

Zsolt Sándor

FROM BASELINE RESILIENCE TO NATIONAL RESILIENCE

ABSTRACT: *Lieutenant General Zsolt Sándor opened the two-day conference 'Soldiers and Hybrid War: The Role and Missions of Armed Forces in Below-Threshold Conflicts' on 17th November 2021 in Budapest with this speech.*

KEYWORDS: *hybrid warfare, gray zone, Russia, annexation of Crimea, whole-of-nation approach*

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LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

Welcome to the Hungarian Defence Forces Transformation Command's conference on hybrid warfare. I would like to welcome you all, including experts, professionals, and presenters. It is my distinct privilege to welcome Brigadier General Peter Zwack, a real warrior, a mindful thinker, a patriot, and a very good friend of mine. It is so good to see you in Hungary, Peter. I am also delighted to welcome Dr. Michael Miklaucic, from the National Defense University, editor in chief of Prism. Allow me a personal note. The National Defense University is one of the most prestigious institutions of the world, and I was fortunate enough to attend it, and graduated in 2007. Dr Miklaucic, it was the greatest time of my life. And last but not least, I would like to thank the HDF Scientific Research Centre for organizing this event.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

During the next two days you will be discussing hybrid warfare. It is a relatively new term that became the subject of intense study only after the Russian annexation of Crimea and the war in Eastern Ukraine. However, what it describes cannot be called new, even with the best intentions. In fact, there is nearly nothing novel in the phenomenon itself. Such expressions as modern war, irregular warfare, low-intensity conflict, asymmetric warfare, Military Operations Other Than War, and small war have all been used in the past to describe the less glorious, clandestine, and least open but potentially highly effective part of warfare in the grey zone.

Most of today's conflicts take place in this intermediate, ambiguous socio-political space between peace and war, where competing parties can assert their interest by targeting the vulnerabilities of other states, sometimes even using considerable military force, but without actually going to war. Sometimes these conflicts transition into black ones. Russia's annexation of Crimea was achieved within the grey zone, but the conflict between Ukraine and the separatist republics backed by Russia's military might turned into a limited but conventional war. Hybrid methods of warfare, such as propaganda, deception, sabotage, and other non-military tactics have long been used to destabilize adversaries. What is new

about attacks seen in recent years is their speed, scale, and intensity, facilitated by rapid technological change and global interconnectivity.

Hybrid warfare is a real challenge for Hungary, for Europe, and for NATO. Our national and alliance security structures are designed for defence against attacks by conventional forces. We have planned for it, trained for it, wargamed it, and as part of the alliance, we are likely to prevail. However, hybrid actors target our societal vulnerabilities, and keep their operations below the threshold of war. Even the best-governed states have vulnerabilities that an adversary can target, and few of today's decision making and crisis response systems are capable of keeping pace with the succession of unexpected events that characterize a hybrid operation.

A modern hybrid war that simultaneously combines conventional, irregular, and terrorist components is a complex challenge that requires an adaptable and versatile military to overcome. This is as true for Hungary and the Hungarian Defence Forces as for any other nation and its armed forces, or for the North Atlantic Alliance as a whole. The HDF had gone through some difficult times in the first decades of this century, and began to emerge as a modern, capable force in the mid-2010s. Now I can say that we are on the brink of a great renewal thanks to the new weapon systems. Although they have a central role in this development, the new mindset, the appreciation of novelties, the emerging threats, and the new approach to organization and leadership, have also contributed to this revival. We realize that the HDF, although small, must be capable of operating both independently and in conjunction with our allies. A military force fighting a hybrid war will need to leverage a wide range of capabilities including conventional, high intensity conflict units, decentralized special operations forces, and sophisticated information operations and technology platforms. The concept of hybrid war is not new, but its means are increasingly sophisticated and deadly, and require a response in kind.

Since the occupation of Crimea, NATO has significantly increased the Alliance's presence on its eastern flank as a deterrent to further encroachments implementing hybrid defence strategy, thankfully decision makers recognize that military capabilities alone are not sufficient in the face of such subtle, amorphous challenges. Military and security forces are likely to be in the forefront of such a struggle, but good soldiers and police officers are not enough. They must be complemented and supported by critical non-military capabilities such as the continuity of government, the continuity of essential services, and the security of civil infrastructure in support of military operations and the protection of the nation. One must have the confidence, support and loyalty of the citizens. Only such a whole-of-nation approach can build national resilience and minimize the chance of successful subversion.

As Clausewitz stated, "Every age has its own kind of war, its own limiting conditions, and its own peculiar preconceptions." Hybrid warfare has already been studied intensively. Thousands of papers, monographs, books, and articles on various aspects of military science and security policy are published in the world. They all possess high standard of scholarship, yet few actually influence high-level decision making. Do we really understand the complexity of hybrid warfare? Do we consider the importance of a whole-of-nation approach which requires whole governmental understanding of the challenge? Do we contemplate significant reorganizational requirements in the military to generate forces capable of operating in grey zones? Do we have a command and control system that is flexible enough and capable of tailoring and leading different state instruments to identify and defeat an adversary? All in all, are we able to adapt as fast as the threat requires? Those significant questions have to be answered, better sooner than later.

So, ladies and gentlemen, I look forward to the upcoming discussions on this critical topic, and encourage you to share your insights through candid and lively exchanges.

I understand that tomorrow the last hour of the program will be an open, interactive discussion summarizing the conclusions and recommendations of this conference. It will be a very important output, and in a few days, I hope to see accessible and timely conclusions, and actionable recommendations on my desk.

Thank you for your attention.