



# *Russian Next Generation/Hybrid Warfare Study: Using Crimea to Assess the Vulnerability of the Baltic States*

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ISMOR*

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# ***Russia's revanchist foreign policy poses questions for NATO members, particularly the Baltic States.***

**Phase I Problem Statement:** In February and March 2014 Russia illegally occupied and annexed Crimea using operations and tactics that leveraged a domestic environment shaped by Russian influence over the preceding decade. The use of political, economic, and social means in tandem with conventional military deterrence raises critical questions:

- **Would similar operations in NATO member countries trigger Article 5 of the Washington Treaty?**
- **Were there warning signs and observable indicators of Russia shaping the environment in Crimea for occupation?**
- **Are similar warning signs and indicators currently present in the Baltic States?**
- **Could similar operations be successful in the Baltic States?**

**Phase II Questions:** If Russia's annexation of Crimea depended on shaping the environment, is Russia engaging in similar influence operations in the Baltic States? If the answer is yes, then how is Russia influencing the Baltic States?

# The Space

Kaliningrad  
(Russian  
Federation)



Crimean  
Peninsula

# Research Approach

## Phase I: Understanding Crimea

- **Primary and secondary resource literature review**
- **Field research**
  - **Planned for Ukraine but conditions prevented execution**
- **Subject matter expert elicitation**
- **Academic and Technical Review**

## Phase II: Assessing the Baltics



**Same**



**April 13 – April 30, 2015 in the Baltic States with field research expert.**



**Collaborative analysis event held March 23-24 leveraged the expert community in D.C.**



**Scheduled for July 2015**



# Phase I Deliverable

**This white paper endeavors to understand Russian hybrid warfare as seen in Crimea in 2014 so as to identify how Russia may undertake similar actions in the Baltic states.**

- Section 1: Why did Russia occupy and annex Crimea using hybrid warfare?
- Section 2: How did Russia successfully occupy and annex Crimea without incurring an armed response?
- Section 3: Why should the Baltics nations, Poland, and NATO take notice?
- Section 4: How does this impact NATO?
- Section 5: How did international law play a role?
- Section 6: Primer on Ukraine.

Asymmetric Operations Working Group

## Ambiguous Threats and External Influences in the Baltic States and Poland

Phase 1: Understanding the Threat



October 2014





***A sharp rise in military activities and drop in diplomatic activities four days before occupation stands out as a possible indicator.***

19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
PDP	PDP	RC	PDP	PDP	PDP	PDP	PDP	PDP	BDR
PDP	PDP		SD	IW	PDP	PDP	PDP	PDP	MO
PDP	PDP			IW	AOF	PDP	RC	PDP	MO
RC	PDP			AOF	ES	BDR	IW	PDP	MO
	PDP			AOF	CMPL	IW	IW	RC	MO
	PDP			SD		DM	AOF	RC	MO
	PDP			SD		MO	AOF	IW	MO
	IW			MO		ES	DM	IW	MO
	IW					CMPL		MO	MO
								MO	MO
								MO	MO
								MO	AOF
								SD	AOF
								DM	IW
								EWF	IW
								CMPL	IW
								CMPL	EWF
									CMPL

