

CTX

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From the Editor

Mariupol. Kharkiv. Bucha. Donbas. We've all quickly, unintentionally become experts on Ukrainian geography, tutored by a relentless barrage of news stories and videos detailing the Russian assault. After months of ferocious battle, what's the endgame: victory? Stalemate? Partition? Who knows? Even Vladimir Putin, venting his rage against Ukraine's intransigent bid to be European while yanking his own country from authoritarian kleptocracy into neo-fascist totalitarianism, appears to be flailing for an answer.

In 2013, Russian General Valery Gerasimov described a concept of cyber-enhanced hybrid war that came to bear his name. The "Gerasimov Doctrine" may have originated more as a conspiracy theory about the West than as military guidance, and much of what it describes may not actually be new, but its cogent analysis of how irregular, cyber, and special warfare can be combined with covert influence operations to undermine a society's institutions and lead to a government's downfall struck a nerve—or rang a bell—everywhere.¹ Russia had already tested several of the tactics in Georgia, but the tightly orchestrated 2014 invasion of Crimea and seeding of insurrection in Ukraine's Donbas region served as proofs of concept. Many observers are now struggling to redefine warfare itself. If, as Gerasimov warned, "the very 'rules of war' have changed" and the actual declaration of war has apparently become passé, how do we know when we're at war?² Should the atrocities attributed to Russian soldiers in Ukraine fall under the trending rubric of "terrorism," as some declare, or are they just the same old war crimes the Geneva Conventions were meant to control a hundred years ago? Is it a brave new world we live in, or Groundhog Day?

Whatever answer we may choose to believe, the reality is that hybrid/irregular warfare is now the norm because it works. The United States just extricated itself from its second 20-year quagmire against a much weaker but unconventional, and ultimately victorious, adversary in a little over half a century. The French are pulling their forces out of Mali in the face of an extremist insurgency they can't control. And Gerasimov's ideas are defeating his army in parts of Ukraine.

Our first feature article, by Dr. Siamak Naficy, delves into what he terms "delinquency," the edge of the political space where grievance is radicalized into alienation and, often, violence. For those who take pride in posing as antagonistic outsiders in opposition to the larger society, the ends of moral and political

rectification can justify whatever means are needed to get society there, regardless of what is destroyed in the process.

The next article looks through the lens of the 2012-2013 Malian Civil War to evaluate the effectiveness of irregular warfare tactics against a conventional opponent. Major Ryan Hess demonstrates how al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) made a serious strategic error when it shifted from cultivating popular support and using hit-and-run attacks against the Malian army to controlling territory by force and establishing a line of battle.

The final feature article is a story about terrorism with a twist. Lieutenant Commander Nikolaj Lindberg describes a fictional terrorist attack in Mali that uses a heretofore unknown and horrifyingly effective chemical agent. Told from the point of view of the former French Minister of Defense, Florence Parly, the author guides us through the exhausting, often frustrating work of trying to figure out what happened, how it happened, who did it, and how to stop it from happening again.

The *CTX* Interview brings you two conversations between Dr. John Arquilla and Ali Nazary, Head of Foreign Relations for the National Resistance Front of Afghanistan (NRF). They spoke for the first time on 8 September 2021, shortly after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, as NRF forces were defending positions in the Panjshir Valley from Taliban attacks. The second conversation took place on 29 January 2022, as the Taliban were consolidating their control over the country.

We have two book reviews in this issue. First, Dr. Craig Whiteside discusses *Irregular Soldiers and Rebellious States: Small-Scale U.S. Interventions Abroad*, in which author Michael P. Noonan examines US irregular warfare practice and the implications of changes in warfighting strategy for the future. Major Timothy Bettis reviews *Head of the Mossad: In Pursuit of a Safe and Secure Israel* by Shabtai Shavit. Shavit discusses the Mossad's activities in the context of Israel's modern history, geopolitical position, and policy making from the point of view of someone deeply invested in a secure future for his country.

Be sure to read about *Outsourcing Duty: The Moral Exploitation of the American Soldier*, the latest book from Drs. Michael J. Robillard and Bradley J. Strawser, in the Publication Announcements.

Our mission is to bring you stories, essays, research, and ideas that will inspire and encourage you as you pursue your mission of countering threats to security wherever they arise. Do you have a story or comment that you would like to share with the community? What ideas do you have to make *CTX* even better? Write to us at CTXeditor@globalecco.org and follow Global ECCO on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/GlobalECCO/>.

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NOTES

1. Mark Galeotti, "The Gerasimov Doctrine," *Berlin Policy Journal* (May/June 2020): <https://berlinpolicyjournal.com/the-gerasimov-doctrine/>
2. Molly K. McKew, "The Gerasimov Doctrine," *Politico*, September/October 2017: <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/09/05/gerasimov-doctrine-russia-foreign-policy-215538/>