Hungarian Defence Review

FOR THE HOMELAND

HUNGARIAN DEFENCE FORCES

CALL FOR PAPERS

The editorial board of *Hungarian Defence Review* invites authors to submit papers in 2019, based on new research results that deal with some aspect of the following topics:

1. Hybrid warfare – changes in the doctrine of leadership: decision-making and Mission Command in the 21st century
2. Automated systems: changes in the operational requirements of autonomous systems in light of recent technological developments
3. Warfare in non-conventional theatres: challenges and opportunities of the information battlespace, the role and significance of information warfare in contemporary conflicts
4. Built-in areas: the characteristics of urban combat and its digital military challenges in built-in areas
5. Cognitive development: Super-soldiers? Challenges and opportunities in the mental development of the digital soldier – human-machine teaming on the battlefield
6. Leadership aspects of technological changes and their impact on decision-making
7. The introduction of Mission Command into the Hungarian Defence Forces on the organizational level.

We request our authors to submit a max. 2000-character preliminary abstract of the planned paper, addressed to the responsible editor (gaspar.katalin@hmzrinyi.hu). The editorial board of the journal will evaluate the received abstracts and notify the submitter of the decision. At the same time, acceptance of a submitted abstract does not automatically entail the publication of the paper, as the decision on its publication will be based on the final text after a professional review.

The Editorial Board of Hungarian Defence Review

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**Proceedings of the Conference on 'Soldiers and Hybrid War:
The Role and Missions of Armed Forces in Below-Threshold Conflicts'**

Budapest, 17–18 November 2021

FOREWORD

Hybrid challenges have become a permanent element of the security environment. Today every member state of the NATO alliance is likely to be subjected to some form of hybrid attack sooner or later. Strong NATO responses to such non-linear threats are therefore critical because not every member nation has the resources to face a series of hybrid attacks on its own. However, hybrid defense must originate in the nation under attack: an alliance response can succeed only if the societal sectors – the political, military, economic, society, information and infrastructure sectors of NATO doctrine – are adequately hardened and prepared. This must be a whole-of-nation project, in which the armed force plays an important role.

In November 2021 the Scientific Research Centre of the Hungarian Defence Forces organized an international conference in order to improve general understanding of the characteristics of hybrid warfare, and identify some of the interdependencies among the various stakeholders, as well as to encourage an exchange of views and best practices through open and unrestricted debate.

A distinguished team of international and Hungarian scholars and hands-on experts presented the fruits of their research and the lessons of their experience, and engaged the audience in lively debate. This special issue of the Hungarian Defence Review contains some of the papers developed from the presentations.

by Péter Álmos Kiss

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*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:
Lieutenant General Zsolt Sándor is the Deputy Commander of the Hungarian Defence Forces

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.

Peter Zwack

OLD TACTICS, NEW TECHNOLOGY: HYBRID WARFARE'S NEW SCRIPT FOR THE WORLD'S ARMED FORCES

ABSTRACT: *Brigadier General (Ret.) Zwack sums up in his speech the very basics of hybrid warfare and the potential countermeasures.*

KEYWORDS: *hybrid warfare, definition of hybrid warfare, gray zone, role of technology, below-threshold capabilities*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:
Dr. Peter Zwack is a retired Brigadier General of the U.S. Army

General, good to follow you in this discussion.

General Sándor, Colonel Bárány, my old friend Lieutenant-Colonel László Ujházy, and Dr. Péter Kiss who worked with me in the 66th Military Intelligence Brigade thirty years ago. What an honour it is for me to have been invited to speak to you today about a really serious topic that all of us would define in a different way, and that is one of the challenges. I feel among friends when I say that, allies, partners, and even countries where it has been difficult relationships in that way as well. The first time I was in Hungary in the military mode was, like, around 1993, and it just shows you how the world has changed: I was in the 3rd Infantry Division and we came down to watch a Hungarian infantry and engineer river crossing of the Danube River at Ercsi.

And how the world has changed! We watched Hungary's progression in becoming a NATO ally. I worked with a Hungarian guard battalion and teams in Kosovo, and in the world of hybrid and complexity even got out to Pol-e Khomri, to your PRT. So, there is a long history here and again a huge honour. I am sorry about this long preamble, but this is very special for me. I must say it is quite the honour to be asked as one of the early keynote speakers in this important and timely conference.

Therefore, I see my early role today as setting the proverbial table up with some broad thoughts and perspectives regarding hybrid warfare and its challenges for armed forces both independently and as operating as allies. I will emphasize that over and over again not just in traditional warfighting. But anyway, what is traditional warfighting anymore, I wonder. Does it really exist anymore? Especially when facing hybrid type threats that as much attack the mind and our functional and psychological nervous system as specific military systems and functions.

For me it is important not to get mired, bogged down, in the academic definitions of hybrid warfare that I feel put us in a cognitive box. We have all tried to pin it down while also parsing out other terms related to hybrid in nonlinear, new generation, new type war, irregular warfare, military operations other than war or MOOTW, irregular warfare, asymmetry and many more. But in this day of comprehensive connectivity through the depths of

societies and their militaries, what is the difference anymore between so called conventional and unconventional warfare?

Suffice to say, to me hybrid and the so called gray zone is a domain that lives between full war and full peace, one in which we live every day and we are in it now as well whether militarily or in our societies. When we discuss the definition for hybrid warfare, I prefer the analysis by Frank Hoffman, a friend of mine from the National Defence University and a professor. He writes that hybrid war is a tailored mix of conventional weapons, people, irregular tactics, terrorism, and criminal behaviour in the same battle space – all mixed together in the same battle space, to obtain political objectives.

I am going to do now something that is fairly basic, and perhaps not usual in a scientific conference, but I want to get to the very basics of hybrid war. I am not a high academic, but I want to talk to you about the vocabulary – just the fundamental vocabulary of hybrid warfare. I am going to go through a list of words just to reflect on the subject. You may find this purely elementary but I think that just to get our heads wrapped into how we grapple with this.

First of all, when we talk about hybrid, what are the **targets?** What are the objectives of hybrid? What is it that a nation or group is trying to do? The targets, I would say, from the top down are societal, political, alliances, and with that cohesion – the Clausewitzian centre of gravity works through all of that. Also, units of all sizes. How about individuals within those units with their smartphones?

Will – this is such a critical word. Will – whether at national, domestic, group or individual level. The will to fight, the belief in your system, the belief in your nation. All of that. And we saw a well-armed Afghan military collapse in August, I believe first and foremost because psychologically they lost their will, lost their belief.

And then again, I think **cohesion and centre of gravity,** which is where I believe a hybrid campaign is targeted at every level. And with all that there are tribes, clans, population groups, political parties – it is all of it.

Intent. I have talked about targets. What about the intent. These are timeless, I mean obvious words, but I refresh.

Surprise. Highly unconventional, right down on the ground, in everything that goes on within the world of hybrid. Usually in the hybrid world, the opponent is often overmatched by what we would call strength or power, but will gain a little, gain equivalency in surprise in other ways.

Disruption. A classic military word, but also applies to the populace.

Deception. We live through this in this world every day.

Paralysis. The inability to make a move and, as you know, a shock right through your system.

Confusion. A word in English I like to use is warmongering, creating fear and anxiety among target groups, amongst the people.

Division. Dividing societies, dividing through belief within the ranks.

Demoralization.

Distraction. Meaning when we are moving into a potential fight or whatever we need to be focused, and anything that distract us – a disease or anything else – makes us weaker.

Tactics. How about just simple things like false flags. We see that in the cyber world, especially today. Non-attribution, media insertion, insinuation, stealth tactics. All these are timeless in conception, but with a new technological backbone today.

Means and delivery. You know we talked about means and delivery in a military sense, firing things. But it also very much applies to hybrid. A whispering campaign as in the old days, you know, rumours and all of that. Media and social media – they are similar but different.

Cyber – viruses, phishing, stealing, all of that, which we are all very prone to.

Sanctions, economic, infection, all of these things.

And, frankly and most importantly, **imagination,** that is, anything that you can figure out in the hybrid world imaginatively, against what you perceive as conventional thinking, is potentially quite effective.

Role of artificial intelligence. China is leading the way on that. How does that play out here?

So, the result is that we have to deal with all that as targets, but also in our own offensive campaigns. Again, the intent is similar – disruption, confusion, distrust. Look at the distrust out there in the world of information and intelligence. Paralysis, miscalculation, hesitation, indecision, ridicule. Functions for the military that today in this cyber-fast world we have to make decisions clearly and quickly, and anything you can do to cloud that can change the mental correlation of forces and bring about division and then defeat.

Then finally, how to counter this. The good news is that NATO and in some of our NATO countries there are now centres of excellence in cyber and in hybrid warfare, they are beginning to work pulled together. It is inoculation. That is the word I would use – it is psychological, first and foremost.

Crosstalk, the criticality of cross talk.

Integrated fusion, meaning you have fusion centres and you are not working in stove pipes where you are vulnerable. Saying that, within those stovepipes you have redundancy, and you need redundancy within that fusion. It cannot all be in one place.

Civil-military fusion. We are struggling with that in the United States. The firewall between military and civilian is critical when you are living in the world of cyber and hybrid, where there are no boundaries and there is no rear zone. Everything is alert, quick reaction, moving fast, seeing it being able to process it.

You have to know your own **vulnerabilities.** It is one thing to focus on the potential adversary, we have to know our own vulnerabilities and then work within that system to adjust. How about honesty and an open society in your assessments. If you were all closed up and cramped, you know you cannot crosstalk the way you would want to. However, with it there is also a vulnerability, which is the open society, which of course the world of hybrid feeds on. And this is a challenge for democratic leading nations with open societies.

Finally, **deterrence.** How do you deter hybrid actors whether criminal or state owned and we grapple with that. And I go back to it again – imagination. It is fighting the failure of imagination. For example, 9/11 in the United States was a failure of imagination of our own side to see what was going on, although all the pieces were there. Afghanistan August, just now, was a failure of imagination. What could happen and what happened so fast and then for the Americans, talk about Pearl Harbour all the indicators were there and a lot of them were out there out in the hybrid world and we just missed it.

In the United States, I just throw out a couple of magazines here, because people are focusing on this new age. In Newsweek, Risk of a New Cyber Pearl Harbour. What it is doing is opening thoughts. In Harper's, just now, The Coming Battle in Space. Space also can and will be, if we ever get to do something really combative there, a hybrid domain, because it has an enormous effect on everything that goes on on the ground.

Threats today can come from any direction, at any speed, especially against ill-prepared entities, against which the armed forces can be ineffective. We have all read accounts of the various ways Ukrainian forces were hit in the Donbass, whether by cyber, electronic warfare, PMCs, media disinformation, proxies, assassinations, and much more. Those forces involved in contact, and also to those way back deep in sanctuary. We grappled with that in Iraq and Afghanistan as well.

Does this sanctuary work anymore if an individual or unit is switched on? What I mean by "switched on" is that as soon as you have turned on your smartphones or your systems even in a so called sanctuary, you are now plugged into the world of hybrid and need to be protected. The famous term is "strategic corporal."

In that realm, I am reminded of two well-known societal and/or strategic hybrid instances. Many among you know better than I do that Estonia was brought to a standstill in 2007 due to unattributed cyber-attacks linked to the Soviet bronze statue incident. In 2017, during the onset of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence battalion deployments in the Baltics, disinformation was put out, falsely insinuating that a Bundeswehr soldier raped a local child. Initially it shocked the public, but the good news is that the disinformation was quickly defused by a coordinated Lithuanian, German, and NATO reaction. So, bad news, but then good news on that. And this is the tip of the iceberg when we consider external national level hybrid efforts in both Europe and in my country, as noted by our 2016 and 2020 election hacks and interferences. The aim was to subvert governance and confidence in the democratic processes influencing media platforms and corrupting political parties all of which affect the morale, cohesion and focus of our armed forces, and I submit that we all grapple with this.

Then on a macro scale: in May 2021 – and you all read about this, it was a big deal – ransomware hackers, likely a Russia-based dark side criminal group, shut down the over five thousand miles gas pipeline, disrupting much of the power grid in the eastern United States. This went on for quite some time. The effect was quickly resolved by an unpopular four million-dollar ransom payment. The episode highlighted the world's growing vulnerability to destructive attacks by unconventional players using sophisticated technology and techniques, but at the same token cheap, inexpensive, and anybody with the smarts can figure it out.

Whether it was a criminal or a state sponsored organization, there can be no doubt that the effects were strategic in nature, and risked a strategic response matching the scale of the attack, especially if, God forbid, innocent people had been killed.

If that thing had occurred in winter, while other things were also occurring, and our defence system is surprised – we do not know what is happening, where it is coming from – then our readiness level goes up it starts to get really militarily dangerous. Could you imagine if a giant river dam or valves in a chemical complex are stealthily cyber-opened from afar? It could be a criminal, but how it brings in defence involved now. Or how about nuclear command and control. It all sounds very military, but it is very hybrid, a whole-of-society vulnerability.

Non-attributed private military companies, PMCs, such as the Wagner group and local proxies, carry out aspects of foreign policy with little accountability and deniable visibility. Particularly alarming is the fact that today's hybrid warfare methods are faster, easier to obscure, and potentially far more lethal. As our societies and economies become increasingly knitted together around the world, we can no longer depend on borders or geographic distance to supply defences against bad actors.

Warfare is not limited anymore to physical battlefields or conventional or just conventional weaponry, the Internet, global finance, supply chain and other interconnected systems are subject 24/7 to manipulation and misuse designed to destabilize populations and societies. A catastrophe in one country can easily have ripple effects within the greater region or region around the world.

How does this new state warfare effect our militaries? I have already touched on this, the impact is profound. Not only are individual soldiers in units subject to the influence of disinformation and other disruptive campaigns, but our militaries as a whole must be prepared to expand their below-threshold skill sets beyond conventional ground and air warfare. This is already happening and the fact that you are hosting this conference is a real good indicator that you know our minds are in it. But how we get to thinking and down into action in the units is also a major task.

Another example, cheap drones, that just one of many examples first created for peaceful applications now are potentially game changing weapons especially when unleashed in large numbers such as we saw in Armenia and Azerbaijan last summer. With tensions increasing between Russia and Ukraine and greater NATO-EU, the ongoing major disruption caused by Belarus surging and hybrid-weaponizing migrants into NATO territory, Poland and Lithuania, in the general territory of the sensitive Suwalki gap, separating core Russia and Russian Kaliningrad, further destabilizes European security.

As electronic weapons and systems eclipse older technologies, the ability to recognize and analyse incoming threats quickly and accurately will become more important than ever. It is no exaggeration to say that the difference between being a peacetime and wartime commander now it is just a matter of flicking a switch – really cognitive. While below threshold gray zone activities are switching on and off a switch.

Russian chief of the general staff Valery Gerasimov just recently noted he said it several times that the lines are increasingly blurred between conventional and nuclear war and by inference this is the gray zone. With hackers and other bad actors targeting the established systems we depend on communication, so there is the ever-present danger of deadly misunderstandings based on false information. So how should our armed forces address this ongoing threat to our societies and our military organizations during "peacetime"?

Swift awareness is the number one priority. The ability to recognize false damage and misinformation quickly is critical. Second, and I cannot emphasize this enough, second, crosstalk between all echelons up, down, and laterally is essential, which has significantly improved within NATO and EU. This is especially important for the vulnerability for the vulnerable permeable wall between military and civilian entities. Third, military interoperability on which we all grew up with in NATO, and the Partnership for Peace is bigger than that now. Between allies and partners must be closely coordinated not just in system capabilities and tactics, techniques and procedures, TTP, but also in the psychological and material aspects of hybrid warfare across the full spectrum of peace and war and the below-threshold, enormous gray zone in between.

While the short discussion focused on European and western security I would be remiss not to mention that hybrid warfare activities have been along and played in other non-European nations and global regions the Middle East, whether Israel or Hezbollah, Syria, Iraq, Yemen. Afghanistan, Africa and South American bubbles and the China aspect of this is daunting as we see now increasingly the Chinese concept of unrestricted warfare playing out.

In conclusion, no nation today can successfully ignore or cope on its own with the threat presented by hybrid warfare and the ever expanding gray zone between peace and war. A hybrid war can be local and tactical or by leveraging disinformation, economic coercion such as pipeline brinksmanship, and political subversion, it can encompass higher regions, nations and continents.

The world's best hope for engaging in a successful fight against the many-headed hydra that constitutes hybrid warfare will require unprecedented and unceasing coordination and good faith, cooperation between trusted allies and partners locally and globally. In doing so, they must collectively and convincingly ensure that the deterrent costs for such malign actions and behaviour are prohibitively high for those nations and entities that engage in them.

The fundamental objective of hybrid warfare is as old as time itself. The fundamental vocabulary of intent and desired result, which I just touched on briefly, as well as the whispering campaigns seeding disorder and dissent are much the same today as they were a thousand years ago. The blink of an eye delivery systems however are an RMA, a revolution in military affairs and mandate that we all remain ceaselessly vigilant and coordinated.

I brought a copy of a book with me that I'm going to bring tomorrow and give the director of this great program. It is *Hybrid Warfare, Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present,* and it goes back to what I discussed here, old tactics and new technology. It was written number of years ago by a friend of mine on the Joint Staff, Peter Mansoor. It is superb. It gets into a dozen campaigns around the world, going back to the Teuronburg Wald and the Romans a thousand years ago, about how hybrid will work in some of those things. To close, I am honoured to have been invited and I look forward to be with you the next couple of days.

Srdja Trifkovic

AFGHANISTAN: HYBRID WARFARE VICTORIOUS

ABSTRACT: *The victory of the Taliban in Afghanistan in August 2021 marked the end of an extended and successful exercise in hybrid warfare by the Taliban and by its Pakistani mentors. Their strategy provides an example of Sun Tzu's ideal of "winning a war without fighting". The Taliban outlasted their opponents politically and psychologically, while avoiding battle with the U.S. and Coalition forces and refraining from terrorist attacks abroad. Their task was facilitated by the absence of a clear U.S. strategy, intelligence failures, by the misguided order of battle of government forces, and by the chronic corruption at all levels of Afghan officialdom. More significant in terms of Asian geopolitics was Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan, a complex and successful hybrid warfare operation in pursuit of Islamabad's strategic objectives. The key question – what is America's objective in Afghanistan, how does its military go about reaching it, and how does it measure success or failure in doing so – remained unanswered until the end. Finally, the end-game in Kabul in August 2021 also illustrates the gap between the desire of a segment of America's elites to promote "progressive" social and moral norms around the world, and the reality of the Muslim world which, overwhelmingly, finds those norms unacceptable.*

KEYWORDS: *hybrid warfare, Afghanistan, War in Afghanistan, Afghan National Army, Taliban*

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THE TALIBAN STRATEGY

In the opening decades of the 21st century, in Afghanistan, we witnessed the latest episode in an ironic reversal of the roles and objectives of the leading foreign powers of their time in a far-away land of which we know less than we imagine. Britain's profitless involvement in the country (1839–1919) started disastrously yet nevertheless it ended in a stable solution of sorts; but that is ancient history by now.[1] More recently, the Soviet military intervention (1979–1989)[2] and America's "longest war" (2001–2021), had both started without a clear political objective, and both had ended in strategic failures.

The end-game in Afghanistan in the summer of 2021 was the climax of a long-drawn-out and singularly successful exercise in hybrid warfare by the Taliban and – more significantly in geopolitical terms – by its Pakistani abettors. The Taliban strategy since 2018 (or even 2015) provided us with a textbook exercise of Sun Tzu's ideal of "winning a war without

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1 See e.g. Steward, J. On Afghanistan's Plains: The Story of Britain's Afghan Wars. London and New York: I. B. Taurus, 2011.

2 Cf. a highly authoritative account of the Soviet intervention and its aftermath is provided by Coll, S. Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001. London: Penguin Books, 2004.

fighting," which is but one early variant of the definition of hybrid warfare.[3] A numerically inferior irregular force without advanced weaponry, the Taliban managed to survive for two decades of the U.S.-led and financed *Operation Enduring Freedom*. And then – suddenly and surprisingly to most Western media experts, U.S. military commanders in the field, and intelligence analysts – it proved capable of mounting a bid for rapid dominance in May 2021. Within three months, its superior operational art resulted in the total rout of the Afghan National Army and police force.

The Taliban strategy entailed capturing border crossings to the former Soviet Central Asia, to Iran and (of course) Pakistan, at the outset of the offensive. What followed in the first phase of the onslaught was securing the ethnically diverse north and west of the country – a challenge successfully solved – and marching unopposed south and east to Pashtun heartland, finally taking Kabul even before the U.S. could complete evacuation. How could this happen?

Following the rapid fall of its regime before the invading U.S. forces in the fall of 2001, the Taliban adopted a hybrid warfare strategy *par excellence* by aiming to win by not losing: to outlast the Americans politically and psychologically. Rather than carry out major operations, their focus was fourfold:

- – to maintain the coherence of the group's core cadre,
- – to undermine political stabilization of Afghanistan,
- – to safeguard its support in the Pashtun heartland in the south; and
- – to expand it gradually northbound.

A measure of the Taliban's political success is that they were able to co-opt thousands of Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmens, and Hazaras, whom they were unable to control fully – let alone rely upon as allies – when they were in power between 1994 and 2001.[4] They were also able – unknown to the wishfully-thinking American officials and military officers – to establish informal lines of communication with the Kabul government officials and field commanders, and to convince or else intimidate them into accepting the allegedly inevitable end-game.

