CIS with the EU's policies, such as the implementation and development of democracy and human rights. However, Russia sees this process as an attempt to divert these nations away from Russia's sphere of influence and into the sphere of influence of the EU.

Both Hanson (1998, pp. 13–24) and Karabeshkin and Spechler (2007, p. 323) write that Russia sees the ongoing expansion of NATO towards Russia's borders as a threat. Russia has expressed its concerns and its opposition against further NATO enlargement eastwards multiple times. Russia would have preferred to see an European security organization such as the Organization for Security and Co–operation in Europe (OSCE) strengthened or would support the creation of a new European security organization in which Russia would be incorporated. This would allow it to diminish the influence NATO has and to give Russia more influence in Europe. The continuing expansion of a military organization such as NATO has changed the balance of power in favor of Europe and the US. Supporters of NATO enlargement see NATO expansion as a tool for diminishing Russia's sphere of influence and to prevent Russia from re–asserting influence over former USSR members. In turn, Russia is afraid of losing the remaining influence it has over the former USSR members. Already in 1998, Hanson predicted that further NATO expansion would lead to increased tensions between Russia and the transatlantic community:

> Expansion could have a serious impact in four inter–related areas: psychologically, on Russia's self–image and its consequent view of the West; domestically, in terms of a nationalist resurgence; militarily, by provoking a strategic realignment; and diplomatically, where continued Russian cooperation with the West in international relations may be jeopardised. (Hanson, 1998, 21)

Hanson further states that:

> The Alliance's current expansion, together with its stated intention to consider former republics in a second round of enlargement, may, therefore, prompt Russian military leaders to suggest establishing Russia's own counterpart: securing a buffer zone and seeking to rekindle a sphere of influence in those states remaining for the moment outside NATO. A more aggressive Russian posture towards the Baltic states and towards Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova could be precipitated by such developments. (Hansom, 1998, 24)

These predicaments made by Hanson turned out to be true. According to Gressel (2015), tensions along the four points made by Hanson did increase between Russia and the West after ties between NATO and Ukraine (and between NATO and Georgia) in 2008, were strengthened.

3.1.2 Protect the access to Sevastopol

The strategic naval base of Sevastopol is home to Russia's Black Sea armada. The website Global Security (2015, par. 1–2, 18–19) reports that it is the only warm–water naval base the Kremlin has to its disposal and that it gives strategic access to the Middle–East and the Mediterranean. It allows Russia to militarily counterbalance NATO and the transatlantic community in the region. However, the port was prior to the Crimean annexation still de facto and de jure within Ukrainian control. Ukraine was allowing Russia to rent Sevastopol but the lease was due in 2017. In 2010, Ukraine asked Russia to prepare for its navy to leave. Eventually, both countries came to an agreement and Russia was allowed to rent the naval base for another 25 years, but it signaled to the Russian leadership that the usage of the naval base was not to be taken for granted. Not only was its usage not guaranteed, the US and the EU could potentially gain access to the harbor if Ukraine did end up joining the EU or NATO in the future, thus further diminishing Russia's sphere of influence and relative global power.

Trainer writes:

> The decision to pursue a "legitimate" seizure of Crimea, in the eyes of the Russian state, is, at least in part, due to the fact that Russia's Black Sea Fleet is based out of Sevastopol, a Crimean port city. By incorporating Crimea into the existing Russian state, Putin succeeded in guaranteeing the relative safety of Russia's naval power should Ukraine succeed in becoming a part of the EU or NATO. (Trainer, 2015, par. 6)

3.1.3 Challenge the US–led international order

Chivvis (2017, p. 2) writes the Russia uses Ukraine as a stage to increase its relative global power. Within Ukraine, Russia can challenge the current international division of power and

challenge the US' hegemony. Lukin (2014, par. 13) further explains this argument: "…the West's position on Crimea, whereby its leaders refer to the territorial integrity and inviolability of borders, is perceived by Russia as no more than utmost hypocrisy". Lukin is here referring to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Lo (2015, pp. 31–34, 43, 97) argues that Russia does not want the upset the current international order, but that it wants the western states to follow its regulations and to have a bigger say in its institutions. It sees these international organizations as ways to control the power and influence of the US.

Regarding the invasion of Crimea by Russia, Chomsky writes:

> "Putin's annexation of the Crimea is a break in the order that America and its allies have come to rely on since the end of the Cold War—namely, one in which major powers only intervene militarily when they have an international consensus on their side, or failing that, when they're not crossing a rival power's red lines". (Chomsky, 2014, par. 2)

This means that Russian actions in Ukraine in itself form a protest against the US–led international community. This is in line with the theory of revisionism, which states that a nation such as Russia wishes to provoke the current international order.

This leads to the conclusion that Russia sees the further eastwards expansion of both the EU and NATO as an infringement on its periphery and as a threat to its sphere of influence. It feels its own sphere of influence is shrinking and that the spheres of influence of the EU and the sole regional hegemon, the US, are increasing. The loss of Sevastopol would further shrink the Russia's sphere of influence because of its strategic location and since it would greatly diminish Russia's ability to project military power in the region and increase NATO's if it would ever get access to the harbor (e.g. if Ukraine were to join NATO). Furthermore, Ukraine allows Russia to challenge the sole regional power (the US) and shows that as a measured revisionist state, Russia uses international organizations as a method to do so.

3.2 Russia's usage of gray zone strategy

3.2.1 Strategic gradualism and obtaining a fait accompli

Rácz (2015, pp. 57–70) argues that Russia applies a strategic gradualist strategy on Ukraine that involved three independent stages: the preparatory, attack and stabilization phase. This strategy is carried out over a longer period of time, has a long preparation phase and the campaign aims to stay below the threshold that would invoke a non–acceptable international

response, such as a declaration of war. Rácz writes that in the preparatory phase, Russia explored and aimed to exploit the weaknesses of Ukraine. It did so by strengthening or erecting pro–Russian political and social organizations and separatist and anti–governmental movements, exploiting economic weaknesses and applying economic pressure, and by increasing the output of pro–Russia media. These actions are not illegal in nature, do not constitute any violence and were often not noticeable.

Rácz (2015, pp. 57–70) then continuous with the second phase. During this attack stage, the actions and preparations initiated during the first phase were exploited and became overt, and a minimum amount violence started to occur. In both Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, military units bearing no insignia appeared and key governmental and social buildings were taken over. Later, they were helped by protestors and other elements of civil society. Simultaneously, an intensive information campaign started that aimed to disrupt and discredit the Ukrainian government and to shape the political narrative. Meanwhile, the Russian government denied any involvement which confused Ukrainian and international media and governments alike. It had placed significant amounts of conventional Russian military forces on its border with Ukraine, diverting both Ukraine's attention and resources, while at the same time posing a serious military threat, affecting the decision–making of Ukraine's government. In Crimea, a referendum was held which outcome was in favor of Russian annexation while in Eastern–Ukraine alternative governmental institutions were erected (the republics of Donbass and Luhansk). This resulted in Ukraine being divided and experiencing substantial anti–governmental resistance while simultaneously having lost control over vast amount of its territory.

Finally, Rácz (2015, pp. 57–70) writes that during the stabilization phase, Russia attempted to legitimize the new status quo by supporting the referenda held in both Crimea and Eastern Ukraine. The situation in Crimea stabilized and the region became part of Russia, but Eastern Ukraine remains a conflict area, neither part of Ukraine or Russia nor fully independent. With the start of a new counterattack in Eastern Ukraine by the Ukrainian government, Russia had to intervene with regular troops to prevent the separatists from being defeated. Freedman writes:

> In late August, Russian armed forces became involved in a much more overt way. The starting point was an argument over a socalled humanitarian convoy to deliver assistance to the areas under siege. Soon, there were reports of 15,000 troops on the border, with at least 1,000 operating inside Ukraine. As many as 300 soldiers may have been killed in the battle. Luhansk airport was retaken. Ukrainian forces buckled under the new onslaught. Ukrainian Prime

Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk observed that it was easy to deal with 'Russian–led guerrillas and the Russian–led terrorists. But it's too difficult for us to fight against well–trained and well–equipped Russian military.' (Freedman, 2014, 16)

Although the Rácz is right in that the overall strategy of Russia was a strategic gradual one, the second and third stage (the attack phase and subsequently the stabilization phase) were most likely not part of a pre–determined strategy. Russia had to react to the Ukrainian revolution and the drifting of Ukrainian into the sphere of influence of the EU, something Pinkham (2017) concurs. Russia most likely did have plans drawn up in case a situation such as the Ukrainian Revolution would occur (it had seen a similar situation in Ukraine in 2004 and in other former Soviet members such as Georgia and Kyrgyzstan) as part of its strategic gradual strategy but only implemented them because it felt it was forced to do so.

