# Is the European Migration Crisis Caused by Russian Hybrid Warfare?

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## Abstract

Recent developments in European security situation, starting with the Russia-Ukraine conflict, followed by the complicated Brexit and political instability in the Middle East and North Africa, have given rise to instability in the European Union. Yet, none of the other factors could be compared with the risks caused by the massive influx of refugees into the EU that challenges both solidarity and responsibility of the member states. In this context, it is extremely important to understand the actual security threats related to the refugee crisis and the root causes of growing refugee flows. This article discusses the roots of large-scale migration flows in the European Union (EU) over the present decade and investigates the potential link between migration flows and modern hybrid warfare, referring to the coordination of various modes of warfare, such as military and non-military means, conventional and non-conventional capabilities, state and non-state actors with an aim to cause instability and disarrangement. It is intriguing to investigate whether the increase in migration flows could be linked to present confrontation in the global arena on the Russia-West axis. Common patterns of migration flows from Syria and Ukraine to the EU are discussed, as well as policy recommendations are given to diminish the negative impact of similar events in the future.

**Keywords:** European Union, refugee crisis, Russia, hybrid warfare, Syria

## 1. Introduction

The first signs of the emerging migrant crisis in Europe could be seen already in 2013 and 2014, when the number of first time asylum applications to the EU countries had increased substantially compared to the previous years (Veebel and Markus 2015). During the recent migration crisis in the EU, an unusually large number of refugees passed through the European Union.

