

Hybrid Wars 2: Testing the Theory, Syria and Ukraine

By [Andrew Korybko](#)

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(Please read '[Hybrid Wars 1. The Law Of Hybrid Warfare](#)' prior to this article)

The author's book, "Hybrid Wars: The Indirect Adaptive Approach To Regime Change" (available for free PDF download [here](#)), thoroughly makes the case that Syria and Ukraine are the US' first victims of Hybrid War, but the scope of the article is to express how the abovementioned innovations not included in the original publication have been importantly at play all along. The purpose is to prove that the newly discovered facets can seamlessly be interwoven into the overall theory and used to enhance one's comprehension of it as a result, thus positioning studied observers to more accurately project the future battlegrounds in which Hybrid Wars are most likely to be fought.

This part of the research thus follows the theoretical model that was just set out before it, in that it elaborates on the geostrategic-economic determinants that were behind the Wars on Syria and Ukraine, before touching on the socio-political structural vulnerabilities that the US attempted to exploit to various degrees of success. The last part incorporates the idea of social and structural preconditioning and briefly discusses how it was present in each case.

Geostrategic Determinants

Syria:

The traditionally secular Arab Republic was sucked into the US' theater-wide Color Revolution scheme when the "Arab Spring" was unleashed in 2011. To concisely summarize the strategic underpinnings of this grandiose operation, the concept was for the US to assist a transnational Muslim Brotherhood clique in coming to power from Algeria to Syria via a series of synchronized regime change operations against rival states (Syria), untrustworthy partners (Libya), and strategic proxy states set for inevitable leadership transitions (Egypt, Yemen). The resultant strategic environment was supposed to resemble Cold War-era Eastern Europe, in that each of the states would have been led by the same party (the Muslim Brotherhood instead of the Communist Party) and controlled by proxy via an external patron, in this case a joint condominium presided over by Turkey and Qatar on the US' [Lead From Behind](#) behalf.



Syrians rally in Damascus in support of President Bashar al-Assad, October 2011

This loosely organized ideological 'confederation' would have been disjointed enough to be

manageable via simple divide-and-rule tactics (thus preventing it from ever independently organizing against Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States), but easily provoked into sectarian hatred for mobilizing against Iran and its regional interests, thereby making it an extremely flexible tool for promoting American grand strategy in the Mideast. Given the chaotic origins of this geopolitical gambit, it was predetermined that elements of it wouldn't go according to plan and that only the partial realization of this project could realistically occur during the first attempt, which is precisely what happened when the Syrian people defiantly withstood the Hybrid War assault against them and courageously fought in defense of their secular civilization-state.

It can be argued that Syria was always seen as the most strategic prize out of all the "Arab Spring"-affected states, and this is proven by the desperate nearly five-year-long Hybrid War that the US unleashed against it in response to its initial regime change attempt failing there. In comparison, Egypt, the most populous Arab state, has only had to deal with [low-level Qatari-managed terrorism](#) in the Sinai ever since it overthrew the American-imposed Muslim Brotherhood government. The reason for this glaring discrepancy of relative importance to American grand strategic goals is attributable to the geo-economic determinants behind the War on Syria, which will be expostulated upon shortly.

Ukraine:

The geostrategic determinants behind the War on Ukraine are much more straightforward than those behind the War on Syria, and they've mostly already been spoken about earlier when describing the "Reverse Brzezinski" stratagem of geopolitical entrapment. Part of the motivation behind overthrowing the Ukrainian government and ushering in the subsequent anti-Russian pogroms was to lure Russia into an interventionist trap à la 1979 Afghanistan, and the War on Donbass was the epitome of this attempt. Washington failed to achieve its objective in this regard, but it was much more successful in turning the entire territory of Ukraine into a geopolitical weapon against Russia.



Political map of Ukraine before the coup d'état of February 2014.

