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Russia and the “Color Revolution”

***A Russian Military View of a World Destabilized by the US
and the West (Key Briefs)***

By: Anthony H. Cordesman

CSIS

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Introduction

The British strategist, Liddell Hart, stressed the need to understand rival views of grand strategy and military developments, or “the other side of the hill.” A range of Russian and Belorussian military and civil experts presented a very different view of global security and the forces behind it at the Russian Ministry of Defense’s third Moscow Conference on International Security on May 23, 2014.

The first session of the Conference presented an overview of the security situation, focusing on what Russian experts called the “Color Revolution.” Russian analysts have used this term since the “Rose Revolution” in Georgia in 2004, in discussing the “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine in 2004, and the “Tulip Revolution” that took place in Kyrgyzstan in 2005.

Russian military officers now tied the term “Color Revolution” to the crisis in the Ukraine and to what they saw as a new US and European approach to warfare that focuses on creating destabilizing revolutions in other states as a means of serving their security interests at low cost and with minimal casualties. It was seen as posing a potential threat to Russia in the near abroad, to China and Asia states not aligned with the US, and as a means of destabilizing states in the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia, and South Asia.

The second session repeated these themes, focusing on the instability in the Middle East, and the final session addressed the war in Afghanistan and South Asia.

Many of the speakers at the meeting from other countries touched on very different themes, but the Russian and Belorussian military speakers provided a consistent and carefully orchestrated picture of the “Color Revolution” – backed by detailed PowerPoint presentations, some of which came from the audience during what would normally have been the question period.

Key Russian officers and officials presented a view of the US and the West as deliberately destabilizing nations in North Africa, the Middle East, and the rest of the world for their own ends. They describe such actions as having failed, and been a key source of terrorism. They see the West as rejecting partnership with the West as a threatening Russia along all of its borders with Europe.

Senior Russian officials are also using the term “Color Revolution” in ways that are far more critical than in the past. For example, the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, has accused the United States and the European Union of an attempt to stage yet another “color revolution” in Ukraine, and said during the Conference that, “Attempts to impose homemade recipes for internal changes on other nations, without taking into account their own traditions and national characteristics, to engage in the ‘export of democracy,’ have a destructive impact on international relations and result in an increase of the number of hot spots on the world map.” (RIA Novosti, May 23, 2014 ‘Color Revolutions’ Cause Apparent Damage to International Stability – Lavrov, <http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2014/05/26/color-revolutions-upset-global-stability-russian-foreign-minister/>.)

The end result is a radically different reading of modern history, of US and European strategy, their use of force, and US and European goals and actions from any issued in the West and in prior Russian literature.

Western experts can argue the degree to which this represents Russian anger over the West’s reaction to events in Ukraine, Russian efforts at persuading developing nations and Asia to back Russia in a reassertion of its strategic role in the world, propaganda to cloak the character Russian actions in the Ukraine and near abroad, an effort to justify Russian action in Syria, very real Russian concern over US and European actions that have destabilized key MENA and Central Asian states, and a host of other possible motives and intentions.

What is critical is that the US and Europe listen to what Russian military leaders and strategists are saying. These are not Russian views the US and Europe can afford to ignore.

The Burke Chair has prepared two versions of a briefing that presents the key points raised by Russian speakers in note form. It should be stressed that the summaries in these briefs have to be made using quick personal notes taken during the actual speeches, and are not quotes. They are only a very rough indication of what the speakers said, and lack important nuances.

Most speakers spoke in Russian and translation may have also have used wording the speakers did not fully intend.

These notes are, however, backed by photos of many of the “slides” used in the PowerPoints during the meeting – many of which were kindly provided to me by colleagues. These slides do clearly do present the views of the speakers in the form they chose.



Sergey Lavrov

**Minister of Foreign Affairs of the
Russian Republic**

- **Europe and US have missed a key opportunity to work with Russia as a partner. They have sought to expand NATO and not to create a common space of cooperation and harmonize a set of policies to deal with Asia.**
- **This polarization helped trigger the crisis in the Ukraine, and created a zero sum approach which has given new power to nationalists and neo-Nazis.**
- **NATO's support to threat to Qaddafi empowered the forces of terrorism the West claims to fight.**
- **The US and Europe use the "Color Revolution" to serve their own interests, impose their own values, and end in creating new global tensions.**
- **The end result of the intervention in Afghanistan has been to breed terrorism in Central Asia.**
- **There is a need for Security Council action to stabilize Afghanistan and Central Asia. The SCVO should work to bring stability to Afghanistan and not the US. It should work with the Afghans to bring that stability on their terms and not those of outside states.**
- **There should be a collective approach to security in Iran and Syria. The West keeps seeking to use the UN to interfere in Syria as it did in Libya.**
- **Russia wants to resume the Geneva talks, to fight terrorism with a common eight country resolution.**
- **Western colleagues and some countries in the region still seek a military solution, Russian feels a peaceful approach like that in Homs is the right one. Military action in Libya ended in making it a permanent source of support for terrorism.**
- **Egypt is now playing a key role in stabilizing the region against terrorism.**
- **We need a collective approach to an Arab-Israeli peace settlement. The US unilateral approach has failed.**
- **Trying to isolate Russian is a recipe for failure. It breeds terrorism, threatens new sources of proliferation, can create a new kind of Cold War, and threatens the global economy.**