Altman (2017, pp. 2–11) offers a better explanation. He describes the invasion of Crimea by Russia and the following referendum and annexation by Russia on 18 March 2014 as a fait accompli which was designed to acquire Ukrainian territory without entering a state of war. By suddenly annexing Crimea without warning, the Ukrainian government had to choose between not reacting or sending Ukrainian troops to Crimea in an attempt to re–establish Ukrainian rule. This would force the hand of the Russian decision–makers and could potentially have led to a war between Ukraine and Russia. Ukraine's military on its own was in bad shape and subpar to Russia's and it is unlikely that Ukraine could have won such a war without outside help. Furthermore, the political landscape in Ukraine was turbulent and the nation was divided between pro–Russian and anti–Russian supporters, making any military campaign significantly more complex than if Ukraine would have been unified politically and socially. Finally, the majority of the population of Crimea was pro–Russian and not unwilling to join Russia (Morello, Englund and Witte, 2014, par. 4). For all the before–mentioned reasons, Ukraine did not try to re–assert control over Crimea, making it a successful fait accompli by Russia.

Altman's arguments fit better with the chain of events as we know it now. Russia felt it had to intervene in Ukraine and did so swiftly and decisively. Therefore, Russia's strategy was most likely a combination of both Rácz' and Altman's theories. Russia was effectively pursuing a strategic gradual strategy in Ukraine in order to keep in from drifting into the sphere of influence of the EU but was forced to implement its attack phase because the situation changed. This led to the fait accompli that was the annexation of Crimea and the de–stabilizing of Eastern Ukraine.

3.2.2 The usage of unconventional military units and proxy forces

Chivves (2017, p. 2) argues that the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 was done by using hybrid and unconventional warfare tactics. He writes that Russia used 'little green men', which were Russian special forces without insignia, to facilitate said annexation. Freedman writes:

> It was evident in Crimea that preparations had been made for this contingency for some time. Here was seen the first use of professional soldiers in uniforms without markings (the so–called 'F'). They were deployed again in numbers in April, as Russian agents acted with indigenous separatists to seize administrative buildings and other facilities in the Donbas area. At first these operations were successful, in part because the local response by Ukrainian security forces was lame. (Freedman, 2014, 15)

Rácz (2015, pp. 60–61, 80) writes that these military forces worked together with local protestors and other elements of civil society. All participants repeatedly claimed that they were local anti–governmental and separatist protestors. They rapidly took over key government and other important buildings, obstructing and hindering the set–up of any meaningful Ukrainian resistance. Furthermore, the seizure of information centers such as television and radio channels helped Russia's information campaign, which will be discussed later this chapter. He further elaborates that the presence of ethnic Russian and Russian–speaking Ukrainians in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine allowed Russia to deny its involvement in the conflicts since it could mask its units as locals, argue that the protestors and combatants were local and that is was therefore not involved.

Freedman further writes:

> Initially, the main requirement was sufficient force to take over administrative buildings and intimidate local police forces. Over time the demands increased, to the point where local agitators had to be supplemented with Russian fighters with combat experience, apparently often Chechen. Eventually, regular forces had to become directly involved. Throughout there was a deceptive intent, recalling the old Soviet concept of maskirovka (masking) or even Potemkin villages. The aim was to sustain the pretence that the fighting force was wholly indigenous, supplemented by no more than some friendly volunteers from over the border. (Freedman, 2014, 22)

> This particular episode may be one reason why Russia began sending more advanced equipment to the separatists, including anti–aircraft weapons and GRAD rockets. At this point, a decision seems to have been taken in Moscow to get a grip on the situation. One move, which may have added to rather than reduced Moscow's problems, was to replace the leadership of the rebellion with Ukrainians rather than the Russian citizens who had initially taken charge (so Russian were in control in the beginning). (Freedman, 2014, 16)

Rácz (2015, pp. 68–69) emphasizes the importance of the deployment of Russian units bearing no insignia or carrying civilian clothing. This allowed Russia to use the element of surprise, making the annexation of Crimea a successful fait accompli. Not only did this install confusion

in the Ukrainian, European and US' ranks, making the campaign that much more effective, it also allowed Russia to claim non–involvement. It could therefore not be held accountable and forced the Ukrainian government to directly negotiate with the separatists and not with Russia. This Ukraine could not do, because it could not recognize the separatist entities as having any authority. Therefore, Ukraine had no formal opponent to initiate peace talks with, which aided to creation of a frozen conflict. Additionally, it created more options for Russian decision–makers and offered more flexibility to the campaign. Russia could stop the campaign at any moment if it wishes to do so without losing any political face, since it officially was not involved and therefore could not officially lose face. Finally, it also complicated Ukraine's fight against the separatists. With ethnic tensions between Ukrainian and (self–proclaimed) ethnic Russians running high, Ukrainian officials could not permit killing or arresting ethnic Russian (Ukrainian or not) for the danger of escalating the situation any further and instigating additional anti–governmental and anti–Ukrainian sentiments. The deployment of unidentifiable military units who worked together with non–military and local actors and proxy forces combined with a propaganda warfare campaign led to a rapid annexation with a minimum usage of conventional military forces.

The effective usage and the rapid deployment of irregular combat troops by Russia in Crimea shows that the actions taken were most likely part of a pre–determined strategy. Yanukovych fled Ukraine on 22 February and barely a week later, Russian forces occupied Crimea (BBC News, 2015). This show that a plan must have been drawn up beforehand that would have allowed to effective deployment of troops and equipment.

3.2.3 Russia's information campaign: shaping foreign political narrative and decision–making

Freedman (2014, p. 14) writes that Russia tactics in Ukraine are largely based on intimidation and deterrence. Russia's military capabilities are largely overstated by the Russian government and media channels and Russia would not be able to wage a conventional war against the US or NATO. It therefore used hybrid and political warfare tactics such as propaganda, political and economic pressure and the threat of military use to coerce decision–makers in Ukraine and to shape their political narrative. Rácz (2015, pp. 61, 70, 74, 81) agrees with Freedman and adds that the threat of the usage of conventional Russian forces deterred the Ukrainian security forces from effectively combating the 'little green men' and the protestors. Following Russia's

rhetoric about protecting ethnic Russians abroad, which will be discussed later this chapter, any violent actions taken against these 'little green men' or demonstrators could have led to a military response from Russia that would have had some credibility within the international community (the protection of ethnic Russians). He further argues that the main goal of the Russian information campaign in Ukraine was to invoke anti–governmental and separatist emotions in Ukrainian civil society, to confuse the Ukrainian decision–makers, the Ukrainian population and the international community and to weaken and lower the morale of the Ukrainian security forces. Furthermore, it aimed at disrupting and hampering the Ukrainian chains of command and control. The Russian information campaign was so effective at disrupting Ukraine's chain of command that Ukrainian security forces such as police officers and military units did not know which orders were real and which where fake while simultaneously the legitimacy of the government in Kiev was discredited. This led to a more passive approach by Ukrainian security forces, aiding the pro–Russian and separatist elements. Its efficiency was due to the ability of the campaign to isolate the contested areas and remove any Ukrainian broadcasting channels while simultaneously injecting pro–Russian and pro–separatist media. Therefore, the Ukrainian government was no longer able to disperse information to these regions and Russia was able to control to the flow of information going in and out of the areas.