Over the present decade, the number of first-time asylum applications that non-EU citizens have submitted to the EU countries has increased manifold and peaked in 2015–2016 when more than million people from non-EU countries yearly applied for asylum in the EU, looking at the number of first-time asylum applications (see, Figure 1(a)). For over 70 years, the European countries haven't seen such a drastic number of refugees seeking asylum. To get the situation under control, Hungary has closed its main border with Serbia, and Germany has introduced temporary border controls on the southern border with Austria, followed by temporary border controls introduced by Austria, Slovakia and the Netherlands. The refugee crisis has clearly revealed the weakness of the European integration model that could lead to the loss of credibility of the EU in the international arena and Russia as one of competing regional powers might be motivated to exploit the situations.
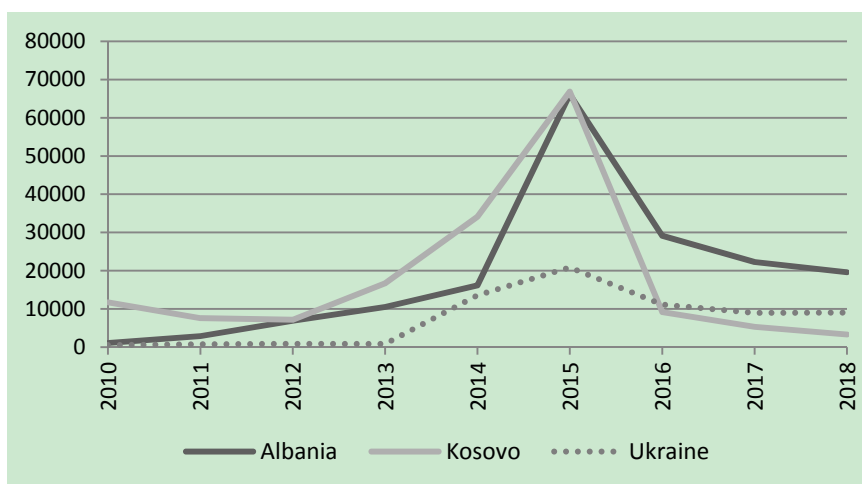
A large number of first-time asylum applications were submitted by people originating from the past and present conflict zones like Syria, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan in the Middle East or South Asian region (see, Figure 1(b)), as well as from Kosovo, Albania and Ukraine, to name some European countries (see, Figure 1(c)). In some cases, those past or present conflicts have been associated with Russia's actions in the international or regional area, like initiation of the conflict in Ukraine or military interference in Syria.
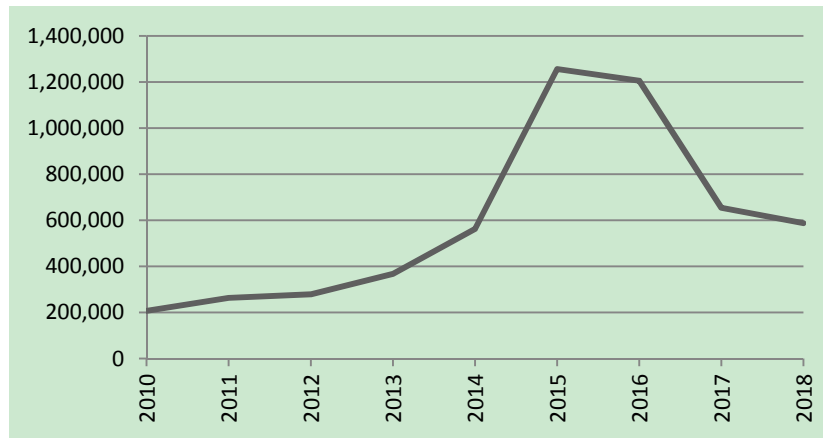
(a)    Number of first-time asylum applications submitted by non-EU citizens to the EU countries in 2010–2018 (persons)
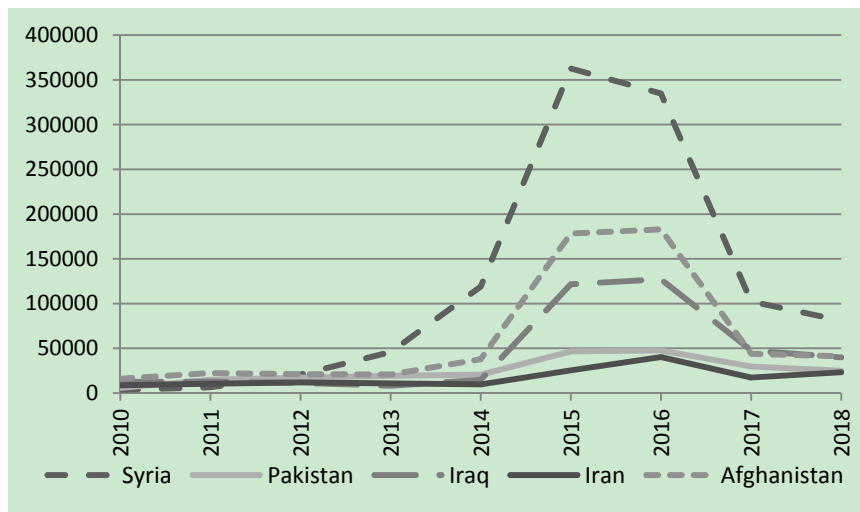


(b)    Number of first-time asylum applications submitted by the citizens of Syria, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan to the EU countries in 2010–2018 (persons)



(c)    Number of first-time asylum applications submitted by the citizens of Albania, Kosovo and Ukraine to the EU countries in 2010–2018 (persons)

Figure 1. Number of first-time asylum applications submitted to the EU countries in 2010–2018: selection of countries (persons). Source: Eurostat (2019).

In this respect, it could be discussed whether the recent migration flows to the EU countries could potentially be part of Russia's strategy of hybrid warfare in creating regional instability and weakening the authority, credibility and unity of the European Union in the international arena. Europe's refugee crisis has revealed numerous challenges to European integration that could lead to some loss of credibility of the EU in the international arena and pose, thereby, a threat to a full integration with the European and transatlantic security networks.

There are many layers in this aspect. First, the growing influx of refugees into the EU refers to the fact that the EU has lost control over its external borders. A large number of unregistered refugees are passing through the EU with the purpose of arriving at countries which attract refugees with the fact of having better financial and social conditions. Secondly, and rather indirectly, concerns are rising with regard to the growing fragmentation of member states´ national interests in terms of refugees and the tendency to protect their own interests. Whether justifiably or not, this often causes additional costs to other member states. Tensions among the member states of the EU are particularly high due to the refugee crisis and they have often accused each other in not following the initial commitments. Thirdly, the refugee crisis has also revealed the vulnerability of the EU in economic terms, which also impacts its security capabilities. More precisely, the EU countries have to dedicate significant financial resources to the administration costs of processing asylum applications and offering social guarantees and integration services to a remarkable numbers of refugees.