- **What is needed is a new poly centric approach to cooperation like the OSCE and to expand the role of the UN.**
- **Cooperation must respect all civilizations and values.**



Valery Gerasimov

**Army General, Chief of General Staff
of the Armed Forces of the Russian
Federation – First Deputy Minister of
Defense of the Russian Federation**

- **DETAILED POWERPOINT FOLLOWS**
- **The break up of the FSU has led the US to act as if it were the only superpower and for its own ends using a mix of force and sanctions using its NATO allies.**
- **The US military interventions in Iraq in 1991, in Yugoslavia in 1999, in Afghanistan, and then again in Iraq in 2003 used pretexts to allow aggression that violated international norms and law.**
- **Color revolutions have led to civil wars and threats to civil populations that only make things worse and leave major parts of the state under militant control and become training areas for terrorists.**
- **Afghanistan has seen more than 10 years of war, and a 30-fold increase in drug production. There has been no concern for the civil population, drones have killed some 2,500 in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Yemen. Color revolutions so can use military forces.**
- **Crisis in Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, Georgia, Ukraine. Tensions in many other areas like Algeria and Mauritania.**
- **Use transfers of arms, SOF, mercenaries, and foreign fighters.**
- **Claim to protect civilians and deal with WMD, but use to change regimes and force support of the US and NATO.**
- **Syria sees influx of foreign troops, US double standards. Use of SOF and weapons supplies, threat of military operations like cruise missiles, and constant use of information warfare.**
- **The adaptive approach to Color Revolutions allows the US and Europe to fight low cost wars at the expense of local populations.**
- **Libya is a warning of the costs: terrorism, migration, fragmentation, suffering, spread of SHORADS to Mali, Tunisia, etc. Then left Libyans to themselves without assuming any responsibility for order.**
- **Russia favors collective action to bring stability and unity.**

- **The Ukraine is another case in point:**
 - **Pressed to change the regime.**
 - **Overtaken the legitimate power.**
 - **Suppress protests,**
 - **Operations by private military groups.**
 - **Use anti-government demonstrations.**
 - **Army used against the people.**
 - **Makes legitimate economic development impossible.**
 - **Increasing use of force.**
 - **Threaten European security.**
 - **See NATO build-up in Baltic, Poland, areas near Russia.**
 - **Sanctions end European and Russian cooperation.**
 - **Entire region sees growth in mercenaries, terrorism, extremism, transnational crime.**
 - **All in the guise of a Color Revolution.**

Main Development Trends of the Current Politico-Military Situation

1

More acute competitiveness for geostrategic space, economic and natural resources

Deeper differences between states, nationalities and confessions

US aspiration towards global domination in the conditions, when multipolar system of international relations is taking shape

US-led NATO expansion and Alliance's aspiration to replace existing international security mechanisms

Expansion of means for resolving differences, with military force maintaining its key role