Chivves (2017, pp. 3–4) writes that Russia has various media channels that broadcast material approved and created by the Russian government to other nations (mainly in Europe). Furthermore, the Kremlin funds European organizations and think tanks that are aligned with Russia's interests and it has a vast army of internet 'trolls' that spread false news, attack political opponents and are able to hack into foreign intelligence and data services. It does so to spread doubt about and to counteract the Western media channels or any independent journalism, to collect information and to influence the foreign political agenda. An example of such Russian political and cyber warfare is the presumed mingling of Russia in the US' presidential elections of 2016 in the pursuit of having a president being elected that would be less anti–Russian. Another example is Russia's support for anti–Ukrainian organizations in other countries. In the Netherlands, Russia supported anti–EU groups that opposed a trade deal between the EU and Ukraine. This trade deal would have led to closer relations between Ukraine and the EU and would have made any trade deal or closer relations between Ukraine and Russia less likely. However, it was blocked by a Dutch referendum organized by populist, anti–EU actors with the support from Russia. This is in line with Russia ability to apply

economic pressure and to force Ukraine into trade deals more beneficial to Russia. For example, Russia shut off the gas supply to Ukraine in the winter of 2006 and 2009 in an attempt to renegotiate the price of its gas.

Chivves (2017, p. 2) further argues that Russia uses the Russian minority in Ukraine to create an excuse for the usage of more conventional warfare within Ukraine. Sakwa (2015, pp. 101–102) writes that Ukraine (and especially eastern Ukraine and Crimea) have a high percentage of ethnic Russians. Particularly those living in Crimea see themselves as Russian opposed to Ukrainian. This fact is capitalized on by the Russian government. Not only did it help the annexation of Crimea and create a frozen conflict in Eastern Ukraine as mentioned before in this chapter, it also gives the Russian government some form of legitimacy and credibility for its actions. The president of the Russia, Vladimir Putin, clearly uses ethnic rhetoric to justify the annexation of Crimea in 2014. He emphasizes specifically the close connection between Crimea and Russia and its peoples. In a statement from 18 March 2014 he said the following:

> In people's hearts and minds, Crimea has always been an inseparable part of Russia [….] After the revolution, the Bolsheviks, for a number of reasons – may God judge them – added large sections of the historical South of Russia to the Republic of Ukraine. This was done with no consideration for the ethnic make–up of the population, and today these areas form the southeast of Ukraine. Then, in 1954, a decision was made to transfer Crimean Region to Ukraine, along with Sevastopol, despite the fact that it was a federal city. (Putin, 2014, par. 11–12)

Putin then continuous by talking about the Ukrainian revolution, its effects on the ethnic Russians in Ukraine and why it justifies the annexation:

> Those who opposed the coup were immediately threatened with repression. Naturally, the first in line here was Crimea, the Russian–speaking Crimea. In view of this, the residents of Crimea and Sevastopol turned to Russia for help in defending their rights and lives, in preventing the events that were unfolding and are still underway in Kiev, Donetsk, Kharkov and other Ukrainian cities. (Putin, 2014, par. 24)

> Our concerns are understandable because we are not simply close neighbours but, as I have said many times already, we are one people. Kiev is the mother of Russian cities. Ancient Rus is our common source and we cannot live without each other. (Putin, 2014, par. 53)

> Let me say one other thing too. Millions of Russians and Russian–speaking people live in Ukraine and will continue to do so. Russia will always defend their interests using political, diplomatic and legal means. But it should be above all in Ukraine's own interest to ensure that these people's rights and interests are fully protected. This is the guarantee of Ukraine's state stability and territorial integrity. (Putin, 2014, par. 54)

Rácz (2015, p. 62) argues that the legitimacy of the separatist republics in Eastern Ukraine is solely based on Russia's approval and support. Russian media treats the separatist areas of Donbass and Luhansk as if they were legitimate political entities. By recognizing the legitimacy of these separatist entities, Russia wishes to nudge the opinion of the international

community to a more favorable one vis–à–vis said entities, or at the least make the international community more critical towards Ukraine's point of view. Thus, Russia attempt to shape the political narrative and the decision–making process at home and in other countries in an attempt to gain support for its own interests in Ukraine or to prevent other governments from harming its interests in Ukraine.

3.2.4 Creating a frozen conflict

By annexing Crimea and supporting the separatist movements in Eastern Ukraine, and by creating a pro–Russian/separatist and anti–Ukrainian narrative, Russia has managed to create a frozen conflict that prevents further Ukrainian integration into the sphere of influences of the transatlantic community, similar to what happened in Transnistria and Georgia. Trainer (2015, par. 7) writes: "having achieved this aim and provided for the safety of Russia's naval power, Putin proceeded to attempt to halt Ukraine's drift toward western alliances by creating frozen conflicts as in Georgia and Moldova". Chivves (2017, p. 2) also writes that the frozen conflict in Eastern Ukraine has prevented Ukraine from further integration with Western Europe. Freedman (2014, p. 28) agrees with Trainer and Chivves and writes that Russia does not aim to annex Donetsk and Luhansk. It solely wishes to support the rebels with the goal of destabilize these regions. By doing so, the whole of Ukraine is being destabilized militarily, economically and politically. This is supported by Rácz (2015, pp. 65–67). He argues that Russia commitment to create a frozen conflict in Ukraine is confirmed by Russia's significant deployment of conventional troops in Eastern Ukraine. During a counter attack by the Ukrainian military in Eastern Ukraine in 2014, the separatist movements started to lose ground, men and material. This led to an influx of Russian material and personnel, in an attempt to halt the Ukrainian advance. He sums up the goal of Russia in Ukraine with regards to Crimea and Eastern Ukraine as follows: "One variant is the annexation of the captured territory, as occurred in Crimea, while the other option is to keep the territory inside the attacked country but deny the central government any control". Creating a frozen conflict in which territories in Eastern Ukraine are not under Ukrainian rule of law prevents Ukraine reaching the requirements needed to join either the EU or NATO, thus averting Ukraine's drift in to the sphere of influence of the transatlantic community.

4 Case study 2: The People's Republic of China and the South China Sea

This chapter will use the arguments and theories outlined in chapter 2 to identify China's objectives in the South China Sea. It will argue that China has vested interests in the South China Sea because it sees it as inherently Chinese territory. The control of the waters would further allow China to expand its sphere of influence and diminish the sphere of influence of the US and the ability of the US to project power (and thus its relative international power). Furthermore, China needs the islands in the South China Sea so it can station military facilities on them to counterbalance the network of alliances its competitors are forming with the US. This would also allow it to control the resources and the trade routes within the region. Finally, controlling the water would help China protect itself against any possible aggression that would result in a diminishing of its sphere of influence or the halting of its ability to increase its sphere of influence, and it would be of aid in any possible conflict.

The second part will look at what gray zone strategies China uses. These tactics differ greatly from the tactics Russia applies. Russia's actions are often quite overt whereas China's tactics hardly use any military means. Economic measurements are more prominent and China's actions are a lot more gradual and coherent.

4.1 China's geo–political goals in the South China Sea

4.1.1 Create a sphere of influence and block US interference

Yoshihara and Holmes (2011, pp. 46–49) argue that China sees the waters and the islands in the South China Sea as an integral part of China in the same way it sees the territories of Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang as inherently Chinese. It therefore wishes to acquire said territories or at a minimum, prevent other nations from controlling these areas. By doing so, it can create an effective sphere of influence and project its power within, and more effectively prevent other actors from mingling in its sphere of influence. The end goal is to turn the South China Sea into an area in which China has complete control over the territories and resources as well as the ability to regulate who has access to it (described by the authors as a 'Chinese lake'). This is of particular importance because of a multitude of essential trade routes that go through the area, some of which are the most important and lucrative in the world.