Particularly noteworthy was the Taliban's systematic avoidance of clashes with the remaining U.S. forces after 2015 and the group's discreet arrangements with other foreign troop contingents (most notably Germans and Italians) to refrain from attacking them in return for cash payments.[5] Avoiding battle with the U.S. military and their Coalition helpers, and strictly refraining from terrorist attacks abroad, was an integral part of the Taliban

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3   A more precise translation of the famous maxim is, "The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting". Quoted in: Jackson, E. "Sun Tzu's 31 Best Pieces Of Leadership Advice". Forbes, May 23, 2014. www.forbes.com/sites/ericjackson/2014/05/23/sun-tzus-33-best-pieces-of-leadership-advice/?sh=61e459 f95e5e, Accessed November 14, 2021.

4   Bezhan, F. "Ethnic Minorities Are Fueling the Taliban's Expansion in Afghanistan". Foreign Policy, June 15, 2016. https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/06/15/ethnic-minorities-are-fueling-the-talibans-expansion-in-afghanistan, Accessed on 2 November 2021.

5   For the Italian and German contingents' local deals with the Taliban amounting to de facto truces, see e.g. Amies, N. "Paying for peace". DW, 10. 19. 2019. https://www.dw.com/en/allegations-of-taliban-bribery-stoke-debate-on-afghan-engagement/a-4804047 and "Germans in the Taliban Stalingrad – Fighting the Kunduz Insurgency". In Steinberg G. German Jihad: On the Internationalization of Islamist Terrorism. New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2013. https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.7312/stei15992-012/pdf, both accessed on 15 November 2021.

strategy in the years preceding August 2021.[6] Ironically, the absence of attacks plotted from within Afghanistan was presented in the U.S. as an encouraging sign that the mission was not a failure after all.[7]

At the same time the Afghan National Army and police, which outnumbered the Taliban by at least three to one as late as July 2021, were subjected to operational-level isolation: cutting off garrisons from their bases of support, pinning them down and preventing reinforcement. Attempts by the government in Kabul to control territory with checkpoints and fortified outposts – an approach suggested and approved by the U.S. military – played right into the Taliban's hands. The roads were easily cut, airlifted supplies proved insufficient, and isolated garrisons were not able to provide reinforcement to each other.

Demoralized by hunger, lack of pay, shortage of ammunition and no prospect of relief, government soldiers were both unwilling to fight and unable to offer sustained resistance. At the same time, the Taliban activated a second line of effort: tailored propaganda and information operations to further undermine morale and cohesion:

"The insurgents flooded social media with images that offered surrounded Afghan security forces a Hobson's choice: Surrender and live – or die and wonder if the Taliban will kill your family next. More than 70 percent of the Afghan population has access to cell phones… As outposts crumbled, the Taliban sustained its momentum on the battlefield using captured military equipment not only to resupply its forces but also to exploit images of the surrender for additional propaganda."[8]

All along, by contrast, a new generation of highly motivated Afghan youths – many of them indoctrinated in Pakistan's madrassas – provided the influx of fresh recruits to the Taliban. The focus was on the quality of the recruits – their wholehearted acceptance of the Caliphate narrative and readiness to die for it – rather than quantity. Slowly but steadily, they created a countrywide network of sleeper cells and village-level local authorities, even in areas seemingly under government control.

This task was facilitated by the absence of a clear U.S. strategy, intelligence failures, by the misguided order of battle of government forces, and by the venal Afghan officialdom, rotten from the presidential palace down to the humblest local clerk and village police officer: everyone wanted a piece of action, but nobody wanted to die for Ghani or "democracy". When South Vietnam fell in 1975, dozens of senior officers killed themselves. None in Afghanistan.

The Taliban were all too happy to promise clemency to those who surrender with their weapons and equipment undamaged, but at the same time, they threatened death to resisters and their families. This proved to be an extremely effective form of hybrid warfare, as evidenced by senior members of President Ghani's government surreptitiously advising

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[6] At most 128 U.S. and Coalition soldiers were killed in action in Afghanistan between January 2015 and September 2021. (See "Number of fatalities among Western coalition soldiers involved in the execution of Operation Enduring Freedom from 2001 to 2021". Statista. Last updated on Sept 30, 2022. https://www.statista.com/statistics/262894/western-coalition-soldiers-killed-in-afghanistan, Accessed on 15 November 2021.) This was treated by the U.S. as a sign of progress and made withdrawal feasible.

[7] O'Hanlon, M. E. "5,000 Troops for 5 years: A no drama approach to Afghanistan for the next US president". https://www.brookings.edu/policy2020/bigideas/5000-troops-for-5-years-a-no-drama-approach-to-afghanistan-for-the-next-us-president, Accessed on 8 November 2021.

[8] Jensen, B. "How the Taliban did it: Inside the 'operational art' of its military victory". New Atlanticist, August 15, 2021. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/how-the-taliban-did-it-inside-the-operational-art-of-its-military-victory, Accessed on 2 November 2021.

provincial governors and field commanders to surrender, perhaps after a choreographed pretence of a battle. In the event most decided to give up without any such charade.

THE KEY ROLE OF PAKISTAN

Essential to the Taliban victory was the continuous and barely concealed military, technical, logistic, and intelligence assistance by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). It also included vital provision of safe havens in the Northwest Province, out of reach of the U.S. and allied forces, and covert diplomatic support abroad.

Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan was in itself a striking example of a complex, long, and eminently successful hybrid warfare operation. It was directed directly against the U.S. and its allies, and indirectly against India, in pursuit of Islamabad's geostrategic objectives. All along, the pretence of partnership with the U.S. was successfully maintained due to the inexplicable and utterly self-defeating willingness of American officialdom to pretend that all was well, even after the killing of Osama bin Laden. The brazenly open (one is tempted to say triumphant) presence of the Pakistani ISI chief, Lt. Gen. Faiz Hameed, in the final stages of the military operation in Panjshir was followed by the new Taliban government formation. It was packed with figures from the Haqqani Network, which the U.S. Joint Chief of Staff Mike Mullen described as a veritable arm of the ISI. In the end-game the Pakistani GHQ in Rawalpindi felt it did not need to hide its fingerprints any more.[9] They had won.

All along, a notable feature of the new, ISI-directed Taliban *modus operandi* was to maintain a regular schedule of suicide bombings and complex terrorist attacks against schools, hospitals, mosques, and non-compliant media outlets – mostly in Kabul but also in other cities. It is noteworthy, however, that the execution of such attacks was entrusted mostly to foreign jihadist volunteers. Unsurprisingly, the attacks contributed to a permanent atmosphere of fear and instability, as intended; yet the foreign origin of many attackers provided the Taliban with the option of plausible denial.[10] The Taliban's own terrorist attacks focused on killing individuals – including prominent civil-society activists, senior army officers, and especially air force pilots at their homes; but usually this was done without openly claiming credit. This was an effective approach. After more than four decades of foreign intervention and chronic insecurity, many Afghans came to long for stability, which the government was patently unable to provide.

Among major state actors, Pakistan is clearly the biggest winner of the Afghan finale. The new Taliban Mark 2 government is a client regime of Islamabad. It provides a welcome north-western strategic depth to Pakistan's narrow corridor to the Chinese border in the Himalayas. It increases the value of Pakistan to China's geostrategic designs, including a safe link to the port of Gwadar.

It is arguable that Pakistan, rather than the Taliban, provides an important case study of hybrid warfare. It is a long story of hunting with Western hounds and running with jihadist hares, from General Zia ul Haq in the late 1970's onwards. The most significant fact about

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9   Mukhopadhaya, G. "In Afghanistan's Collapse, a Win for Pakistan's 20-Year Long Covert, Hybrid War". https://www.news18.com/news/opinion/afghanistan-collapse-win-for-pakistan-20-year-long-covert-hybrid-war-4205126.html, Accessed on 15 November 2021.

10 This technique applied even to the attack at Kabul's international airport, attributed to foreign ISIS terrorists, when it was almost all over.

the killing of Osama Bin Laden was that Pakistan's ISI had been sheltering him for years. Over two decades after 9/11 the open question is no longer whether the ISI had been helping Al Qa'eda, but rather whether Al Qa'eda was in fact a project of the ISI – in other words whether Pakistan is literally a terrorist state, a major promoter of state-sponsored terrorism.

(SELF) DECEPTIVE INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The root cause of America's defeat in Afghanistan was the failure of successive national security teams to pay heed to Sun Tzu's famous advice from *The Art of War:* "If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat... If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle." "Knowing the enemy" was absent in Afghanistan because no intelligence at odds with the claims of progress was welcomed by politicized generals, greedy contractors, mediocre career diplomats, corrupt aid workers, and their Afghan partners in crime. Their claims of "progress" were a substitute for coherent, reality-based analysis. Chronic deceit of the military-political apparat in Kabul distorted the perception of reality at all levels of authority. It meant that *the enemy* remained an enigma to most key American decision-makers until the end, even more so than to their Soviet predecessors.

The Afghan-related IM by four successive U.S. administrations is worth contrasting with some historical precedents. Starting around 1800, France was the pioneer in the field of systematic collection, processing, and presentation of information to the public.[11] It is remarkable, however, that even with the change of Bonaparte's fortunes – after the rout in Russia in 1812 – the press as a whole, even the official *Le Moniteur* and *La Gazette de France,* continued to report accurately the shifting military lines and political landscape.

In the First World War, Great Britain used a mix of deceitful propaganda and accurate news reporting. In early 1918, the British government established the Ministry of Information (MOI), the first body of its kind in the world. When the MOI was re-established in 1939, it was agreed that the truth should be told whenever possible.[12] This applied even during the darkest days of 1940–1942, including the fall of France and the surrender of Singapore.

During World War II, the German High Command issued regular bulletins about the situation on all fronts. They had a triumphalist tone in 1940 when France fell, and in 1941 when it looked like the Red Army would collapse, but the core information remained reliable throughout the war. The *Wehrmachtberichten* adopted a sober tone after Stalingrad, and deceptive euphemisms were used about "ordered withdrawals to previously prepared positions," and even after Normandy, they did not lie about the actual position and shifts of the front lines.

Shortly after Midway, President Roosevelt created the Office of War Information (OWI), to manage the news and to enthuse the American public for the war effort. Unlike its British counterpart, however, while refraining from directly *lying* to the public, the OWI routinely

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[11] See Matthews, T. "Napoleonic Era Newspaper Collection". Historic Newspapers. Last updated on 14 December 2021. https://www.historic-newspapers.co.uk/blog/napoleonic-era-newspaper-collection, Accessed on 15 November 2021.

[12] Welch, D. *Persuading the People: British Propaganda in World War II.* London: British Library Publishing, 2016.

blended news with politically slanted commentary. During the Cold War, the U.S. covertly funded institutions and publications which had the objective of discrediting the communist ideology in general and the Soviet system in particular. The effort was subtle and successful.

No such sophistication was deemed necessary, however, when it came to selling wars of choice to the American public, let alone the world, after the end of the Cold War. Its particularly egregious road marks were the neocon-invented Iraqi WMDs; the fabricated myths of massacres to justify the intervention in Bosnia and the Kosovo war; and of course the entire Afghan operation. That long war by itself, rather than any specific incident, was marked by a massive and deliberate campaign of disinformation and deception.

The material known as the *Afghanistan Papers* demonstrated, in December 2019, that successive administrations had deliberately and systematically disinformed the nation about the nature of the conflict, its course, and its prospects.[13] The White House and Pentagon would spin the news to the point of absurdity, according to a senior NSC official: "Suicide bombings in Kabul were portrayed as a sign of the Taliban's desperation, that the insurgents were too weak to engage in direct combat. Meanwhile, a rise in U.S. troop deaths was cited as proof that American forces were taking the fight to the enemy".[14] According to Daniel Ellsberg, the leaker of the Pentagon Papers, the Vietnam dynamic was present half a century later: "The presidents and the generals had a pretty realistic view of what they were up against, which they did not want to admit to the American people".[15] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction John F. Sopko was more succinct: "The American people have constantly been lied to".[16]

Military leaders stuck to the same script for years. Gen. John Abizaid told reporters in 2005 that Afghanistan had shown "interesting progress".[17] In 2007, it was Gen. Dan McNeill's turn to mouth the phrase "significant gains and great progress".[18] In 2010, Lt. Gen. David Rodriguez told reporters in Kabul, "We are steadily making deliberate progress".[19] That year his commander, Gen. Stanley McChrystal, used the "P" word three times in a single statement.[20] Gen. David Petraeus kept repeating the Progress mantra after he took

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[13]   Whitlock, C. The Afghanistan Papers: A Secret History of the War. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2021.

[14]   Quoted in the newspaper feature article which provided the basis for the subsequent book: Craig Whitlock, "The Afghanistan Papers: A Secret History of the War". The Washington Post, December 9, 2019.

[15]   Shephard, A. "Why the Media Is Ignoring the Afghanistan Papers?" The New Republic, December 13, 2019. https://newrepublic.com/article/155977/media-ignoring-afghanistan-papers, Accessed on 14 November 2021.

[16]   Glasser, J. "Special Inspector General for Afghanistan: 'The American People Have Constantly Been Lied To'". CATO Institute, December 9, 2019. https://www.cato.org/blog/special-inspector-general-afghanistan-american-people-have-constantly-been-lied, Accessed on 15 November 2021.

[17]   Szoldra, P. "Here's how top military leaders have described 'progress' in Afghanistan". Task & Purpose online, August 23, 2019. https://taskandpurpose.com/code-red-news/us-military-progress-afghanistan, Accessed on 14 November 2021.

[18]   NATO Joint Press Conference with General Dan McNeill, Commander of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, and Ambassador Daan Everts, NATO Senior Civilian Representative. https://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2007/s070912a.html, Accessed on 15 November 2021.

[19]   This assertion has been extensively sourced and subsequently quoted with gusto, e.g. by Maureen Callahan in "Lying by Bush and Obama over Afghanistan is this era's Pentagon Papers". The New York Post, December 14, 2019. https://nypost.com/2019/12/14/lying-by-bush-and-obama-over-afghanistan-is-this-eras-pentagon-papers, Accessed on 15 November 2021.

[20]   Baker, F. W., III. "McChrystal notes progress in Afghanistan". U.S. Central Command news, February 5, 2010. https://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/NEWS-ARTICLES/News-Article-View/Article/883991/mcchrystal-notes-progress-in-afghanistan, Accessed on 15 February 2021.

over in 2011.[21] In 2015, future Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Joseph Dunford, assured us that the progress was indeed continuing. In 2016, the new commander in Afghanistan, John W. Nicholson, had some good news for the American people: progress, it was happening. The list goes on and on, literally *ad nauseam*. The mantra, fanatically parroted, had a distinctly Soviet-era quality to it.

Deception continued to the bitter end. It was eloquently summarized in President Joe Biden's telephone call to his soon-to-be-deposed Afghan colleague Ashraf Ghani on July 23, which was reported by a major news agency and not denied by the White House, yet ignored by the corporate media. "I need not tell you the perception around the world and in parts of Afghanistan … is that things are not going well in terms of the fight against the Taliban," Biden told Ghani. "And there's a need, whether it is true or not [sic!], there is a need to project a different picture."[22]

UNCLEAR OBJECTIVES AND MEASUREMENT OF "PROGRESS"

So much for knowing the enemy. "Knowing thyself" proved even more problematic for the U.S. This cardinal failure made the triumph of hybrid warfare in Afghanistan possible. To Sun Tzu's disciples it is of course inconceivable that you could go to war without defining your strategic objectives, therefore without having a clear tactical doctrine related to your capabilities in the field, and without a clear measurement of success or failure…

That is exactly what happened to the U.S. Army in Afghanistan. Upon arrival there, brigade and battalion commanders were given the same basic mission: to protect the population and defeat the enemy in their sector. "So they all went in for whatever their rotation was, nine months or six months, and were given that mission, accepted… and executed that mission," according to Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, a veteran of multiple tours in Afghanistan as an intelligence officer who in 2017 briefly served as President Donald Trump's national security adviser. "Then they all said, when they left, they accomplished that mission. Every single commander. Not one commander is going to leave Afghanistan," Flynn said, "and say, 'You know what, we didn't accomplish our mission' … So the next guy that shows up finds it [their area] screwed up… and then they come back and go, 'Man this is really bad.'"[23]

The *progress*-obsessed top brass chose to pretend that all was well. Bob Crowley, the retired Army colonel who served as a counterinsurgency adviser in Afghanistan in 2013 and 2014, told U.S. government interviewers in 2015 that "truth was rarely welcome" at military headquarters in Kabul.[24] Career-minded officers in the field soon grasped that much, and acted accordingly. The ensuing culture of senior military officers' self-deception went hand-in-hand with the government-approved campaign of disinforming the public back home.

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[21] See e.g. "Petraeus positive about US Afghanistan progress". BBC News, March 15, 2011. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-12748852, Accessed on 15 November 2021.

[22] Roston, A. and Bose N. "Exclusive: Before Afghan collapse, Biden pressed Ghani to 'change perception'". Reuters, August 31, 2011. https://www.reuters.com/world/exclusive-call-before-afghan-collapse-biden-pressed-ghani-change-perception-2021-08-31, Accessed on 14 November 2021. One can only speculate what the mainstream media would have made of a similar statement had it been made by Donald Trump.

[23] Flynn's "Lessons Learned" interview, as quoted by Whitlock (2019).

[24] Ibid.

The key question – what is America's objective in Afghanistan, how does its military go about reaching it, and how does it measure success or failure in doing so – remained unanswered for all of twenty years. Was it to defend America from future attacks, to punish the Taliban for 9/11? To eradicate it altogether, or to deny their protégés a base? Or was it to unify the Afghan nation, to bring human rights to the hills of Tora Bora, and democracy to the Panjshir valley? Was it to make Afghan schools safe for girls? To bring women into legislative chambers? To make the streets of Kandahar safe for LGBTQ+ pride parades?[25] All of these appeared to be America's objectives at varying times, as stated by different officials. The ill-defined mission led to failure and an unwinnable conundrum for those charged with its execution.

America's failure to accomplish its fluid and elusive objectives in Afghanistan, which provided the Taliban with an opportunity to conduct and win a hybrid war, was not due to the presence of a mighty enemy in the field, or to the lack of resources, let alone a lack of war-fighting experience. The failure was due to shortcomings of U.S. policies themselves: "The inconsistencies, contradictions, gaps, and poor policy implementations of various U.S. administration policies that have entrenched the nation in prolonged wars against terrorism and undercut the prospects of ending the conflicts responsibly over the last two decades".[26]

GEOPOLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

From a realist perspective, a rational reason for the long and costly U.S. military and political engagement in Afghanistan could have been the need to maintain a foothold in Central Asia and control future pipelines connecting the oil and gas rich Caspian Basin to the Indian Ocean. To that end, however, rather than establish and keep propping up a corrupt and dysfunctional central authority in Kabul, it would have been necessary to make a series of local agreements with the tribal leaders, especially in the north of the country. It would have meant spreading the rich cake of U.S. taxpayer largesse more evenly, and refraining from flying the rainbow flag from the roof of the U.S. Embassy, most recently last June. After all, in the years before 9/11 Washington was happy to keep quiet about Taliban founder Mullah Omar's massive violations of human rights while it seemed that a pipeline deal was still possible.

China is now likely to take over that unfinished job in pursuit of the strategic objective of strengthening its overland connection to the Middle East. It is also vitally interested in having a stable security situation along the developing transport and pipeline China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which connects China's south-western border in the Himalayas with the Pakistani port of Gwadar on the Gulf of Oman. (U.S. efforts to sabotage it will fail.)[27] This link bypasses the maritime choke point in the Straits of Malacca and provides China with long-term access to a deep seaport well to the east of the Strait of Hormuz.

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[25] See e.g. Roth, B. F. "U.S. Military Holds LGBT Pride Event In Kandahar, Afghanistan". KPBS, June 28, 2013. https://www.kpbs.org/news/military/2013/06/28/military-lgbt-pride-kandahar-afghanistan-video, Accessed on 14 November 2021.

[26] Azizian, N. "Easier to Get into War Than to Get Out: The Case of Afghanistan". Harvard Kennedy School: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, August 2021. https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/easier-get-war-get-out-case-afghanistan, Accessed on 14 November 2021.

[27] See e.g. "US sabotaging China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Imran Khan's aide," Press Trust of India, Last Updated on October 24, 2021. https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/us-sabotaging-china-pakistan-economic-corridor-pakistan-pm-s-aide-121102400262_1.html, Accessed on 15 November 2021.

The Taliban-2 government will almost certainly rely on China both because it is the only likely source of substantial funding and because its Pakistani mentors are keen to see it happen. In return, the Taliban has announced that it would cut all links to the East Turkestan Islamic Movement in Xinjiang, a minor jihadist outlet which is merely an irritant to the Chinese. It is nevertheless an important symbolic gesture for the new government in Kabul.

One potential weakness of the developing Chinese position is that it has to rely on the presumed pragmatism of the Taliban leadership, which should not be taken for granted in perpetuity. Beijing is aware, of course, that the Taliban is a millenarian Islamic movement, which does not regard permanent peace with the infidel as legitimate or even possible. For the time being, however, the benefits of geopolitical expansion outweigh the risks. The Chinese will rely heavily on Pakistan to keep the Taliban in check, and both sides have a vested long-term interest in keeping India locked out of Central Asia. It is by no means certain, however, that this will make India more inclined than before to become the south-western pivot in a U.S.-led effort to contain China in the Indo-Pacific. Modi is well aware that the Americans cannot help him if the Chinese increase the pressure along the disputed Himalayan border.