The article aims to discuss the roots of migration flows in the European Union over the present decade and to investigate the potential link between migration flows and the tools of modern hybrid warfare. The concept of hybrid warfare has been discussed in the context of recent events in Ukraine and in Syria also by other authors, like Michael Kofman (2016), Nicu Popescu (2015) and others. However, to authors' knowledge none of them has previously in depth investigated migration flows as part of modern hybrid warfare. The present article is the first step in this direction. In more detail, two cases are highlighted in the article, referring to Syria and Ukraine. Common patterns of migration flows from Syria and Ukraine to the EU countries are discussed as well as policy recommendations are given to diminish the negative impact of similar events in the future.

Current study is very important also for Central and Eastern European Countries and their security as from one side hybrid threats from Russian side are seen central for national security (Veebel and Ploom 2016) and from the other side social tensions caused by refugee crises and related fears are among the main factors of political instability and social fragmentation (Veebel and Markus 2015).

The article is structured as follows. Section 2 briefly discusses the theoretical concept of hybrid warfare and analyses Russia's understanding of contemporary conflicts. Section 3 describes Russia's recent interventions both in Syria and Ukraine, links them to the dynamics of migration flows from Syria and Ukraine to the EU, and discusses the dynamics of migration flows in the framework of the concept of hybrid warfare. However, hereby the authors clearly emphasize that next to Russia's influence the large-scale migration flows to the EU could be affected by other factors, such as changes in people's behavioural patterns, political instability, economic reasons, push-and-pull factors, climate conditions, and so on. Section 4 concludes by hypothetically asking what are the consequences both at the country-level and globally, should the provocation of the emergence of large-scale migration flows be a new form of hybrid warfare.

## 2. Various Visions of Hybrid Warfare

Theorizing hybrid warfare is a challenging task for two main reasons. On the one hand, the term associates with something that you simply "can't touch", referring to the wide coverage of measures that classify under the tools of hybrid warfare as well as blurring activities, actors and objectives in a hybrid conflict. To quote, for example, Frank G. Hoffman: *"hybrid threats incorporate a full range of modes of warfare, including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts that include indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal disorder. 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 battlespace to achieve synergistic effects in the physical and psychological dimensions of conflict"* (see, Hoffman, 2009, 36). In this respect, the "attractiveness" of hybridity lies especially in its asymmetrical nature and in the opportunity to remain below the legal threshold at which the target state would be grounded and compelled to respond militarily. Furthermore, the main "benefit" of using hybrid modes of warfare lies in the way how various tools are used to simultaneously pursue certain goals and avoid the costs of retaliation from the target (Sliwa et al., 2018). Next to that, Volodymyr Horbulin stresses that the absence of clearly defined time horizons is typical to hybrid war (Horbulin, 2017, 3-6). Thus, it is obviously difficult to define what hybrid warfare is and what it isn't, or where the hybrid war starts and where it ends.

On the other hand, the content of the term *hybrid,* referring to *hybrid war, hybrid warfare*, *hybrid threats, hybrid*

*world order* etc., is, in its dynamic way, changing all the time. For example, Michael Kofman argues that "*In two short years, the word (i.e. hybrid warfare – authors' specification) has mutated from describing how Moscow fighting its war in Ukraine to incorporating all the various elements of Russian influence and national power. term continues to evolve, spawning iterations like 'multi-vector hybrid warfare' in Europe. Hybrid warfare has become the Frankenstein of the field of Russia military analysis; it has taken on a life of its own and there is no obvious way to contain it*" (Kofman, 2016, 1). Thus, all possible forms of hybrid warfare should be open-mindedly discussed, referring also to migration flows as a potential tool to simultaneously pursue certain goals and avoid the costs of retaliation from the target.