Following the argument that China wishes to control the South China Sea to further enlarge its sphere of influence in its quest for more regional power, China needs to counterbalance and attack the influence of its main global competitor and the sole regional hegemony, the US. As Mearsheimer (2014a, p. 3) argues, the US will try and hinder China's own quest for regional hegemony by mingling in its 'backyard'. Already, the US has extensive military and/or political alliances with nations that are in close proximity to the South China Sea (and China's east coast in general) and who are concerned about the increase of power of China. Such countries include Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and Taiwan, and countries further away such as India and Australia. Furthermore, the US and its allies perform extensive military exercises in the waters bordering China (Brookings, 2016). They further entice China by disregarding its concerns, e.g. by patrolling near waters and territories China sees as its own or by enforcing policies such as Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPS) (Cheng 2015, par. 1). However, according to the Institute for Security & Development Policy (2016, How Does China View Responsibility for the Escalation of Disputes?), what upsets China the most is the US' 'pivot to Asia' to counterbalance China, which it sees as the US choosing sides in a dispute that was formerly solely between China and countries member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

This leads to a Chinese feeling of encirclement (Chang, 2016). Mearsheimer (2014a, pp. 5–6) therefore argues that China wishes to control the South China Sea in order to block US' influence on China's periphery. This would also help break the encirclement. As Mearsheimer points out, this is not a remarkable or hostile desire. No nation wishes to see foreign military exercises or large numbers of troops near the vicinity of its own border. The US would most likely view a joint Russian–Chinese armada conducting military exercises along its west coast as having hostile intentions and object. In addition, China has a complicated history with some of its neighbors (especially with one of the US' closest allies Japan) and with former colonial powers such as the US and the European countries in which it was subject to foreign aggression. These historical conflicts often still play an important role in Chinese society because of the tendency of the Chinese government to emphasis on Chinese culture and history and use it to strengthen its domestic position (Brown, 2016). It will therefore wish the establish a perimeter or buffer zone surrounding its eastern borders that would dampen any potential aggression. Furthermore, if a conflict between China and one of the US' allies in the East Asia does occur in the future, e.g. a conflict including Taiwan or South Korea, the US would be hard–pressed

to come to the aid of its allies if China were to control the South China Sea through military facilities and dominant naval and air presence.

An alternative view could be, that China views the South China Sea as its own backyard and within its sphere of influence and merely wishes to project a defensive domain, similar to the US' policy towards its near waters and its Monroe doctrine in the 19th and early 20th century. It does not wish to acquire more power within the area but simply desires the ability to intervene in case a third nation would assert its power in the region or would try to obtain more territory through political, economic or military means ("Monroe Doctrine," 2016b). However, this argument can be disregarded since China does make claims of its own in the region. According to the Beina Xu (2014), China claims multiple island chains in the area such as the Spratly Islands and the Paracel Islands, as well as various (artificially created) reefs such as the Subi Reef the Fiery Cross Reef and the Scarborough Shoal. Furthermore, it is building military facilities on these islands and reefs. These are facilities that serve no civilian purposes. If China simply wishes to prevent other nations from acting out hostilities in the South China Sea, it could do so through diplomatic or political channels such as declaring a policy similar to the Monroe Doctrine or through international organizations such as the UN, in which in plays a large role and has a lot of influence. Additionally, the Institute for Security & Development Policy (2016, China's Basic Position) argues that China is mainly interested in the territorial features within the South China Sea, that is the islands, and not the maritime delineation (territorial waters and EEZ) marine based resources or control over trade routes. However, this would only confirm the argument that China wishes to control the South China Sea in order to create a sphere of influence and dominate the region militarily, since the (artificially created) islands do not offer any benefits on their own, except the possibility to harbor military facilities.

4.1.2 Obtain natural resources and control trade routes

Beina Xu (2014) argues that one of China's main interests in the South China Sea is the exploitation of its resources. It contains massive amounts of oil and gas reserves, which China desperate needs to fuel its ever–growing economy. Furthermore, ever–declining global fishery stocks leads to more competition within the region and the South China Sea is highly contested. According to (Greer, 2016, p. 3), twelve percent of all the fish caught globally is caught in the South China Sea. China needs these fish supplies to feed its (still growing) population of 1.3 billion citizens (Rosenberg, 2017, par. 1). Additionally, a large portion of global trade travels

through the South China Sea. Global Security (2017) writes that more than half of global trade goes through the region of which the majority passes through the South China Sea and past the Spratly Islands, making especially this chain of islands of vital importance to China. This trade goes mainly to China and its regional competitors: Japan, Taiwan and South Korea. Controlling these trade routes would place China in a more secure position and would give it leverage over its competitors. Finally, as stated before, the US has established extensive bilateral alliances with China's neighbors and China has a complicated relationship with most of in neighbors (Hengjun, 2014). China also does not need to conquer territory to reach regional hegemony status. It will thus find it difficult to grow through military or diplomatic means. China's best option for more regional power is therefore to grow economically. It can use its increasing economic dominance in the region to coerce other nations into signing trade deals or political alliances that are more favorable to China such as it did with Taiwan (Gold & Pomfret, 2014) and the Philippines (Romero and Mercurio, 2016). It would therefore be most logical that China desires to gain more power through economic means while simultaneously use its economic power diplomatically and politically. Thus, the South China Sea and its economic importance are paramount to China's interests.

4.2 China's usage of gray zone strategy

As a measured revisionist state, China desires to achieve more regional power without upsetting the international order. Wang (2008, p. 491) argues that China is increasingly cooperating and integrating within the international community and pursues a more active and progressive role. China has stated recently that it believes in further multilateralism and UN cooperation and has promised its continuing and increasing role within the international community (Jing, 2016). However, that does not mean that it does not pursue objectives as prescribed by the theory of offensive realism. It rather pursues these goals very gradually and patiently.

As Yoshihara and Holmes (2011, pp. 48–54) point out, China cannot rely (solely) on military means to pursue its goals in the South China Sea. It simply does not have the military capabilities to do so, even if it were to detract resources from other key areas (such as the Yellow Sea and the East China Sea). Also, other nations in the region (and the US) are not likely to accept nautical hegemony by China, their combined navies are on par with China's (or when including the US, exceed China's) and they are resisting Chinese military actions in

the region. As a result, China is currently significantly expanding its navy ("China builds new military facilities on South China Sea islands: think tank," 2017) and military (O'Connor, 2017). Combined with the decline of the US navy, the increase of China's naval capabilities should tip the nautical balance of power eventually into China's favor (Yoshihara and Holmes 2011, pp. 52–53). Nevertheless, China is currently not able to resort to its military capabilities to pursue its interests in the South China Sea. Neither can it pursue a purely diplomatic or political path. As Liu (2017) explains, China bases its claims in the South China Sea on its 'nine–dash line' which encompasses almost 90 percent of the South China Sea. However, these claims are highly contested and are disagreeable with the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), of which China (as most other nations in the world, arguably making the international treaty *jus cogens*) is a party. Combined with the reasons mentioned earlier in this chapter and in chapter 2, China will have to look for other methods to pursue its interests. Consequently, China follows a more patient and gradual strategic approach in the region that would slowly but ultimately tip the nautical balance of power into its favor and establish Chinese nautical hegemony in the South China Sea.

4.2.1 Strategic Gradualism, salami–slicing and fait accompli

Yoshihara and Holmes (2011, pp. 47–49) argue that in order to protect its interests in the South China Sea (e.g. its increasing influence in and control over the region), China wishes to alter the international order. It could gradually use its increasing military, economic and diplomatic capabilities to coerce and persuade neighboring nations to adhere to the new status quo preferred by China in which China controls the South China Sea not *de jure* but *de facto*. This would slowly and gradually increase the legitimacy of China over the South China Sea.