"Traditional" Approach for Achieving Politico-Military Goals

Search for a pretext to launch a military operation



Iraq
1991, 1998, 2003

Yugoslavia
1999

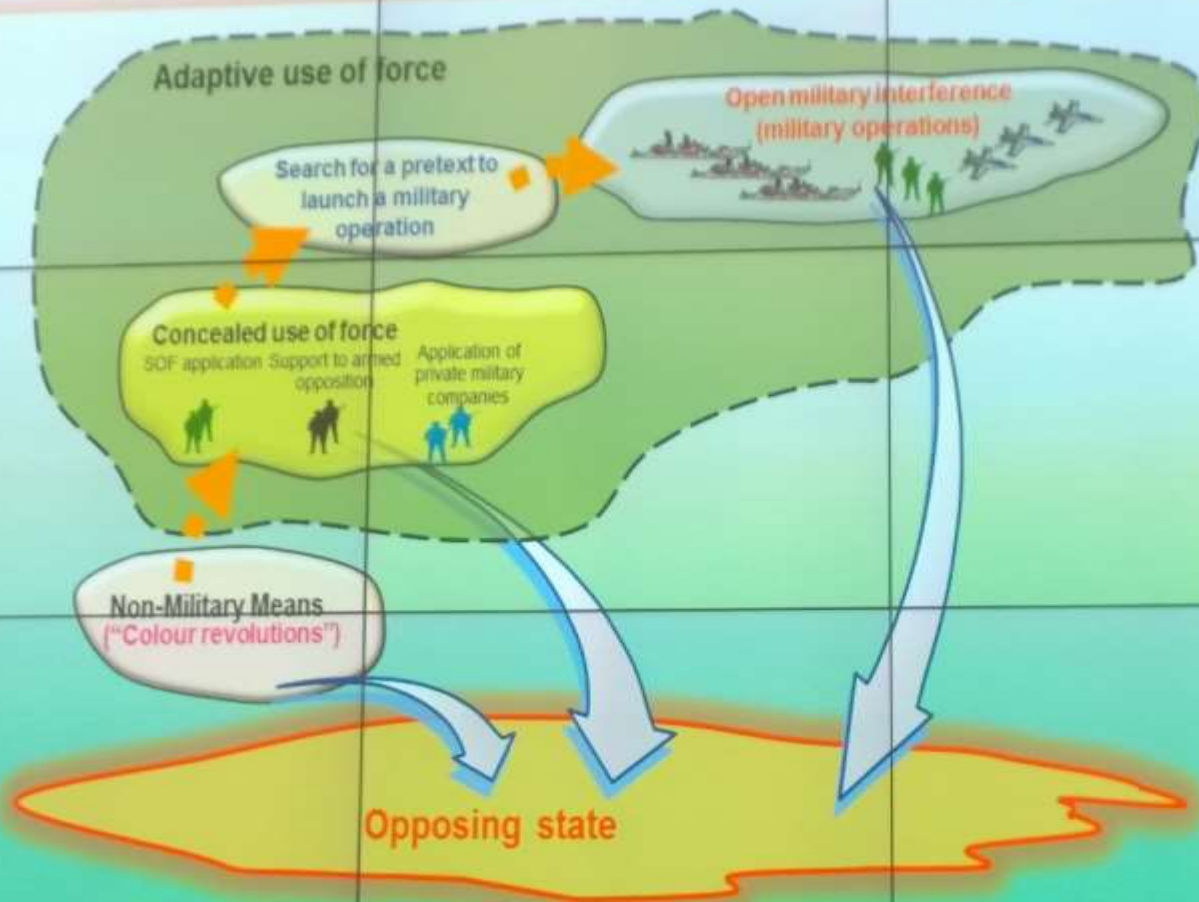
Haiti
1994, 2004

Afghanistan
2001

Opposing state

"New" Approach for Achieving Politico-Military Goals

4



"Colour Revolutions"

"Colour Revolutions" is a form of non-violent change of power in a country by outside manipulation of the protest potential of the population in conjunction with political, economic, humanitarian and other non-military measures



Adaptive Approach to the Use of Military Force

Concealed use of military force



Military training of rebels by foreign instructors



Supply of weapons and resources to the anti-government forces



Application of SOF and private military companies



Reinforcement of opposition units with foreign fighters

Search for (creation of) pretext for a military operation



Protection of civilians and foreign citizens



Accusing a conflicting party of using weapons of mass destruction

No

Has the resistance of the opposing side been suppressed?

Yes

Military Operation



Change of political regime

Armed Conflict in Syria



Influx of foreign mercenaries and radical fighters



Double Standards policy



Participation of foreign SOF and private military companies in the conflict



Open military interference under the pretext of protecting civilians is not excluded



Large weapons supplies to opposition

Assessment of Adaptive Approach to Use of Military Force

Adaptive Approach to Use of Military Force



Provides for maintaining positive image in the international community



Avoids substantial costs for military operations



Gives an opportunity to prevent numerous casualties



What is the influence of such an approach on the international security ?

Post-Conflict Situation in Libya



Division of the country into the spheres of influence by military tribe formations and their confrontation



Safety threat to foreign citizens



Legalization of illegal armed formations



Uncontrolled migration



Increase in extremism and crime



Spread of terrorism to other regions



Uncontrolled weapons proliferation



Crisis in Ukraine



Change of political regime



Overturn of legitimate power by using fighters from extremists organizations



Suppression of protests by using national armed forces



Anti-governmental demonstrations



Legend

- Regions where the situation is under the control of the new regime
- Regions where there are still protests against the new regime
- Regions where the punitive operation is under way against those who do not recognize the new regime



Operations by private military companies

Changes in Politico-Military Situation in Europe due to the Events in Ukraine



Suspension of Russia's cooperation with NATO, including on ensuring regional and global security



NATO

Higher intensity of operational and combat training of NATO forces

Build-up of NATO forces in the Baltic states, Poland, Rumania

Higher combat readiness of NATO Response Forces

NATO increased military presence in the Baltic, Mediterranean and Black Seas



Russia

Consequences for International Security of Implementing New Approaches to Use of Military Force

Colour Revolutions

Military support to anti-governmental forces,
open military intervention

Increase in uncontrolled force



Mercenarism



Terrorism



Extremism



Transborder crime

Expanded range of threats
to international security

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Expanded range of threats
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Yury Zhadobin

**Lieutenant General, Minister of
Defense of the Republic of Belarus**

- **DETAILED POWERPOINT FOLLOWS**
- **The influence of Color Revolutions affects both regional and global security.**
- **These are not real internal conflicts. They are driven by outside power and intervention in the MENA region. Mali, Egypt, Syria all see this foreign pressure.**
- **History goes further. Czechoslovakia in 89-93, Belarus in 2006, Ukraine in 2004 and 2014, Yugoslavia in 2000, Moldova in 2005, Georgia in 2003, Uzbekistan in 2005, Kyrgyzstan in 2005 and 2010.**
- **What the world needs is participation in international organizations, joint defense and security. Russia and Belarus Regional Military Cooperation Group, integrated air defense system, collective power projection, cooperative special forces.**
- **Color Revolutions come from the outside and are disastrous for states, their victims and global stability.**
- **“Gunpowder can be smelled in Europe.”**
- **The UN fails to halt this. UN Resolutions are used to support it. They demarcate sides, and then see mercenaries, non-state actors, and other foreign elements intervene.**
 - **Examples are Yugoslavia in 1991-2001, Libya in 2011, Syria since 2001, Ukraine since 2014.**
- **Belarus is building up its forces to gain security against this.**
- **Ukraine poses a threat along a 1,084 KM border with Belarus, and 1,222 KM border with Moldova.**
- **Baltic states have become grey zones as a threat to Russia, outside arms control and role of CFE. No limits to NATO’s concentration of force.**
- **US and NATO have positioned militant to be a threat to Central Asia.**
- **Neo-Nazism, nationalism, and xenophobia are rising in Europe.**
- **We lost 25% of our population in WWII.**
- **“Information Confrontation” is a key weapon in Color Revolutions.**