**Key:**  
**Diplomatic**  
**Information**  
**Military**  
**Economic**

*Escalations  
Phase*

*Start of Conflict  
Activities Phase*

*Crisis  
Phase*

*Resolution  
Phase*

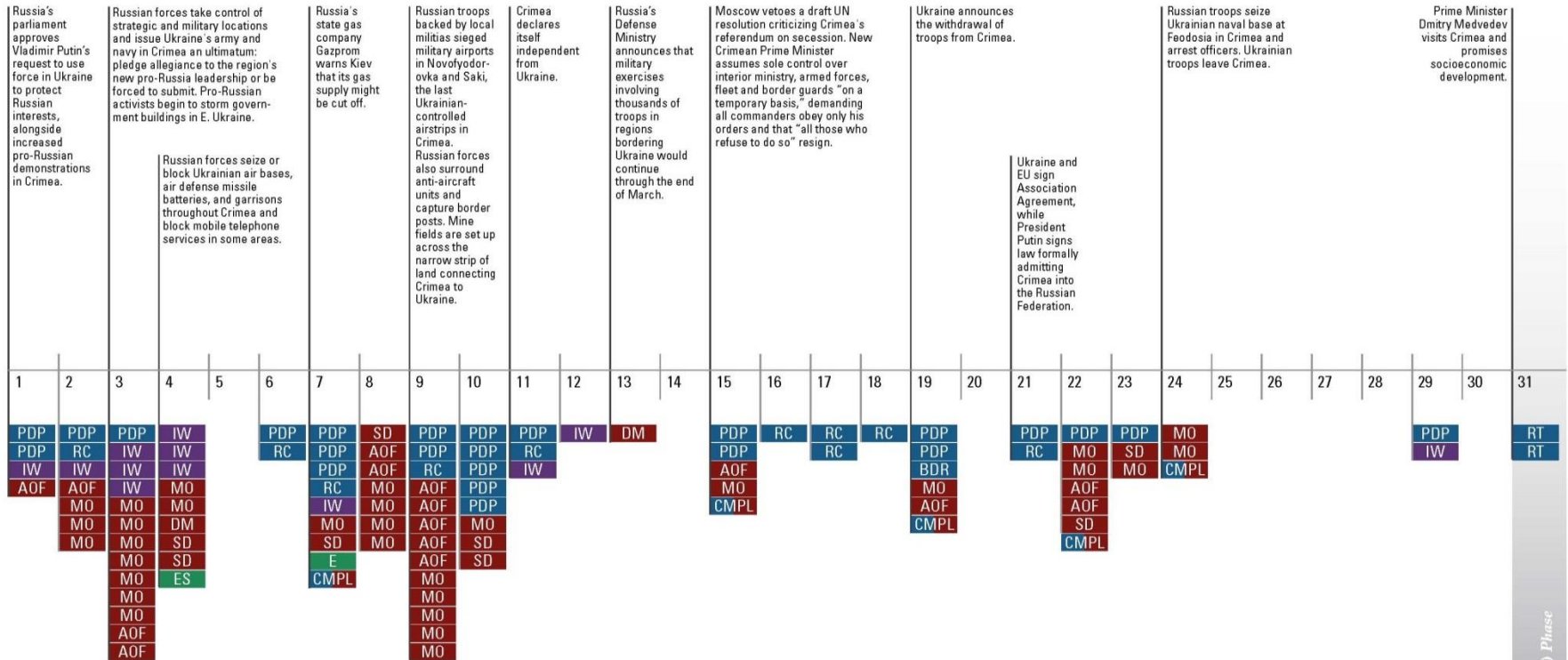
## Observations:

- News reports show an increase in irregular military activities 3-4 days prior to introduction of first troops
- Increase in information operations preceding and following introduction of troops
- The beginning of February witnessed more political acts than military, but that changes during the end of February and into March



***Military activities outnumber diplomatic while Russia consolidates power in Crimea.***

## March 2014



**Key:**

**Diplomatic**  
**Information**  
**Military**  
**Economic**

### Resolution Phase

### Restoration of Peace (post-conflict settlement) Phase



# ***Phase II Field Research Methodology: Soak and Poke***

- 1) Formal interviews** with subject matter experts in international relations, Russian foreign policy, Baltic national security and military, and Baltic society.
  - 1. We aimed to meet with 4-5 experts in each country.**
- 2) Informal interviews** with members of the local population in Tallin, Narva, Aluksne, Rezekne, Daugavpils, and Riga.
  - 1. We aimed to conduct 4-5 informal interviews in Estonia and Latvia based on being identified as containing larger Russian compatriot populations and more divisive policies on language and citizenship.**
  - 2. After formal interviews with experts in Vilnius, it is apparent that the minority Polish populations in Lithuania is an area for further research.**
- 3. Discussions focused on:**
  - **Russian strategic objectives in the region;**
  - **Characteristics of the Russian compatriot population and the likelihood of mobilization; and**
  - **Responses to Russian hybrid warfare at the local and national levels.**