While the exact term *hybrid warfare* was used for the first time in the early 2000s, the hybrid warfare strategies are much older and seem to date back to ancient times (Yenidünya and Atalay 2016). The term is also slightly differently used, depending on individual countries or institutions. For example, Andersson and Tardy (2015, 2-4) argue that the 2015 National Military Strategy of the United States refers to *hybrid conflicts[1]*, but the United Nations is mostly talking about *asymmetric threats* without using the term *hybrid*. NATO seems to use the term *hybrid* relatively often, referring to *hybrid attacks, hybrid threats, hybrid challenges, hybrid actions, hybrid campaigns, hybrid warfare,* etc. For example, the NATO Brussels Summit Declaration from July 2018 stresses the existence of "*dangerous, unpredictable, and fluid security environment, with enduring challenges and threats from all strategic directions; from state and non-state actors; from military forces; and from terrorist, cyber, and hybrid attacks*", and points to several specific threats in this respect, such as Russia's aggressive actions, instability and continuing crises across the Middle East and North Africa, terrorism, irregular migration, human trafficking, the crisis in Syria, disinformation campaigns, malicious cyber activities, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and advanced missile technology, and so on (NATO, 2018, 1). It also states that in case of *hybrid warfare*, NATO could decide to invoke Article 5, similarly to an armed attack (NATO, 2018, 8). However, the declaration stresses that the Alliance is ready to assist its member states at any stage of a *hybrid campaign*, but the primary responsibility for responding to *hybrid threats* remains with the targeted nation (NATO, 2018, 8).

In this light, *hybrid warfare* may also not be the right term that accurately portrays Russia's understanding of a contemporary conflict. Discussions on hybrid conflicts intensified in Russia in the early 2010s, when the Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, General Valery Gerasimov presented his understanding of contemporary warfare for which Russian armed forces should be better prepared. Gerasimov argues that "*frontal engagement of large formations of force /.../ are becoming a thing of the past*" and will be effectively replaced by "*the use of special forces, exploitation of internal opposition*" and "*informational actions, devices and means*" (Kaldor and Chinkin, 2017, 6). However, in fact, Russians rather prefer to use the term *non-linear war,* not *hybrid war* (ibid.).

At the same time, both Russia's political and military leaders have clearly stated that external threats to Russia are of a hybrid nature, referring, for example, to increased global and regional instability, the use of ICT-tools, territorial claims of other countries on Russia, the violation of international agreements by other countries, and so on as potential external threats to Russia's security (see, e.g. President of…, 2014). Furthermore, Russian leaders constantly spread the view that the Western countries use hybrid warfare in Russia's near-abroad countries in the form of promoting and supporting colour revolutions there. In 2016, to counter the potential threat of "colour revolutions", Valery Gerasimov has called for the development of a "soft power" strategy", referring to the toolkit of soft measures supported by conventional hard power (see, McDermott, 2016, 1).

The concept of hybrid warfare has not only changed the way of how we define and understand wars and conflicts nowadays, but it also poses serious threats to modern societies. To quote Kersten Knipp (2016), one dangerous trend that is associated with the hybrid warfare and hybrid conflicts, is the abuse of democratic values (Knipp, 2016, 7). In a wider context, this could lead to the manipulation of democratic values, which in turn could result in undesirable consequences. In this respect, subjective and targeted "advocacy campaigns" in social media or in so-called free media platforms with the aim to promote the ideas of certain parties or politicians under the aegis of simply "sharing information" could also be interpreted as a potential tool of hybrid warfare. The same applies to the promotion of the emergence of large migration waves into democratic countries that could lead to the abuse of democratic values. Last but not least, provocation of (military) conflicts in the neighbouring countries clearly counteracts democratic values, the current rules-based global order and international law, and should,

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[1] The reference is made to the quotation of 2015 National Military Strategy of the US, stating that hybrid conflicts consist of "*military forces assuming a non-state identity, as Russia did in the Crimea, or involving a violent extremist organisation (VEO) fielding rudimentary combined arms capabilities, as ISIL has demonstrated in Iraq and Syria*". The strategy also stresses that "*hybrid conflicts may be comprised of state and non-state actors working together toward shared objectives, employing a wide range of weapons such as we have witnessed in eastern Ukraine*" (see, Andersson and Tardy, 2015, 1-4).

therefore, be considered as another form of hybrid warfare.