Karka agrees and writes the following:

> In order for China's strategy to work, it has to slowly coerce its neighbors into accepting Beijing's hegemony, but avoid a military confrontation. China uses force through its coast guard, fishing vessels, and now oil rigs, to change the political and legal seascape in East Asia, but it studiously keeps PLAN ships over the horizon to sidestep the chance of war. (Karka, 2015, China "Minds the Gap" in International Law)

As stated before, China does not at the moment possess the military strength to obtain its goals in the South China Sea through military means. However, China will most likely surpass the US in the future economically and militarily. At the same time, it cannot permit to breach any thresholds that would result in a severe response from the international community. It therefore

needs to find a way to put pressure on and contest the territories in the South China Sea it sees as vital through non–military means. Kraska (2015a, China's Strategy) names an example of such pressure tactics. He writes that in 1999, China proclaimed a ban on fishery in the entirety of the South China Sea, even though China has no legal grounds for such a ban. The vast majority of the South China Sea that is encompassed by China's nine–dash line is outside of China's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and even within the EEZ of South East Asian countries such as the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Brunei, etc. Fabi and Aizhu (2012) write that in 2012, the Chinese state–owned oil company China National Offshore Oil Corp (CNOOC) offered up for sale an area of 160,000 square kilometer in the South China Sea to foreign oil companies for exploration. This area lays partially in the EEZ of Vietnam while the rest lays in international waters and therefore cannot legally be sold by China. However, it does show China attempts to pressure the international community into accepting that the South China Sea is Chinese territory.

Already in 2000, China's strategic gradualism strategy in the South China Sea and its usage of certain gray zone tactics (such as combing military with non–military measures and staying below any major thresholds) were evident to Scobell, showing the long–term commitment:

> China is clearly the most ambitious and assertive claimant to maritime territory in the South China Sea. While it has refrained from launching an all–out military operation to expel the forces of other states, it has engaged in what might be called "Slow Intensity Conflict." Unlike low intensity conflict, slow intensity conflict entails the possibility of conventional warfighting between the regular armed forces of different states, primarily small units battling in minor and infrequent skirmishes. In addition, slow intensity conflict may involve the use of diplomatic and economic pressure and propaganda. Escalation of such a conflict tends to be slow and incremental, thereby impeding the efforts of any other party to focus international attention on a suspected violation and coordinate a response with neighbors. (Scobell, 2000, Slow–Intensity Conflict)

> None of the parties laying claim to territory in the South China Sea — including China — has any interest in seeing a full–scale war break out. But China has clearly understood the advantages of slow intensity conflict. Although Beijing claims to seek negotiated solutions to the disputes and advocates joint exploitation of the region's natural resources, its record of actions belies its cooperative rhetoric. (Scobell, 2000, Slow–Intensity Conflict)

As the International Institute for Strategic Studies (2016, p. 4) reports, China is artificially creating islands in the South China Sea and claiming formerly uninhabited island. It is then building military facilities such as missile shelters, military airfields and military communication facilities on these various islands. It can use these islands and their military facilities to project military power and establish a sphere of influence. These military facilities would give it a profound benefit in any military conflict in the region. According to UNCLOS, China cannot claim the (artificially created) islands and their adjacent seas as Chinese territory.

Article 121 (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) states the following: "1. An island is a naturally formed area of land, surrounded by water, which is above water at high tide" and: 3. "Rocks which cannot sustain human habitation or economic life of their own shall have no exclusive economic zone or continental shelf." Article 60 says that: "8. Artificial islands, installations and structures do not possess the status of islands. They have no territorial sea of their own, and their presence does not affect the delimitation of the territorial sea, the exclusive economic zone or the continental shelf". Most of the islands China claims are artificially created, cannot sustain human life on their own or are normally not above waters (such as the reefs). Furthermore, none of them fall within China's territorial waters or its EEZ. Therefore, China cannot claim them or their adjacent waters as its own according to UNCLOS. Furthermore, China is pushing its claim in the region by building civilian infrastructure as well. Haddick (2014, par. 3) writes that China has built "Sansha City" on one of the Paracel Islands, which, according to China, administrators not only the Paracel Islands but also other contested territories such as the Scarborough Islands and the Spratly Islands, hence increasing its *de facto* rule over these areas.

However, it is very difficult for the international community to contest these islands. International pressure, including the case of the South China Sea Arbitration (The Republic of Philippines v. The People's Republic of China) (The South China Sea Arbitration (The Republic of Philippines v. The People's Republic of China), 2016), which ruled in favor of the Philippines, has not had any effect or halted China's actions in the South China Sea. On the contrary, it has made China position stauncher. Other nations do not have many options outside of military interference to try and stop the creation of such islands and the deployment of Chinese military facilities and units in the South China Sea. China's actions do not constitute as a fait accompli, since they are not a decisive action that occurs before other nations can react. However, they do result in the same outcome as a fait accompli since other nations are forced to react severely to prevent them (e.g. by removing China's presence in the South China Sea through military means), possibly causing themselves harm, greatly upsetting China and disturbing the international community and order. Haddick (2012, par. 2, 9) writes that the ASEAN did try and attempt to set up a code of conduct that would regulate any claims in the South China Sea and would resolve possible conflicts. However, the negotiations surrounding this code of conduct failed, which greatly benefitted China since it could now resolve any issues through bilateral agreements that would favor China, as the biggest player in the region by far,

greatly. The only actor that could possible stop China's actions is the US. But Haddick explains how the US is unable to halt China's gray zone tactics in the South China Sea:

> Meanwhile, The Pentagon intends to send military reinforcements to the region and is establishing new tactical doctrines for their employment against China's growing military power. But policymakers in Washington will be caught in a bind attempting to apply this military power against an accomplished salami–slicer. If sliced thinly enough, no one action will be dramatic enough to justify starting a war. How will a policymaker in Washington justify drawing a red line in front of a CNOOC oil rig anchoring inside Vietnam's EEZ, or a Chinese frigate chasing off a Philippines survey ship over Reed Bank, or a Chinese infantry platoon appearing on a pile of rocks near the Spratly Islands? When contemplating a grievously costly war with a major power, such minor events will appear ridiculous as casus belli. Yet when accumulated over time and space, they could add up to a fundamental change in the region. (Haddick, 2012, 10)

4.2.2 Using civilian and commercial actors

Kraska (2015a, China's Tactics) writes that China uses mainly civilian, commercial and civil law enforcement naval vessels and aircraft to try and intimidate and pressure other nations adjacent to the South China Sea. Such vessels probe and enter the EEZ of such countries. They work in concert with the military naval forces of China (such as the usage of military personnel on civilian vessels) and use mainly non–violent measures to hinder the civilian and military naval vessels of other countries. They try and block access to areas China sees as vital, such as fishery grounds. He sums up China's tactics of using civilian naval vessels as follows:

> China operates a network of fishing vessels organized into a maritime militia with paramilitary roles in peacetime and during armed conflict. The maritime militia forms an irregular naval force that provides the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) with an inexpensive force multiplier, raising operational, legal and political challenges for any opponent. The sheer size and scope of the vast network of China's maritime militia complicates the battlespace, degrades any opponent's decision–making process and exposes adversaries to political dilemmas that will make them more cautious to act against China during a maritime crisis or naval war. The legal implications are no less profound. (Kraska, 2015b, par. 1)

In 2012, Chinese vessels had a stand–off with Philippine coast guard vessels in the vicinity of Scarborough Reef, which China eventually won. This allowed China to control the reef and use vessels to prevent any Philippine ships from coming near, even though both nations claim the reef (Haddick, 2014, par. 4). Haddick further explains that this is part of China's 'cabbage strategy':

> In a May 2013 interview on Chinese television, Major General Zhang Zhaozhong of China's People's Liberation Army described the "cabbage strategy" China is employing in the South China Sea. According to General Zhang, the cabbage strategy consists of surrounding a

> contested island with concentric layers of Chinese fishing boats, fishing administration ships, maritime enforcements ships, and warships such that "the island is thus wrapped layer by layer like a cabbage." (Haddick, 2014, par. 6)