## Trip Route

**The red line on the this map approximates the trip's route.** \_\_\_\_\_



# ***Phase II Field Research Methodology: Actuals***

**Number of formal and informal interviews by city:**

<b>City</b>	<b>Formal/ Expert</b>	<b>Informal/ Non-expert</b>
<b>Tallinn</b>	5	3
<b>Narva</b>	3	5
<b>Tartu</b>	6	4
<b>Aluksne</b>	0	1
<b>Rezekne</b>	3	15
<b>Daugavpils</b>	1	14
<b>Riga</b>	7	1
<b>Vilnius</b>	26	0

# *Defining Hybrid Warfare*

- **Several experts we met with wanted to discuss the definition of hybrid warfare because they observed there to be a lack of a definition.**
  - **Offers for a definition:**
    - **To be hybrid warfare requires the deployment of special operations forces in a ‘little green men’ scenario**
    - **Includes all attempts by Russia to undermine a country’s political, social, and economic integrity with or without the military.**
    - **Parallel actions beyond conventional warfare.**
    - **Multi-dimensional warfare.**
- **This study uses ‘hybrid warfare’ less as a denotation and more as a connotation. It is meant to convey the concept of employing military and non-military means to take territory or destabilize a country, as was done in Crimea and eastern Ukraine in 2014.**
- **Hardly anyone interviewed agreed on a definition, but everyone knew what we meant by hybrid warfare.**



# ***Russia's Strategic Objectives***

- **Russia views itself as under attack from within and outside. It therefore engages in efforts to shape its perceived sphere of exclusive interest that NATO and the EU view as aggressive but Russia views as defensive.**
  - **In the Russian psyche war and struggle are constant.**
- **Field Research Observations:**
  - **There are very few concrete, physical benefits or gains from invading, occupying, and annexing Baltic territory.**
    - **Except for a corridor to Kaliningrad.**
  - **The Baltic States do not hold similar symbolic and historical value as Ukraine, and Crimea in particular.**
    - **Baltic Russians don't see the Baltics as Russia, but do see Crimea as Russia, and support the annexation**
  - **Russia's strategic objectives are not aimed against the Baltic States per se, but against NATO and the EU.**
  - **Domestic concerns of regime consolidation and preservation, as well as perceived internal threats, also drive foreign policy.**

# ***Energy Security***

- **Estonia's energy security remains strong only to the extent that there is no substantial drop in its use of oil shale. Such a change would upend the country's energy flow.**
- **Latvia's energy security is weaker than Estonia's and the country remains vulnerable to gas supply interruptions by Russia.**
- **Lithuania's energy security is the weakest after the loss of its nuclear power plant, and the country is the most reliant on Russian energy.**
- **Disunity across the region and within the EU opens up opportunity for Moscow to leverage energy as a tool of influence.**
- **Field Research Observations:**
  - **Interdependent electrical grid is currently important, but it's being replaced.**
  - **Lithuanian transit of energy to Kaliningrad serves some security interest.**
  - **Critical infrastructure is integral in hybrid warfare, and Estonia and Latvia appear in similar positions to Ukraine in 2014.**

# ***Economic Domain***

- **Lower wages and higher unemployment in the Russian community than in the Estonian provides and exploitable grievance – economic success is tied to language.**
- **The Baltic States have greater trade and investment ties with Nordic neighbors and the EU than with Russia, but Russia is heavily invested in the transit and logistics sectors.**
- **Russia's ability to influence the Baltic States through economic avenues remains insignificant.**
- **Field Research Observations:**
  - **The conclusion that Russian economic influence is insignificant might be challenged by Gazprom's underpricing effort to undermine Lithuania's natural gas projects.**
  - **If one cannot speak, write, and read in the home-state language sufficiently, one remains in low-wage jobs and possibly out of university.**
  - **Even though these wage gaps exist, life in the EU remains better than in neighboring Russian oblasts. A problem of perception exists, wherein those close to the border know the reality of life in Russia better than those far away from the border, i.e., Riga, Tallinn, Klaipeda.**