### 3. Are Russia's Recent Interventions Linked to Migration Waves from Syria and Ukraine to the EU?

The conflict in Syria has lasted for almost a decade already and many countries like Russia, the United States, Iran, the United Kingdom, France, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Israel were involved in the conflict in its different stages.

It started with pro-democracy demonstration and civil uprising in 2011, but developed quickly to the full-scale civil war in 2012–2013. Although presidential elections took place in Syria in June 2014, the situation did not calm down and violent fighting continued. The conflict was further fuelled by the rise of the terrorist formation, ISIL in the region. The US actively intervened in the Syrian conflict from September 2014 to September 2015 by supporting the opposition and targeting the ISIL fighters (Bannelier-Christakis, 2016, 745-748). Russia intervened in the conflict in September 2015 at the request of the Syrian government, relying on the long-term cooperation between Russia and the Syrian government in the past. In the following months, Russia organised air strikes in Syria against both ISIL and the anti-government opposition (Segall, 2019, 1). It has been argued that Russia's air campaigns in support of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria in 2015 and early 2016 were crucial on turning the war in al-Assad's favour (BBC, 2019). Partial ceasefire in Syria was introduced under the aegis of the UN Security Council from February to July 2016, however, after that fighting intensified again. In 2017, an agreement was signed to create de-escalation zones in Syria and to introduce ceasefire, and in late 2017, Russia announced that Syria has been liberated from ISIL. However, the conflict intensified again in 2018, after a chemical attack has been reported in Syria. This has triggered further missile strikes of some Western countries on multiple targets in Syria. Next to that, also the ISIL attacks have continued. Today, the conflict in Syria is still ongoing.

The conflict in Syria has clearly initiated unprecedented waves of migration from Syria to other countries. Based on Eurostat data about first-time asylum applications submitted to the EU countries, the situation in Syria was mostly under control during the initial phase of the conflict in 2011. The number of first-time asylum applications to the EU started to increase drastically since May 2012, after the confrontation turned to the full-scale civil war. The first peak was reached in September 2014, when more than 16 000 asylum applications from Syria were submitted to the EU countries within one month (see, Figure 2). The migration wave from Syria peaked again in September 2015, when more than 60 000 first-time asylum applications were submitted to the EU countries. The migration waves from Syria to the EU started to significantly decline only from October 2016 on and today they are relatively close to the level of the year 2013.
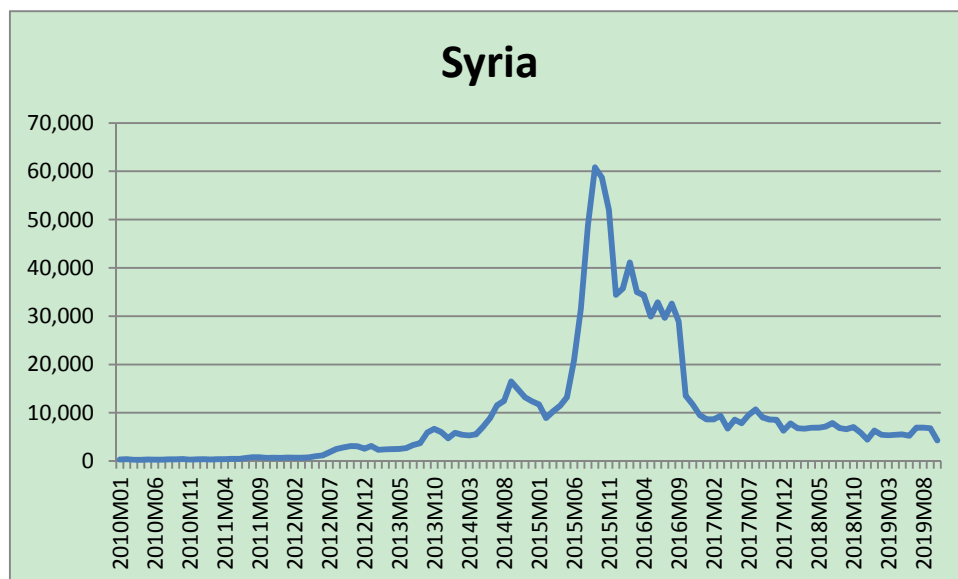