Afghanistan is now reverting to its usual state of Islamist unpleasantness. That melancholy yet predictable fact will not affect the rest of the world much. The return to the strictures of a Sharia-based society was certain after the August 2021 debacle. It was a testimony to the failure of every level of the U.S. establishment – politicians, generals, intelligence agencies, think-tank analysts, diplomats, journalists – to understand the workings of a traditional Muslim society. To wit, the surrender of Afghanistan's National Army – lavishly armed, equipped, and trained by the U.S. for years, to the tune of almost a hundred billion dollars – had been quietly negotiated and arranged under the noses of those same American officials who kept telling us that Kabul would be no Saigon, and that Ashraf Ghani's regime would not be in any danger of collapsing in the immediate aftermath of American withdrawal.

CONCLUSION

Some events can change not just the balance of causal forces operating, but "the very logic of their consequences".[28] They can bring about such historical changes "in part by transforming the very cultural categories that shape and constrain human action". This is an important insight. Over two decades after 9/11, and following the triumph of jihadist hybrid warfare in Afghanistan, the task of America defining what it really stands for in today's world – Sun Tzu's "knowing thyself" – increasingly appears as a prerequisite to the West's civilizational survival. Restraining the ongoing march of irrational, wantonly destructive "wokedom" at home is the non-negotiable precondition of defeating jihad abroad.

The end-game in Kabul in August 2021 illustrates a yawning and growing gap between the real world and the aspiration of a segment of America's coastal elites to promote a "rules-based global order" which includes a host of bizarre and – especially to the Muslim world – repulsive social norms (exemplified by the rainbow flag on the roof of the U.S. embassy in Kabul a month before the collapse). It would be in the American interest, and to

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[28]   On the significance of events as the building blocks of history, see Sewell, W. H. Jr. "Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation". University of Chicago Press, 2005.

the benefit of the rest of the world, that this gap be recognized, and if possible pragmatically bridged, before the U.S. considers another intervention in a far-away country of which we know little.

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Johann Schmid

CONCEPTUALIZING HYBRID WARFARE

> *"Therefore it is said that victorious warriors win first and then go to war,*
> *while defeated warriors go to war first and then seek to win".*
> Sun Tzu, The Art of War, p. 57

ABSTRACT: *This article conceptualizes hybrid warfare as a specific style of warfare, strategic in nature and in contrast to "military-centric warfare" as its counterpart. The article builds on previous research and publications by the author and presents results in a condensed way. It suggests the following comprehensive definition of hybrid warfare: "Hybrid warfare is a specific and unorthodox style of warfare. It extends the battlespace horizontally by involving multiple domains, operates in the shadow of various interfaces thus creating ambiguity, and creatively combines the use of force with different soft-, hard- and smart-power means and methods. It tries to reach a decision primarily on non-military centres of gravity".*

KEYWORDS: *hybrid warfare, Crimea, Russia, Ukraine, Center of Gravity, conventional war*

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EMPIRICAL MANIFESTATION: HYBRID WARFARE ON THE UKRAINIAN BATTLEFIELD[1]

With the takeover of Crimea by masked Russian soldiers/fighters without national insignia in February/March 2014, and with the Kremlin initially denying its involvement, war became 'hybrid' in our minds. The ensuing conflict in Eastern Ukraine, with separatism supported by neighbouring countries, the establishment and security of pseudo-state people's republics by military force, including recourse to pro-Russian fighters 'on holiday', has reinforced the impression of a hybrid form of warfare, raising the question: what is hybrid warfare?

It seems helpful to start by considering what does not define hybrid warfare: outward appearances such as wearing facemasks or going without national insignia, as well as asymmetric, irregular or terrorist actions, may regularly accompany hybrid warfare, but are not in themselves sufficient indications of hybrid warfare in the narrower sense. Nevertheless, both the uniformed masked ('green') men without national insignia in Crimea, and the

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[1] This paragraph builds on elements Schmid, J. "Hybrid warfare on the Ukrainian battlefield: developing theory based on empirical evidence". In Sciendo: Journal on Baltic Security. Tartu, August 2019; 5(1): 5–15. https://sciendo.com/article/10.2478/jobs-2019-0001, Accessed on 10 November 2021. Cf. Schmid, J. "Hybride Kriegführung und das 'Center of Gravity' der Entscheidung." In: S+F, Sicherheit und Frieden. Security and Peace 34 (2). Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2016, 114–120.

irregular pro-Russian separatist fighters in Eastern Ukraine, represent two key characteristics of hybrid warfare.

Firstly, they represent the dissolution of fixed categories of order, and hybrid actors' tendency to deliberately operate at the various interfaces of traditional areas of responsibility, thereby creating vulnerabilities while systematically attacking them. The resulting ambiguity prevents, paralyses, or impedes a fast, unified response either from the targeted nation or the international community. It is particularly important to consider the following interfaces:

– Between war and peace: War is not declared or even necessarily fought, yet the 'conqueror' takes whatever he wants. Fast, unexpected actions of a political, military, clandestine, or propaganda-related nature leave behind a new set of circumstances ('fait accompli').

– Between friend and foe: Who is the actual adversary? Hybrid actors operate in ways that allow them to deny their actions with a certain amount of plausibility, or at least so that the actions cannot be clearly attributed to them in a timely manner ('plausible deniability'). Opposing forces are not necessarily fought, but rather sometimes disarmed and 'motivated' to join the hybrid actor's own ranks e.g. through a combination of financial incentives, threats and pressure.

– Between intrastate and interstate conflicts and therefore between domestic and external security, involving state, non-state and pseudo-state actors: The fact that in 2014 the external attacker was already in the country and allied with local actors raised the question as to whether Ukraine was defending its domestic or external security. Who were the separatists in Eastern Ukraine? Domestic or foreign? State or non-state actors? Which domestic or external security forces were able to respond appropriately or were even available for this purpose? What political and legal obstacles had been associated with a governmental response by Ukraine?

Ukraine's paralysis in winter/spring 2014 was no accident. It was primarily caused by these vulnerabilities, which were deliberately created and exploited along various interfaces. At the same time, it is evident that actions like those in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine were only possible and successful under very specific conditions that cannot readily be applied to other situations.

Secondly, the uniformed masked men without national insignia in Crimea and the pro-Russian separatist fighters in Eastern Ukraine constitute the creative combination and interrelation of different categories, means and modes of warfare. This is both the second key characteristic of hybrid warfare, and an illustration of the range of creative ways in which 'hybrid actions' can take shape. In this regard, it is important to consider aspects such as the combination and interrelation of irregular and conventional forms and concepts: the pseudo-state separatists in Eastern Ukraine primarily drew on irregular, subversive and propaganda-related means and methods. However, behind these separatists loomed Russia's (state) conventional military and nuclear threat scenario.

What is significant in addition is the fact that the military elements of Russia's actions visible from outside were intended, not so much to decide the conflict but to secure a decision already achieved in other fields – through subversive, clandestine, propaganda-related or political means. This demonstrates that from the very beginning, Russia was not primarily pursuing a decision on this conflict in military terms. Accordingly, the focus on a broad and flexible spectrum of non-military 'centres of gravity' for deciding the conflict and reaching

own political goals becomes the most pivotal point in explaining the hybrid form of Russia's and pro-Russian separatist actions involving Ukraine in 2014 and the following years.

Overall, these actions are marked by holistic, cross-level orchestration of different civil and military concepts, means and methods combined in an unconventional, nonlinear and scalable manner. Along with other objectives, they were and are intended to blur the line between war and peace, friend and foe, domestic and external security, and between the use of civil and military means, as well as between state and non-state actors. These operations target the vulnerable interfaces of traditional categories of order and areas of responsibility. Fast political, clandestine, military, and other actions create a new set of circumstances (Crimea) and put the actors taking them in a grey area – at least for a certain amount of time – while paralysing or impeding possible responses. In the background, Russia was maintaining a substantial conventional and nuclear military threat scenario, which ostentatiously demonstrates its own escalation dominance through activities like extensive military exercises.

THEORY: CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF HYBRID WARFARE[2]

The main characteristics specific to hybrid warfare, as demonstrated for example on the Ukrainian battlefield in 2014/15, are neither wearing masks and going without national insignia, nor generally covert or irregular military actions. These characteristics are merely the symptoms or side effects that can be empirically observed from outside. After all, what renders warfare hybrid is not something we can see. While relevant in themselves, the large-scale use of disinformation and propaganda, cyberattacks or the widespread use of subversive or clandestine means to destabilize the opponent are also only partial characteristics of a hybrid grand strategy. The decisive factor is the 'hybrid' orchestration of these various elements in an overall strategic approach, and their dynamic and flexible orientation towards a broad spectrum of primarily non-military 'centres of gravity' for deciding the confrontation/war. Not only a general statement about war, but also three main characteristics and tendencies specific to the identification of the nature of hybrid warfare can be derived from these observations:

General statement

In principle, every war exhibits hybrid dimensions and elements, on the one hand to the extent that it proceeds from a political rationale or motive – namely one that exists independently of the war itself – and, on the other, because war is, as a rule, not conducted in purely military terms, but rather in many other fields and domains (including politics, diplomacy, the economy, technology or information). In this respect, war is inherently hybrid – as is clear even in the Clausewitzian sense of 'a continuation of policy by other means'.[3]

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2   This chapter builds on and further develops Schmid, J. "The hybrid face of warfare in the 21st century". Maanpuolustus, #127, 8 March 2019, Helsinki (FIN). https://www.maanpuolustus-lehti.fi/the-hybrid-face-of-warfare-in-the-21st-century/, Accessed on 10 November 2021, as well as on Schmid, J. "Hybrid Warfare – a very short introduction". COI S&D Conception Paper. Helsinki, 2019. Cf. Schmid, J. (2017 a): "Konfliktfeld Ukraine: Hybride Schattenkriegführung und das 'Center of Gravity' der Entscheidung." In: Krieg im 21. Jahrhundert, hrsg. Von Ehrhart, H. 141–162. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag.

3   Cf. Clausewitz, C. von "On War". Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, 101.

However, a specific hybrid way of conducting war can be identified. It combines the tailored use of hard, soft and smart power elements with symmetric as well as asymmetric means and methods. It potentially includes all levels of vertical escalation from subversion and destabilization to the use of military force in all possible manifestations. Most importantly, it extends the battlespace horizontally by making flexible use of multiple – military as well as non-military – domains and dimensions. In order to conceptualize hybrid warfare, it is particularly important to distinguish it from its counterpart – 'conventional' or more precisely 'military-centric warfare'.[4] It is to be understood as a form of warfare that aims for an overall military decision of a confrontation primarily by military means and methods on a military battlefield. The main distinguishing feature here is the question regarding the centre of gravity on which the war is to be decided. In contrast to 'military-centric warfare', the centre of gravity in hybrid warfare is not primarily located in the military domain. Hybrid warfare in the narrower sense (as all war is hybrid) can be described by three key characteristics and their hybrid orchestration. In their combination they form a 'threefold hybridity':

Field of decision
The first key characteristic is related to the field of decision. In this regard, it can be identified that hybrid warfare **extends the battlespace horizontally** by exploiting a broad spectrum of domains and dimensions as battlefields in their own right in order to conduct and decide a confrontation. These domains range from politics, diplomacy, information, economy, technology, military and society to dimensions like culture, psychology, legitimacy and morale and many more. They potentially include all sources of power.

Despite its use of force component however, hybrid warfare tries to reach the decision of a war/confrontation as such primarily on a broad spectrum of **non-military centres of gravity.** In contrast to 'military-centric warfare', hybrid warfare operates with multiple, integrated, and shifting military as well as non-military centres of gravity in a flexible and dynamic manner.

In this context, the entire range of military means and methods, tactics and strategies can be employed and combined without pursuing decision of the conflict primarily in the military domain. Hence, success in hybrid warfare does not necessarily require an overall military victory.

Based on these considerations, hybrid warfare may also appear as **'Mosaic-Warfare'** or **'Multi-Domain-Warfare'** as it extends the battlespace horizontally and integrates different domains – as "battlefields" in their own right – with each other by multi- and cross-domain operations.

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[4] To be understood as the form of warfare with its centre of gravity primarily focused on an overall military decision of a war/conflict and with a military decision on the military battlefield being able to decide the entire war. E.g. along the lines of the Falklands War (1982), the Gulf War (1991), big portions of the Napoleonic Wars or both world wars. A bias in such thinking makes it at the same time more difficult to understand the specific logic of hybrid forms of warfare. As 'conventional' is a relative term the concept 'military centric warfare' is used to describe the counterpart of hybrid warfare more precisely. Compare: Schmid, J. "Der Archetypus hybrider Kriegführung. Hybride Kriegführung vs. militärisch zentrierte Kriegführung." In: Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift (ÖMZ), Heft 5/2020, S. 570–579, Wien, 2020.

Conduct of operations

The second key characteristic is related to the conduct of operations. Referring to this, hybrid warfare **operates in the shadows/grey areas of various interfaces,** e.g. between war and peace, friend and foe, internal and external relations, civil and military as well as state and non-state actors and fields of responsibilities and finally in between reality/truth and fiction/propaganda.

By operating at such interfaces, hybrid warfare **blurs traditional lines of order and responsibilities** while heading for their subsequent dissolution. This is the main way of **how "hybridity"** in hybrid warfare **is created** in the first place.

The resulting **ambiguities** are intended to paralyse, limit or impede a response from the opposing side, since they make **attribution** and situational awareness difficult. At the same time, such approaches try to **cause interface challenges** for the victim or defender. As interfaces are difficult to protect, they are often not well defended and therefore constitute most critical vulnerabilities. Hence, hybrid operations are designed and tailored to expose and exploit targeted vulnerabilities in the gray zone of interfaces primarily in a non-linear or unorthodox way.

Paralysing the opponent's decision-making process, limiting his options to respond, while avoiding confrontation with his strengths can be considered as the overarching goal of such an approach.

Based on these perspectives and the crucial role of operations in the shadow of various interfaces, hybrid warfare may also appear as **'Shadow-Warfare'** or **'Gray Zone Warfare'**.

Employment of means and methods

The third key characteristic is related to the employment of means and methods. Concerning this matter hybrid warfare **creatively combines** and makes **parallel use** of different civil and military, regular and irregular, symmetric and asymmetric, open and covert, as well as legal and illegal instruments, means, methods, tactics, strategies, concepts and modes of warfare which otherwise prevail rather separately from each other. By exploiting **multiple attack vectors**, hybrid warfare **creates ever-new mixed hybrid forms designed and tailored to hit at vulnerable interfaces across all relevant strategic domains.**

Conventional, regular and symmetric forms and concepts are interwoven with irregular, asymmetric, nonlinear, or unorthodox categories to form a strategic hybrid amalgam. In some cases, this process takes place across different levels within an area of operations and may involve state, non-state, or pseudo-state actors. Both open as well as covert or concealed forms and methods come into play.

The 'new' hybrid forms that result are generally difficult to clearly identify or understand in terms of their patterns, rationales and logic. This fact favours the element of surprise, while making defence, response, and the development of appropriate counterstrategies more difficult.

In short: The employment of means and methods intends to combine the tailored use of hard power with a broad spectrum of soft power elements by the creative use of smart power in order to enable operations at targeted interfaces.

The approach can be compared with the creation of a "Swiss army knife" where the knife, as a symbol for the military component is an important element, but just one element in the context of a broad variety of hard, soft, and smart power tools and instruments.

Based on this, hybrid warfare may also appear as **'Multi-Vector-Warfare'** as it creatively combines soft, hard, and smart power means and methods. At the same time, it may appear

as **'Multi-Mode Warfare'** as it combines different, regular and irregular, open and covert, symmetric and asymmetric, modes of warfare which might be seen separately from each other in a more traditional way of thinking.

Interaction

These three characteristics are closely interlinked and form a **threefold "hybridity"** of hybrid warfare in the form of a hybrid combination and interplay of different domains, interfaces and vectors. They interact closely.

The purpose of the hybrid orchestration of employed means and methods is to make operating in selected fields of action and along various vectors of action in the grey area of intersections possible in the first place. Following the basic principle of a Swiss army knife, various instruments, means and methods are precisely combined and interwoven with each other so as to enable tailored operations at those intersections considered to be relevant. The knife as a symbol of military means and methods does not necessarily take a centre stage, however. It is only one element in a spectrum of various combinations of means and methods.

Operating in the grey areas of different intersections in turn has the purpose of creating ambiguities, complicating attribution and paralysing the adversary's decision-making process to prevent, limit, or undermine defence measures and responses. It is also intended to expose and target the adversary's specific vulnerabilities, which are often located especially at unprotected intersections, and to shift the decision of the entire conflict to gravitational fields where one's own strength meets the adversary's weakness. Creating ambiguity thus becomes a means of paralysing the adversary.

The result of this is an interconnected and dynamic interaction pattern of the various fields of action in which wars and conflicts can be conducted. In contrast to 'military-centric warfare', the various fields are not hierarchically oriented towards a military decision of the war or conflict. Instead, the military becomes an enabling element of the general decision that is sought primarily on other (non-military) gravitational fields. Indirect, covert, nonlinear, unconventional and asymmetric actions are integral parts of hybrid strategies. These may be planned, develop gradually, or even come about by chance.

In their **hybrid orchestration**, these three characteristics form the essence of hybrid warfare in the narrower sense: They can be considered as the **'marvellous or paradoxical trinity of hybrid warfare'**.

Comprehensive Definition of hybrid warfare

Based on these considerations the following comprehensive definitions of hybrid warfare as a specific – particularly creative and unorthodox – style of warfare and in contrast to military-centric warfare as its counterpart is suggested:

(long): *Hybrid warfare is a creative act of force combining a broad spectrum of military and non-military instruments and vectors of power on an extended, multi-domain battlespace – ranging from politics, diplomacy, information, economy, technology, military and society to dimensions like culture, psychology, legitimacy and morale – while ambiguously operating in the shadow/gray zones of blurred interfaces – between war and peace, friend and foe, internal and external relations, civil and military as well as state and non-state actors and fields of responsibilities – with the ultimate goal to enable*

an own decision of the confrontation primarily on non-military centres of gravity while preventing being militarily overthrown or compelled by the enemy.
(short): Hybrid warfare is a specific and unorthodox style of warfare. It extends the battlespace horizontally by involving multiple domains, operates in the shadow of various interfaces thus creating ambiguity and creatively combines the use of force with different soft-, hard- and smart-power means and methods. It tries to reach a decision primarily on non-military centres of gravity.

These conceptual considerations are to be understood as a contribution to help improve the judgement of political and military leaders, decision-makers, analysts as well as conceptual thinkers and to analyse the continuously emerging "new" empirical manifestations of hybrid warfare and their associated strategic approaches.
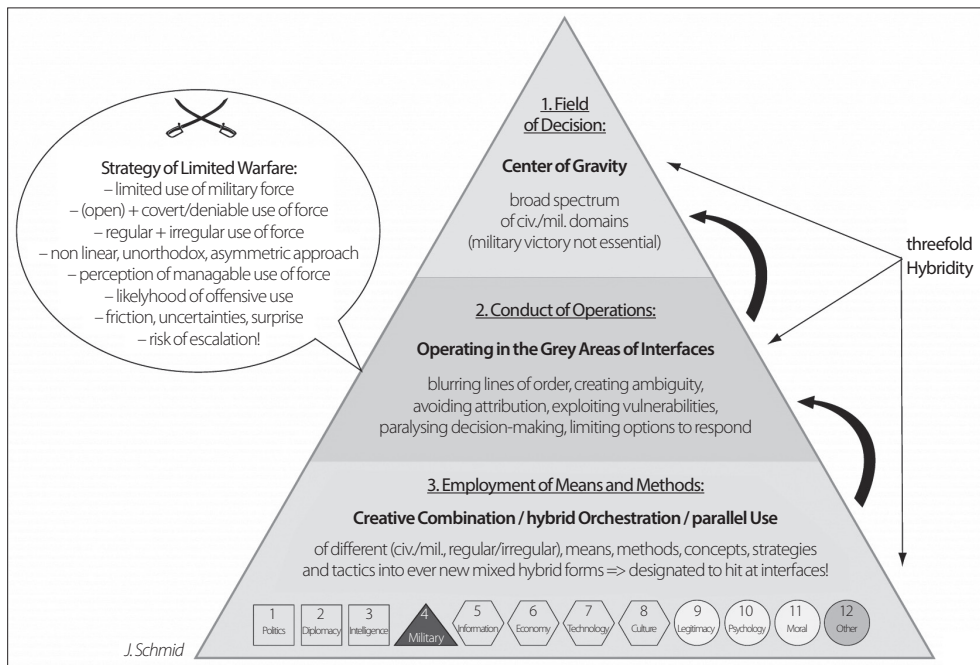

Figure 1 *The "paradoxical" Trinity of Hybrid Warfare. Three key characteristics/tendencies and their hybrid interaction/orchestration*[5]
(1: Politics, 2: Diplomacy, 3: Intelligence, 4: Military, 5: Information, 6: Economy, 7: Technology, 8: Culture, 9: Legitimacy, 10: Psychology, 11: Moral, 12: Other)

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[5]   https://www.maanpuolustus-lehti.fi/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/190303_Paradoxical-Trinity-of-Hybrid-Warfare_J.Schmid1-2048x1448.png

THE USE OF FORCE AND THE NATURE OF CONFLICT[6]

The concept of hybrid warfare is the most comprehensive way to address hybrid challenges in a wider sense. In this understanding it represents the 'all-inclusive package' of 'hybrid threats'. This particularly includes the 'hard end' in the escalation spectrum of 'hybrid challenges'. While it potentially makes use of all strategic domains and sources of power – politics, diplomacy, intelligence, information, economy, finance, technology, military, society, culture, psychology, legitimacy, morale and others – hybrid warfare includes the use of force as its defining element. From terrorism, terror, sabotage and subversion, to guerrilla warfare, conventional warfare and even the nuclear domain, all possible levels of vertical escalation can be included or even combined.