# *Information Space*

- **Two information spaces exists: Russian and non-Russian (to include Baltic and other western media like CNN, BBC, etc.)**
- **Russian programming outcompetes Baltic programming in terms of quality and quantity**
- **Content is rebroadcast from domestic Russian media and focuses on deriding the Baltic governments, undermining NATO and the US, and portraying Russia as a great, benevolent power.**
- **Field Research Observations:**
  - **The biggest victory of Russian media in the region has been the influence on society's perception of western media. Many trust neither Russian nor western media and instead go online to find 'trustworthy' information.**
  - **"If you want to know where Russia is going next, follow the cameras." During the 2007 Bronze Soldier incident Russian news crews set up apart from others and protesters arrived in the camera frame shortly afterward.**
  - **Regulating Russian media present jurisdiction and enforcement difficulties.**



# *Characteristics of the Russian Compatriot Populations*

## ■ Who are they?

- 25% in Estonia's, 28% in Latvia and 8% in Lithuania, but the Russian and Polish minorities in Lithuania combine to make up 16% of the population.
- They are not homogeneous, and radicalized elements remain few.
- The number of Russian-speakers is higher in each State, but the trend in second language acquisition favors English over Russian.

## ■ Estonian academics in 2011 developed 5 categories of compatriots

- Successfully integrated (21%); Russian-speaking patriots of Estonia (16%); Estonian-speaking active and critical (13%); Little integrated (29%); Unintegrated passive (22%)

## ■ A Latvian academic is developing 4 categories, but without percentages as yet:

- Uncritical support of the Kremlin, imperialist right-wingers who want tougher actions in Ukraine by Russia, enlightened radicals who are equally critical of Russia and Latvia, and rationalists/opportunists who fully support Latvia and the West without criticism

# Cont'd

- **When asked about the likelihood of compatriot populations supporting a pro-Russian movement to separate and join Russia, interviewees responded that it was highly unlikely**
  - Russian agents have been in Estonia and Latvia attempting to instigate demonstrations against Estonia/Latvia, the EU and NATO, but they received little support (estimates of tens of persons)
- **There is a significant imbalance in NGO funding where pro-Russian groups receive funding from Russia, and Baltic NGOs continue to struggle to raise funds**
  - Russian NGOs produce reports and hold events spreading Kremlin ideas and rhetoric to foment social tension and support arguments that these populations are in need of help
- **Russia is financing youth camps, popular movies, and video games with patriotic themes**
  - Interviewees stated, however, that Russian attempts to recruit youth have not been successful
  - Youth spoken with in Latgale stated they were joining rifle clubs (akin to the national guard)
- **They also stated that living in the EU has changed the mindset of Russian speakers**

# ***Responses to Russian Hybrid Warfare***

- **Conscription in Lithuania was initially poorly received, but interviewees stated they knew several youth joining volunteer “rifle groups;” interviewees in Estonia and Latvia reported similar youth interest in volunteer defense organizations**
- **All three Baltic States have a quick reaction force of some kind, as well as a paramilitary law enforcement group trained for resolving internal disturbances**
- **All three Baltic States now have legislation designed to address resolving internal disturbances via cooperation between the national military and law enforcement**
- **Lithuania only recently stood up a group to secure the cyber domain in the public sphere**
- **Estonia and Latvia are scheduled to start local Russian-language TV channels late summer and early fall of this year**
- **Estonia created a government agency designed to counter Russian information warfare through programs modeled in part after Finnish psychological defense concepts from the Cold War**

