

Eka BERAIA<sup>1</sup>

Georgia

Nikoloz MAGRADZE<sup>2</sup>

Georgia

**FALL AND RISE OF RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA  
MEANWHILE THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR  
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF 5<sup>TH</sup> GENERATION WARFARE:  
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS (UKRAINIAN AND GEORGIAN CASE)**

***Abstract:** Russian foreign policy and its main military documents are based on the demonstration of propagandistic methods of war. However, analyzing the main components and dynamics of the Russo-Ukrainian war, it is obvious that information warfare, as well as propaganda conducted by both sides of this conflict broadly shapes public opinion. Observing the above-mentioned conflict from the 5th generation warfare it has to be mentioned that due to technological progress, cyberspace, and social media backed by misperception, shape the wild will of the adversary. This article will take a close look at the main aspects and changing character of wartime propaganda tactics and will represent its causes and effects.*

***Keywords:** Propaganda, 5<sup>th</sup> Generation warfare, information technology, identity, false theories.*

**The 5th generation warfare:  
one more possibility to conduct the contemporary wars**

The nature and composition of war is changing. Traditional aspects of war are fading, and conventional techniques are declining instead, new methods and techniques, tools, and tactics are substituting the old approaches. We live in an era when the following terms “asymmetric warfare”, “information war” “media

---

<sup>1</sup> Eka Beraia, PhD, Caucasus International University (Georgia).

<sup>2</sup> Nikoloz Magradze, MA, Caucasus International University (Georgia).

propaganda warfare”, “hybrid war”, and “psywar” are becoming common and active units of our vocabulary<sup>3</sup>.

5th generation warfare is the type of war that represents dramatic changes in methods, approaches, techniques, and tactics of fighting. 5th generation warfare calls us to use the cognitive mission space and network artificial intellect to make decisions in advance. 5th generation warfare forces us to consider the critical importance of the narrative instead of physical activity. “We are no longer fighting a defined adversary in a defined battlespace for a defined period. Instead, the 5th generation mission space is a continuous global battle of narratives that will play out over both virtual and physical space and encompass a range of violent and non-violent actions and effects”<sup>4</sup>.

NCW - Network-Centric Warfare is a concept that represents the complexity of 5th-generation warfare. The term NCF broadly describes the combination of emerging tactics, techniques, and procedures awareness of the situation, and enabling more rapid, effective decision-making, It is based on the collection of analysis of appropriate information. It is defined as the mixture of operations, doctrine, force structure, and each of the elements that perform a mission to leverage the available information to take further steps to improve the ability in warfare either on the battlefield or virtually.

As weapons are not considered the only instruments of power today, information gains priority and substitutes any type of weapon very often. Information technologies greatly improve our ability to collect and store data, process and analyze it to create information and distribute it widely. Information is being transformed from a relatively rare product into universally accessible within societies, by increasing public awareness. Not only are people more aware of what is going on and of views that may not conform to those of their governments, but the governments are more aware of what the people are thinking.

In this regard, 5th generation warfare is perceived as a battle of information and perception. In this type of warfare violence and cruelty are considered to be one and the most powerful instruments, but they are veiled and hidden so discretely that victims can not notice and feel that they are dispersed or even are on the edge of losing the war. Confidentiality, secrecy, and silence are the main aspects that make this type of war the most dangerous of all time as it hides the nature background and visibility and is hard to identify.

*“Fifth-generation warfare is warfare that is conducted primarily through non-kinetic military action, such as social engineering, misinformation,*

---

<sup>3</sup> A. Lee, E. B. Lee, *The fine art of propaganda: A study of Father Coughlin’s speeches*, New York 1939.

<sup>4</sup> F. G. Hoffman, *Hybrid Threats: Reconceptualizing the Evolving Character of Modern Conflict*, “Strategic Forum” 2009, No. 240.