Figure 2. Number of first-time asylum applications from Syria submitted to the EU countries in 2010–2018, monthly data (persons)

Source: Eurostat (2019).

To sum up, migration waves from Syria to the European Union countries started to significantly increase from

September 2014 on, after the conflict has gained international dimension. Although migration to the EU peaked in September 2015 which overlaps with Russia's direct intervention and air strikes in Syria, it cannot be clearly concluded that Russia's actions in Syria have initiated the migration wave from Syria to the EU. On the one hand, migration waves from Syria started already earlier, but initially mostly Turkey was under pressure, not the EU. On the other hand, there are many factors or pre-conditions that have contributed to migration crisis. For example, high unemployment, corruption and lack of political freedom and of economic progress in Syria have been mentioned (BBC, 2019). It has been argued that in 2015 the refugees from Syria "discovered" the migration route through the Balkan countries and shared information about it in social media (Kingsley, 2015). This has most likely also contributed to the large-scale migration waves in 2015. The generosity of Germany was mentioned as a potential pull-factor, too (Kingsley, 2015). Unfavourable climate conditions, such as heat waves in Europe and in the Middle East in 2015 have also been mentioned as potential push factors. Furthermore, Eurostat statistical data may not reflect the full picture of the migration waves from Syria to the EU, considering the fact that some refugees from other countries have falsely reported that they originate from Syria when applying for asylum in the EU, and so on. However, despite the reasons that are mentioned above, it is still a fact that migration waves from Syria exploded in numbers particularly after the conflict in Syria became international, and that Russia's support for the political regime of Bashar al-Assad led to conflict aggravation. Referring to Russia's support to al-Assad's regime, the US Ambassador to the United Nations Kelly Craft argues that: "*What we are witnessing is not counterterrorism, but an excuse to continue a violent military campaign against those who refuse to accept the Assad regime's authority*" (Reuters, 2019).

Similarly to the Syrian conflict, the Ukrainian conflict started with mass-protests against the decision of the former President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovych to suspend the implementation of the EU association agreement in November 2013. The anti-government protests basically evolved to a revolution and Yanukovych fled from Ukraine to Russia in February 2014 (European Parliament 2018; Poltorakov, 2015; Veebel 2016). Based on the argument that Viktor Yanukovych has asked Moscow for assistance, Russia sent his troops to Ukraine in February-March 2014 as a justification for the annexation of Crimean peninsula. Russia organised a referendum in Crimea in March 2014, however, this was not recognized internationally. After Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea violent fights were triggered in the Eastern Ukraine between the Ukrainian troops and the Russian-backed separatists. The first version of Minsk Protocols was signed in September 2014, however, in retrospect we can say that Russia had no intention to back up in Ukraine and to stop supporting separatists in the Eastern Ukraine (Veebel and Markus 2018). As a result, full-scale armed conflicts in the Eastern Ukraine broke out again since January 2015. The Minsk II agreements were signed in February 2015, however, the situation remains complicated up to the present day, as armed conflicts in the Eastern Ukraine happen almost in a daily basis between Ukrainians and the Russian-backed separatists (Sazonov et al. 2016).