- **The US and NATO are revving the Cold War.**
- **Again, the Answer is international cooperation, arms control non-interference, and preserving the unity of the European security space.**
- **If not, then Russia and Belarus must find a regional solution to anti-Color Revolutions**
 - **Joint exercises.**
 - **Joint basing and stockpiles,**
 - **Interoperability**
 - **Strong government pressure, Low level of a corruption.**
 - **Effective internal security.**
- **The UN needs to focus on the war crimes inherent in Color revolutions.**



**INFLUENCE OF “COLOUR
REVOLUTIONS” ON REGIONAL
AND GLOBAL MILITARY SECURITY**

**Minister of Defence
Republic of Belarus**

Lieutenant General Yuri Zhadobin

AFTERMATH OF "COLOUR REVOLUTIONS"



Mali



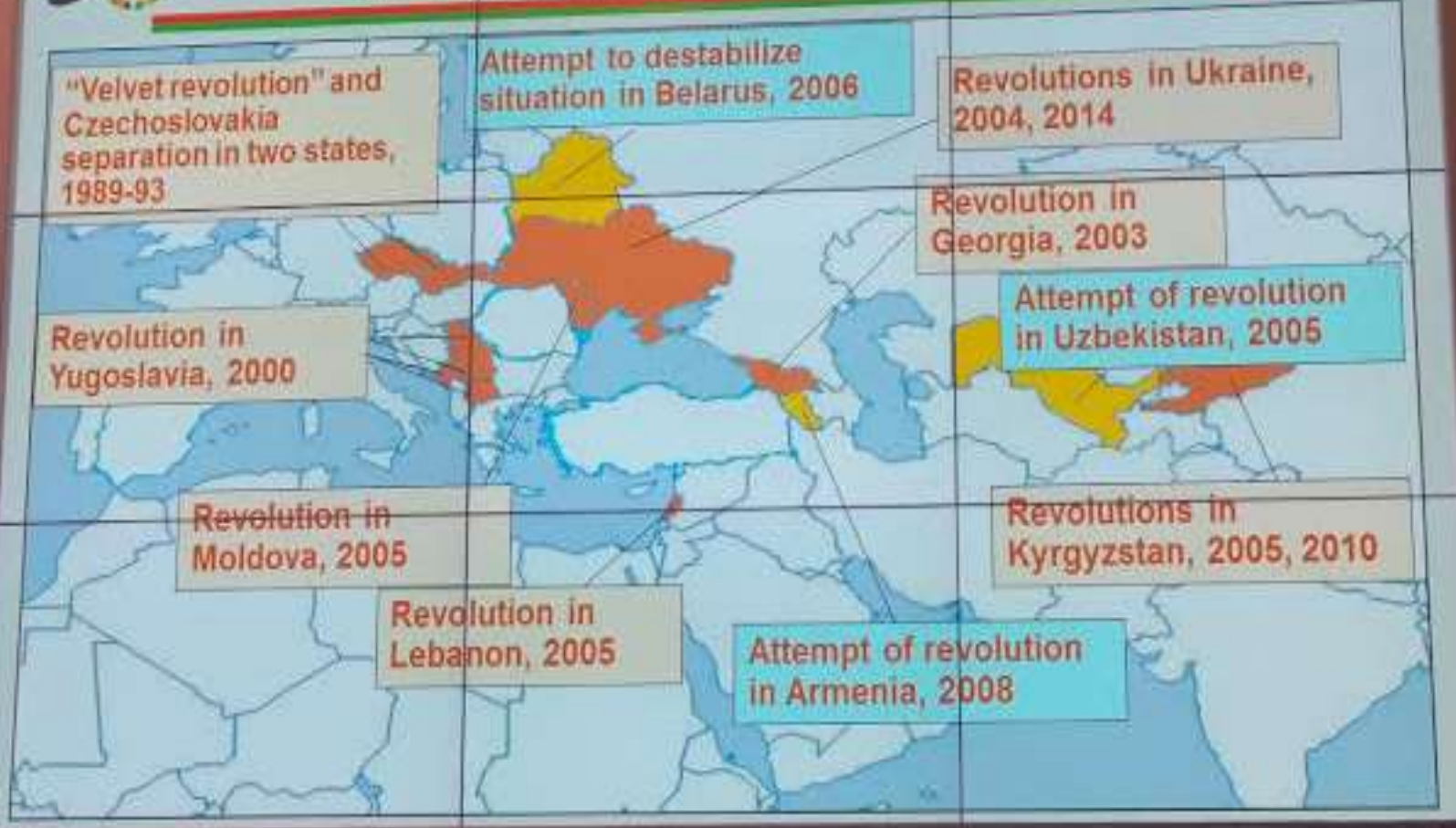
Egypt



Syria



"COLOUR REVOLUTIONS" AS CATALYSER OF MILITARY CONFLICTS



OBJECTIVE LAWS OF COLOUR REVOLUTIONS



Those nations are more exposed to destructive centrifugal forces, which lack strong power, information link between the government and the people, where corruption is flourishing and state interests are substituted by personal benefit

Key factors for successful countering "colour revolutions":

- Participation in international organizations;
- Establishing joint defence and security structures;
- Effective functioning of Russia-Belarus Regional Military Group and Joint Regional Air Defence System;



osce



INCITEMENT OF "COLOUR REVOLUTIONS"



"Colour revolutions" are prepared from outside, but their aftermath is disastrous both for states-victims and globally





CONFLICTING PARTIES IN "COLOUR REVOLUTIONS"



State

Conflicting parties

International irregular forces



"Traditional" types of peace-keeping operations tend to be ineffective in the absence of clearly-defined boundaries between the opposing parties.