Brzezinski [famously quipped](#) that "Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire", and while he had a whole different conception in mind when he said that (his thinking was that Russia would try to "imperialy re-Sovietize" the region), geopolitically speaking, his quote holds a lot of fundamental truth to it. The Russian Federation's national security is to a large extent determined by events in Ukraine, especially as it relates to its broad western periphery, and a hostile government in Kiev that becomes amenable to hosting US "missile defense" infrastructure (which is really a euphemism for increasing the chances that the US can neutralize Russia's second-strike capability and thus put it in a position of nuclear blackmail) would pose a major strategic threat. To rephrase Brzezinski and make his quote more objectively accurate, "If the West succeeds in manipulating Ukraine into becoming a long-term enemy of Russia, then Moscow would be faced with a major geopolitical obstacle to its future multipolar ambitions."

The dire scenario of Ukraine hosting US or NATO "missile defense" units has yet to play out in full, but the country is still making leaps towards "[Shadow NATO](#)" membership whereby it becomes a de-facto part of the organization without the formal mutual defense guarantees.

The increased military cooperation between Kiev and Washington, and by extension, between Ukraine and the bloc, is premised on aggressive maneuvering against Russian strategic interests. Nevertheless, this isn't as bad as it could have been, since American strategic planners had naively assumed that the Pentagon would have already had control of Crimea by this time, and therefore would have been able to position their "missile defense" units and other destabilizing technologies right on Russia's doorstep. The ultimate fallacy in the West's thinking during the Hybrid War preparations was that Russia would back down from defending its civilizational, humanitarian, and geostrategic interests in Crimea (or that if it did so, it would be pulled into a "Reverse Brzezinski" quagmire), which as history now attests, was an epic miscalculation on par with the worst the US has ever made.

Geo-Economic Determinants

Syria:

Syria is so significant from the perspective of American grand strategy because it was supposed to be the end terminal for the [Friendship Pipeline](#) shared between it, Iran, and Iraq. This gas route would have allowed Iran to access the European market and completely nullify the sanctions regime that the US had built against it at that time. Contemporaneous with this project was a competing one by Qatar to send its own gas through Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, and thenceforth to the EU, either through LNG or via Turkey. President Assad astutely rejected the Gulf proposal out of loyalty to his country's long-established Iranian ally, and the War and Syria as waged through the post-"Arab Spring" Hybrid War against it was supported so fiercely by the US and the Gulf States specifically to punish the country for its refusal to become a unipolar satellite.



"Friendship Pipeline" is labelled "Islamic Pipeline" on this chart.

If it would have been completed, the Friendship Pipeline would have been one of the world's most important multipolar transnational connective projects, in that it would have revolutionized regional geopolitics by providing an energy and investment corridor linking Iran with the EU. It would have thus entailed a significant alteration in the Mideast's balance of power and played to the absolute detriment of the US and its Gulf allies. Understanding the acute threat that the Friendship Pipeline posed its decades-long hegemonic dominance over the region, the US committed itself to making sure that the project would never materialize no matter what, ergo one of the partial reasons behind the [creation of ISIL](#) smack dab in the middle of the expected transit zone. Seen from this perspective, it's much clearer why the US would prioritize the destabilization of Syria over that of Egypt, and would actually be willing to pour innumerable resources into this endeavor and organize a global proxy coalition to help achieve it.

Ukraine:

The US' determination in capturing Ukraine was inspired by much more than just geostrategic thinking, since those imperatives intersected with contemporaneous geo-economic realities. At the time that the urban terrorist campaign popularly known as

“EuroMaidan” was initiated, Ukraine was forced by the US into an artificial “civilizational choice” between the EU and Russia. Moscow had been advancing three interlinked multipolar transnational connective projects – gas and oil sales to the EU, the Eurasian Union, and the Eurasian Land Bridge (energy, institutional, and economic, respectively) – that Washington was eager to weaken at all costs. Recalling Brzezinski’s earlier cited quip about Ukraine and the author’s rephrasing of it, the words now make a lot more sense, as without Ukraine as a part of this interconnected web of projects, the entire whole becomes substantially weaker than if it were otherwise.

As it relates to each of the projects, Ukraine’s removal from the equation: obstructs the Russian-EU energy trade and creates unexpected complications for both sides; leaves a sizeable marketplace and labor force outside the scope of the customs union; and necessitates an infrastructural refocusing solely on relatively smaller and less economically important Belarus, which thus becomes a geopolitical chokepoint that figures even greater than before into the West’s [anti-Russian schemes](#). As an added ‘benefit’ of poaching Ukraine from the Russian integrational orbit, the US was able to set into motion a chain of thematically preconceived events (excluding Crimea’s reunification, of course) that instigated the New Cold War it was eager to spark.