*cyberattacks, along with emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and fully autonomous systems”<sup>5</sup>.*

5th generation warfare is also called a ”cultural or moral war”, which distorts and distracts beliefs and perceptions of people and instead provides manipulated and premeditated views of current political events. One of the main cores of the strategy is a proliferation in warfare has technologically designed practices of warfare when direct physical involvement and violent actions are not required at all. Aggressor uses the better instrument - information via social media networks and surveillance to affect, manipulate, and change people’s mindsets, perceptions, and viewpoints. According to the Chinese greatest military thinker Sun Tzu definition of this tactic - “winning the battle without fighting“ alters the perspective of winning. It makes it much easier and more effective<sup>6</sup>. The turning point of 5th-generation warfare is disparity - the more dispersed its methods are the more successful results war might have.

Perception and persuasion are the main aspects and weapons of 5th-generation warfare where information plays a crucial role. Due to the increased technology of cyberspace, media, and social media, it is obvious that these tactics of deception and propaganda are backed by identity construction and misperception, and the power of shaping the will of the adversary which helps the opponent to achieve the desired political goal, outcome without using many attempts, violence but through manipulating the minds, heavily influencing and attacking thoughts and shaping particular types of mindsets. This warfare can be compared to a gas drifting from nowhere, is intangible, has no limits, no foregrounds, and backgrounds but it can spread instantly, at an unprecedentedly fast pace, cover, and destroy all surroundings,, As it is a kind of silent war, a “war where the war and political desires are visible but the combatants and the strategic forms of power used in the war are invisible.”

In this battle of the minds, cyber war is taking a central place, turning ordinary people into insurgents through propaganda and misinformation. In this context, media plays a crucial role in building perspectives of people against a particular event. Political decisions government, leaders, etc. by providing them with particular pieces of information created purposely in advance<sup>7</sup>.

One of the Kremlin’s promoted propagandists declared: ”Russia intervenes in your brains and then you do not know what to do with your altered consciousness”. This is the formulation of the method of how Russia

---

<sup>5</sup> A. Krishnan, *Fifth Generation Warfare, Hybrid Warfare, and Gray Zone Conflict: A Comparison.*, “*Journal of Strategic Security*” 2022, Vol. 15, No. 4, pp. 14-31.

<sup>6</sup> F. G. Hoffman, *Hybrid Threats...*

<sup>7</sup> E. Gartzke, *The Myth of Cyberwar-Bringing War in Cyberspace Back Down to Earth*, “*International Security*” 2013, Vol. 38, No. 2, pp. 41-73

manipulates target societies by using pro-Russian narratives and rhetoric, deploying skepticism and mistrust. This is a strategy on how to veil a real goal and pretend patriotic intentions aiming to preserve real traditional Georgian values. Unfortunately, in some cases, some Georgians are deceived by such narratives as the Soviet past of these people still works somehow. It is “tailored propaganda” that works sufficiently by targeting a particular segment of Georgian society spreading advanced, well-digested information that can effectively impact this group of people. A well-known American research organization defines “cognitive hacking” as an attack that includes a psychological understanding of the target group, place, and time to post the disinformation and achieve a desirable ending)<sup>8</sup>. In our technologically advanced age, IT technologies provide Russian propagandists the vast opportunity to use the Internet and Social media to act effectively and manipulate the masses of people.

### **Propagandistic Narratives were used as the main tool of war by Russia meanwhile the Russo-Ukrainian War**

Propaganda represents one of the most crucial elements of war fought in the modern world as it motivates, and manipulates societies by spreading persuasive narratives and fake news. There is no exception of Russo – the Ukrainian war. Russian propagandistic machine still works with its old-fashioned style and screeching sound co-opting for and involving thousands of Russians in the daily Russian war agenda. Millions of Russian citizens use a vast state-controlled network, social media, and cable TV channels that feed them false information that seems never to dive into the ocean and disappear. Propaganda is not a novelty for the Russian government but today it spins and moves so harder and stronger that public support towards their leader Vladimir Putin remains surprisingly high. As the war is entering its second phase now Russian propaganda is its fastest action to achieve an advantage over the opponent, to disseminate fake information to prove and justify its brutal invasion of Ukraine. Here are some of the vivid examples of Russian propagandistic methods that can deploy hate and negativity, mistrust of the war facts, and attempt to be proven not guilty of committing crimes<sup>9</sup>:

- A. Russian propagandistic claim: Russia had to perform a full-scale invasion to protect the citizens of Russia on the territory of Ukraine December 9 - Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke out about the

---

<sup>8</sup> F. G. Hoffman, *Hybrid Threats...*

<sup>9</sup> S. Bond, *How Russia is losing — and winning — the information war in Ukraine*, <<https://www.npr.org/2023/02/28/1159712623/how-russia-is-losing-and-winning-the-information-war-in-ukraine>>.

discrimination against the Russian-speaking population outside Russia, "I must say that Russophobia is the first step towards genocide. You and I know what's happening in Donbas. That, of course, is very much like genocide." He also condemned the law on the Ukrainian language adopted on July 16, 2019, which gave Russian and other minority languages the status of "regional language". According to one of the influential Russian propagandists Kiril Vyshnievsky ( who is at the same time an executive director of "Russia Segodnya"- a media group owned by the Russian government), -the demonstration of "Russophobia" was vividly seen from the Ukrainian government by restricting and eliminating the Russian language from schools, We see an ideology of hatred for everything Russian, hatred of Russians, hatred of anyone who is somehow linked to Russia," he claimed.

Action: starting the war on February 20, 2022

Reality: According to the Deputy Head of the Ukrainian Trade Union of Law Workers Dmitri Vasiliets, the Russian language was restricted at educational institutions in 2020 as speaking the mother language and using it as an official language is a human right protected by international law. Moreover, "Russophobia" is simply colonial rhetoric and part of a larger strategy of hate speech, he stressed.

- B. Propaganda: February 21, 2022- Russian President Putin delivered a long speech representing a so-called "analysis of Russia" or the narrative full of misinformation that is typical of the Kremlin signature, persuading people that Ukraine was created by the Soviet Union and personally by Lenin and if Ukraine wanted to perform the process of "democratization" then as he believed it had to be started with the returning the countries created by Russia to Russian federation as its historical belonging.
- C. Reality: The Kremlin's traditional disinformation policy is based on the instrumentalization of the falsified history of the former Soviet republics. The old methods are intended to create the feeling as if the post-Soviet countries can not exist and survive without the support of Russia as it used to be and will be the only guarantor of freedom, peace, and prosperity.
- D. Propaganda and Action: Russia mounted the full-scale invasion of Ukraine with the reason of protecting the people who lived there from Ukrainian bandits and terrorists.  
Reality: Russia committed crimes including criminal attacks on civilian infrastructure, willful killing of peaceful people, torture, and sexual violence, forced deportation of children.
- E. Russian propagandistic claim: the Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry claimed that the U. S Patriot air defense system is unable to interpret

the Russian Hypersonic “Kindjal” missile and spread the news about hitting and damaging it.

Reality: Ukrainian authority represented photos that reflect the debris from( pieces of ) “Kinkzal “ missile that was intercepted by Patriots on May 3,

- F. Propaganda: in May 2022 president of the Russian Federation claimed that on the map of Europe that dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Ukraine had no legitimacy as a country.

Reality: this announcement is just an argument to support Russian falsified ”historical truth” as if Ukraine never existed independently and prior but was created by the Soviets.

Using false information as the main tool of war can be identified as the purposeful action to deceive the people living on both territories of the war countries as well as the international society. This is a well-proven method that is flexibly used as a foreign policy tool for two reasons<sup>10</sup>:

1. it represents the confirmation of the vivid but biased fact that people intended to listen to the information that had existed in their minds beforehand or they had thought about this possible truth earlier.
2. People likely prefer to listen to media sources that seem to be more trustworthy rather than using any other type of social media. In addition. Fake news can spread faster rather than truthful information, they are far more impressive for the audience especially when it is a war or conflict, such news seems to be more involving and captivating for the audience.