LOW EFFICIENCY OF THE UN ACTIONS IN PREVENTION OF MILITARY CONFLICTS



Yugoslavia
(1991 – 2001)



Libya
(2011)



Syria
(since 2011)



Ukraine
(since 2014)





SIGNIFICANCE OF ARMAMENTS SAFETY CONTROL



in the Republic of Belarus

Project in improving safety of SALW storage sites is being implemented. It will enable to reduce the risk of its proliferation and illegal use.

Major tasks of the project:

- > Equipping weapons storage sites with lighting and alarm systems;
- > Replacement of inner and outer fencing of weapons storage sites;
- > Weapons record automation;
- > Procurement of needed equipment and material supplies;
- > Renovation of weapons storage facilities

The total project's budget is about US \$3.7 million. OSCE and EU member states currently have allocated more than US \$2.8 million.



in Ukraine



As a result of situation destabilization illegal armed groups have seized SALW and now use it to resist the authorities and for further conflict escalation.

Moreover, spread of these weapons on the surrounding territories is not excluded



Ukraine has common borders with:

- Belarus – 1,084 km.
- Russia – 2,295 km.
- Moldova – 1,222 km.
- EU (Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland) – 1,391 km.



COLLAPSE OF INTERNATIONAL MILITARY ACTIVITY CONTROL SYSTEM

9



"Grey zones" on the map of Europe



Activity of private military companies



Functioning of militants training bases

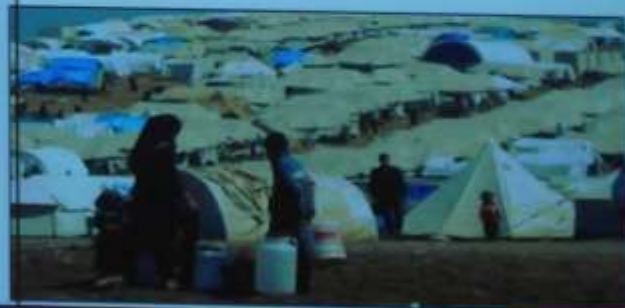


AFTERMATH OF "COLOUR REVOLUTIONS"

10



Use of military force during "colour revolutions" results in humanitarian disasters fostering human trafficking, cross-border criminality and drug cartels activities





INFORMATION CONFRONTATION DURING "COLOUR REVOLUTIONS"

During "colour revolutions" information confrontation rises to unprecedented levels, provoking nationalism and xenophobia