Map of the Ukrainian gas transposition system.

It wanted to do so in order to create seemingly insurmountable obstacles between Russia and the EU, knowing that the expected security dilemmas (in military, energy, economic, and strategic terms) would dramatically impede cooperation between them and make Brussels all the more vulnerable to being cajoled into the US’ massive unipolar power plays that it was planning. In order to maintain its hegemonic position over Europe, the US had to engineer a scenario that would split Russia and the EU long enough and in as intense of a manner as possible so as increase the chances that the three following categorical projects of control could be imposed on Europe: NATO’s permanent on-alert deployment in the east (military); US LNG exports to the EU and the newly attractive appeal of non-Russian energy routes such as the [Southern Gas Corridor](#) (energy); and the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), which, among other privileges it grants the US, makes it impossible for the EU to conduct any further Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) without Washington’s approval (economic).

Altogether, these three interlocked factors are intended to bolster the grandest of the US’ strategic objectives, which in a mutually interrelated manner, also increases the prospects for their own success. This is the artificially engineered “clash of civilizations” between the West and Eurasia-Russia, whereby the US expects the EU to henceforth cobble in fear before Russia and consequently rush into Uncle Sam’s arms as the ‘defender of Western civilization’. It is this ultimate plan that the US wants to fulfill in Europe, since its successful implementation alongside its three key components (the military, energy, and economic facets earlier described) would create the conditions for multi-generational hegemonic dominance over Europe, and thus spiking the odds that multipolarity’s counter-offense against the US will be a drawn-out, decades-long affair.

Socio-Political Structural Vulnerabilities - Syria

Ethnicity:

At least 90% of Syria's population is Arab while the remaining 10% or so is mostly Kurdish. From the Hybrid War perspective, one would assume that this state of affairs might be useful in destabilizing the state, but several factors prevented it from reaching its American-anticipated potential. Firstly, the Syrian population is very patriotic due to their civilizational heritage and galvanized opposition to Israel. As a result, while there's obviously a plurality of personal political opinion among the mostly mono-ethnic society, there was never any real possibility that they would violently turn against the state, hence the need to import such a vast number of international terrorists and mercenaries to the battlefield to satisfy this Hybrid War 'requirement'.

✘ Concerning the Kurds, they've never had a history of anti-government rebellion unlike their Turkish and Iraqi counterparts, thus implying that their state of affairs in Syria was manageable and nowhere near as bad as Western information outlets try to retroactively paint it as. Even if they could have been conjured up into a radical anti-government mass, their relatively minor role in national affairs and obscure geographic distance from any relevant power centers would have precluded them from becoming a significant Hybrid War asset, although they'd be an effective strategic supplement to any Arab terrorists based closer to the primary population centers. As is known, however, the Kurds have remained loyal to Damascus and have not broken with the government, thus adding confirmation to the thesis that they were content with their original status and not prone to "rebel".

In sum, the ethnic components of the US' Hybrid War planning against Syria failed to live up to their anticipated potential, indicating that pre-war intelligence assessments were cripplingly distorted in underestimating the unifying pull of Syrian Patriotism.

Religion:

Syria's population is overwhelmingly Sunni but also has an important Alawite minority that has traditionally held various leadership positions in the government and military. This never was an issue before, but externally managed social preconditioning (in this instance, organized by the Gulf States) acclimatized parts of the population to sectarian thinking and began laying the psychological foundation for takfiri tension to take root among some domestic elements after the Color Revolution stage was initiated in early 2011. Afterwards, even though sectarianism was never a factor in Syrian society before and still isn't a major force to this day (despite almost five years of "religiously" motivated terrorist provocations), it would be used as a rallying cry for replenishing the ranks of foreign jihadists and as a 'plausible' cover for the US and its allies to allege that President Assad doesn't 'represent the people' and must therefore be overthrown.