Through its 'use of force' component, hybrid warfare constitutes the most challenging and vital scenarios in the wider spectrum of hybrid conflict. It combines the tailored use of 'hard power' with the deployment of a broad spectrum of 'soft power' elements through the creative exercise of 'smart power'. In this connection, the use of force is not only an additional element in a hybrid threat scenario, it changes the entire nature of the conflict and turns it into war. Therefore, whatever counts for war, it counts for hybrid warfare in particular. For this reason, hybrid warfare can also be considered 'a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means', or as 'an act of force to compel an enemy to do one's own will' (Clausewitz, On War, I, 1, 83, 99).

In addition, although hybrid warfare has implications for the operational and tactical level, it is primarily of a political-strategic nature. Hybrid warfare can start long before the 'shooting war' begins, and in an extreme case it even offers the option to win a war despite military defeat.[7] Therefore, whatever counts for strategy – particularly 'grand strategy' – it counts for hybrid warfare strategy in particular. It 'is about getting more out of a situation than the starting balance of power would suggest'. It can be perceived as 'the art of creating power' (L. Freedman, Strategy, p. xii). As a result, war and strategy do not need to be redefined to conceptualize hybrid warfare.

Furthermore, it is important to note that hybrid warfare is not a new phenomenon. It has existed throughout the entire history of war. However, while far from novel in its essence, the empirical manifestation of hybrid warfare can be surprisingly new and differ significantly from case to case. This makes identification and understanding particularly challenging. Awareness and understanding are the first preconditions for addressing this challenge.

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[6] This paragraph builds on Schmid, J. "Hybrid Warfare – a very short introduction". COI S&D Conception Paper, Helsinki, 2019.

[7] Cf. Schmid, J. "Hybrid Warfare in Vietnam – How to win a war despite military defeat". In ISPAIM – Monitor Strategic 2–4/2020, B. Nr. 17/02.12.2020/0691, Bucuresti, 2021, 54–67. https://ispaim.mapn.ro/app/web root/fileslib/upload/files/Monitor%20Strategic/ms342020.pdf, Accessed on 10 November 2021. Cf. Schmid, J. "Hybride Kriegführung in Vietnam – Strategie und das center of gravity der Entscheidung." In: Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik (ZFAS), Vol. 10, No. 3, Wiesbaden, 373–390. DOI: 10.1007/s12399-017-0659-4.

HYBRID WARFARE – A MULTIDOMAIN CHALLENGE FOR THE EU, NATO AND THEIR MEMBER STATES[8]

Hybrid warfare of the type that was demonstrated, for example, on the Ukrainian battlefield, if carried out against European countries, would pose a particular challenge for Europe and the crisis management and defence of both NATO and the EU. In an extreme case, NATO's military defence and deterrence posture could be bypassed by subversive means in a 'downward or horizontal escalation mode'. This may include possible threats from within, for example as a result of long-term subversion, infiltration, propaganda, destabilization, or internal disintegration. Such hybrid threat- and attack-vectors may combine multiple domains and dimensions including e.g. politics, diplomacy, information, media, intelligence, economy, finance, infrastructure, technology, society, culture, law, psychology, legitimacy or morale – as elements of horizontal hybrid escalation. The military domain with its "operational sub-domains" – air, land, sea, cyberspace and space – being part of them. With their security and defence policy primarily oriented towards external threats, neither NATO nor the EU would be prepared, able, or ostensibly entitled to protect their member states as well as themselves as organizations against such challenges at the blurred interfaces of war and peace, friend and foe, internal and external security as well as of civil and military fields of responsibilities on multi-domain-battlefields.

At the same time, in a world of growing insecurity and global power shifts, **dividing lines** are growing and deepening within the EU and NATO and particularly within the societies of their member states. Social and cultural tensions, radical ideologies, illegal migration, demographic transformation, eroding respect towards state authorities, organized crime and on top the insecurity created by the COVID-19 crisis situation function as **catalysts** in the convergence of various hybrid risk factors. They create additional lines of conflict, and thus provide additional starting points and leverage for hybrid action. This exposes numerous vulnerabilities on multiple domains that can be exploited by all kinds of hybrid actors – internal and external, state as well as non-state – from various directions. However, military strength provides additional opportunities to exploit hybrid methods, even without the active use of force. Military escalation potential or dominance by its mere existence would support any kind of subversive or horizontal hybrid activities on non-military domains.

In this context it has to be highlighted that keeping and preserving the **technological edge** would be of utmost importance for the EU, NATO and their member states. As their military strength and defensive posture builds to a large degree on technological superiority, losing this advantage could create a "solidarity gap" for the collective defence of Europe as it would increase the risk and "price" of transatlantic engagement. As a result, European nations could be threatened by hybrid methods of warfare with growing credibility. The same counts for their civil engagements and military operations abroad.

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[8]   This paragraph builds on and further develops Schmid, J. "The hybrid face of warfare in the 21st century". Maanpuolustus, #127, 8 March 2019, Helsinki (FIN). https://www.maanpuolustus-lehti.fi/the-hybrid-face-of-warfare-in-the-21st-century/, Accessed on 10 November 2021.

However, it is worthwhile to remember that success in hybrid warfare depends on certain preconditions that do not automatically apply to any situation. For example, the Crimea scenario (2014) could not be implemented elsewhere in an offhand manner. The war in Donbas demonstrated the limitations of such an approach already back in 2014/15. In addition, Russia's large scale assault on Ukraine on 24th February 2022 shows that the hybrid design and preparation of a campaign do not necessarily guarantee overall success.

The Ukraine case (2014/15), however, illustrates another important relationship.[9] The more closely connected and interwoven a country's relations with its adversary, and the more pronounced their mutual dependencies on multiple domains and dimensions, the more potential starting points there are for hybrid methods of warfare, which will also tend to be more successful as a consequence. For this reason, globalization, close international interaction, and interconnected societies – as positive and desirable as these developments may be – have the potential to open up additional starting points for hybrid methods of warfare. This could make hybrid warfare a particularly favoured means among former (alleged) friends (as Ukraine and Russia had been), within the framework of intrastate conflicts, and especially in inner-state and civil wars. Open, democratic societies that lack strategic vigilance are particularly vulnerable to such hybrid methods of warfare.

SUMMARY: NEED FOR COMPREHENSIVE UNDERSTANDING

Hybrid warfare is not fundamentally new. However, the variety of its manifestations that can be creatively designed through hybrid orchestration is. This means that hybrid warfare does not present a fundamentally 'new challenge', nor can the phenomenon be tied to specific outward appearances such as wearing face-masks or soldiers going without national insignia. The deciding factor is orchestrating the various concepts, means and methods within the framework of a hybrid grand strategy.

While hybrid warfare actors generally resort to creative and indirect strategies of limited warfare and a limited use of military force, it must be emphasized that hybrid warfare potentially includes all levels of escalation. Friction and uncertainty are always part of the game and the perceived manageable use of force may get out of control. Due to its focus on a broad spectrum of non-military centres of gravity, however, a military decision as such is not necessarily required for hybrid warfare actors to achieve their political goals. As happened in Donbas (2014/15) or during the Second Indochina War,[10] militarily it may be sufficient for the hybrid warfare actor to prevent his opponent from deciding the war on the military battlefield, while seeking a decision himself on non-military centres of gravity. Morale and legitimacy can become strong weapons in this context.

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9 Cf. Schmid, J. "Hybrid warfare on the Ukrainian battlefield: developing theory based on empirical evidence". In Sciendo: Journal on Baltic Security. Tartu, August 2019; 5(1): 5–15. https://sciendo.com/article/10.2478/jobs-2019-0001, Accessed on 10 November 2021.

10 Cf. Schmid, J. "Hybrid Warfare in Vietnam – How to win a war despite military defeat". In ISPAIM – Monitor Strategic 2–4/2020, B. Nr. 17/02.12.2020/0691, Bucuresti, 2021, 54–67. https://ispaim.mapn.ro/app/webroot/fileslib/upload/files/Monitor%20Strategic/ms342020.pdf, Accessed on 10 November 2021. Cf. Schmid, J. "Hybride Kriegführung in Vietnam – Strategie und das center of gravity der Entscheidung." In: Zeitschrift für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik (ZFAS), Vol. 10, No. 3, Wiesbaden, 373–390. DOI: 10.1007/s12399-017-0659-4.

In this way, the military becomes a supporting element in the 'orchestra' of an overall decision of the conflict, which, though drawing on the entire range of civilian and military means and methods and all possible strategic dimensions and areas, is primarily pursued in non-military fields.[11] Flexibly focussing the decision of a war/conflict on a broad spectrum of non-military centres of gravity is therefore the first and most fundamental characteristic of hybrid warfare in the narrower sense and the one that distinguishes it from what can be called military-centric warfare.

With its ability to cause ambiguity by silently operating in the grey areas of interfaces, while concealing or plausibly denying an actor's intent and role as a party to the conflict, combined with a limited use of force only as a last resort, hybrid warfare offers a huge potential for surprise and offensive actions even against militarily superior opponents ('underdog strategy'). By following a long-term, indirect or masked 'salami tactics' approach or, conversely, by conducting rapid, unexpected offensive operations ('fait accompli'), hybrid warfare actors can create new sets of circumstances that are almost impossible to be changed afterwards without undue effort. Hence, the offensive power of hybrid warfare presents the defender with a particular challenge: being taken by surprise without even recognizing that one is under hybrid attack until it is too late. Such a surprise could also be carried out indirectly, in slow motion and over a long period of time. Hybrid warfare generally favours the offensive. Hence, countering hybrid warfare successfully in the long run requires far more forces, resources, and efforts than offensive hybrid operations do.

Against this backdrop and in light of the dynamic, multifaceted nature of hybrid warfare, the crux of meeting this challenge will be to identify and understand in due time its ever-changing, multiple and often disguised appearances, as well as the pattern and strategic rationale behind it. It is impossible to respond appropriately unless the strategies and methods of a certain hybrid warfare actor are identified and understood comprehensively and early enough. Accordingly, in addition to long-term measures to build resilience, the ability to constantly perform in-depth analyses of specific war/conflict situations, related actors and strategies will become a key capability in countering and responding to hybrid methods of warfare. A comprehensive understanding of hybrid warfare and a related education of judgement, not least to prevent over-interpretation and overreaction, are decisive. For this reason, scholarship and the building of the respective analytical capabilities will play a vital role in meeting this challenge. The conceptual understanding of hybrid warfare briefly outlined in this article could serve as an analytical framework for considering and assessing this breed of warfare and related strategies in current and future situations.

"War is more than a true chameleon that slightly adapts its characteristics to the given case. As a total phenomenon its dominant tendencies always make war a paradoxical trinity – composed of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity, which are to be regarded as a blind natural force; of the play of chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free to roam; and of its elements of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone". (Clausewitz (1832), *On War,* I, 1, p. 101)

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[11] Conversely, this does not, however, mean that each case in which the military has a supportive role and is employed in other fields is already a case of hybrid warfare.

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Marco M. Marsili

HYBRID WARFARE: ABOVE OR BELOW THE THRESHOLD OF ARMED CONFLICT?

ABSTRACT: *The term "hybrid" gained widespread use in military and political discourse; it grabbed the headlines and eventually reached the general public. We refer to "hybrid warfare" or "hybrid conflict", most likely without fully comprehending the term's meaning and ramifications. The question is whether and when hybrid warfare should be regarded an armed attack that exceeds the threshold of damage and devastation caused by a kinetic action. The purpose of this paper is to shed light on the consistency of the growing doctrine of hybrid warfare with current international (humanitarian) law, beginning with a lexical and logical analysis of the words.*

KEYWORDS: *hybrid, conflict, war, International Humanitarian Law, Geneva Conventions*

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INTRODUCTION

At the 2014 NATO Summit in Wales, the allies agreed that international law applies to cyberspace, and that cyberattacks can be just as harmful as conventional strikes.[1] As a result, cyber defence was recognized as part of NATO's core task of collective defence. At the Warsaw Summit in 2016, the alliance raised cyberspace as a domain of operations, comparable to the "traditional" domains of air, land, and sea.[2] In 2021, at the NATO summit in Brussels, the allies confirmed that a cyber-attack can trigger Article 5 of the Atlantic Charter, which states that "an attack on one is an attack on all".[3] The doctrine, which the North Atlantic Alliance have been developing since 2014 and is a cornerstone of the organization, raises an alarming possibility. The terms and concepts contained in contemporary NATO policy on "hybrid" have no legal significance because they are not specified by conventions or customary law.

[1]   Marsili, M. "The War on Cyberterrorism". Democracy and Security, 15/2, 2019, 178. DOI: https:// doi.org/10. 1080/17419166.2018.1496826

[2]   Marsili. "The War on Cyberterrorism". 178.

[3]   NATO. "Brussels Summit Communiqué". Press Release (2021) 086. NATO. June 14, 2021. https://www.nato. int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm, Accessed on 24 March 2022.

LEXICON, TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

The term "hybrid warfare" or "hybrid war"[4] gained popularity in the post-Cold War geopolitical setting, when hybrid wars replaced traditional ones.[5] Hybrid warfare lacks a legal definition; it is a sort of infusion cooking in which everything goes; it blurs the line between peace and conflict, transcends traditional military domains, and resides at the interface of information, physical, and cognitive/social domains.[6] Indeed, the concept is not new – a bouquet of various techniques, methods, technologies, tactics, procedures and means[7] for achieving a political or military objective – as it was frequently exploited in previous centuries. There is nothing novel about it. What is novel is the equivalence between the use of actual force and the use of other means, which certain doctrines attempt to establish. In short, it is a matter of disguising something that is not armed conflict as armed conflict, using the kaleidoscopic hybrid idea to do so.

To begin, we must cleanse the field of lexical misunderstandings and conduct an analysis of the appropriate environment for reusable term definitions. Terminologists generally employ text for the purpose of identifying terms and locating contextual examples.[8] We will investigate these patterns and demonstrate how the data they contain can be obtained and used as input for terminological entries in the sections that follow.

To be clear, a *per se* conflict does not necessitate the use of armed force. Although there is no consensus over whether lexicology and terminology should be used to define concepts in certain fields, we checked the following definitions, which are based on well-established content and found in several of the most reputable dictionaries: *Merriam-Webster, Britannica, Collins, Oxford, Cambridge, Longman,* and *Macmillan* are all examples of well-known publishers.

Merriam-Webster,[9] America's most authoritative online dictionary for English word definitions and meanings,[10] distinguishes between the following: 1) armed conflict, synonymous with war; 2) conflict as a) "competitive or opposing action of incompatibles: antagonistic state or action (as of divergent ideas, interests, or persons)" or b) "mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, or external or internal demands;" 3) "the opposition of persons or forces that gives rise to the dramatic action in a drama or fiction". The same dictionary defines the verb similarly: "to be different, opposed, or contradictory: to fail to be in agreement or accord," whereas "to contend in combat" is deemed "archaic".

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4 In the scope and for the purpose of this paper, the terms "war" and "warfare" are equivalent.

5 Marsili. "The War on Cyberterrorism". 172.

6 Marsili, M. "The Russian Influence Strategy in its Contested Neighbourhood". In Mölder, H., Sazonov, V., Chochia, A. and Kerikmäe, T. (eds.) The Russian Federation in Global Information Warfare. Influence Operations in Europe and Its Neighborhood. Cham: Springer, 2021, 152. DOI: https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-73955-3_8

7 Marsili, M. "The Russian Influence Strategy in its Contested Neighbourhood". 151.

8 For a discussion on lexicography and reusable definitions of terms, see: Pearson, J. Terms in Context (Studies in Corpus Linguistics). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1998.

9 "Conflict". In Merriam-Webster Dictionary. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conflict

10 Merriam-Webster. https://www.merriam-webster.com, Accessed on 24 March 2022.

Indeed, the doctrine observes that the concept of armed conflict has largely supplanted the concept of war,[11] which has lost its original meaning in international law: "a contention between two or more [s]tates through their armed forces, for the purpose of overpowering each other and imposing such conditions of peace as the victor pleases."[12] Although the term "war" is still used in international law, the larger idea of armed conflict has supplanted it.[13]

A conflict, according to the *Britannica Dictionary,*[14] the first English-language compendium published since 1773,[15] is a "struggle for power, property," such as armed conflict, violent border conflicts, or a conflict between two gangs. When no one is armed, a conflict develops in "strong disagreement between people, groups" or in "a difference that prevents agreement: disagreement between ideas, feelings." Accordingly, the word means "to be different in a way that prevents agreement: to say or express opposite things." Both of the first two dictionaries given, both published by Encyclopaedia Britannica, define the term "conflict" identically.

The *Collins Dictionary,* which has been published since 1824,[16] defines conflict 1) a "serious disagreement and argument about something important" e.g. between two people or groups; 2) a "state of mind in which you find it impossible to make a decision;" 3) "fighting between countries or groups of people;" 4) a "serious difference between two or more beliefs, ideas, or interests". According to this definition, a conflict happens when "ideas, beliefs, or accounts conflict, they are very different from each other and it seems impossible for them to exist together or to each be true".

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary,*[17] the *Oxford Advanced American Dictionary,*[18] and the *Oxford Learner's Dictionary of Academic English*[19] all define conflict as: 1) "a situation in which people, groups or countries disagree strongly or are involved in a serious argument;" 2) "a violent situation or period of fighting between two countries," referred to as an "armed/military conflict;" 3) "a situation in which there are ideas, opinions, feelings or wishes that are opposed to each other; a situation in which it is difficult to choose".

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[11] Use of Force Committee. "Final Report on the Meaning of Armed Conflict in International Law". The Hague Conference, International Law Association, May 2010, 190. http://www.rulac.org/assets/downloads/ILA_report_armed_conflict_2010.pdf, Accessed on 27 March 2022.

[12] Oppenheim, L., II. International Law: A Treatise, edited by Hersch Lauterpacht. London: Longman, Greens, 1952, 202.

[13] Use of Force Committee. "Final Report on the Meaning of Armed Conflict in International Law". 1.

[14] "Conflict". In Britannica Dictionary. https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/conflict, Accessed on 24 March 2022.

[15] National Library of Scotland. "First edition, 1773 – Encyclopaedia Britannica: or, A dictionary of arts and sciences, compiled upon a new plan". https://digital.nls.uk/encyclopaedia-britannica/archive/144850365, Accessed on 24 March 2022.

[16] "Conflict". In Collins Dictionary. https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/conflict, Accessed on 24 March 2022.

[17] "Conflict". In Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/conflict_1, Accessed on 24 March 2022.

[18] "Conflict". In Oxford Advanced American Dictionary. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/american_english/conflict_1, Accessed on 24 March 2022.

[19] "Conflict". In Oxford Learner's Dictionary of Academic English. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/academic/conflict1, Accessed on 24 March 2022.

The following definitions are provided by the *Cambridge Dictionary:*[20] 1) "an active disagreement between people with opposing opinions or principles," 2) "fighting between two or more groups of people or countries".

A conflict, according to the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English,*[21] can be defined as: 1) "a state of disagreement or argument between people, groups, countries, etc.;" 2) a "fight or a war" in the sense of an "armed/military/violent conflict;" 3) "a situation in which you have to choose between two or more opposite needs, influences;" 4) "a situation in which you have two opposite feelings about something;" 5) "something that you have to do at the same time that someone wants you to do something else".

Finally, the *Macmillan Dictionary*[22] defines conflict as: 1) "an angry disagreement between people or groups" or "a fighting between countries or groups" (primarily in journalism); 2) "a situation in which it is difficult for two things to exist together or be true at the same time" or "a feeling of being nervous or unhappy because you want two different things at the same time". The award-winning *Macmillan English Dictionary,* first published in 2002 and available online since 2009,[23] makes no connection between conflict and war in its definition.

A rebuttal is feasible using the dictionaries' synonyms (thesauri). The *Merriam-Webster* lists "conflict" among the synonyms for "war," meant as "a state of armed violent struggle between states, nations, or groups".[24] The *Collins Dictionary*[25] offers the following alternative definitions for conflict: 1) "dispute," which refers to an "opposition between ideas or interests;" 2) "struggle" or "battle," which refers to "the anguish of his own inner conflict;" 3) "battle," in the sense of "a military confrontation," which is synonymous with "war" or "warfare".

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The comparison of the aforementioned definitions reveals that conflict is distinct from war, which is defined as "armed conflict". The Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, and the Geneva Conventions of 1949, as well as their additional protocols, establish the legal basis for "armed conflict".[26] This body of law, dubbed "international humanitarian law" or the "law of war," is applicable exclusively during armed conflict.[27] The terms "warfare" and "war" do not have the same meaning as "conflict" in this context, but they are equivalent

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[20] "Conflict". In Cambridge Dictionary. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/conflict, Accessed on 24 March 2022.

[21] "Conflict". In Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/conflict, Accessed on 24 March 2022.

[22] "Conflict". In Macmillan Dictionary. https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/conflict_1, Accessed on 24 March 2022.