It is clear why China would use tactics including such civilian vessels since it would be very unlikely it would breach any thresholds that could be instigated as an 'armed attack'. However, this could potentially lead to dangerous situations since it uses civilians and civilian vessel to achieve objectives normally reserved for the military. By using this strategy, other nations are faced by a dilemma: either they can try and use violence to dismiss the Chinese vessels, which would increase nationalistic sentiment in China and a stiffening of China's position, severely damage relations with China and could even be illegal under International Humanitarian Law, which states that civilians and civilian objects are not the be attacked (Kraska, 2015b, par. 4). The other option is to do nothing and cede jurisdiction and give in to China, even letting the Chinse vessels enter their own EEZ. Kraska gives an example of such a combined military–civilian action by China that took place in the EEZ of another nation:

> Last year, China added oil rigs to its stable of paramilitary maritime forces when the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) rig HD 981 was positioned near the Paracel Islands in Vietnam's EEZ. The rig was guarded by a bevy of some 30 Chinese fishing vessels, paramilitary craft, and PLAN warships, until it withdrew months later. The oil rig incident was the lowest point in Sino–Vietnamese relations since 1979. Vietnamese forces were ejected from the Paracels by Chinese marines in a bloody 1974 invasion. (Kraska, 2015a, China's Tactics)

4.2.3 Economic coercion

Although China is unable to use military means to try and influence the decision–making of its neighboring countries, it can and does employ economic means to try and coerce them. Gamel (2016) reports that in 2016 it was decided that the US would place several Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) units in South Korea as a defensive measure against North Korea's aggressive rhetoric and actions. However, Chinese media warned that South Korea would 'pay the price' if they proceeded. China saw the placement of the units as an offensive measure against itself and as a breach of its sphere of influence since they could be deployed against Chinese missile. Mullen (2017) reports that China subsequently targeted South Korea's economy as a result. China is South Korea's biggest trade partner and Chinese state media started to negatively target certain South Korean trade sectors. This resulted in a 64% decline of Hyundai's car sales, leading to a discontinuing of its production in China. Hyundai's sister car brand Kia was badly hurt too. Tourism from China to South Korea dropped by almost half after Chinese state media told Chinese travel agencies to stop organizing group vacations to

South Korea. Chinese tourists are the biggest tourist group in South Korea. This subsequently led a big plummet in South Korea's retail sector, since Chinese tourists tend to spend a lot. According to Lee and Griffiths (2017), this resulted in South Korea discontinuing the THAAD placement after the first two were placed, meaning that four more units will never reach the peninsula. In turn, this decreases US sphere of influence and its ability to project military power in the South China Sea region.

Another example of Chinese economic coercion is the 24 billion dollars in investment and financing agreements it has pledged the Philippines to make starting October 2016 (Romero and Mercurio, 2016). This would result in an increase of 2 million jobs in various sectors and a strengthening of Chinese–Philippine relations which were strained after the South China Sea dispute. The investment coincided with the Philippines distancing itself from the US in October 2016. According to Blanchard (2016), the president of the Philippines Mr. Rodrigo Duterte proclaimed its separation for the US, saying the US had lost and re–affirming its commitment to solving the South China Sea dispute and closer relations with China. If Mr. Duterte were to commit to its statement long–term, it would have three important consequences. Firstly, it means that China has an ally (or at a minimum one fewer opponent) regarding its South China Sea claims. Secondly, the US loses an important ally that would help facilitate its 'pivot to Asia' (the US has troops stationed in the Philippines and the Philippines has been one of the US' most loyal allies). Finally, it means that China's sphere of influence is increasing, the US' sphere of influence shrinking and that the overall balance of power is slightly tipping in the favor of China.

With regards to the South China Sea Arbitration case, China has been gaining a lot of support for its case from countries that at first sight do not have a stake in the issue. Wen and Xiaochen (2016) write that China's support mainly comes from poorer and less developed countries primarily located in Africa and the Middle East. Their support is based on various reasons. Some countries feel that the dispute should have been dealt with bilateral and not through an international court. Others nations support China out of fear for an escalation of the conflict and an increase of violence that could lead to war, and because they hope it will lead to a lessening of tensions between China and the US. However, this does not explain why a country such as Mauritania, located on the north–west coast of Africa would care about how the issue was resolved or would not simply refrain for expressing an opinion, since it is so far positioned from the South China Sea and has no immediate stake in the matter. Some of them are even landlocked and have no invested interest or expertise in international maritime law. Esmaquel

II (2016) brings forth a more plausible argument. He reasons that these countries support China because of the financial support it is giving them. China has been investing heavily in Africa and many African countries rely on Chinese financial aid. This show how China is working within the international order while at the same time it is manipulating it and adjusting it in its favor. If it can get enough international support, it could possibly even alter or ignore international law (such as UNCLOS) all together, which fits with its gray zone strategies.

4.2.4 Propaganda, political rhetoric and cyber warfare

Piiparinen (2016) writes that China is increasingly using its cyber warfare capabilities to pursue its interest in the South China Sea. Chinese hackers have targeted several South East Asian countries that have a stake in the South China Sea, with the main targets being the Philippines and Vietnam. The cyberattacks started in 2012 during the Chinese–Philippine standoff at Scarborough Shoal. Philippine military and government systems were targeted and data was stolen. In 2014, Vietnam was targeted twice. First during a standoff between China and Vietnam after China transported an oil rig into waters that are claimed by Vietnam and which led to clashes between Chinese and Vietnamese naval vessels and widespread anti–Chinese demonstrations. A second chain of cyberattacks targeting Vietnam occurred after Vietnam increased its military naval capabilities later that year. In both cases, Vietnam's intelligence services were targeted and diplomatic and military data compromised. In 2015, Chinese hackers targeted the Permanent Court of Arbitration's servers in an attempt to compromise and hinder the South China Sea Arbitration case. When the court ruled in favor of the Philippines, Chinese hackers target and brought down 68 local and national Philippine websites. Piipparinen wrote:

> The attacks that ensued spanned over several days and targeted key government agencies, including the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of National Defense, the Central Bank, and the Presidential Management Staff, along with a medical center and smaller local government units. In addition, some local government portals were defaced with popular Anonymous insignia and a message signed by "the Chinese Government." (Piiparinen, 2016)

Piipparin (2016) writes that although it is clear that these attacks were Chinese in origin and that it is likely that for some part they were orchestrated by the Chinese government, it is not clear in how far the Chinese government is responsible or if Chinese citizens organized them individually. Therefore, it can be argued that the Chinese government is not to blame for such attacks. However, these type of cyber warfare attacks do fit in perfectly with Chinese strategy

vis–à–vis its interests in the South China Sea. The cyber–attacks cannot constitute as an 'armed attack', therefore do not breach any threshold while simultaneously they do increase Chinese influence and power by intimidating other nations and stealing sensitive information. Even if the Chinese government were not to blame directly it could still be responsible indirectly. It might be encouraging its citizens to perform such attacks or even manipulate them into carrying them out. The Chinese government often incites negative sentiments towards other countries it has disputes with. Such was the case when the Chinese government manufactured and promoted anti–Japanese sentiments over a dispute with Japan concerning a string of islands in the East China Sea (Carter, 2013). This led to wide–spread demonstrations in China. The Chinese government does so to gain domestic support for its policies and for the communist party. However, as was the case during the 2012 anti–Japan demonstrations, the anti–Japanese sentiments led to violence and riots, the demolishing of private property and a heightening of tensions between China and Japan. The Chinese government lost control over its citizens and eventually had to arrest protestors. The Chinese government, by encouraging anti–Philippine and anti–Vietnam sentiments, could therefore also encourage its citizens to act out cyberwarfare attack on said countries. This fits in with its gray zone strategies by using civilians to target military and government organizations.

5 Conclusion

The goal of this research has been to find an answer to the research question: *how are the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China able to obtain objectives usually associated with victory in war while avoiding a state of war and its negative consequences?* In order to reach an answer, the question had to be dissected into different themes. These main themes are *if* the two cases were trying to create changes, *why* they were trying to create these changes and most importantly, *how* they created these changes.