History:

Syrian history is thousands of years old and represents one of the richest civilizations of all time. Consequently, this imbues the country's citizens with an unshakeable sense of patriotism that would later reveal itself to be one of the strongest defenses against Hybrid War (civilizational solidarity). It's obvious that this would have been discovered by American strategists in their preparatory research on Syria, but they likely underrated its importance, figuring that they could successfully provoke a return to the destabilizing coup-after-coup

post-independence years prior to the late Hafez Assad's Presidency. On the contrary, the vast majority of Syrians had grown to sincerely appreciate the contributions of the Assad family to their country's stability and success, and they never wanted to do anything that could return the country to the dark years that preceded the first family's political rise.

Administrative:



The brief legacy of [separate administrative boundaries](#) during a period of the French occupation provided the geopolitical precedent for the US to resurrect a formal or federalized division of Syria. Even though the historical memory of this time is largely lost on the psyche of contemporary Syrians (save for the mandate-era flag that represents the anti-government terrorists), that doesn't mean that there's no possibility of externally enforcing it on them in the future and "historically justifying" it after the fact. The Russian anti-terrorist intervention in Syria neutralized the possibility of the country's formal fragmentation, but the ongoing [Race for Raqqa](#) means that the force which captures the terrorists' 'capital' will hold the best cards in determining the post-war internal makeup of the state, opening the possibility for the US and its proxies to force a federalized 'solution' on Syria that could create largely autonomous zones of pro-American support.

Socio-Economic Disparity:

Pre-war Syria had a relatively balanced distribution of socio-economic indicators, despite adhering to the globally stereotypical 'rule' of the urban areas being more developed than the rural ones. Though the rural areas comprise most of the country's geographic area, only a fraction of the population inhabited them, with most Syrians living along the western-based north-south corridor of Aleppo-Hama-Homs-Damascus, while a strategically important population also inhabits coastal Latakia. Up until 2011, Syria had been showing years of steady economic growth, and there's no reason to believe that this would have abated had it not been for the Hybrid War against it. Therefore, although socio-economic disparities surely existed in Syria before the war, they were properly managed by the government (owing in part to the semi-socialist nature of the state) and weren't a factor that the US could exploit.

Physical Geography:

This is the one characteristic that works out most to the advantage of Hybrid War against Syria. The Color Revolution component was concentrated in the heavily populated western-based north-south corridor that was written about above, while the Unconventional Warfare part thrived in the rural regions outside this area. The authorities understandably had difficulty balancing between urban and rural security needs, and the absurd amount of support that the US and its Gulf allies were channeling to the terrorists via Turkey temporarily threw the military off balance and resulted in the stalemate that marked the first few years of the conflict (with some dramatic back-and-forth changes from time to time). As this was happening and the Syrian Arab Army was focused on the pressing security matters challenging it along the population corridor, ISIL was able to make swift conventional military advances along the logistically accommodating plains and deserts of the east and rapidly set up its "caliphate", the consequences of which are driving the present-day course of events in the country.

Socio-Political Structural Vulnerabilities - Ukraine

Ethnicity:

Ukraine's demographic divide between East and West, Russians and Ukrainians, is well known and has been heavily discussed. In the context of Hybrid War, this almost clean-cut geographic distribution (with the exception of the Russian plurality in Odessa and majority in Crimea) was a godsend to American strategic planners, since it created an ingrained demographic dichotomy that could easily be exploited when the time was ripe.

Religion:

Here too is an almost perfect geographic divide between East and West, with the Russian Orthodox and Ukrainian Orthodox Churches representing the two critical population groups in the country. Further west are the Uniate and Catholic Churches, corresponding mostly to the former lands of the interwar Second Polish Republic. Christian sectarianism wasn't the most visible rallying cry behind EuroMaidan, but its radical adherents used the coup's success as cover for destroying Russian Orthodox Churches and other religious property in a nationwide campaign that sought to prompt the [ethnic and cultural cleansing](#) of the Russian population.

History:

✘ The modern Ukrainian state is an artificial amalgam of territories bequeathed to it by successive Russian and Soviet leaders. Its inherently unnatural origins curse it with a perpetually questionable existence, and the territorial aggrandizement after World War II complicated this even further. The most nationalist chunk of modern-day Ukraine used to be part of interwar Poland, and before that, the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, thus giving its inhabitants a diametrically different historical memory than those in the central or eastern portions of the state.