[23] Macmillan Education Limited. "About Macmillan Dictionary". https://www.macmillandictionary.com/about.html, Accessed on 24 March 2022.

[24] "War". In Merriam-Webster.com Thesaurus. https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/war, Accessed on 25 March 2022.

[25] "Conflict". In Collins Dictionary Thesaurus. https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english-thesaurus/conflict, Accessed on 24 March 2022.

[26] Marsili. "The War on Cyberterrorism". 183.

[27] Marsili. "The War on Cyberterrorism". 181.

to "armed conflict".[28] The distinction is critical for comprehending the debate surrounding and about the "hybrid" spectrum.

According to a House of Lords report on the parliamentary role and responsibilities in "waging war", there is no distinction between war and armed conflict; in both cases, troops are deployed abroad in situations in which they can kill or be targeted.[29] As a result, we can deduce that the Geneva Conventions do not apply to a conflict that does not involve the use of weapons merely because it is not an armed conflict.

A seminal work on the equivalency between cyber-attacks and traditional kinetic attacks, i.e. the use of military, lethal force, reveals the logical and legal absurdity of this equation, which is based only on US and NATO policy.[30] Doctrine retains neither the force of international treaty law nor the force of customary law in and of itself; it is based only on national interest.

THE HYBRID BLEND

We now turn our attention to the amalgamation of these elements that constitutes "hybrid warfare" – a theoretical term devoid of legal significance. There is no one-size-fits-all recipe for hybrid warfare; like the curry powder, it can be made up of any combination of ingredients. It is an amorphous term, an umbrella notion that incorporates a variety of tools: military and civil, conventional and unconventional.[31] Hybrid warfare is a comprehensive strategy, not just a collection of techniques and tactics, capable of integrating lethal and non-lethal tools into a holistic approach that shapes the hybrid continuum as a whole.[32] Due to the fact that hybrid warfare – often referred to as gray zone conflict or low-intensity conflict[33] – blurs the border between peace and war, it is debatable whether it should be considered above or below the threshold of armed conflict. What is certain is that when weapons are used, an armed conflict occurs, and the existing legal framework applies. Case law pertaining to detainees captured and imprisoned in Guantánamo Bay by the US during the "War on Terror" is pertinent in this regard.[34]

On the other hand, the use of non-lethal means is not a form of warfare.[35] Hybrid operations that do not involve the use of lethal force do not qualify as armed conflicts and hence cannot be compared to a conventional/kinetic military attack.[36] These are "military

[28] Marsili, M. "The Russian Influence Strategy in its Contested Neighbourhood". 153.
[29] House of Lords, Select Committee on the Constitution. 15th Report of Session 2005–06. Waging war: Parliament's role and responsibility. Vol. I, HL Paper 236-I. London: The Stationery Office Limited, 2006. § 11, 8. https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200506/ldselect/ldconst/255/255.pdf, Accessed on 27 March 2022.
[30] Marsili. "The War on Cyberterrorism".
[31] Marsili, M. "The Russian Influence Strategy in its Contested Neighbourhood". 151.
[32] Marsili, M. "The Russian Influence Strategy in its Contested Neighbourhood". 153–154.
[33] For a definition of gray zone warfare, see: Theohary, C. A. Information Warfare: Issues for Congress (CRS Report No. R45142), Version 5 Updated. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service. March 5, 2018. https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45142/5, Accessed on 27 March 2022.
[34] Marsili, M. "The War on Cyberterrorism". 186–188.
[35] Marsili, M. "The Russian Influence Strategy in its Contested Neighbourhood". 153.
[36] Marsili, M. "The Russian Influence Strategy in its Contested Neighbourhood". 153.

operations other than war."[37] According to certain authors (Thomas,[38] Giles,[39] Gorkowski,[40] Theohary,[41] Marsili[42]), we remain below the threshold of armed conflict under these circumstances.

Coercion and deterrence do not necessitate the use of force and can be accomplished fully through soft power means such as diplomacy and persuasion.[43] During its short life (1920-1946), the League of Nations experimented diplomatic measures, including sanctions;[44] in the First World War, Britain's naval blockade compelled Germany to conduct submarine warfare.[45] England had already experimented a similar blockade between 1806 to 1814, when Napoleon imposed economic sanctions against British trade through the Continental System.[46] Coercion and deterrence can also be accomplished by the use of "hard power" or a combination of soft and hard power,[47] and clustered under the umbrella concept of "hybrid warfare." If, for example, resorting to lethal force to impose sanctions is necessary, the threshold of an armed conflict is crossed. If military force is not used, we stay below such threshold. The Cuban missile crisis is a case in point from recent history.

On 22nd October 1962, President John F. Kennedy declared a naval blockade on Cuba, following the discovery of Soviet missile installations on the Communist-ruled island by American spy planes.[48] The purpose of this "quarantine," as he termed it, was to deter the Soviet Union from sending in additional military supplies to Cuba. President Kennedy stated that the US would not rule out the use of force. On 28th October, the situation came to a peaceful conclusion when the USSR began dismantling its missile bases. Kennedy declared the blockade ended in November.

Instrumentalizing migrants for political ends is regarded as a hybrid move that elicits diplomatic and economic sanctions, but not a military response. Throughout the November 2021 Poland-Belarus border conflict, political figures began to frequently and consistently use the word "hybrid." The European Commission's President, Ursula von der Leyen, issued a statement holding the Belarusian authorities accountable for the "hybrid attack" and urging EU member states to impose diplomatic and economic sanctions on the government of Minsk.[49] In a similar joint statement, the US and European delegations of

37 Marsili, M. "The Russian Influence Strategy in its Contested Neighbourhood". 154.

38 Thomas, T. L. "Russian Views on Information-Based Warfare". Airpower Journal, Special Edition. 2016, 29.

39 Giles, K. "Handbook of Russian Information Warfare" (Fellowship Monograph 9). Rome: NATO Defense College. 2016, 5. http://www.ndc.nato.int/news/news.php?icode=995, Accessed on 18 May 2020.

40 Gorkowski, J. B. "US Information Operations in Large-Scale Combat Operations: Challenges and Implications for the Future Force". In Vertuli, M. D. and Loudon, B. S. (eds.) Perceptions Are Reality: Historical Case Studies of Information Operations in Large-Scale Combat Operations. 23. Fort Leavenworth, KS: Army University Press, 2016.

41 Theohary, C. A. "Information Warfare: Issues for Congress".

42 Marsili, M. "The Russian Influence Strategy in its Contested Neighbourhood". 153.

43 Marsili, M. "The Russian Influence Strategy in its Contested Neighbourhood". 155., 158–159

44 Marsili, M. "From Battlefield to Political Arena. Shifting the Clausewitzian Paradigm". 19–20.

45 Marsili, M. "Propaganda and International Relations: An Outlook in Wartime". 8.

46 Marsili, M. "From Battlefield to Political Arena. Shifting the Clausewitzian Paradigm". 19.

47 Marsili, M. "The Russian Influence Strategy in its Contested Neighbourhood". 158.

48 U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian. "The Cuban Missile Crisis, October 1962". U.S. Department of State. https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/cuban-missile-crisis, Accessed on 26 March 2022.

49 Von der Leyen, U. "Statement by President von der Leyen on the situation at the border between Poland and Belarus". Statement/21/5867. European Commission. Nov. 8, 2021. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/press corner/detail/en/statement_21_5867, Accessed on 27 March 2022.

the UN Security Council described "the orchestrated instrumentalization of human beings for political purposes" as a "hybrid operation tactic".[50] Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken discussed "hybrid tactics," "hybrid operations," and "hybrid methods of aggression,"[51] while Defence Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III used the term "hybrid tactics".[52] The counterpart US leaders met in this context, adapted their lexicon accordingly: Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs spoke of "hybrid attacks"[53] while Slovak Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď' included cyber, espionage, and fake news as hybrid threats.[54] Oleksii Reznikov, Ukraine's Defence Minister, discussed a "Russian hybrid attack, using migrants on the Poland and the Baltic countries" during a meeting at the Pentagon.[55] Reznikov lamented that his country has been victimized for eight years by "Russian hybrid aggression". He listed energy, women, children and cyberspace as examples of Moscow's "hybrid weapons". Again, terminology is significant: nobody ever used the term "hybrid" in conjunction with the words "war" or "conflict".

In 2016, the European Commission adopted the *Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats,*[56] which was implemented in 2017[57] and followed by the *Joint Communication on*

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[50] Permanent Representative of Estonia on behalf of Albania, Estonia, France, Ireland, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States. "Joint Statement on the Belarusian Authorities' Activities with Regard to the Instrumentalization of Migrants". Nov. 11, 2021. United States Mission to the United Nations. https://usun.usmission.gov/joint-statement-on-the-belarusian-authorities-activities-with-regard-to-the-instrumentalization-of-migrants/, Accessed on 27 March 2022.

[51] U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesperson. "Secretary Antony J. Blinken and Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs at a Joint Press Availability". U.S. Department of State. Nov. 30, 2021. https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-and-latvian-foreign-minister-edgars-rinkevics-at-a-joint-press-availability, Accessed on 1 December 2021.

[52] Kirby, J. F. "Readout of Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III's Call With Polish Minister of National Defense Mariusz Błaszczak". U.S. Department of Defense. Nov. 30, 2021. https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/2857573/readout-of-secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iiis-call-with-polish-minister-o/source/readout-of-secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iiis-call-with-polish-minister-o, Accessed on 1 December 2021.

[53] Office of the Spokesperson, U.S. Department of State. "Secretary Antony J. Blinken and Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs at a Joint Press Availability". U.S. Department of State. Nov. 30, 2021. https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-and-latvian-foreign-minister-edgars-rinkevics-at-a-joint-press-availability, Accessed on 1 December 2021.

[54] Austin, L. J., Naď', J. "Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III Welcomes Slovak Minister of Defence Jaroslav Naď' to the Pentagon". U.S. Department of Defense. Oct. 28, 2021. https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/2826285/secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iii-welcomes-slovak-minister-of-defence-jar/source/secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iii-welcomes-slovak-minister-of-defence-jar, Accessed on 29 October 2021.

[55] Austin, L. J., Reznikov, O. "Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III Remarks Welcoming Ukrainian Minister of Defense Oleksii Reznikov to the Pentagon". DoD News. U.S. Department of Defense. Nov. 18, 2021. https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/2848065/secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iii-remarks-welcoming-ukrainian-minister-of, Accessed on 19 November 2021.

[56] European Commission. High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats: A European Union response. JOIN (2016) 18 final. Brussels: EC. Apr. 6, 2016.

[57] European Commission. High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Joint Report to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats: A European Union response. JOIN (2017) 30 final. Brussels: EC. July 19, 2017.

increasing resilience and bolstering capabilities to address hybrid threats in 2018.[58] Hybrid activities mentioned in the latter range from cyber-attacks through disinformation[59] and to hostile military actions. The joint framework defines hybrid activities as a combination of "coercive and subversive measures, using both conventional and unconventional tools and tactics (diplomatic, military, economic, and technological)".

The cooperation against hybrid threats is a key area of the Euro-Atlantic partnership, as outlined in the July 2016 Warsaw Joint Declaration.[60] As part of the measures foreseen in this context, in 2017 the Participating States, NATO and the EU established the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (Hybrid CoE) in Helsinki.[61]

According to the NATO doctrine, which views the virtual domain as analogous to the physical domain, a cyber-attack is treated similarly to a traditional, kinetic attack, and so fits within the broad definition of "hybrid warfare." Due to this stance, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg characterized certain Russian operations against Ukraine as "aggressive hybrid strikes [and] cyber-attacks" during the conflict on the Poland-Belarus border.[62]

Nonetheless, the political and military elites of the United States maintain an ambiguous and inconsistent position. Speaking at the 2nd National Cybersecurity Summit, held at the National Harbor, on 19th September 2019, U.S. Defence Secretary Mark T. Esper defined cyber as "part and parcel of what many call hybrid war – a blurring of the lines between peace and war" that is "below the threshold of armed conflict".[63] In his speech delivered at the Space & Missile Defense Symposium in Huntsville, on 12th August 2021, commander of U.S. Strategic Command, Navy Admiral Charles A. Richard, concluded that cyber is "below the threshold of conflict".[64] The US leadership appears to be perplexed by the nature of hybrid warfare.

Western powers have unlocked Pandora's box; let us now observe the immediate ramifications. Sergey Lavrov, Russian Foreign Minister, described the sanctions imposed by Western nations against Moscow in response to the conflict in Ukraine that erupted in

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[58] European Commission. High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Increasing resilience and bolstering capabilities to address hybrid threats. Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council. JOIN (2018) 16 final. Brussels: EC. June 13, 2018.

[59] For a definition of "disinformaton", see: European Commission. Communication on tackling online disinformation: a European Approach. COM (2018) 236 final. Brussels: EC. April 26, 2018

[60] Juncker, J-C., Tusk, D., and Stoltenberg, J. "Joint Declaration by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization". Warsaw, Jul. 8, 2016. https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2016_07/20160708_160708-joint-NATO-EU-declaratio.pdf, Accessed on 30 March 2022.

[61] European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats. https://www.hybridcoe.fi, Accessed on 30 March 2022.

[62] Garamone, J. "NATO Warns Russia of 'Serious Consequences' for Ukraine Actions". DoD News, Dec. 1, 2021. https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2858633/nato-warns-russia-of-serious-consequences-for-ukraine-actions, Accessed on 2 December 2021.

[63] Garamone, J. "Esper Describes DOD's Increased Cyber Offensive Strategy". U.S. Department of Defense, Sept. 20, 2019. https://www.defense.gov/explore/story/Article/1966758/esper-describes-dods-increased-cyber-offensive-strategy, Accessed on 21 September 2019.

[64] Vergun, D. "China, Russia Pose Strategic Challenges for U.S., Allies, Admiral Says". DoD News. U.S. Department of Defense, Aug. 12, 2021. https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/2729519/china-russia-pose-strategic-challenges-for-us-allies-admiral-says, Accessed on 12 August 2021.

February 2022 as "a genuine hybrid war" and a declaration of "total war".[65] This is how, in the absence of a legal definition, the concept of hybrid warfare, when it is based on national interest, can readily be abused. The allies have "kicked off the dance", and these are the consequences. Although coercive diplomacy and economic sanctions fall below the threshold of war,[66] if we adhere to the US and NATO concept of hybrid warfare, they can be considered as acts of war.

This is how the concept of hybrid warfare can be easily manipulated in the absence of a legal definition and if the concept rests on the national interest. The alliance has "started the dance," and these are the consequences. Coercive diplomacy and economic sanctions are below the threshold of war but if you follow the hybrid warfare doctrine adopted by the US and its allies, it can be considered an act of war.

The NATO doctrine is evolving towards broadening the hybrid concept by including cognitive warfare that involves the (military) technologies grouped under the acronym NBIC (Nanotechnology, Biotechnology, Information Technology and Cognitive Science). A report released by NATO in cooperation with the Johns Hopkins University concludes that "although it takes elements from previous types of hybrid warfare," the reach and level of impact cognitive warfare possesses "make it far more dangerous than its predecessors" to such an extent that it has been dubbed a "new way of war". Currently, the relationship between cognitive and hybrid warfare needs to be clarified.

According to the definition developed by the NATO Science and Technology Organization (STO) Exploratory Team "'Cognitive Warfare' is the convergence of 'Cyber-Psychology,' 'Weaponization of Neurosciences,' and 'Cyber-Influence' for a provoked alteration of the perception of the world and its rational analysis by the military, politicians, and other actors and decision makers, for the purpose of altering their decision or action, for a strategic superiority at all levels of tactical intervention concerning individual or collective natural intelligence, as well as artificial or augmented intelligence in hybrid systems". A Cognitive Warfare Exploratory concept is currently under development by the NATO ACT team of experts. The goal is to develop an Exploratory Cognitive Warfare Concept for approval by the NATO Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT) in first quarter of 2023 to implement the NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept (NWCC) and leverage the Warfare Development Agenda (WDA). This exploratory concept will include a final Cognitive Warfare Concept, to be approved by the Military Committee in summer of 2024.

CONCLUSIONS

There is no legal definition for the term "hybrid warfare" or "hybrid war"; the components of its blend remain unknown. Nonetheless, certain hypotheses appear to be sound. Operations based solely on military intervention, in which lethal force is employed in kinetic actions, should be considered to be above the threshold of armed conflict. This is self-explanatory and does not require more clarification.

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[65]   TASS. "Lavrov slams all-out sanctions spree, says West's values 'aren't worth a red cent". https://tass.com/politics/1427557, Accessed on 25 March 2022.

[66]   Marsili, M. "From Battlefield to Political Arena. Shifting the Clausewitzian Paradigm". 15.

Non-kinetic actions, such as information or influence operations, diplomatic and economic sanctions, do not rise to the level of devastation and destruction caused by a kinetic attack and so do not constitute an act of war. As a result, we make a mistake when we use the term "war" or its synonym "warfare" to describe hybrid operations that do not involve the use of actual force.

The "hybrid" context is purposefully unclear, imprecise, indeterminate, and broad, so that its identity is obscured. This uncertainty is exacerbated by the attitude of political and military leaders who seek to cloud the public's thoughts in order to secure support for their actions. Nevertheless, it is essential to abide by international humanitarian law and, through compliance, to protect and respect the right to life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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Péter Á. Kiss

ARE ALL WARS HYBRID WARS?

*'When I use a word … it means just what I choose it to mean
– neither more nor less'.*
Humpty Dumpty in *Through the Looking Glass* by Lewis Carroll

ABSTRACT: *Although there are some semi-authoritative definitions of hybrid war currently in use, the term is still subject to various interpretations, and it usually means what the individual author or speaker chooses it to mean. The author discusses the origins of the concept and the characteristic of hybrid war. He recommends analyzing and describing hybrid conflict using two NATO analytical tools, PMESII and DIME, that model the operational environment, as well as a decision matrix (borrowed from the military decision making process) to evaluate the various factors that spell success or failure of a hybrid operation. Finally, he compares the two current semi-authoritative (NATO and EU) definitions of hybrid war, and recommends a working description, rather than a new definition of hybrid war.*

KEYWORDS: *definitions of hybrid warfare, DIME, PMESII, gray zone*

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THE ISSUE OF TERMINOLOGY

The term 'hybrid warfare' was first used in 2002 by Major William J. Nemeth in his master's thesis which analyzed how the Chechens blended the methods of irregular warfare with modern technology, and thereby produced a new form of warfare.[1] Frank G. Hoffman expanded on the idea and in a series of papers brought it into the mainstream of military science.[2] Then it became the subject of common discourse and serious study only in 2014, as a result of Russia's seizure of the Crimean Peninsula.[3]

Surprisingly, even after all this time, there is still no agreement on a common definition among security professionals. All agree that it is characterized by the combination of conventional warfare, irregular warfare, and a lot of non-kinetic actions, such as economic and financial measures, subversion or information operations. According to some specialists, it is an entirely new way of waging war. Others argue that it is little more than just a new buzzword, because all wars are hybrid wars. Yet others acknowledge that the appearance of

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[1] Nemeth, W. J. "Future War and Chechnya: A Case for Hybrid Warfare". Monterey, Naval Postgraduate School, 2022.

[2] Hoffman, F. "Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars". Arlington: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007.

[3] See for example Rácz A. "Russia's Hybrid War in Ukraine: Breaking the Enemy's Ability to Resist". Helsinki: Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA), 2015.

such new enabling factors as global connectivity or cyber capabilities have brought significant changes but the nature of war is unchanged.[4] Consequently, hybrid warfare is subject to various interpretations to this day, and it usually means what the individual author or speaker, like Humpty Dumpty, chooses it to mean.

There are several definitions for hybrid warfare, but most suffer from the same defect: they use 'hybrid threat' and 'hybrid warfare' interchangeably. The problem with this is that words do have meanings, and 'threat' and 'warfare' mean two different things. The best way I can explain it is that a 'hybrid threat' should denote the concrete action or potential action of an actor (state or non-state) that is capable and prepared to employ hybrid means. On the other hand, 'hybrid warfare' should be more of a concept, a framework that describes the various hybrid means and actions, how they can be deployed, how they can be countered.

The European Union has a good definition of hybrid warfare, but it also uses 'hybrid threats' when it is actually describing hybrid warfare:[5]

[A] … mixture of coercive and subversive activity, conventional and unconventional methods (i.e. diplomatic, military, economic, technological), which can be used in a coordinated manner by state or non-state actors to achieve specific objectives while remaining below the threshold of formally declared warfare. There is usually an emphasis on exploiting the vulnerabilities of the target and on generating ambiguity to hinder decision-making processes.

NATO's first definition (again, of hybrid threats not of hybrid warfare), contained in the Wales Summit Declaration was actually quite comprehensive:[6]

[A] … wide range of overt and covert military, paramilitary and civilian measures … employed in a highly integrated design. The adversary tries to influence … policy-makers and key decision makers by combining kinetic operations with subversive effort [and] … resorts to clandestine actions, to avoid attribution or retribution.

Subsequently this definition was simplified and became so general that now it can be applied to any conflict, all the way up to nuclear Armageddon. Furthermore, the idea that hybrid war is below the threshold of conventional war is entirely absent from this definition:[7]

A type of threat that combines conventional, irregular and asymmetric activities in time and space.