5.1 The changing of the geo–political landscape and its effect on warfare

Firstly, the current international community and how (and why) it came to be was scrutinized. Also, a brief contemporary history of (the changing nature of) warfare and its relationship to the current international community was explained. The main conclusion is that throughout history, warfare has been used as a tool to facilitate political objectives. Such objectives can be more territory, resources or international power and the ability to assert influence. Warfare (in any shape) is therefore a tool to obtain such goals (Howard, 1983, p. 87).

However, the nature of warfare has changed dramatically in contemporary history. Historically, the default was interstate warfare. A combination of the invention of the atomic bomb, dramatic changes within the geo–political landscape and the position of the US as the most powerful global actor led to interstate warfare becoming too costly. Also, an international diplomatic forum in the form of the UN has been set up to resolve global issues through political methods (Smith, 2006, pp. 130–131, 147, 152, 190, 197). Still, these political methods are inadequate because of their structure and the ability of the five permanent members to use their veto within the Security Council. This means that even countries that have access to the highest decision–making organ in the world (including China and Russia) cannot resolve issues or acquire their objectives politically (Archer, 2014, pp. 19–20). This has led to situation in which nations cannot resolve their issues or obtain their objectives through purely political methods nor military actions.

5.2 Offensive realism and revisionism

Chapter 2 continued by explaining the theories of *offensive realism* and *revisionism*. These theories explain more in detail that states in general and Russia and China in particular are pursuing changes that would lead to gains. Russia and China are unsatisfied with the current status quo, they wish to increase their spheres of influences and decrease the spheres of influences of their competitors (primarily the US) and they seek to obtain more international power and influence (Mearsheimer 2014a, 2014b, 2014c). However, they are benefitting from the current set–up of the international community (e.g. they are both permanent members of the Security Council) and are therefore not willing to destabilize it too much (Mazarr, 2015, pp. 9–25).

5.3 Gray zone strategies

The second chapter ends by introducing *how* nations are able to facilitate changes in the international community in order to obtain gains without entering a state of war. This is done by presenting the reader with the various gray zone strategies. These gray zone strategies allow nations to pursue objectives without using solely military means. The aim is to not breach a certain threshold (normally an armed attack) that would lead to a costly response from the international community (Mazarr 2015, pp. 58, 62, 64, 86). Such strategies can be strategic gradualism, fait accompli and salami–slicing and apply tactics such as using proxy forces, civilian entities, political and economic coercion and propaganda (Mazarr 2015, pp. 33–40). Such methods are not new. What defines gray zone strategies is that all of these strategies and tactics are being combined and applied within one battlespace (Ukraine and the South China Sea).

5.4 Case study 1: Russia and Ukraine

Chapter 3 reviewed the case study of Russia and Ukraine. Within this chapter the theories mentioned in chapter 2 are combined to explain why Russia is acting the way it is in Crimea and how. It concluded that Russia felt it had to intervene in Ukraine because its sphere of influence was being threatened and the influence of other actors (the various members of the transatlantic community) along Russia's periphery was increasing (Karabeshkin and Spechler, 2007, pp. 308–313). Firstly, it feared that Ukraine was drifting out of its sphere of influence

and into the sphere of influence of the transatlantic community. A pro–EU sentiment was evident within Ukraine and anti–Russia moods were beginning to surface. Both the EU and NATO showed interest in Ukraine and introduced closer relations (Hanson, 1998, pp. 13–24). Also, Russian access to its strategic naval base of Sevastopol in Crimea was being threatened (Trainer, 2015, par. 6). These factors combined would diminish Russia's sphere of influence and increase the sphere of influence of its competition and decrease its ability to project power and assert influence. Additionally, as a measured revisionist state, Russia wishes to change the current international order. It therefore seeks to diminish the power of the US–led international order and the status of the US as a hegemon (Mazarr, 2015, pp. 9–16). Because of the before–mentioned reasons, Russia felt it necessary to act.

To obtain its objectives, Russia could not use purely military or political methods. Invading Ukraine with conventional military forces would have led to a severe response from the international community, would have hurt Russia's standing within the international community and would therefore have been too costly. Consequently, it had to resolve to gray zone strategies. One method Russia used in Ukraine was strategic gradualism. During a long period of time, Russia strengthened pro–Russian organizations in Ukraine, exploiting economic weaknesses and applied economic pressure. It also instigating an extensive information campaign and spread pro–Russian propaganda through the media and internet. This led to a pro–Russian sentiment and Ukrainian dependence on Russia (Rácz, 2015, pp. 57–70). It then caused a fait–accompli by suddenly invading Crimea. The Ukrainian government had to choose between reacting militarily and risking a war with Russia or not doing anything. It had no secure allies, the country was divided between anti– and pro–Russian movements and its army was ill–prepared for war. As a result, the costs of reacting to Russia's actions were deemed too costly and the gaining of Crimea and the port of Sevastopol by Russia were successful (Altman, 2017, pp. 2–11). Furthermore, Russia did not use its conventional military forces to facilitate the Crimean invasion. It used unconventional and proxy forces (Chivves, 2017, p. 2). This led to confusion and indecision by the Ukrainian decision–makers, further facilitating the fait–accompli. Finally, Russia created a frozen conflict in Eastern Ukraine. This led a further destabilized Ukraine which, as a result, would be unable to gain access to the EU or NATO (Chivves, 2017, p. 2). All in all, Russia successfully used gray zone strategies to obtain its objectives by stopping Ukraine from gaining access to either the EU or NATO in the near future, securing its naval base in Sevastopol and increasing its own sphere of influence

and diminishing the sphere of influence of the transatlantic community without entering a state of war.

5.5 Case study 2: China and the South China Sea

Chapter 4 looked at the case study of China and the South China Sea. China has vested interests in the South China Sea. It sees it as inherently Chinese territory (Yoshihara and Holmes, 2011, pp. 46–49). Many of the world's largest trade routes traverse through the South China Sea and it is rich in resources (Beina Xu, 2014). The waters are a great method to apply power and military pressure. Furthermore, China wishes to control these waters to increase its sphere of influence and decrease the sphere of influence of other countries such as Japan and the US. The US has various alliances with other Asian countries in the region (such as Japan and South Korea). China wishes to challenge the US–led international community in the region. By controlling the South China Sea, China has a way of breaking the encirclement of US allies surrounding it and feel more confident regarding its coastal areas (Mearsheimer, 2014a, p. 3).

As is the case with Russia, China cannot reach its objectives in the South China Sea through purely political or military methods. The international community does not recognize the South Chinese Sea as Chinese and will therefore not acknowledge China having any legitimacy over these waters. China also does not have the military power to force the issue. The other Asian countries combined with the US vastly outnumber Chinese military forces (Yoshihara and Holmes, 2011, pp. 48–54). It therefore uses several gray zone strategies such as a combination of strategic gradualism, salami–slicing and fait–accompli to obtain its goals. China is economically, politically and militarily rising and increasing in power. It can therefore use its increase in power to coerce or persuade other countries into supporting its policies and to accept a new status quo which benefits China (a South China Sea which is pre–dominantly under Chinese control) (Romero and Mercurio, 2016). This new status quo is being created through a combination of salami–slicing and fait accompli. China is building various island in the South China Sea and placing military facilities on them (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2016, p. 4). By rapidly building these facilities, its adversaries are often too late to stop them. Also, the actions taken are not so dramatic that they lead to a substantial international response or too much loss of Chinese capital within the international community. Because China is patiently building these facilities, other nations are not inclined to respond. Therefore, the costs for China are minimum. Furthermore, once the facilities are build, other nations cannot remove

them without using military capabilities. Other nations are not willing to use such methods because it would upset China or even create a state of war between the country in question and China. China uses non–military means such as civilian vessels to exert power in the South China Sea (Kraska 2015a, China's Tactics). By using such methods, China's actions cannot be described as 'armed attacks' and therefore do not result in a response. Also, China is using gray zone strategies in the form of economic coercion, cyber warfare and propaganda to further reach its objectives. China is an economic powerhouse in the region and has therefore a large economic influence over its neighbors and it uses cyber warfare to attack its opponents (Piiparinen, 2016).