As many authors have pointed out, Russia has clearly used the strategy of hybrid warfare in Ukraine both in terms of military and non-military means and state and non-state actors (See, e.g. Sazonov et al. 2016; Renz 2016; Chausovsky 2019; Midttunn 2019 and so on ). Before and during the conflict, heterogeneous lines of operation were conducted in various areas like diplomatic and political relations, economy, energy, religion, military and informational sphere, and so on with the aim to allow Russia to gain control over Ukraine and change public opinion both in Ukraine and internationally (Midttun, 2019). Russia has provided military "aid" to the separatists to keep the contact up in the Eastern Ukraine (Mölder, 2016, 112). Russia conducted a massive, multifaceted and coherent information operation in Ukraine in 2014 (Sazonov et al., 2016, 6), and so on.

In this respect, based mostly on Russia's recent actions in Ukraine, the authors would actually suggest to use the term *hybrid aggression* instead of *hybrid war* or *hybrid warfare*, referring to aggression as hostile or violent behaviour, or an overall readiness to attack or confront. In Ukraine, the complex set of instruments of force, including unconventional, covert, and inherently illegal forms of pressure was used by Russia. This seems to be more in accordance with the meaning of aggression, not of the "classical" warfare. Next to that, another important aspect in defining hybrid aggression seems to be the effort of avoiding legal status of a country that violates international law, which also seems to deter from the "classical" meaning of war. During the recent conflict in Ukraine, Vladimir Putin argued that he had every right for the annexation of Crimea relying on a common historical legacy of Crimea and Russia, and he also stated that no violation of international law has taken place in Ukraine. Furthermore, he called other countries, especially the United States and Germany to understand Russia's recent action based on their own historical experience (see, President of Russia, 2014). Last but not least, unlike in the "classic" war, during the hybrid aggression it is often difficult for the attacked party to realize that it is actually under the attack (NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 2018, 2). Thus, the conflict in Ukraine is more typical to an aggression referring to hostile and violent behaviour of an aggressor and its overall

readiness to confront and attack, and not so typical to "classical wars".

The migration waves from Ukraine to the European Union fully reflect the dynamics of the conflict. While before the outburst of the conflict in November 2013, less than 100 first-time asylum applications from the citizens of Ukraine were monthly submitted to the EU countries, the number of applications increased in times during the conflict and peaked from October 2014 to May 2015, when up to 2,100 first-time asylum applications were monthly submitted by the Ukrainian citizens to the EU countries (see, Figure 3).



Figure 3. Number of first-time asylum applications from Ukraine submitted to the EU countries in 2010–2018, monthly data (persons)

Source: Eurostat (2019).

In levels, the migration pressure from Ukraine to the EU is not comparable with the migration waves from Syria to the EU; however, they are still large in comparison with the migration from Ukraine to the EU before the Ukrainian conflict started in November 2013. Since Russia escalated the conflict as a result of the annexation of Crimea in February-March 2014, it makes Russia also responsible for the migration waves from Ukraine to the EU.

## 4. Conclusion

Over the last decade, the European Union countries have found themselves overwhelmed by serious challenges. They were particularly unprepared for the crisis in Ukraine in 2013–2014, as none of them would have been expected that war breaks out in Europe and that Russia has the courage to violate international law and harm the sovereignty of Ukraine. This has seriously damaged the basic principles of Europe's security. The conflict in Syria has further aggravated the vulnerability of the current global security order, as well as initiated large-scale migration flows from Syria to the European Union (Veebel, Kulu, Tartes 2014). In both conflicts, in Syria and Ukraine the migration flows increased significantly after domestic conflicts turned to international confrontation and escalated to a full-scale war. The current refugee crisis has clearly revealed that the EU has no control over its external border and that some EU member states are unable to comply with their obligations or tend to protect their own interests, whether justifiably or not. Most striking examples of this are fences built by some EU member states on their borders to stop migration flows. Thus, too often over the last years, the EU countries have found themselves confronted with a situation that was out of their control. In practical terms the "existential security threats" are associated with the potential loss of credibility and legitimacy of the national governments and European institutions. In other words, people in the European Union are afraid of the government's actions and transparency, rather than the refugees themselves. Due to the weak and unfocused strategic communication in terms of refugee crisis, European citizens have already started to have some doubts about the long-term sustainability of the process.