The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, an international think tank maintained by 31 nations and located in Helsinki, also offers a definition for hy-

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4   For the various opinions see: Abbott, K. "Understanding and Countering Hybrid Warfare: Next Steps for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization". University of Ottawa. 2016. 03. 23., 18.; Cullen, P. J. and Reichborn-Kjennerud, E. "MCDC Countering Hybrid Warfare Project: Understanding Hybrid Warfare". 2017. 01. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/647776/dar_mcdc_hybrid_warfare.pdf, Accessed on 10 November 2021; Jacobs, A. and Lasconjarias G. "NATO's Hybrid Threats: Handling Unconventional Warfare in the South and the East". Research Paper, Rome: NATO Defense College, 2015; Chivvis, C. S. "Understanding Russian 'Hybrid Warfare' and What Can be Done About It". Testimony, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017, 7–8.; Raitasalo, J. "Getting a Grip on the So-Called 'Hybrid Warfare'". ASPJ Africa & Francophonie, 3/2017, 20–39., 21.
5   Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats – a European Union response. Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council. Brussels: European commission, 2016.
6   Wales Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales, 5 September 2014. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm, Accessed on 10 November 2021.
7   NATOTerm – The Official NATO Terminology Database. https://nso.nato.int/natoterm/Web.mvc, Accessed on 10 November 2021.

brid threat but not for hybrid warfare. It also sneaks in a veiled value judgement, implying that only non-democratic states resort to hybrid operations, whereas democratic states are too noble and principled for such underhanded, nefarious measures:[8]

- *Coordinated and synchronized action that deliberately targets democratic states' and institutions' systemic vulnerabilities through a wide range of means.*
- *Activities that exploit the thresholds of detection and attribution, as well as the different interfaces (war-peace, internal-external security, local-state, and national-international).*
- *Activities aimed at influencing different forms of decision-making at the local (regional), state, or institutional level, and designed to further and/or fulfil the agent's strategic goals while undermining and/or hurting the target.*

There are common elements in the above definitions: combination of conventional and unconventional measures; coordinated and synchronized actions; ambiguity; below the threshold of war (although some of them are absent from the current NATO definition). In my view, the two most important common elements are ambiguity and the hybrid actor's intention to keep his operations below the threshold of war. That is, hybrid conflicts – even if a considerable armed force is deployed – are still in the gray zone between the black of war and the white of peace. This latter element is often absent from current scholarship. And failure to consider this key attribute leads to the Humpty Dumpty effect.

Since the concept of hybrid warfare is still evolving, the lack of a clear-cut, generally accepted, doctrine-ready definition may not be such a bad thing. Nathan Freier and some other authors suggest that creating a precise definition is self-limiting. The hybrid operator can frustrate the desire for clarity by finding new ways to execute his attacks and adapting his operations to the political, strategic and operational environment. Therefore, he suggests that describing and analysing hybrid war is far more useful than trying to define it.[9] These authors are correct when they imply that description and understand can bring us closer to definition. However, a clear, doctrine-ready definition will be needed eventually.

DO WE REALLY NEED A PRECISE DEFINITION?

Our usual understanding of war and peace proceeds from certain assumptions. First of all, it is the affair of nation states or alliances, non-state actors play no role in it at all. Second, it is an either-or proposition: nations are either at peace with each other, or they are at war. (Figure 1) The transition from peace to war is symbolized by a declaration of war, and the transition from war to peace by a peace treaty (or outright annexation). Third, one set of laws applies when a nation is at peace, and another when it is at war. We have well-developed mental

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[8]   Hybrid threats as a concept. Hybrid CoE. https://www.hybridcoe.fi/hybrid-threats-as-a-phenomenon/, Accessed on 10 November 2021.

[9]   Freier, N. "The Defense Identity Crisis: It's a Hybrid World". Parameters, Autumn 2009. http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/09autumn/freier.pdf, Accessed on 10 November 2021; Freier, N. "Hybrid Threats and Challenges: Describe… Don't Define". Small Wars Journal, 01. 06. 2010. https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/hybrid-threats-and-challenges-describe-dont-define, Accessed on 10 November 2021; Weissmann, M. et al. (eds), "Hybrid Warfare: Security and Asymmetric Conflict in International Relations". London: I. B. Tauris, 2021, 47.

models and terminology to conceptualize and describe both peace and war, and even better developed doctrines to conduct them.[10]

PEACE	WAR

Figure 1 *The general western perception of war*

However, the real world hardly ever works this way. The orderly procession from peace through a declaration of war, large-scale military operations, and armistice to a return to peace again is the rare exception, rather than the rule. In reality, there is an intermediate, ambiguous social and political space between white (peace) and black (war), where competing states and non-state actors can assert their interest by using some force, but without reaching any recognized threshold of international war. This gray zone between peace and war can be quite narrow and restricted, as it was during the cold war, for example, or quite extensive, as it is today. (Figure 2)

PEACE	WAR

Figure 2 *The reality: the gray zone of conflict below the threshold of war*

Furthermore, in most cases the participants in a hybrid conflict – or any conflict, for that matter – do not perceive themselves to be in the same place on this peace-to-war continuum. Taking the conflict in Ukraine as an example, each principal actor perceives the conflict differently, and deploys the instruments of power accordingly. (Figure 3)

– For both Ukraine and the separatist republics, the conflict is an existential one, deep in the black zone of war: their national sovereignty is at stake, and it justifies the full mobilization of all elements of national power.

– For Russia, the situation is not nearly as acute: it is not an existential conflict, but it is still in the very dark gray area of limited war because existential national interests (and great power prestige) are at stake. The deployment of all instruments of power is appropriate, albeit not necessary their full mobilization.

– NATO and the EU cannot view the conflict complacently: several member states – in particular the Baltic States – of both organizations are threatened by Russia's potential for destabilization. All their instruments of power are deployed but with emphasis on the diplomatic and economic instruments. So far, their military instrument is engaged to support Ukraine with war materiel and intelligence, but their military forces are not involved in combat operations.

– For much of the rest of the world (as represented by the United Nations) the conflict is in the light gray area, and only the diplomatic instrument is deployed but even that only in a cursory manner.

UN	NATO EU	Baltic states	Russia	Ukraine Separatist Republics

Figure 3 *The perception of the affected parties in a conflict*

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10   Kiss, Á. P. "Meeting the Gray Zone Challenge. In Conflicts in the Gray Zone: A Challenge to Adapt". 135–144. Budapest, Hungarian Defence Forces Scientific Research Centre, 2017.

There is a good reason for seeking a precise definition. As the beginning of this chapter showed, most nations make a clear distinction between war and peace. They have a set of laws for peacetime, and another set of laws that mobilize society's resources and grant greater freedom of action to the armed forces are implemented when war makes that necessary. The ambiguity of hybrid warfare is of great utility to the attacker, but it can backfire and cause great societal-level confusion and uncertainty as well.

A recent, telling example is Russia's grave difficulties in the Russo-Ukrainian war, caused by the political leadership clinging to the fiction of the "special military operation". Without a declaration of war (a weighty political decision), conscripts cannot be deployed beyond the borders of the Russian Federation, volunteers (who can be deployed) can decide to terminate their contract when they feel like it, and mobilization of the nation's material and manpower resources cannot be carried out.

DESCRIBE AND ANALYSE

So, eventually a clear-cut, doctrine-ready definition will be needed, but meanwhile the next best thing is to accurately describe and analyse hybrid warfare, as recommended by Freier and others. Fortunately, NATO doctrine provides a number of analytical tools that help do just that. Moreover, these tools can be used not only to analyse hybrid operations that have already taken place, but also operations in progress, as well as to identify potential threats that may materialize in the future.

The first tool is the instruments of power: the actions and resources available to a state to protect and advance its interests in the international environment, influence the rest of the world, coerce or incentivize other nations. NATO adopted the USA acronym DIME.[11] It stands for diplomatic, informational, military, and economic instruments. Whatever the state does, it can be squeezed into these four categories. Sometimes the fit is not very comfortable, sometimes it requires a little effort, but it can be done.

The second tool is the concept of the societal sectors or key systems of a state or a polity within the state. Originally, it was an analytical tool for operational planning developed in the US in the mid-2000s, and subsequently it entered NATO doctrine as well.[12] The NATO acronym is PMESII. It stands for political, military, economic, social, infrastructure, and information sectors or subsystems. It describes the foundations and key features of a state or a polity within a state, helps identify the polity's key nodes, links, strengths and weaknesses, and helps estimate the effects that various adversarial actions will have in these areas.

The third tool is a suitably modified Courses of Action matrix. Hybrid operations are tailored to the hybrid actor's strengths, the targeted state's vulnerabilities, and the tolerance threshold of the international environment. Nevertheless, some conditions are generally applicable for success.[13] Gathering them in a matrix and assigning them either pluses and

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[11]   AJP-01 Allied Joint Doctrine. NATO Standardization Office, 2017, 1–4.

[12]   Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive. SHAPE, 2021, 1–14.

[13]   Cederberg, A. and Eronen, P. "How can Societies be Defended against Hybrid Threats?" Genf: Geneva Centre for Security Policy, 2015. https://s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/defenddemocracy/uploads/documents/GCSP_Strategic_Security_Analysis_-_How_can_Societies_be_Defended_against_Hybrid_Threats.pdf, Accessed on 10 November 2021; Neville, S. B. "Russia and Hybrid Warfare: Identifying Critical Elements in Successful Applications of Hybrid Tactics". Monterey: Naval Postgraduate School, 2015. https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=790506, Accessed on 10 November 2021; Kiss, Á. P. "Kashmir, 1947 – the First Modern Hybrid War". https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354312781_Kashmir_1947_-_the_First_Modern_Hybrid_War, Accessed on 10 November 2021.

minuses or preferably numerical values allows the hybrid actor to evaluate his chances of success – but it also allows the target of the hybrid attack to evaluate the threat and develop his plans to deploy his defensive assets to best effect. (Table 1)

Table 1 *Success factors matrix*

Success factor	Multiplier	Score
Strong political leadership		
Suitable instruments of national power		
Control over state and private resources		
Robust intelligence capability		
Surprise		
Strong political follow-up		
Control of the information environment		
Neutralization of targeted state's armed forces		
Prevention of international intervention		
Unimpeded access to operational area		

HYBRID WAR WORKING DESCRIPTION

Based on the work of scholars that went before me, as well as on the results of my own research, I propose here a somewhat wordy working description of hybrid warfare (as opposed to hybrid threats) that may eventually help arrive at a definition that will be good enough to become a doctrinal term:

– Hybrid warfare is a form of conflict between states or states and powerful non-state actors in which the attacker seeks to achieve warlike objectives (e.g. territorial gains) without the risk of open war. He does not seek unconditional surrender, only disruption and destabilization, in order to compel the targeted state to bend to the attacker's will.

– Synchronization and coordination are the twin keys to success: several parallel operations, using various DIME instruments, directed against various PMESII vulnerabilities of the targeted polity are timed and sequenced to support and reinforce each other, and achieve synergistic effects, while the operations remain below the threshold of war.

– A key enabler of hybrid warfare is modern technology that allows close control of operations, real-time situational awareness and anonymous global reach.

– By these means, the hybrid actor creates conditions that compel the targeted state to accept a disadvantageous settlement, and the international community to consent to it.

HUMPTY DUMPTY AGAIN

Without a clear doctrinal definition any unfriendly act that is not limited to a single dimension can be described as hybrid, and the term will mean whatever the user wants it to mean. As a consequence, it will lose its conceptual value, because if any hostile act from unflattering propaganda to the use of force up to nuclear war can be defined as hybrid wars, then we have no need for the concept at all. Hybridity is simply one more characteristic of

modern armed conflicts, just as the reliance on technology, physical destruction, or high civilian casualty rates are. Discarding the concept would certainly eliminate fruitless arguments about how to pigeonhole a particular conflict.

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Yagil Henkin

COLLAPSE: THE FAILURE OF WESTERN-BASED LOCAL FORCES AND THE LESSONS FOR HYBRID WARFARE

ABSTRACT: *The sudden collapse of the Afghan army in August 2021 brought public attention to a well-known phenomenon again: western countries invest time, resources, and money in building local militaries. Yet, those forces collapse as soon as the western power leaves and they come under pressure, and in one case – even before the western country left. This article will analyse one aspect of hybrid war: the attempt to use local forces, and the question why western forces that attempt to shift responsibility to local forces as part of their 'exit strategy'*[1] *fail time and again to do so, while countries such as Russia or Iran succeed more, or at least fail less, in their attempt to create and use local forces to advance their aims, as part of their hybrid strategies.*

KEYWORDS: *hybrid warfare, Afghan National Army, Afghanistan, South Lebanon Army, Palestinian Security forces in Gaza, Iraqi Army*

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THE PROBLEM

The sudden collapse of the Afghan army in August 2021 brought public attention to a well-known phenomenon again: western countries invest time, resources, and money in building local militaries. Yet, those forces collapse as soon as the western power leaves and they come under pressure, and in one case – even before the western country left. This article will analyse one aspect of hybrid war: the attempt to use local forces, and the question why western forces that attempt to shift responsibility to local forces as part of their 'exit strategy'[2] fail time and again to do so, while countries such as Russia or Iran succeed more, or at least fail less, in their attempt to create and use local forces to advance their aims, as part of their hybrid strategies. Indeed, if most wars today are hybrid wars, it can be argued that still some wars are more hybrid than others, and that the use of local forces – with its successes and failures – is tied to the ways in which western and non-western countries fight hybrid wars. Thus, I will attempt to show that this aspect is relevant to other conflicts, including

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1   See Clark S. A. "Exit Strategy: The Nexis of Policy and Strategy". Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 2006. https://scholarsprogram.wcfia.harvard.edu/files/fellows/files/clark.pdf and Rose, G. "The Exit Strategy Delusion". Foreign Affairs, 77 (1), 1998.

2   See Clark, S. A. "Exit Strategy: The Nexis of Policy and Strategy". Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 2006. https://scholarsprogram.wcfia.harvard.edu/files/fellows/files/clark.pdf and Rose, G. "The Exit Strategy Delusion". Foreign Affairs, 77 (1), 1998.

cases in which western countries face hybrid warfare within their own borders,[3] and try to present what can be done to improve the situation.

   The problem of collapsing local forces cannot be traced to lack of time to train them and build a capable military. Of the four main examples in this article, the 'youngest' army was also the one that did not completely collapse – the Iraqi Army, which nearly collapsed as it faced the advance of ISIS in 2014, some 11 years after its inception.[4] Yet in a few years it was capable of defeating ISIS in its stronghold of Mosul. The other examples' main cases of this article, namely the Palestinian Security Forces in Gaza, the South Lebanese Army and the Afghan National Army, all existed for 13, 17 (or 23, if one counts its short-lived predecessor, The Free Lebanon Army) and 19 years respectively, yet collapsed within days. Furthermore, in all cases, while post-facto many argued that the collapse was inevitable, the collapse caught western countries by surprise. Policymaker not only publicly argued that those forces are capable of surviving and fighting on their own, but made policy decisions based on the assumption that those forces would hold.

Table 1 *A comparison of the collapse of Western-trained local militaries*

The force	Existed for	Trained/ supported by	Collapsed in	Average number of troops	KIA during existence	Enemy
South Lebanon Army, 2000	17 years/ 23 years[5]	Israel	Right before Israeli withdrawal	2500+ in two brigades	660	Hezbollah
Palestinian Security forces in Gaza, 2007	13 years (still existing in the West Bank)	varied	Two years after Israeli withdrawal, "The battle of Gaza": 6 days.	Thousands	Few dozen	Hamas
Afghan National Army, 2021	19 years	US/NATO	2 weeks (a month, including Panjshir Valley)	Seven corps (Nominally, 180,000+)	60,000-92,000 (Including police)	Taliban
Iraqi Army, Northern Iraq, 2014	11 years	US	3 weeks	Five divisions lost	Thousands +	ISIS

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[3]   As other articles in this volume deal with the definitions and problems of defining Hybrid Warfare, this article will not discuss those topics in depth.

[4]   While of course Iraq had more than enough seasoned military personnel, the "De-Baathization" policy of 2003 effectively meant that most professional soldiers and officers find themselves out of the army, and the new army lacked experienced commanders and NCOs.

[5]   The Free Lebanon Army was created in 1977 By Lebanese major Saad Haddad (https://www.nytimes.com/1984/01/15/obituaries/maj-saad-haddad-47-israel-s-christian-ally-in-southern-lebanon.html), and it later changed name into the South Lebanon Army. The militia underwent reorganization in 1983.

Post-facto explanations tended to centre on issues such as the lack of will to fight, poor training or corruption. But while the armies discussed here were indeed usually plagued by some, if not all, of those problems, those are insufficient explanations – either because there were exceptions to the rule, or because in advance those factors weren't considered crucial enough. It actually can be said that those explanations tend to suffer from the streetlight effect: they concentrate on the facts that are easily visible, but that does not mean that *the* reasons are so clear to spot and predict – otherwise, everyone would have predicted them. Self-illusion by western countries can of course explain why those failures were not identified in advance, but this again will bring us back to the same question, only from a different angle: why do western countries, time and again, fail to create self-sustaining local forces?

THE WILL TO FIGHT?

The problem with the supposed lack of will to fight is that despite this alleged lack, most Western-trained local forces suffered severe casualties for years without collapsing. In some cases, like the Iraqi army in northern Iraq in 2014 and the Palestinian security forces in Gaza, some of them trained by Western police or military forces,[6] the first significant challenge brought a collapse or a near-collapse (yet, that same Iraqi army did manage to recover and overcome ISIS in Basra in 2016–2017). The Afghan National Army suffered horrible casualties over the years, estimated as some 60,000 killed (including police) and according to Afghan sources up to 92,000.[7] It was pushed back from significant parts of Afghanistan before the final US pull-out, but it did not collapse until after the pull-out – and then, it did so at such a speed that not only western countries but many Afghans as well were caught unawares. Despite having probably the worst of all militaries described here (with the possible exception of the Palestinian forces in Gaza), it still held out until the Western forces left – including the year before the final withdrawal, when no American soldier was killed in battle. That means that apart from air support, the Afghan forces bore the full brunt of the fighting (in 2015–2020, 93 US soldiers were killed in Afghanistan).[8] Beforehand, some Western officers rained praise on the Afghan soldiers or officers. A senior Australian officer, who was a trainer in the ANA officers' course, said in October 2020 that "The Afghans are incredibly resilient. They regularly fight in exceptionally difficult terrain, in extreme weather conditions, but they have a mindset of perseverance."[9]

The Iraqi army in Northern Iraq, which collapsed under the ISIS onslaught, should have had the same will to fight as the Iran-supported Shi'ite militias. It was mostly Shi'ite as well, and as the Sunni ISIS attacked and after years of bloody internecine fighting between

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6   In 2007, a short time before the collapse, US general Keith Dayton, United States Security Coordinator to the Palestinian Authority, praised the ability of the Palestinian security forces (International Crisis Group). Middle East Report No. 68. "After Gaza," 2 August 2007, 22. https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/68-after-gaza.pdf. His trained forces fared better in the West Bank/Judea and Samaria – though admittedly they had the backing of the Israeli army to deal with Hamas. Haaretz [Hebrew], 26 May 2010.

7   George, S. "Final weeks of fighting among deadliest for Afghan security forces, former official says: 4,000 dead and 1,000 missing". Washington Post, December 30, 2021. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/12/30/afghanistan-security-forces-deaths/

8   Simpson, E. "Do not blame the Afghan army for what's happening now". Financial Times, August 29, 2021. https://www.ft.com/content/5a35e66f-ccf1-4625-a248-3c425b77a4e8

9   Bree, M. "Mission complete at Afghan Army Academy". Australian Government Defense News, 28 October 2020. https://news.defence.gov.au/international/mission-complete-afghan-army-academy

Shi'ites and Sunnis, it could have expected no quarter. Indeed, Iraqi soldiers who surrendered were slaughtered *en masse*. Yet, despite having all the incentives in the world to fight, it did not. But Iraqi PMF Groups – virtually the same population pool[10] – fought on and attracted many volunteers. The Iraqi army itself was able to develop the will to fight in a relatively short time, though not before nearly collapsing again in 2015, and by 2017 it ousted ISIS from Mosul and re-captured most of the territory it had lost.

The South Lebanon army fought well on many occasions during its existence, having suffered some 660 KIA over the years from a relatively small force (for a comparison, Israel lost in Lebanon, from the end of operation "Peace for Galilee" in 1982 to the Israeli withdrawal in 2000, 675 KIA, including a few civilians).[11] Before the upcoming Israeli withdrawal in 2000, it mostly held its own up to two weeks before the withdrawal – and then started to collapse, forcing the Israelis to withdraw earlier than they planned. Yet, in the first two weeks of May 2000, when the planned Israeli evacuation from Lebanon was already in sight, and after some prominent SLA commanders or family members were assassinated, still only ten out of some 2,500 soldiers of the South Lebanon Army deserted;[12] in April the number was seven.[13] Despite the low Israeli estimate of the SLA, most soldiers held their position almost to the day of the sudden collapse, though a few outposts *were* abandoned shortly after the IDF turned them to the SLA as part of the IDF's withdrawal plan.[14] In one example, an Israeli staff officer testified later that not only did quite a few officers of the SLA keep operating up until the withdrawal, despite the uncertainties, but even the withdrawal of the Israeli brigade HQ from the town of Bint-Jbel would not have been possible without the aid of "SLA administration personnel, without which we couldn't have evacuated even one match". Only after the Israeli withdrawal was a given fact did they evacuate their own families.[15] In another example, on 21st May, the day the collapse began, an SLC company commander led a combat engineer detachment on patrol as usual and disarmed some Hezbollah-planted mines. Indeed, some members of the SLA definitely had the will to fight – yet the organization, as a whole, collapsed almost instantly, and forced the Israeli forces to withdraw somewhat earlier than they planned.