Nazism in Europe, 1939-1945



Neo-Nazism in contemporary Europe



CONSEQUENCES OF INFORMATION CONFRONTATION

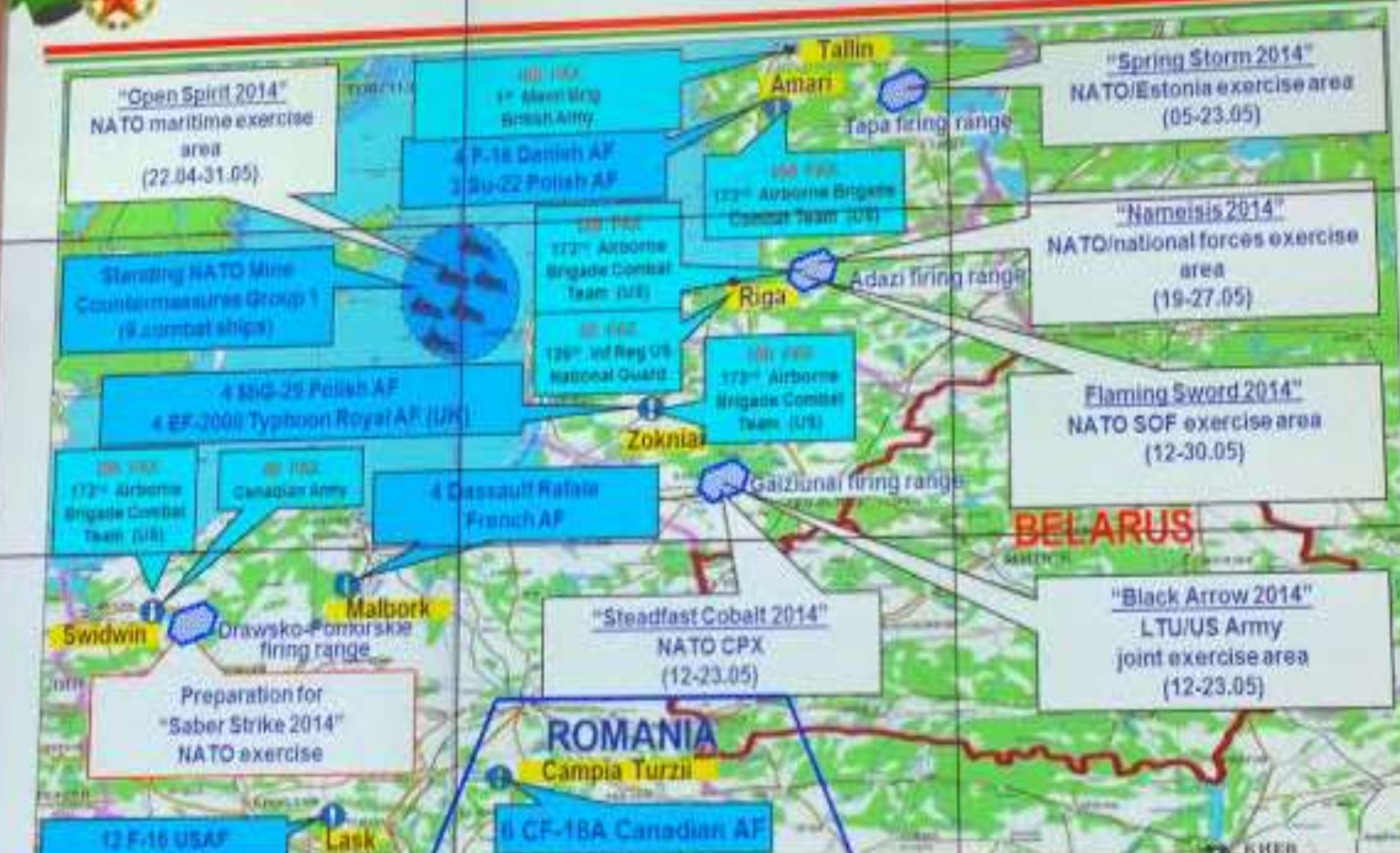


On a global scale information confrontation during "colour revolution" leads to military and political confrontation

Escalation of information confrontation leads to a significant increase in the military budget, activation of defence industry and strengthening of power method for problem solving as a priority vector of foreign policy



NATO MILITARY PRESENCE BUILDUP IN BALTIC REGION



RUSSIA-BELARUS INITIATIVE, AIMED AT STRENGTHENING EUROPEAN SECURITY



2011

Statements of Russian and Belarusian military leadership



"... in order to demonstrate transparency, peace-loving policy of the Union State ... "Union Shield 2011" joint operational exercise is conducted in the territory of the Russian Federation. It clearly confirms commitment to take real measures to strengthen European security"



"The decision to conduct "Union Shield 2011" exercise away from NATO borders has been adopted to demonstrate transparency, peace-loving policy of the Union State and in conformation of Regional Military Group' defensive nature."

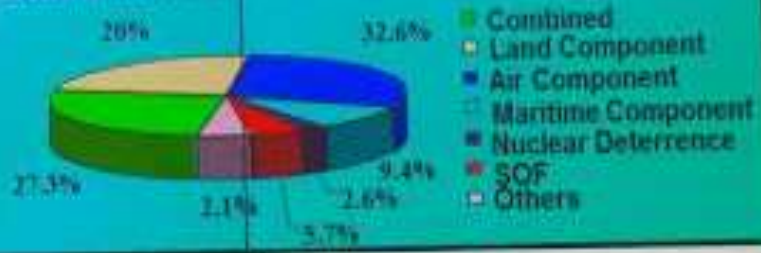
2011-2013

In 2012, the Union State did not conduct any large-scale military activity near NATO borders

Increase in number of NATO exercises in Baltic Region



Distribution of combat training events in 2013



"Colour revolutions" aftermath carries a significant destructive power to the existing global and regional military security structure. It may generate a number of threats, plunging the world into a new round of military confrontation in the form of the "cold war"



"COLOUR REVOLUTIONS" PREVENTION

16

World community assistance to the actions of legal government

Intensification of international cooperation, forging relationships and reaching compromises



If it is impossible to reach a consensus in a wide format of international security organizations, it is essential to search for an acceptable solution at a regional level



"COLOUR REVOLUTIONS" PREVENTION

Joint exercises enable development of appropriate forms and methods of the armed forces employment in conflicts, generated by "colour revolutions". They are the viable tool to strengthen international mechanisms of ensuring military security



Countering color revolutions assumes:

- > presence of strong government;
- > low level of corruption;
- > ability to counteract information influence;





Nikolay Borduzha

**Secretary General, Collective Security
Treaty Organization (CSTO)**

- **The crisis in the Ukraine is the product of illegitimate interference by non-state groups. Those who support this ignore the principles of the UN and are blackmailing other states with sanctions.**
 - **The US now sanctions more than 70 countries with populations equal to more than half the world total.**
 - **The US uses disinformation and information warfare in the global information space.**
 - **foreign mercenaries are used in Libya, Syria, and the Ukraine,**
- **The US manipulates arms control agreements to expand its role and that of NATO in the East and is expanding NATO to admit anyone regardless of standards.**
- **The Color Revolution serves its interests under the cloak of humanitarian intervention.**
- **The US and Europe try to enforce their own vector of development and isolate Russia and Asia.**
 - **The Ukraine is a copy of events in Yugoslavia and Croatia.**
 - **The US seeks to divide and create conflicts in the region and Asia.**
- **See problems rising in Turkestan triggered by camps in Afghanistan where also train FSU extremists.**
- **The US has failed to the point where 1/3 of all the drugs in the world come out of Afghanistan**
- **Russia seeks a comprehensive agreement for European security— solve all issues through comprehensive security agreements.**