# ***Military Domain***

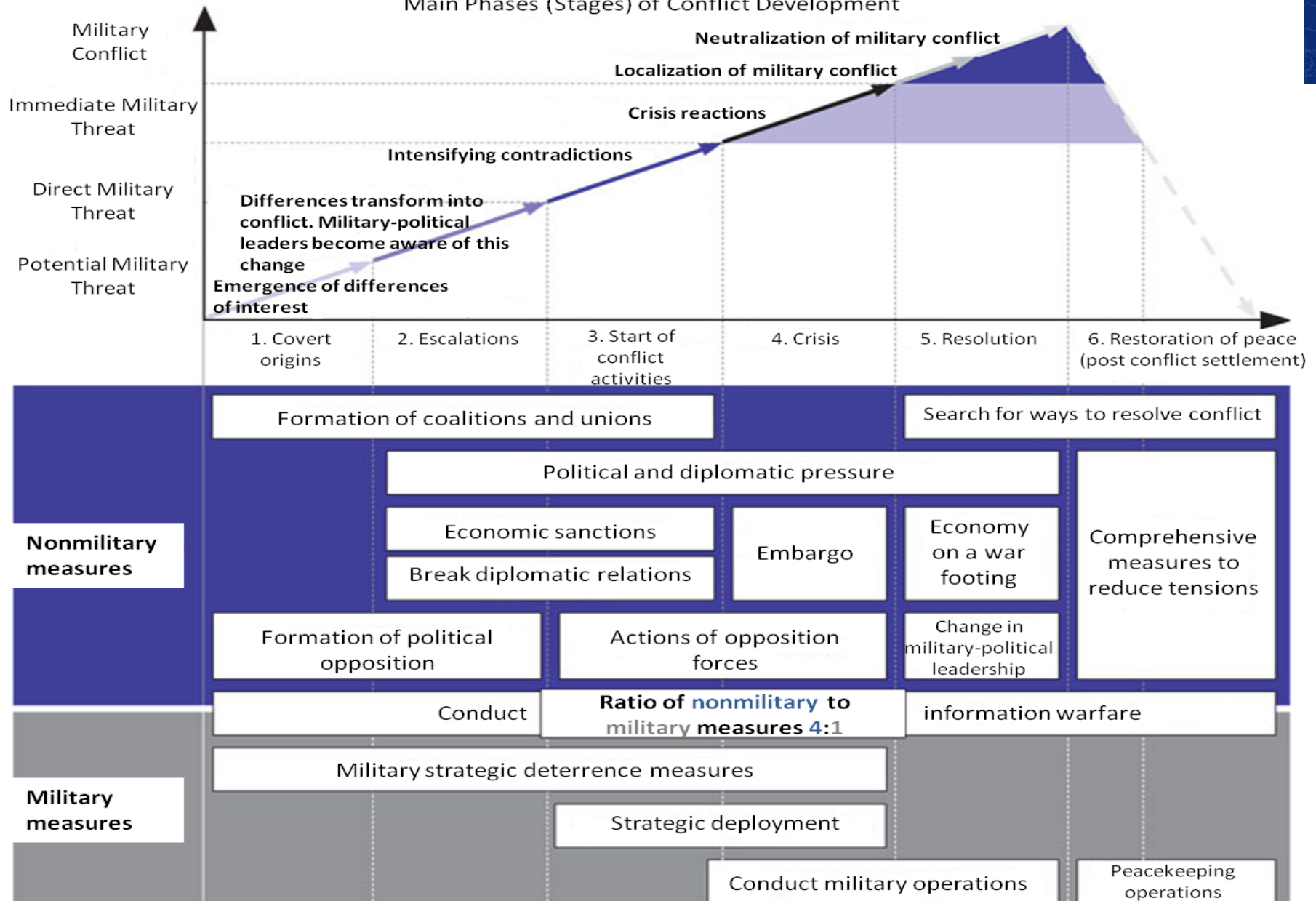
## **■ Field Research Observations:**

- **The borderlands are densely forested, as well as swampy in parts, but are also filled with logging roads. Crossing points ranged from unmanned areas with demarcation posts to heavily-manned checkpoints. The border guards are modernizing and training for incursion scenarios. The Saatse boat is scheduled to be returned to Estonia with the ratification of the recently-concluded border treaty.**
  - **Curiously, the border crossing where Estonian intelligence agent Kohver was grabbed appeared to be the most heavily-manned and secured.**
- **The border regions were sparsely populated, but respondents characterized those populations as unwilling to permit foreign or unidentified forces to travel through with impunity.**
- **Several interviewees emphasized the conventional military threat, as well as how the Baltics will essentially be cut off from the rest of NATO if Gotland Island (Sweden) and the 100km border with Poland are compromised.**
- **While there are no Russian military installations in the Baltics, Kaliningrad is heavily militarized and access is obtained via rail across Lithuania. Respondents stated that the agreements governing that system were highly-detailed in order to prevent abuse. Additionally, the engines moving the rail cars are owned and controlled by Lithuania.**