Of course, the classic case of military collapse is that of the ARVN forces in 1975, which had enough will to fight for years, yet the country disintegrated fast in the face of the NVA onslaught in 1975. In the aftermath, many senior South Vietnamese military and civilian

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[10] On Shiite Militias in Iraq see Smyth, P. "The Shia Militia Mapping Project". The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, May 20, 2019. https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/shia-militia-mapping-project. On the ethnic composition of the Iraqi Army at the time see Mohammed Salman Al-Tai, "Ethnic Balance in the Ministry of Defence (Iraqi Army – Counter Terrorism Service)". The Center Of Making Policies For International & Strategic Studies, 13 July 2018. https://www.makingpolicies.org/en/posts/ethnicbalance.english.php

[11] Levi, S: "The veterans of Lebanon claim: 675 Israelis were killed until the IDF's withdrawal". [Hebrew], Mako, 14 May 2020. https://www.mako.co.il/pzm-magazine/Article-73db727c7621271026.htm

[12] Yediot Aharonot [Hebrew], 17 May 2000.

[13] Data in Author's possession.

[14] The Israeli withdrawal took place on 21–24 May 2000 (mostly 23rd). In 1999 SLA evacuated the Jezzin enclave, and concentrated its forces in Southern Lebanon. In February 2000 Both IDF and SLA forces withdrew from the outpost of Sojud, in the northeastern part of the Israeli "Security Zone" in Lebanon. SLA soldiers evacuated or withdrew from five outposts up to 20 may 2000; once the collapse began in May 21st, they evacuated or withdrew from 49 outposts in three days. Data in Author's possession.

[15] Amal, formerly senior staff officer (operations) at the western brigade of the Lebanon Liaison Unit, "The Withdrawal from Bint-Jbeil, South Lebanon, 21–23 May 2000" (Hebrew), undated, author's possession.

officials blamed the US "abandonment" of South Vietnam, with "The psychological effects of no longer being regarded by the US as worth saving" while the enemy received support "from *his* allies" no less important than any material reason.[16] Yet, even in the last days of the war, many ARVN forces fought: according to the North Vietnamese, in the last stages of the war their forces lost (that is after it was clear that South Vietnam lost, and during the battle for Saigon) more than 6,000 men, killed and wounded, and some 33 tanks and armoured vehicles. Most South Vietnamese senior officers stayed with their men and fought almost to the end.[17]

Apparently, the lack of "will to fight" made itself clear only when those forces had to fight *without Western support.* This is not the same as a total lack of will to fight – therefore, the relations between Western support and the capability to fight may be more important than the "will to fight" as the culprit for collapse. Of course, bad political leadership and confused orders added to most collapses (South Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestinian authority), but the lack of *Western* support seems to be the decisive part, as also will be shown in some cases where local militaries *did not* collapse.

POORLY TRAINED?

The argument blaming "lack of training," or "poor training" of those forces in the collapse, is even more problematic. First, some of those forces were trained adequately. The SLA, for example, had units, which were definitely well trained[18] and inflicted significant casualties on Hezbollah and other organizations.[19] The same was true for the Iraqi and Afghan army; while there is no doubt that many Afghan recruits got poor training, some units were much better – not to mention the commandos, which apparently were good enough that Britain considered incorporating them as a Gurkha-style unit in the British army.[20] The Taliban's assassination campaign against ANA pilots shows us that at least the air force fighting men and women were good enough for the Taliban to target them personally in the fear that they would be a formidable foe.

Moreover, some of the officers in the collapsing forces were trained in the best military academies in the Western world (e.g. Sandhurst), which have decades of experience in

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[16] Hosmer, S. T. et al. "The Fall of South Vietnam: Statements by Vietnamese Military and Civilian Leaders". Santa Monica: RAND, 1978, V.

[17] Veith G. J. "Black April: The Fall of South Vietnam, 1973–1975". New York: Encounter Books, 2013, 496.

[18] Some SLA soldiers were directly trained by the Israelis, including some who passed officer courses in the IDF's school of officers (BAHAD 1). While the 5-week officer course for SLA candidates was shorter than the IDF's combat courses (12 to 24 weeks, depending on the branch), SLA officers usually had prior experience, at least at first, and didn't have to learn to maneuver within a combined arms unit, therefore shortening the effective length of training needed. Data in Author's possession.

[19] In a military bookkeeping trick, Israel tended to separate the casualties list of IDF soldiers and SLA soldiers, but usually did not bother differentiating enemy fighters killed by SLA from enemy fighters killed by the IDF, thus creating the impression of better casualty ratio. In reality, not only did the SLA suffer more casualties than the IDF, but it killed a significant amount of enemy fighters. Classified IDF document written by the author, 1998.

[20] Atlamazoglou, S. "After taking in Afghan commandos, the British military may try to build another elite special-operations force". Business Insider, 20 December 2021. https://www.businessinsider.com/british-army-considering-gurkha-style-unit-with-afghan-special-forces-2021-12

bringing officers from all sorts of countries to a reasonable level.[21] The Afghan National Army even had the "National Military Academy of Afghanistan" and the "Afghan National Army Officer Academy (ANAOA)," modelled after West Point and Sandhurst respectively. ANAOA, the brainchild of a Sandhurst-trained Afghan army's Chief of General Staff, was built by the UK, had British and Australian trainers to "train the trainers," as well as an Afghan staff with serious credentials. The first commandant was Soviet-trained and studied at the Indian Staff College; his deputy and Chief of Staff attended the UK Staff College, with the COS being a graduate of Sandhurst too. *The Spectator* proudly reported in 2013 on it as "The one good thing we're leaving in Afghanistan… a remarkable and radical experiment in social engineering".[22] From its inception in 2013 to the time the whole training was turned over to the ANA in late 2020 it already had 5,000 graduates – some seventy five percent of Afghan officers.

Some trainers complained about the quality of Afghan officers or about cultural problems, and some argued that their mission was "to make the Afghans good enough to deliver the training – not to produce the best officers". This view led one scholar to conclude in 2013 that it "makes it necessary for the international military to forego their usual procedures and instead settle for lesser goals".[23] However, in 2020 General Nick Carter, Chief of British Defence Staff, said that the Afghans "have proven to be more than capable of taking ownership," as their mentors did "the most impressive job."[24] He called the ANAOA "one of the proudest achievements of UK forces in Afghanistan."[25] As late as July 2021, almost exactly a month before Kabul fell to the Taliban, the UK Ministry of Defence was still boasting about the ANAOA.[26] The Afghan Army also had its artillery and armour courses run by Western trainers – it was not just those poor bastards in the infantry and the militias. It is well known that a good officer can mould poor soldiers into cohesive fighting units – 'Sheep led by a lion'. Theoretically, this should have happened with the ANA. It did not.

If poor training is to blame, should Western militaries point the finger at themselves, and why did many Western officers and trainers not recognize the problem beforehand?

If lack of training is to blame, the Taliban would probably have never won, and neither would have ISIS or Hamas (Hezbollah, which was trained by Iranians as early as 1985, is an exception). Generally, the adversaries of the Western-trained forces – those who, in the end, won or nearly won – were hardly ninja fighters themselves. They have a mixture of well-trained fighters and poorly trained volunteers, can be no less messy than 'pro-government'

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[21]   E.g. UK Ministry of Defence, "Afghan general visits Sandhurst," 6 February 2014. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/afghan-general-visits-sandhurst At that time there were 7 Afghan candidates in Sandhurst, and the General himself had been a Sandhurst Cadet, and had passed an impressive list of military Courses in the US, Egypt and other countries.

[22]   Foreman, J. "The one good thing we're leaving in Afghanistan". 2 November 2013. https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/the-one-good-thing-we-re-leaving-in-afghanistan

[23]   Christensen, M. M. and Jakobsen, C. O. "Cultural Frictions: Mentoring the Afghan Army at 'Sandhurst in the Sand'". Small Wars Journal, 19 November 2015; Jarstad, A. K. "Unpacking the friction in local ownership of security sector reform in Afghanistan". Peacebuilding, 1(3), 2013, 387.

[24]   "Afghan National Army Officers Academy graduates its 5000th officer". 10 September 2020. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_177902.htm

[25]   General Sir Nick Carter: "General Sir Nick Carter congratulates 5,000th Afghan Officer graduating from 'Sandhurst In The Sand'". The Telegraph, August 30, 2020. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/08/30/general-sir-nick-carter-congratulates-5000th-afghan-officer/

[26]   UK Ministry of Defence voices of the armed forces, "'Sandhurst in the sand' explained," 14 July 2021. https://medium.com/voices-of-the-armed-forces/sandhurst-in-the-sand-explained-fb8ed745cecc

forces. The British House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee wrote in 2011, that the "Afghan insurgency is a mix of Islamist factions, power-hungry warlords, criminals and tribal groupings, all pursuing their own economic, political, criminal and social agendas and interests, from local feuds to establishing a pan-Islamic caliphate."[27] Those insurgents fought badly many times, clashed among themselves, evaded a fight with Western forces even without any heavy weapons, and were by no means a first-rate military force.[28] In the end, however, those forces prevailed and the Afghan Army collapsed. Even if we attribute much of their success to Pakistani intelligence service,[29] nobody argues that not all or even most Taliban (whatever the term means) were trained in Pakistan or at all. Their success in assassinations, blackmail, spreading rumours etc., was not the result of a PSYOP manual or professional military training.

If we dismiss or minimize the role of training in the success of irregulars employing hybrid tactics, we cannot attribute much of the failure of Western-trained or Western-equipped forces to poor training. An argument that holds to its own; a Western-supported force must be highly trained, yet none of that is required to defeat it, just is not convincing.

CORRUPT?

Last but not least, it was argued that those forces collapsed because of corruption. Indeed, there was much corruption in most of them if not in all of them.[30] Yet, even that explanation is not sufficient, as many military forces suffered from corruption but were reasonably effective, and others managed to recover from corruption, over time. Other forces managed to benefit from corruption. Marshall Dostum in Afghanistan was one of the most notorious and corrupt warlords that the country managed to produce (by no means a feat itself) yet he was also, for a time, one of the strongest and most powerful warlords.[31] The insurgents in Afghanistan, as noted earlier, included quite a few corrupt warlords. In Zimbabwe, despite

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[27] UK House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee – Fourth Report, The UK's foreign policy approach to Afghanistan and Pakistan. 9 February 2011, Ch. 5 (103). https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmfaff/514/51410.htm

[28] Former British officer Emile Simpson argued that the war in Afghanistan was a "Mosaic conflict" in which there is "a multitude of sub-narratives" it would be wrong to divide the many actors into pro-government and Taliban, as many were on their own sides and switched loyalties as needed, and "tactical actions often need to be considered primarily in terms of their local political effect". Emile Simpson "War from the ground up: Twenty first century combat as politics". Oxford: Oxford University press, 2018, 93., 97. This may be true, but in 2021, when Afghan National army collapsed, it collapsed in the face of a Taliban assault, where all those insurgents managed to act towards a unified goal.

[29] E.g. Riedel, B. "Pakistan's problematic victory in Afghanistan". Brookings Institute, August 24, 2021. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2021/08/24/pakistans-problematic-victory-in-afghanistan/

[30] In 2019 the Afghan Police chief Khoshal Sadat apparently tried to do something about police corruption, and among other actions fired 30 of 34 provincial police chiefs, eliminating some road blocks which were used for extortion, etc. In the long run, apparently it was either too late or not enough or both. Hamid Shalizi "New commander takes on corruption 'mess' in Afghan police". Reuters, June 4, 2019. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-police-idUSKCN1T51UC

[31] On Dostum see Williams, B. G. "The Last Warlord: The Life and Legend of Dostum, the Afghan Warrior Who Led US Special Forces to Topple the Taliban Regime". Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2013. See Also Emran Feroz "Afghan Warlord's Promotion Highlights the Bankruptcy of America's Longest War". Foreign Policy, 17 July 2020. https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/07/17/afghan-warlord-abdul-rashid-dostum-power-sharing-war/

high levels of corruption, the Army was a quite effective fighting force.[32] In the Korean war, the South Korean army and government were probably no less corrupt than the Afghan government and army,[33] and were quite close to collapse on some occasions. The country itself was not westernized by any means: until 1970, the GDP per capita of North Korea and South Korea was almost identical, and it was a brutal dictatorship well into the 1980s.

Yet in the end, despite the fact that corruption was rife in higher echelons and the political echelon, the military survived, and transformed into an effective force with US help. The FARC in Columbia gave a hard time to government forces for decades, despite the fact that it became effectively a corrupt, for-profit force masquerading as an ideological guerrilla movement. One of its leaders, Géner García Molina ("John 40") benefited so much from drug shipping that he built himself a guitar-shaped pool in one of his farms.[34] Even Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Syrian army ventured into the business of drugs, both to subsidize their operations and to make some of the high-level commanders very rich.[35] Yet Hezbollah is considered an efficient fighting organization and the Syrian army gained the upper hand in the ongoing civil war with Russian help.

This hints that the problem, tactically speaking, is not corruption *per se,* but that the character of corruption in modern-day Western-supported forces does not enable them to be effective, while other forces, corrupted all the same, still manage to fight. So the problem lies at least as much with the character of Western support as with corruption itself. It seems that the ways in which Western support creates corruption, or enables corrupt leaders to exploit it, are detrimental to warfighting abilities, more so than corruption in similar forces not supported by Western forces. If, as alleged, American commanders and advisors knew all too well the character and scale of corruption and ignored it, then again it becomes the question of Western actions, not just of corrupted locals.

WESTERN SUPPORT AS A DETRIMENT

To make matters worse, not only are all those explanations insufficient on their own, it seems that modern Western help hastens the collapse of forces that previously managed to fight on their own. To be blunt: forces which fought for years without Western support tend to collapse fast after they have become accustomed to Western support – or should we say backup.

Dostum's forces in Afghanistan, when Western aid was behind the scenes or non-existent, managed to fight for and against the Taliban for years, before his defeat in 1998; in 2001, Dostum's forces defeated thousands of Taliban fighters with American air support; yet Dos-

[32] E.g. Young, E. T. "Chefs and Worried Soldiers: Authority and Power in the Zimbabwe National Army". Armed Forces and Society, 24(1), Fall 1997, 133–149.

[33] More on that later.

[34] "Los corridos del capo de la guerrilla". El Spectator (Columbia), May 3, 2009. https://www.elespectador.com/judicial/los-corridos-del-capo-de-la-guerrilla-article-138934/

[35] Hubbard, B. and Saad, H. "On Syria's Ruins, a Drug Empire Flourishes". New York Times, 5 December 2021. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/05/world/middleeast/syria-drugs-captagon-assad.html; Levitt, M. "Hezbollah's Corruption Crisis Runs Deep". Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 20 July 2018. https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/hezbollahs-corruption-crisis-runs-deep; Ottolenghi, E. "The Laundromat: Hezbollah's Money-Laundering and Drug-Trafficking Networks in Latin America". Ramat Gan: Begin-Sadat Center, July 2021. https://besacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/194web.pdf

tum's forces in 2021, when he was the Afghan vice president, did not slow the Taliban one bit. He unceremoniously escaped from the country, leaving his mansion and belongings behind.

Ahmad Shah Masoud fought the Soviets, and then other factions, and finally the Taliban, for years; he was assassinated just days prior to September 11th, 2001, yet his forces were still strong enough to play a part ousting the Taliban, with the newly-acquired US fire support. His son's forces, on the other hand, collapsed rapidly in the face of the final Taliban offensive. The mighty Panjshir valley, with which the Soviets had significant problems capturing and holding in the days of the father, due to the topography and the strong resistance, proved virtually no obstacle to the much-weaker Taliban with limited air support in the form of drones, some probably operated by Pakistani intelligence. The resistance in the Panjshir valley collapsed within a few days of the beginning of the Taliban's September 2021 offensive, and the resistance is, at the moment, limited to a very low-key guerrilla operations.[36]

THE SHORT LONG WAR: ANALYSING THE WESTERN WAY OF FAILURE

It seems that all the explanations for the rapid collapse of Western-trained local militaries hold explanatory power only with one additional factor: Western-dependency. In other words, it is the modern Western way of war that finds it extremely hard to produce local armed forces capable of holding their own when facing a hybrid enemy with some offensive capability, which wages (at least in all the above cases) a hybrid campaign against them, with a mixture of semi-conventional assault, assassinations, guerrilla warfare, terror, political influence and psychological warfare.

I would argue this happens because the West tends to fight a specific kind of war, which can be dubbed the Short Long War.

The Western forces usually come in with overwhelming superiority. Sometimes (as Israel found in the second Lebanon war) it may not be enough even to crush an outgunned and outmanned opponent; but other times, as happened to the PLO in Lebanon in 1982, Saddam's forces in 2003, or the Taliban themselves in 2001, the Western steamroller crushes everything it faces. This is the "Short War". But when that period finishes, Western forces try to de-escalate ASAP and turn the power over to friendly local actors. It almost never works, and we get the long, long war. And then the Western forces leave, and their allies collapse.

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[36] "Exclusive: Taliban Claim to Have Conquered Entire Panjshir". Tasmin News Agency, 12 September 2021, https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2021/09/12/2570233/exclusive-taliban-claim-to-have-conquered-entire-panjshir; Huylebroek, J. and Blue, V. J. "In Panjshir, Few Signs of an Active Resistance, or Any Fight at All". New York Times, 17 September 2021. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/17/world/asia/panjshir-resistance-taliban-massoud.html; "Ahmad Massoud's forces clash with the Taliban in Kapisa province". Islamic World News, 8 December 2021. https://english.iswnews.com/21711/ahmad-massouds-forces-clash-with-the-taliban-in-kapisa-province/ "Panjshir: Pak Air Force dropped bombs via drones to help Taliban, say reports". Hindustan Times, 6 September 2021. https://www.hindustantimes.com/videos/world-news/panjshir-pakistan-air-force-dropped-bombs-via-drones-to-help-taliban-say-reports-afghanistan-101630909614845.html; Qazizai, F. "The Drone Unit that Helped the Taliban Win the War". New Lines Magazine, 15 September 2021. https://newlinesmag.com/reportage/the-drone-unit-that-helped-the-taliban-win-the-war/

The Western forces try their best to avoid this situation. The idea – ever since the 1990s[37] – of the "exit strategy" became one of the most important questions for a Western force: do not go in unless you know how to get out. Incidentally, the more the term became popular, the less successful the exit strategies were.

However, as Michael J. Forsyth argued recently,[38] "exit strategy" as an all-compassing demand causes derogation of strategy. First, instead of asking how strategic goals would be best served, it asks how we leave; second, it undermines itself by telling enemies and potential allies alike, that we *will* leave and that leaving is our priority, whatever we will say to the contrary. The surprising thing is not that many people oppose Western and pro-Western forces; it is that the latter actually exists at all, when people know that the West will leave and their problems would stay.

The need for an "exit strategy" creates incentives to shift aims and hasten developments: achieve a semblance of nation-building so one can have a nation to which transfer the responsibilities to, or friendly actors capable of acting on their own. Therefore, for example, the existence of an Afghan government and an Afghan army capable of fending off the Taliban was not an objective question; it was a condition for an exit strategy. No wonder that the coalition forces argued, and perhaps even believed, that it was the case: without that, there would be no exit strategy. As US President Biden explained on 8th July 2021: "With our NATO allies and partners, we have trained and equipped… nearly 300,000 current serving members of the military… hundreds of thousands more… trained over the last two decades. We provided our Afghan partners with all the tools … training, and equipment of any modern military. We provided advanced weaponry. And we're going to continue to provide funding and equipment. And we'll ensure they have the capacity to maintain their air force".[39] In short, the Afghans are capable to hold for themselves. This was the basis for complete US withdrawal. It was not only Biden's opinion of course,[40] and not only in 2021. Take for example the quotes above about ANAOA, or General John Campbell's, ISAF commander in 2015, who argued that "Under the tutelage of Coalition advisors and trainers, and resourced and funded by the international community, the ANDSF have grown and matured in less than a decade into a modern, professional force of all volunteers… they can and will take the tactical fight from here".[41] Some were concerned but still optimistic: General Kenneth McKenzie Jr., Commander of CENTCOM, aired concern in April 2021 about "the ability of the Afghan military to hold on after we leave, the ability of the Afghan Air Force to fly, in particular, after we remove the support for those aircraft".[42] Yet in late July 2021, he said that the "Afghan Air Force is actually carrying out a lot of strikes and is having very good success against Taliban forces… the Afghan Air Force is

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37 Rose: "The Exit Strategy Delusion".