### **Propagandistic Narratives spread by Russia before, during, and after the Russo- Georgian war 2008**

When a military conflict begins between two countries, (particularly in such a small country as Georgia), it is common for the invader side to spread information in order to explain the reasons for the war. It is also urgent for the aggressor countries to convince the international community about the urgent necessity for attacking and invading the country. As I have mentioned above, the international community’s opinion and support matter in this case for such a small country as Georgia represents because the only hope that exists is international support and patrons. The perfect method the occupier starts to use is spreading false information to mislead the international community to make them believe that there is no reason for support. As for the Russo-Ukrainian war, it was obvious from the very beginning that the methods and approaches

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem.

historically used by Russia have not changed and Russian military doctrine has not been modernized since the 2008 brief war of Georgia<sup>11</sup>.

Abkhazia and the region of Tskhinvali turned out to be the best opportunity for Russia to test its hybrid war element – disinformation – taking the chance to increase the tension in the region and escalate the conflict. Moreover, the hidden aggression Russia had against Georgia was- the ties and aspiration of the Georgian nation to become a member of the Euro-Atlantic family. As to hide the real intention Russia started creating narratives about Georgian aggression and brutal behavior in the region neglecting and violating the rights of local people. As Russian TV channels informed the audience Georgian military forces purposely targeted and killed members of Russian Bases and peacekeepers. Exaggerated emotional news impacted people’s moral and psychological aspects and even triggered them to act in support of Russia. As we, Georgians see now Russia replicated the same methods and ways in Ukraine in 2022 as it spread false information to conduct further military action easily just for no reason. A vivid example of the above-mentioned manipulation demonstrated in Georgia was the 2006 referendum of Ossetia when 95 % of the local population - an overwhelming majority of citizens- voted for independence. The result was considered illegitimate by both Georgia and the International society. It was followed by the slow process of armed build-up and preparational military exercises of the Ossetians and Abkhazians which simplified Russian involvement into intra-border conflict. Spreading fake information, propaganda and disinformation, permanent lies, and narratives about aggression, and brutality from the Georgian side as if Georgians targeted members of military bases belonging to the Russian peacekeepers and killed them was a vivid and clear strategy of the Russian foreign policy<sup>12</sup>.

Moreover, Russia spread the information pretended acting as an “essential protection” rather than expansionist indulgence, at that time disinformation was mixed with the process of “pasoportization” which means providing mass citizenship to the population to gain de facto control over the people. It was just an attempt to justify the intervention with local support with the aim to protect the citizens of Russia “at the same time to show the international society how generous and flexible Russian policy is to play the role of mediator in regional conflicts (this process would be repeated in the Crimean region of Ukraine with further legislation being passed for the wider country that makes it extremely easy to gain a Russian passport and citizenship)”<sup>13</sup>.

---

<sup>11</sup> O. Hayward, *The Effects of Russian Propaganda on Georgia’s Diplomatic Relations: 2008 Russo-Georgian War*, <<https://gfsis.org.ge/files/library/pdf/English-2755.pdf>>.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>13</sup> H. Canpolat, *Understanding the Ukraine Crisis Through Putin Doctrine*, <[https://tasam.org/Files/Icerik/File/PUTIN-DOCTRIN\\_EN\\_pdf\\_df0e3fc9-4aa8-4168-a2f0-1b8ae288f7fb.pdf](https://tasam.org/Files/Icerik/File/PUTIN-DOCTRIN_EN_pdf_df0e3fc9-4aa8-4168-a2f0-1b8ae288f7fb.pdf)>.

One of the main disinformation narratives spread meanwhile the 2008 war and even after the war was the impressive and sensitive fake information for Georgian society that Georgia was abandoned by its strategic partners US and Euro Atlantic organizations which was a betrayal and unfair attitude<sup>14</sup>. This idea contributes to the fixation of this skepticism in the country. In May 2023 Russian President Vladimir Putin used another tactic to maintain control over Georgia and to restore the “nostalgic Soviet friendship”. This time he lifted the ban on the flights that were restricted in 2019 by the Russian side and eased visa regulations. Information was the tool the Russian President used even this time. This time the decision was explained as “taking a major step to facilitate travel between neighbors whose relations have been tense since a 2008 war”.