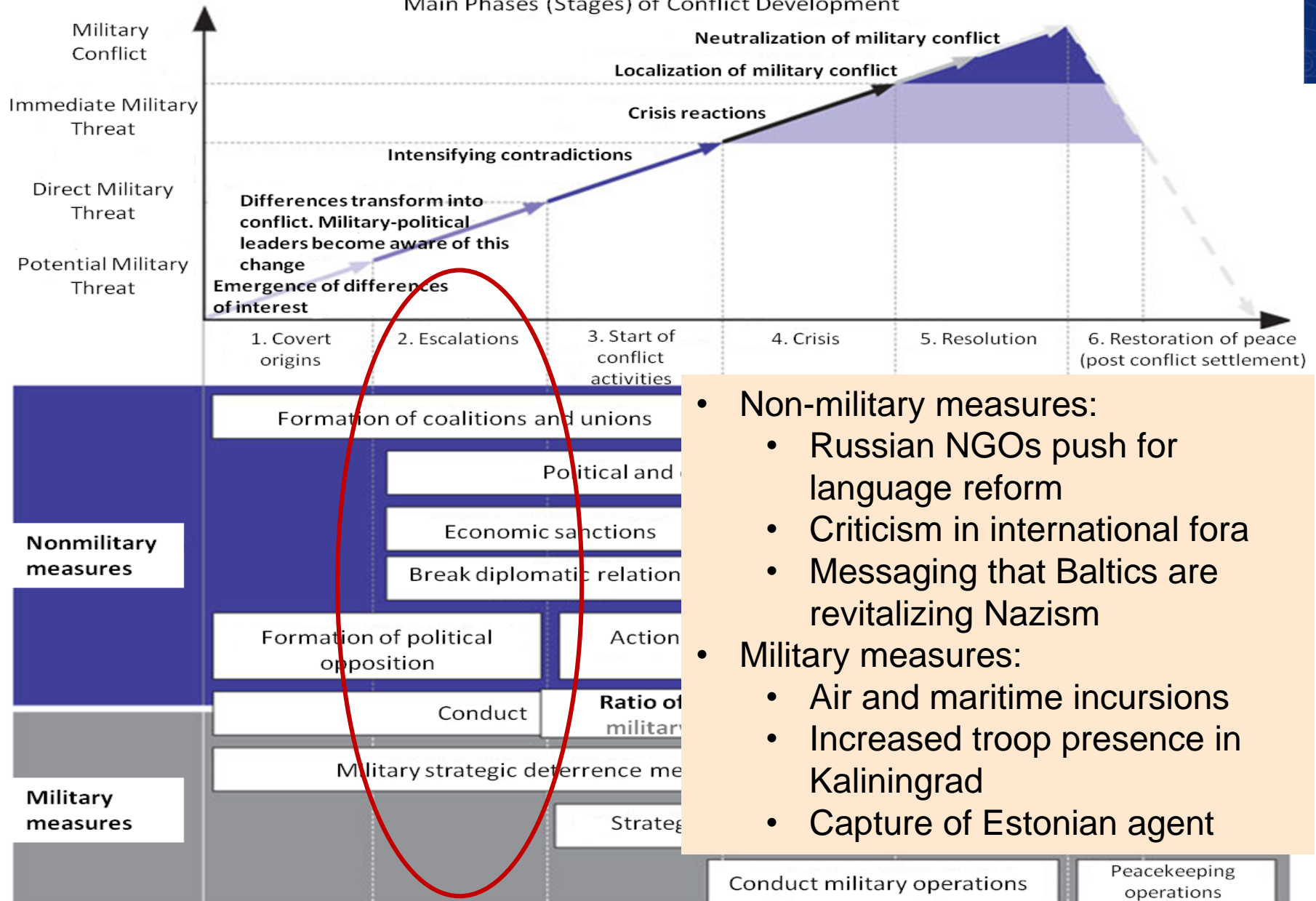
# The Role of Nonmilitary Methods in Interstate Conflict Resolution

Main Phases (Stages) of Conflict Development



# The Role of Nonmilitary Methods in Interstate Conflict Resolution

Main Phases (Stages) of Conflict Development



- Non-military measures:
  - Russian NGOs push for language reform
  - Criticism in international fora
  - Messaging that Baltics are revitalizing Nazism
- Military measures:
  - Air and maritime incursions
  - Increased troop presence in Kaliningrad
  - Capture of Estonian agent



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