At the same time, Russia had the situation fully "under its control" both in Ukraine and Syria. Russia has played an active role in both conflict escalations. Furthermore, in both cases Russia had several opportunities to cool

down the conflicts; however, it didn't do that. During the conflict in Syria, Russia many times blocked the UN Security Council's resolutions aimed, for example, to investigate the use of chemical weapons in Syria, to impose sanctions over the use of chemical weapons in Syria, to stop bombing and to achieve a truce in Aleppo, and to condemn the actions of the Syrian government against the opposition (see, RTÉ, 2018). In Ukraine, after the annexation of Crimea in March 2014 Russia escalated the military conflict in the eastern part of Ukraine, sabotaged the Minsk I agreements and conducted information campaigns to negatively impact Ukraine's image both internationally and internally (Veebel and Markus 2016). Otherwise, if Russia would not have blocked the initiatives of Western countries in solving the conflict in Syria, would have withdrawn from Crimea and would have stopped arming the rebels in the Eastern Ukraine, it would also not lead to drastic migration flows from Syria and Ukraine to the EU countries. Thus, Russia is clearly responsible for the migration flows from Syria and Ukraine to the EU.

Surely, in a more and more globalising world there is nothing bad about controlled migration flows. However, as the Syrian and Ukrainian conflict have shown, the situation becomes critical as soon as controlled migration turns into uncontrolled migration, and the EU member states end up in a deadlock. Regardless of whether Russia considers the provocation of large-scale migration flows to the EU as part of its non-linear strategy or not, the overall impact of massive migration flows is negative to the Western countries in many ways. Firstly, it causes social disintegration in the Western societies. The increasing popularity of far-right parties in some EU countries is to some extent relying on their anti-immigrant attitudes (Janning 2016; Veebel 2019 and others). The migration flows that the EU can't cope with plays right into their hands. Secondly, and quite possibly even more importantly, massive migration waves and the way how they are often depicted in social media under the aegis of simply "sharing information" refers to the potential manipulation of democratic values, to use Kersten Knipp's (2016) thoughts, and in this context, manipulation of democratic values is directly associated with the concept of hybrid warfare. The following example reflects it clearly. The reaction to the European migration crisis has been, and still is, relatively painful in some EU countries, arguing that the European countries should close its borders to the migrants. Even if this argument is motivated, e.g. by financial considerations arguing that the EU can't help everybody, the view does not overlap with the normative values the EU is trying to spread around the world. Should the EU lose its normative power in the world arena (Veebel 2019b) as a result of the manipulation of the EU's democratic values, Russia is again one step closer to realize its aggressive ambitions in other countries (Veebel 2017).

Based on the current study, it might be argued that large-scale migration flows have occurred particularly after domestic conflict turned to an international one, and after Russia has intervened in the conflict. In this respect, Russia is clearly implementing its idea of "selective multipolarity", meaning that it actively participates in those conflicts in the international arena and carefully selects only those opponents that allow Russia to show itself as a global power in the world arena, "the one who sets things in motion". Assuming that Russia has not abandoned its aggressive ambitions both in its neighbouring countries and globally, it could be expected that Russia is intended to intervene in conflicts in other countries in the future, too. Thus, it is in the best interests of the Western countries to constantly assess the situation case by case and to take active countermeasures to avoid massive migration flows (most likely to the EU), as soon as it becomes obvious that Russia has targeted some countries. For the EU, this would mean careful and objective monitoring of political situation and potential hybrid scenarios in various countries around the world – not the developments the EU would like to see in those countries, but what is actually happening there. This applies particularly to the EU Neighbourhood Policy countries.

Obviously, at the present stage the "operation" of hybrid warfare is to return Eastern Europe under the influence of Russia cannot be implemented without destroying the foundations of strategic alliances, including the foundations of the European Union. Vladimir Putin's statements and his actions clearly indicate that Russia has already started down that road. The EU is defining itself as a community that is united by universal values rather than by fleeting interests. In this respect, the liberal values are the key pillars that motivate the cooperation between the EU member states as well as are attractive to people of the EU neighbouring countries, including Ukraine.

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