In 2023 Vladimir Putin remarked: “I always try, as it were, to distribute everything positive that we have going on among my colleagues, but in this case, it was really my decision and my suggestion. And it was due to a number of circumstances, including the holiday season. I wanted to support people who want to build normal relations with Russia in Georgia itself, our business, and simply our citizens who love Georgia and want to come here, to relax and get in touch with Georgian nature, culture, cuisine, and so on”<sup>15</sup>.

The decision, as well as the reality when even more Russian citizens arrived in Georgia, caused strong feelings among Georgians there were permanent protests in the streets of the capital city. Especially young Georgian generation expressed their strong protests and refusal towards the Russian President’s decision. The reaction was offensive to the Russian mainstream and Putin verbalized his “naïve surprise” toward Georgian ingratitude: “I thought everyone would say, thank you, isn’t that swell. There’s been some sort of completely incomprehensible uproar over this issue, very strange, frankly, unexpected.”

## Conclusion

In the 5<sup>th</sup> generation of warfare information, media, and social networks are vital. Disinformation is spread on purpose to create the corresponding environment for achieving the preferable ending of the war. In the 5<sup>th</sup> generation, the targeted society mainly fails to realize how their minds are misguided, manipulated, and damaged. The priority of this type of method is to act silently.

---

<sup>14</sup> S. Neset et al., *Changing Geopolitics of the South Caucasus after the Second Karabakh War. Prospect for Regional Cooperation and/or Rivalry*, <<https://www.cmi.no/publications/8911-changing-geopolitics-of-the-south-caucasus-after-the-second-karabakh-war>>.

<sup>15</sup> H. Canpolat, *Understanding...*



Today we are eyewitnesses of Russian hybrid warfare actions and methods that destroy the security of thousands of innocent lives. By using hybrid war methods, Russia underlines that human life does not have a price and is not valuable. The existence of democratic states in his neighborhood is against its interests because this is a direct indication that soon such processes might even start in Russia and shake its imperialist character one day. I am sure that as soon as the war in Ukraine ends, Russia will begin to manipulate Countries spinning its orbit, cancel flights, stop tourism, destroy the economy, and alienate the pro-Russian electorate. The area of the hybrid war is expanding in Georgia. The goal remains the same. For example, the cultural expansion phase of the hybrid war begins when there is a need to open Russian schools and kindergartens because many Russian families have arrived in Georgia.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1. Bond S., *How Russia is losing — and winning — the information war in Ukraine* <https://www.npr.org/2023/02/28/1159712623/how-russia-is-losing-and-winning-the-information-war-in-ukraine>.
2. Canpolat H., *Understanding the Ukraine Crisis Through Putin Doctrine*, <[https://tasam.org/Files/Icerik/File/PUTIN-DOCTRIN\\_EN\\_pdf\\_df0e3fc9-4aa8-4168-a2f0-1b8ae288f7fb.pdf](https://tasam.org/Files/Icerik/File/PUTIN-DOCTRIN_EN_pdf_df0e3fc9-4aa8-4168-a2f0-1b8ae288f7fb.pdf)>.
3. Gartzke E., *The Myth of Cyberwar-Bringing War in Cyberspace Back Down to Earth*, “International Security” 2013, Vol. 38, No. 2.
4. Hayward O., *The Effects of Russian Propaganda on Georgia’s Diplomatic Relations: 2008 Russo-Georgian War*, <<https://gfsis.org.ge/files/library/pdf/English-2755.pdf>>
5. Hoffman F. G., *Hybrid Threats: Reconceptualizing the Evolving Character of Modern Conflict*, “Strategic Forum” 2009, No. 240.
6. Krishnan A., *Fifth Generation Warfare, Hybrid Warfare, and Gray Zone Conflict: A Comparison.*, “Journal of Strategic Security” 2022, Vol. 15, No. 4.
7. Lee A., Lee E. B., *The fine art of propaganda: A study of Father Coughlin’s speeches*, New York 1939.
8. Nese S. t et al., *Changing Geopolitics of the South Caucasus after the Second Karabakh War. Prospect for Regional Cooperation and/or Rivalry*, <<https://www.cmi.no/publications/8911-changing-geopolitics-of-the-south-caucasus-after-the-second-karabakh-war>>.