The Hungarian and Romanian minority communities that live in the newly added areas (acquired from Czechoslovakia and Romania, respectively) also have a natural degree of identity "separateness" from the state that only needed an externally 'nudged' destabilization to bring it fully to the surface.

As was argued in Hybrid War and confirmed by Newsweek's reporting just days before the coup (suspiciously [deleted](#) from their website but [referenceable](#) on web.archive.org), the historic ethno-religiously separate region of Western Ukraine was in full-scale armed rebellion against the President Yanukovich, and it's no coincidence that the Unconventional Warfare aspect of that regime change campaign began in this specific part of the country.

Administrative Borders:

Ukraine's domestic divisions coincide quite neatly with its administrative borders on many occasions - be they the ethnic divide, Christian sectarianism, historic regions, or electoral results - and this served as the ultimate asymmetrical multiplier that convinced American strategists that Hybrid War could easily be rolled out in Ukraine. Had it not been for the unexpected coup in late February 2014, it's very possible that the US would have sought to exploit the unprecedented overlap of socio-political vulnerabilities in Ukraine in order to physically separate the western part of the country from the pro-government remainder of

the rump state, but only in the event that Yanukovich would have been able to indefinitely hold out against the regime change terrorists and consolidate his holdings in the rest of the non-“rebel”-controlled areas of the country.

Socio-Economic Disparity:



Ukraine is similar to Syria in the sense that it also had a near-even distribution of socio-economic indicators, however, unlike the Arab Republic and its modest wealth, the Eastern European state equally spread poverty among its citizens. The large amount of Ukrainians in poverty or very close to it created an enormous recruiting pool for anti-government ‘activists’ to be culled by the NGO masterminds of the EuroMaidan Color Revolution, and the absence of any civilizational or national patriotism (excluding the hardcore fascist perversion epitomized by Pravy Sektor and company) meant that there were no societal safeguards in preventing the emergence of multiple “rent-a-riots” from being organized beforehand and deployed when the time was ‘right’.

Physical Geography:

The only unique part of pre-war Ukraine’s mostly standardized plains geography was Crimea, which functioned more like an island than the peninsula that it technically is. This ironically worked out to the US’ severe disadvantage when the autonomous republic’s favorable geography helped its inhabitants defend themselves long enough to vote to secede from the failing Ukrainian state and correct Khrushchev’s historical wrong by finally reuniting with their brethren in Russia. The same geographic facilitating factors weren’t in play with Donbass, which thus inhibited the patriots’ defense of their territory and made them much more vulnerable to Kiev’s multiple offensives against them. In the pre-coup environment, Ukraine’s easily traversable geography would have been ideal for the enabling the western “revolutionaries” to make a swift, ISIL-like lunge at Kiev once they accumulated enough stolen weaponry, equipment, and vehicles from the numerous police stations and [military barracks](#) that they were seizing at the time.

Preconditioning

It’s beyond the scope of the present research to discuss the social preconditioning aspects of Hybrid War in detail, but they can generally be assumed to comprise the social/mass media-education-NGO triad. The specifics about structural preconditioning are a bit different, as aside from sanctions pressure, the other majorly discussed element described in Part I (i.e. the energy market disruption) didn’t occur until last year and thus wasn’t a factor in the run-up to either of the two examined Hybrid Wars. Still, other more distinct elements were certainly in play for each of the two states, with Ukraine’s coffers being bled dry by endemic and parasitic corruption and Syria having to perennially balance its military needs in defending against Israel with its social commitment to the population (a tightrope act that it managed quite well over the decades).

Andrew Korybko is the American political commentator currently working for the [Sputnik](#) agency. He is the post-graduate of the MGIMO University and author of the monograph “[Hybrid Wars: The Indirect Adaptive Approach To Regime Change](#)” (2015). This text will be included into his forthcoming book on the theory of Hybrid Warfare.

PREVIOUS CHAPTER:

[Hybrid Wars 1. The Law Of Hybrid Warfare](#)

NEXT CHAPTER

[Hybrid Wars 3. Predicting Next Hybrid Wars](#)

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About the author:

Andrew Korybko is an American Moscow-based political analyst specializing in the relationship between the US strategy in Afro-Eurasia, China's One Belt One Road global vision of New Silk Road connectivity, and Hybrid Warfare. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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