5.6 Comparing both cases

When comparing both cases, similarities and differences can be found. Both nations are large geo–political actors. Both are also member of the Security Council. They therefore have access to the highest political level within the international community and the right to veto. Similarities can also be found in the gray zone strategies both nations use. Both use strategic gradualism to increase their power and their sphere of influence and to change the current status quo. They do so because neither wishes to upset the international community or to invoke a severe international response. They cannot use purely military capabilities to gain more territory or influence because it would force the US, which has much larger military powers, to respond. Most of all, both nations try to avoid interstate conflict. They do so by instigating fait accompli. This leaves the international community with no option but the accept the new status quo. Because they do not wish their actions to be recognized as armed attacks, they use unconventional forces such as civilians and proxy forces to execute their actions. Finally, because both nations are big actors in their own regions, they can use economic and political influence to increase their power. Propaganda and cyber warfare are other gray zone methods that fit within this strategy.

Differences can also be found. Whereas Russia is (arguably) a diminishing regional power that used to be a regional hegemon, China's power is rising and expected to surpass the US' power. China can therefore be a lot more patient with its actions in the South China Sea, whereas Russia had to intervene suddenly according to the changing situation in Ukraine. China's actions are more offensive in nature whereas Russia tries to protect its sphere of influence from shrinking. Russia also tends to use gray zone strategies that rely more heavily on military

forces. China relies almost exclusively on non–military actors. Russia is also more willing to accept loses regarding its international standing.

5.7 Final conclusion

To conclude, the findings of this research are that both Russia and China use gray zone strategies to obtain objectives that were historically gained through warfare. They wish to gain certain objectives because it is their aim to increase their power and influence and because they wish to diminish the sphere of influence and power of others. They also wish to challenge the US–led international community by bending the rules, crossing boundaries and finding loopholes in international law. Gray zone strategies are ideal for these purposes because it allows the two nations to assert pressure without using the military forces that could lead to them being accused of executing an armed attack. They therefore do not reach any threshold that would lead to a severe international response and they thus deem the rewards as outweighing the costs.

These finding do not necessary need to apply only to these two case studies. Because interstate warfare bears such high costs in contemporary international relations it is plausible that gray zone strategies will become the norm (if it has not already). This norm could again change when the international community and others aspects of the geo–political landscape change. If the world would change to a more multi–polar community in which countries such as China, India and Russia are of equal power as the US, the nature of warfare would change as well. The cost of interstate warfare would reduce since other countries could not or do not want to intervene. This could lower global security since nations would not feel the need to restrict the amount of violence they can use. Further research needs to be done on how gray zone strategies will develop in the future. It is most likely that it will adapt and become more covert if the international community does decide to act upon cases as described in this research or become more violent if the international community becomes a more multi–polar one in which more nations are of equal power.

The conclusion of this research confirms the hypothesis. However, at the start of this research the assumption was that both Russia and China were using gray zone strategies to avoid a state of war. Yet, it can be argued that gray zone strategies are not a method to avoid war but simply a different form of warfare which is not defined as such by the international community. Further

studies will need to examine if gray zone strategies can be classified as a type of warfare in a similar way conventional interstate warfare is.

6 Summary

Raziskovalni problem

V preteklosti so narodi uporabili vojno proti drugim narodom, da bi pridobili določene cilje, kot so več ozemlja, virov in vpliva. Vendar pa v sodobnih mednarodnih odnosih upada število meddržavnih vojn. Stroški vstopa v vojno v sedanjem geopolitičnem okolju so dragi in nezaželeni. Mednarodna skupnost (in zlasti regionalni hegemon ZDA) bi s sklicevanjem na mednarodne institucije in pogodbe obsodila in sprožila protiukrepe proti vsakemu narodu, ki bi odkrito poskušal uporabiti silo na drugem narodu. Kljub temu države še vedno lahko pridobijo več vpliva, virov in ozemlja, ne da bi vstopile v vojno z drugimi državami.

Raziskovalno vprašanje in hipoteza

Raziskovalno vprašanje je: *kako lahko Ruska federacija in Ljudska republika Kitajska dosežeta cilje, ki so običajno povezani z zmago v vojni in se hkrati izogneta vojni in njenim negativnim posledicam?*

Hipoteza je, da se narava vojne spreminja. Nacije se vzdržijo uporabe konvencionalnega bojevanja, ker ga vidijo kot predragega in nevarenga. Zato se obrnejo na druge vrste vojskovanja, s čimer se izognejo uporabi konvencionalnih vojnih zmogljivosti zaradi katerih bi se njihova dejanja lahko štela za oboroženi napad na drugo državo. Na ta način so narodi še vedno sposobni doseči svoje cilje ne da bi vstopili v stanje vojne.

Metodologija in struktura

Ta raziskava je teoretična in primerjalna študija primera. Za vzpostavitev zaključkov in povezav uporablja obstoječo literaturo in teorije. Izbrani sta bili dve študiji primerov: dejavnost Rusije v Ukrajini in Kitajska dejanja v Južnokitajskem morju. Ti državi sta bili izbrani, ker sta dve izmed najvplivnejših na svetu, imata precejšnje gospodarske, vojaške in diplomatske zmožnosti ter sta članici najvišjega mednarodnega političnega organa (Varnostni svet Združenih narodov).

Naloga uporablja teorije mednarodnih odnosov – ofenzivni realizem in revizionizem, da bi vzpostavila teoretični okvir, znotraj katerega sta analizirani dve študiji primerov. Raziskava priznava, da izbrani državi, Rusija in Kitajska, želita doseči določene cilje ter ponudi zaključke,

zakaj se obe državi obnašata na določen način in se osredotočita na svoje cilje. Ta raziskava je uporabila teorijo boja sive cone na obeh študijah primerov. Razložene so tudi druge metode, s pomočjo katerih bi oba naroda lahko še dosegla svoje cilje, ne da bi vstopila v vojno stanje.

Poglavje 1 predstavlja uvod in predstavi uporabljene teorije. Poglavje 2 preučuje trenutno geopolitično stanje in mednarodno skupnost ter se poglablja v teorije ofenzivnega realizma, revizionizma in sivoconskega vojskovanja. Poglavje 3 obravnava cilje Rusije v Ukrajini in kako uporablja sivoconsko vojskovanje za doseganje navedenih ciljev, poglavje 4 pa na isti način obravnava Kitajsko na primeru Južnokitajskega morja.

Ključne ugotovitve

Ključne ugotovitve te raziskave so, da Rusija in Kitajska nista zadovoljni z obstoječim geopolitičnim okoljem in želita pridobiti v mednarodni skupnosti večji vpliv ob eroziji moči ZDA. Rusija želi Ukrajini preprečiti, da bi oddrsela na področje transatlantske skupnosti, zaščititi črnomorski mornariški bazi v Sevastopolu in izpodbijti svetovni red, na čelu katerega so ZDA. Kitajska si prizadeva ustvariti sfero vpliva v Južnokitajskem morju, blokirati vpliv ZDA ter pridobiti vire in nadzirati trgovinske poti v regiji.

Vendar pa takšnih ciljev ne moreta doseči prek diplomacije ali z zgolj političnimi metodami, in prav tako ne z vstopom v vojno z drugimi državami. Znotraj sedanje oblike geopolitične pokrajine in mednarodne skupnosti so meddržavne vojne predrage in nevarne.

Zaradi tega se države zatečejo k drugim metodam, ki lahko sicer še vedno uporabljajo vojaške zmogljivosti, ampak tudi (predvsem) druge zmogljivosti, kot so gospodarski pritisk, propaganda, uporaba civilnih akterjev itd. Zato jih ni mogoče opredeliti kot oborožen napad ostanejo pod pragom, ki bi privedel do meddržavne vojne. Te metode so del sivoconskega – 'Grey zone' vojskovanja.

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