Vladimir Zarudnitsky

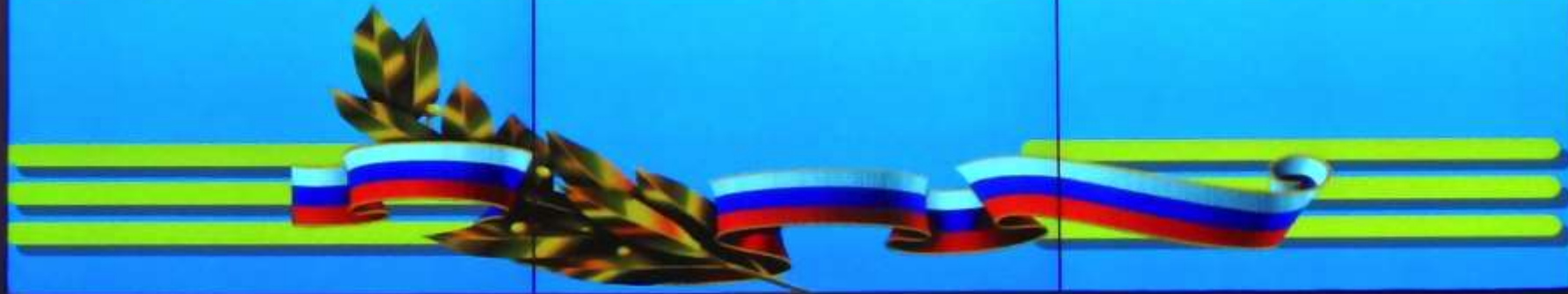
**General, chief, Main Operational
Directorate of the General Staff of the
Russian Armed Forces**

A KEY POWERPOINT ON THE COLOR REVOLUTION FOLLOWS

- **The use of force is a constant part of the Color Revolution's effort to overthrow regimes.**
- **Syria is the scene of militant formations and mercenaries.**
- **A coalition of countries is trying to overthrow the legitimate government.**
- **The rebels are back for economic reasons**
- **The countries where they operate are all very much the same.**
- **Coup d'états have become unstable developments along with the globalization of covert aggression to exploit internal conflicts. Opposition to governments leads to armed conflict. Development and unity halt as part of the population joins the enemy.**
- **See loss of 15-20 years of development.**
- **Libya saw traditional military operations tied to destabilizing – coordinating outside forces with rebels and private armies.**
- **The Color Revolution is:**
 - **Delegitimizing war**
 - **Urban areas are targets**
 - **Use of human shields.**
 - **Go beyond boundaries of humanitarian behavior and international law.**
 - **Criminalizing war.**
 - **Seize and use religious values as weapons.**
 - **Use private military units, SOF disguised as rebels, forces like Blackwater**
 - **“Most disgusting” medieval methods of violence.**
- **Can wage War with with minimal resources and costs.**
- **Outside power use this to serve their own interest in weak and divided states.**

MILITARY ASPECTS OF "COLOUR REVOLUTIONS"

**Chief, Main Operational Directorate
General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces
Colonel General Vladimir ZARUDNITSKIY**





Aims of Aggression



Classical
aggression

Aims of aggression

1. To change of the politico-military leadership of the target country and to involve it into the intended sphere of influence.
2. To decrease its economic and military potential.
3. To impose the aggressor's military presence.
4. To gain access to the resources of the defeated country.

Aggression in the
form of a "colour
revolution"

Outcome

1. Never-ending civil war, terrorism.
2. Decreased status of the country in the region and the world.
3. Partial loss of control over the territory.
4. Ruined economy, lost control over the economic resources.
5. 15-20-year kickback in the development of the country.





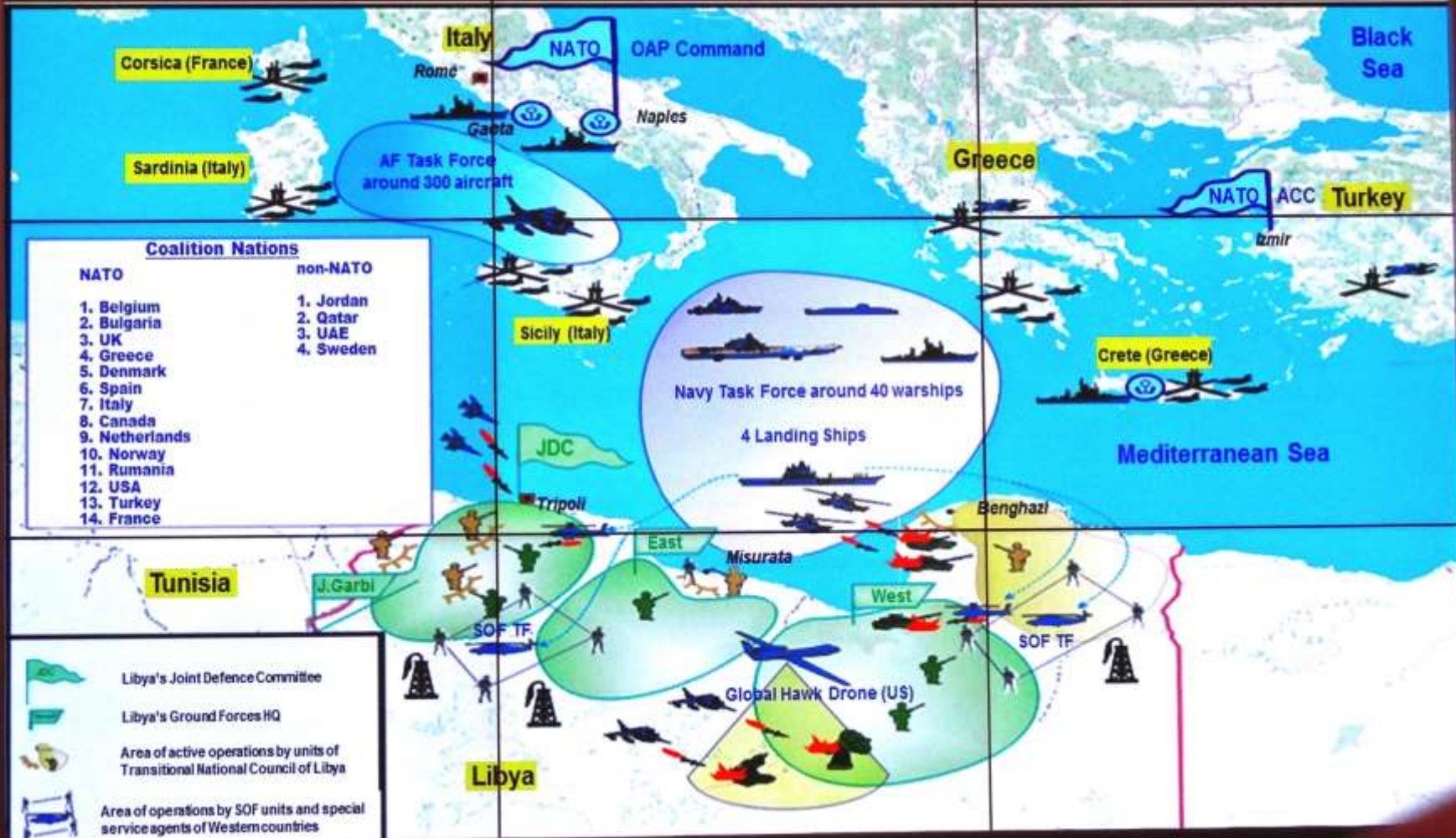
Comparative Analysis



	Classical aggression	Aggression in the form of a "colour revolution"
Subjects of Confrontation	Armed forces of the belligerent states	Government forces against the opposition forces backed by foreign armed forces
Enemy Identity	Adversary (aggressor) is <i>evident</i>	Adversary (aggressor) is <i>not evident</i> ; sides one of the parties to the conflict
Scope of Hostilities	Front and rear areas are existent, hostilities along the directions	Front and rear areas are non-existent, hostilities over the entire territory of the country
Actions of the nation suffering aggression	Consolidation in the face of the external aggression	Split and mutual destruction
Resources spent by aggressor to achieve its aims	Relatively high	Relatively low



Military Operation of Multinational Forces in Libya





Features of Hostilities



1. Lift of boundaries between defensive and offensive operations, strategy and tactics, front and rear.
Network-like hostilities over the entire territory of the country.

3. Hostilities are held mainly in the populated areas.

2. Total delegitimacy of hostilities.
Delegitimacy of war makes it much more ruthless and brutal, brings it beyond the prohibitions imposed by the humanitarian law with regard to the prisoners-of-war, wounded and civilians.

Features of hostilities during "colour revolutions"

4. Criminalization of war.
Impunity and permissiveness lead to criminal and terrorist tactics prevailing in the hostilities. Terror becomes widespread.



5. Wide application of private military companies.
Their hostilities are characterized by indiscriminate means, great number of killed and wounded among civilians.





Michael Bogdanov

**Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of
the Russian Federation**

- **Many economic, demographic and other factors are creating a crisis in the region.**
- **Tunisia saw new impacts from the Internet, new communications methods by religious elements.**
- **See no improvement coming in conditions of life.**
- **Growing threat from mobile warriors,**
- **Sunnis versus Shi'ites, and worst extremist are movements like Al Nusra and ISIL.**
- **Russia is fighting against the negative consequences – it used the chemical weapons incident in Syria to stop the use of foreign intervention.**
- **Russia is leading the US to serious negotiations. The Syrian government is ready, but the opposition delegations won't come. Outside nations keep supplying arms.**
- **Russia played a key role in the aid agreement in Homs, backed the presidential election on June 3rd.**
- **It supports Egypt – stabilize the Islamic world and region fight terrorism and stabilize the Sinai.**
- **The West helped destroy Syria's government, security, and unity. Russia seeks to assist it in creating a stable government.**
- **The Arab-Israel negotiations did not address key solutions for issues like water, refugees, west Bank, settlements, and Jerusalem.**
- **The Palestinians will move towards peace, but Israel must change its posture. Russia will push for this peace.**
- **President Putin is deeply concerned about the plight of Christians in the Middle East. Russia tries to protect Syrian Christians.**