38 https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/its-time-stop-using-term-exit-strategy

39 "Remarks by President Biden on the Drawdown of U.S. Forces in Afghanistan". 8 July 2021. https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/07/08/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-draw-down-of-u-s-forces-in-afghanistan/

40 E.g. US Department of Defense, "Secretary of Defense Austin and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Milley Press Briefing". 21 July 2021. https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/2702966/secretary-of-defense-austin-and-chairman-of-the-joint-chiefs-of-staff-gen-mille/

41 General John F. Campbell "Operation Freedom's Sentinel and our continued security investment in Afghanistan". 5 October 2015. https://www.army.mil/article/156517/operation_freedoms_sentinel_and_our_continued_security_investment_in_afghanistan

42 Ali, I. and Stewart, P. "U.S. general concerned about capability of Afghan security forces". Reuters, April 22, 2021.

the significant asymmetric advantage that the Afghans have in this fight, and I believe they're applying it very effectively".[43]

This official view ignored many warning signs. For example, a classified US report warned in January 2021 that the Afghan Air Force is not sustainable without direct Western support and Western contractors maintaining its planes.[44] By the time General McKenzie was praising the Afghan Air Force, its condition had already deteriorated severely, and it was low on ammunition.[45]

In July 2021, less than a month before the collapse, another US report found that the US failed to make Afghan forces' institutions accountable, with the result that some of the institutions were "incapable of independently performing the most basic tasks".[46] The same could apparently be said on many of the ANA's combat forces, who collapsed, deserted, made local deals, or negotiated surrender in the face of the Taliban's poor-man's-blitzkrieg.[47] To paraphrase Upton Sinclair, it was difficult to get western countries to admit that local forces cannot hold their own when Western strategy depends of them being able to do so.[48]

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[43]   US Central Command, "Gen McKenzie: Press Availability, July 25, 2021, Kabul, Afghanistan". 27 July 2021. https://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/Transcripts/Article/2708310/gen-mckenzie-press-availability-july-25-2021-kabul-afghanistan/

[44]   Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, SIGAR 21-14 Audit Report, Afghan Air Forces: DOD Has Taken Steps to Develop Afghan Aviation Capability but Continued U.S. Support is Needed to Sustain Forces, January 2021 (de-classified January 2022). https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/audits/SIGAR-21-14-AR.pdf

[45]   By the end of June 2021, Afghan helicopters had to be sent abroad to be repaired. Five of the seven types of aircraft within Afghan inventory suffered significant reductions in their operational readiness – its AC-208 light attack aircraft readiness was 93% in April 2021, but only 63% in June 2021; the UH-60 Helicopter readiness level plummeted from 77% in April to 39% in June. It is clear that the situation continued to deteriorate further, and it is questionable just how many aircraft could the Afghan Air Force operate effectively in August 2021, right before the collapse. Losey, S. "After US Withdrawal, Can Afghan Air Force Keep Planes Flying?" Military.com, 29 July 2021. https://www.military.com/daily-news/2021/07/29/after-us-withdrawal-can-afghan-air-force-keep-planes-flying.html See also Stewart, P. "Special Report: Pilots detail chaotic collapse of the Afghan Air Force". Reuters, 29 December 2021.

[46]   Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "SIGAR 22-03 Audit Report Conditions on Afghanistan Security Forces Funding: The Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan [CSTC-A] Rarely Assessed Compliance With or Enforced Funding Conditions, Then Used an Undocumented Approach". October 2021. https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/audits/SIGAR-22-03-AR.pdf

[47]   Lieven, A. "Why Afghan Forces So Quickly Laid Down Their Arms". Politico, 16 August 2021. https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2021/08/16/afghanistan-history-taliban-collapse-504977; Ruttig, T. and Sadat, S. A. "The Domino Effect in Paktia and the Fall of Zurmat: A case study of the Taliban surrounding Afghan cities". Afghanistan Analysts Network, 14 August 2021. https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/en/reports/war-and-peace/the-domino-effect-in-paktia-and-the-fall-of-zurmat-a-case-study-of-the-taliban-surrounding-afghan-cities/

[48]   A word of caution: as in all post-facto explanations, knowing what happens makes it easier to assume that this was the only possible outcome. Yet, As Roberta Wohlstetter said about the Pearl Harbor surprise, "it is only to be expected that the relevant signals, so clearly audible after an event, will be partially obscured before the event by surrounding noise" (Wohlstetter, R. Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962, 397). For an example, in 4th August 2021, an International Institute for Strategic Studies report quoted and April 2021 US intelligence report arguing that "the Afghan Government will struggle to hold the Taliban at bay if the coalition withdraws," but the worse-case scenario drawn from the report was not Afghan collapse but "Descent into civil war" (Barry, B. "Three scenarios for Afghanistan's future".). IISS, 4 August 2021. https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2021/08/afghanistan-us-nato-withdrawal-taliban. With no hindsight, the collapse was less obvious than after it happened.

The Western approach leads to a very expensive way to make "war on the cheap". The main force is always the Western force, which is admittedly much more professional than local forces, and therefore the Western forces do most of the fighting, and consider local forces next to useless. As culture tends to Trump Doctrine, creating Western-like forces where none existed face significant obstacles. No Western country would want to declare that it would stay for a generation or two (even if, in the case of Afghanistan, the coalition DID stay for a generation), and pressure mounts to declare those forces capable and transfer control to them.

But those forces can rarely hold their own, and if the Western ground forces leave, the Western countries still have to provide air support and logistical support. If and when they do not, or even if the local forces have a good reason to believe that would be the case (for example, when the US ignored virtually all Taliban violations of the February 2020 US-Taliban agreement, short of targeting western forces), the local forces collapse. The bitter irony is that the West attempts to build independent forces by creating full dependence, so when the time comes, time and again such forces collapse in the face of theoretically inferior enemy[49] employing hybrid campaigns of warfighting, terrorism, diplomacy, and psychological warfare.

IMPLAUSIBLE DENIABILITY, LIMITED GOALS, NO EXIT STRATEGY: A NON-WESTERN APPROACH

Contrary to the West, Iran or Russia tend to approach the problem from a very different angle. This is not to say they are always successful or that either of those countries have a magic bullet to win a war;[50] The Soviet involvement in Afghanistan and the disastrous intervention in Chechnya in the first Chechen war (the Russians did win the second war, a few years later) testify to that fact.[51]

Yet in general, the Russian and Iranian approach is very different from the Western approach.

First, there is no exit strategy. Both Russia and Iran get involved in places where they want to keep their influence for an unlimited period of time. The cases in which Iran and Russia intervene are mostly those in which they want to stay. Iran does not want an independent Lebanon, which would be sympathetic to Iran but on equal footing; it wants to make sure that Lebanon would advance Iranian interests. Russia went into Crimea to get the peninsula under Russian control; the exact form of control is less important than the fact that such control exists.

Another important part of the Russian hybrid warfare tactics is what should be called "implausible deniability". Whereas "plausible deniability" of the past sought to enable a country to obfuscate the situation and cause confusion, either among its enemies or among

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[49] Some commentators noted that the Afghan's security forces strength was in actuality way lower than the theoretical 300,000, and maybe half that number (Danner, C. "Why Afghanistan's Security Forces Suddenly Collapsed". New York Intelligencer, 17 August 2021. https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2021/08/why-afghanistans-security-forces-suddenly-collapsed.html), yet even that number was almost twice as much as the number of Taliban fighters.

[50] As this article is reaching its final stages in late February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine in almost fully conventional war, not very hybrid, and, at least in the first few days, very partly successful.

[51] Interesting enough, in Ukraine in 2014 one could find Chechens on both sides.

its own citizens. In one such case, the Suez War of 1956, Israel colluded with Britain and France that the former would launch an attack on Egypt to allow the latter to intervene against Egypt, ostensibly to protect the freedom of shipping in the Suez Canal. The aim was to convince the international community that Britain and France are not aggressors acting for their own interests but protectors of peace. The attempt failed, but its goal was to create an impression, advance a claim and confuse Egypt and its supporters at to what exactly was happening.

In contrast, operations such as the "polite green men" in Crimea with their unmarked uniforms did not convince anybody, and were not, it seems, meant to convince anybody. Everybody knew Russia was involved. Russia knew that everybody knew that Russia was involved. And everybody knew that Russia knew that everybody knew that Russia was involved. (Indeed, it did not take much for a Russian town to erect a statue to honour those men).[52] The goal of the denials was very different: to make sure that, since nothing could be proved in the short term, to prevent other countries from having to take steps that, had Russia acted openly, they may have felt obliged to take, but really did not want to take. It did not matter what people believed, as long as there was no legal proof that would force them to act.

Implausible deniability is only one part of information operations: while some parts cannot be hidden, the use of disinformation and the creation of discontent is an important part of any military operation.

Of course, Russian and Iranian goals depend on the self-estimation of their power. It is reasonable to argue that if the balance of power was different, they would have acted differently. Still, they did not. *Hic Rhodus, hic salta.*

The so-called "Gerasimov doctrine," which many in the West believed is a blueprint for Russian action, was in fact nothing more than the Russian army commander explaining the character of modern war.[53] Yet the reason so many people bought into it was the fact the Russia, despite all of its problems, proved to be quite adept in using relatively meagre (that is, relative to the US military and other Western forces) resources to facilitate hybrid warfare in Syria and Ukraine – and would probably continue to do so as long as it serves its interests.

When those countries employ hybrid warfare, they tend to do so for limited, clearly defined goals. As far as we know, Russia does not define its goals as "nation building," for example, even if its actions in the aftermath of the second Chechen war included large-scale reconstruction in the Chechen Republic. Iran does not care for the democratization of Iraq, Syria, or Lebanon: it cares for its influence and interests. The West, on the other hand, at least pretends to aim for democratization and nation building, therefore creating a goal, which is extremely hard to achieve.

Whereas the West regards the employment of local forces as the final stage after the Western army has done their part, Russia tends to employ local forces or mercenaries as a substitute for regular forces, and Iran employs local militias and organizations in places where it does not want or cannot employ regular forces.

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[52] Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, "Russia Unveils Monument To 'Polite People' Behind Crimean Invasion". 7 May 2015. https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-monument-polite-people-crimea-invasion/27000320.html

[53] Galeotti, M. "I'm Sorry for Creating the 'Gerasimov Doctrine'". Foreign Policy, 5 March 2018. https://foreign policy.com/2018/03/05/im-sorry-for-creating-the-gerasimov-doctrine/

This also means that, on a whole, Russian or Iranian-supported local forces tend to be more independent than Western-supported forces. Even the Afghan army of the Soviet period, which collapsed after the collapse of the USSR and the lack of support thereof, fought on its own without Soviet support for almost three years, and then collapsed in a few months after Dostum defected to the Mujaheddin, which is still a better result than most cases mentioned here.

On the other hand, success in hybrid warfare does not mean that the forces employing it will win in a conventional war. An outstanding example is the botched Russian invasion of Ukraine, which was characterized by mediocre planning and bad execution. The Russians had basically ditched their own long-term strategy in Ukraine, which was limited in its goals, used mostly local forces to achieve them, and did not count on quick victory, in the failed hope of achieving a lightning victory and rapid regime change against a weaker enemy. The gamble has backfired remarkably, showing that performance in one way of war does not necessarily lend itself to different ways of war – in a way, a mirror picture of the Western habit of succeeding in rapid military campaigns only to botch the post-war situation.

THE ROLE OF AIR SUPPORT

The case of the Afghan defence forces also heightens the fact that, in the Soviet days as well as today, there is one important aspect that Soviet/Russian-supported local forces tended to be dependent on foreign support: that is, air support or anti-air support. The collapse of the Soviet Union rendered the Afghan air force unserviceable in much the same way that the American withdrawal did to the 2nd generation Afghan Air Force. In Ukraine, the Russians concentrated many SAM batteries near the border, and then attached some to separatist units, therefore inflicting heavy toll on the Ukrainian air force (ten helicopters and twelve planes), and, by the end of August 2014, preventing it from intervening at all against the pro-Russian (or Russian) forces.[54] Hezbollah was limited in its actions by the lack of anti-air missiles, a weakness it seeks to address. The reason is pretty simple: for all the capabilities of hybrid forces and militias, they can seldom stand an aerial attack in the open, and many times they cannot consolidate power without moving through open land in large formations. For this reason the Taliban could not seize Kabul (and many other Afghan cities) until the US withdrew and most of the Afghan Air Force was out of order as a result of the assassination campaign against pilots and the withdrawal of Western contractors who maintained its planes.[55] ISIS made its biggest gains in Iraq when the Iraqi Air

54   Miller, J. et al. "An Invasion by Any Other Name: The Kremlin's Dirty War in Ukraine". New York: Institute of Modern Russia, 17–22.; Chris Pocock "Ukraine Has Lost 22 Aircraft to Rebel Forces". AIN Online, 26 November 2014. https://www.ainonline.com/aviation-news/defense/2014-11-26/ukraine-has-lost-22-aircraft-rebel-forces

55   Stewart, P. et al. "Special Report: Afghan pilots assassinated by Taliban as U.S. withdraws". Reuters, 9 July 2021; Reuters, "Afghan Air Force Pilot Killed in Kabul Bombing; Taliban Claim Responsibility". 7 August 2021.

Force still lacked any operational combat planes.[56] (The Iraqi Air Force is still dependent on contractors to maintain its planes, and suffer from chronic shortages.[57])

   While many cases show that guerrillas and insurgents can survive when the other side (as is usually the case) has air superiority, under those conditions they cannot come out in the open as a significant offensive force.[58] Therefore, air support or at least aerial denial remains crucial to the employment of local forces. While non-Western-supported forces are more independent than Western-supported forces, dependence cannot be fully eliminated, as air support may not win a war, but the lack of it can definitely lose it.

WHEN LOCAL FORCES SUCCEEDED

The failure of Western forces in building or supporting local forces is not predetermined: Western forces have done it successfully in the past, and even in recent years the US has one success story – the Kurds in the Kurdistan area – so some lessons can be learned, cautionary and limited as they may be.

A. The British Empire's approach

Britain, as it is well known, had a long tradition of training local forces, some of which became known all over the world as excellent fighting forces. And, for the most part, Britain did it not by deploying 'advisors' or 'trainers' to train a fully foreign force, but by putting those forces under British command, and training them as British soldiers, with British officers (in many places, fluent in local languages, as a precondition) being their commanders. From the Army of India to the successful counterinsurgency campaign in Oman (1974–1976), British officers commanded and trained those units, sometimes down to the level of NCO's.[59] In some cases, the armies of independent countries were commanded by

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[56] Wilson Center "Timeline: the Rise, Spread, and Fall of the Islamic State". 28 October 2019. https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/timeline-the-rise-spread-and-fall-the-islamic-state

[57] Jennings, G. "Iraqi F-16s log first combat mission since return of contractor support". Jane's, 18 November 2020. https://www.janes.com/defence-news/news-detail/iraqi-f-16s-log-first-combat-mission-since-return-of-contractor-support; Paul Iddon, "How Capable Is The Iraqi Air Force?" Forbes, 26 January 2022. https://www.forbes.com/sites/pauliddon/2022/01/26/how-capable-is-the-iraqi-air-force; The New York Times, "Russian Jets and Experts Sent to Iraq to Aid Army". 29 June 2014.

[58] The Houthis in Yemen are a notable example, as they managed to capture cities despite being attacked from the air and sea at the same time. Yet the size of Yemen and the great ranges involved meant that, at least at first, they were only subject to Sporadic air attacks. When trying to attack a unit or position which had close air support, they usually failed. The Houthis also have Air defense systems, some through Iran (their generous supplier of military equipment) and some which was incorporated from the Yemeni army together with tanks and other heavy equipment. Knights, M. "The Houthi War Machine: From Guerrilla War to State Capture". CTC Sentinel 11 (8), September 2018, 15–24.; Johnson T. et. al. "Could the Houthis Be the Next Hizballah? Iranian Proxy Development in Yemen and the Future of the Houthi Movement". Santa Monica: Rand, 2018, 51–113.; Nadimi, F. and Knights, M. "Iran's Support to Houthi Air Defenses in Yemen". Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 4 April 2018. https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/irans-support-houthi-air-defenses-yemen. Of course, the Houthis also use attack drones extensively as a poor man's air force.

[59] In Oman they also trained irregulars, the firqat, and provided Air support. A British Army Advisory Team (BATT) report argued than one of the keys to success was in selecting "a force of men who have their own motivation for fighting – not necessarily in tune with the aims and motivations of the advisers". Quoted in Simpson, War from the ground up, 152.

British officers who were seconded to those armies (as in Oman and the Jordanian Arab Legion before 1956). In most cases, officers and NCOs who were trained under this British method managed to rise in the ranks in the end and finally, as the result of independence or planned advancement, became at least reasonably capable fighting forces – from the Indian army to the Kenya Rifles. Even the African forces of the rebel colony of Rhodesia, who served the (mostly) white regime against the nationalist guerrillas of ZANLA and ZIPRA, were capable enough so that Robert Mugabe kept them as the backbone of the army when he became the country's ruler in 1980.[60] No Black Rhodesian unit ever disintegrated, even when uncertainty prevailed and the future looked grim. Indeed, there was hardly any force in Africa that was as good as those soldiers. There were some failures: the Uganda army after the independence was mutiny-prone, due to soldiers' dissatisfaction, some mistakes by British commanders, the very late start in training African officers, and government policy which preferred tribal loyalty over professionalism. Rapid expansion and later violent purges of the army left it in a sorry state, and it collapsed in the Uganda-Tanzania war of 1979.[61] But generally, to have *units* which were trained as British *units* with British personnel serving in them, while having their own problems, proved itself time and again as an effective way to build military forces: when you command, you know the local language, you set the rules and you *are* part of the unit, the chances of success are better. Of course, the heyday of such approach was during the imperial period of the United Kingdom, as it necessitates no limited-timeframe power transfer; but as the case of Oman has shown, in some conditions an effective military could be built even in an independent country where no colonial force (or any significant military force) had existed.

B. From corrupt to capable in a few decades: The ROK army

Another successful case of army-building, was the Korean armed forces. On the onset of the Korean War, much of the army was not more than a constabulary; less than a third of the units accomplished battalion-level training before the war broke out. Many formations collapsed in the face of North Korean onslaught. Corruption was endemic. In one particularly notorious case in the winter of 1951, known as the "National Defence Corps Incident," tens of thousands of recruits to the newly-created Korean National Defence Corps, starved to death or succumbed to disease, as a result of corruption, embezzlement of funds, and mismanagement.[62] Other forms of corruption were present too: for example, in order to dis-

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[60]   Howard, M. T. "Allies of Expedience: The Retention of Black Rhodesian Soldiers in the Zimbabwe National Army". Journal of Southern African Studies, January 2022, 1–19.

[61]   Dinwiddy, H. "The Ugandan Army and Makerere under Obote, 1962–71". African Affairs 82 (326), Jan. 1983, 43–59.; Omara-Otunnu, A. "Politics and the Military in Uganda, 1890–1985". London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1987, 28–144.

[62]   The government executed five commanders of the corps, which also helped it ignore the fact that some of the embezzled funds went to the south Korean president's political fund (though the president himself probably was not involved). Haruki, W. "The Korean War: An International History". New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014, 175–178.; New York Times, "50,000 KOREANS DIE IN CAMPS IN SOUTH; Government Inquiry Confirms Abuse of Draftees – General Held for Malfeasance". 13 June 1951; Roehrig, T. "The Prosecution of Former Military Leaders in Newly Democratic Nations: The Cases of Argentina". Greece, and South Korea, Jefferson: McFarland, 2002, 138–139.

rupt an investigation of a massacre committed by South Korean soldiers in February 1951, "The ROK military staged an attack by men disguised as communist guerrillas".[63]

The combat performance of many units was deplorable. A 1951 analysis of the ROK armed forces found that it suffered not only "leadership deficit at all levels of the officer corps but also serious training problems, shortages of weapons and equipment, poor logistical support and, most seriously, a lack of confidence".[64]

Had the US at the end of the Korean War transferred the power, Afghanistan-style, and left, it is almost certain that today we would have a united Korea, under communist rule. But it did not happen. Instead, the US stayed – US and UN forces are stationed in Korea to this day – and General James Van Fleet, Commander of the 8th army in 1951–1953, went on to build an effective training system in the Korean Army. He was concerned that "the primary problem in the ROK is to secure competent leadership in their army," otherwise, supplying weapons and equipment would be "a criminal waste of badly needed equipment".[65] To solve these problems, he decided on a multi-tiered approach. He supervised unit training and the creation of military colleges. He sent virtually all Korean army units to concentrated training with American advisors (unlike the advisory system in Afghanistan, where "we also failed to properly institutionalize advising large-scale conventional forces until far too late," as retired US Army Colonel Mark Jason wrote).[66] Van Fleet created a centralized military school system, trained units at brigade-level operations, supplied the ROK with both heavy weapons and trainers, who were responsible to all parts of the training, sent officers to US schools for long periods of time[67] and established the Korea Military Academy and the Command and General Staff College.[68] In a relatively short period of time, said then-ROK corps commander general Paik Sun-yup, "Units that completed the course lost 50 percent fewer men and equipment in combat… revealed an *élan* and confidence quite superior to what they had shown before".[69]

The success in re-training the Korean army and making it a professional force was due to several factors: the training of both soldiers and officers in the same time, which enabled them to reach a sufficient level relatively quickly; the cooperation with the Korean leadership, with all its problems, to commit it to the program; and a long-term commitment. While as early as 1952 the US started looking to expand the Korean army in order to enable US forces to return home, it was only after the ROK army was already much better compared to the beginning of the war. The US kept a significant force in South Korea, its air force and naval air power remained committed to the defence of Korea for years to come. ROK's then-president Syngman Rhee told a US senator that "we do not want you to sacrifice your own boys. All we ask for is… equipment and that you train our own people".[70] That, and

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63　Haruki. The Korean War, 176.

64　Jongham Na "The Transformation of the Republic of Korea Army: Wartime expansion and doctrine changes, 1951–1953" in Blaxland, J. et al. (eds.). In from the Cold: Reflections on Australia's Korean War. Acton: Australian National University Press, 2020, 99.

65　Haruki. The Korean War, 177.

66　Jason, M. "What We Got Wrong in Afghanistan". The Atlantic, August 12, 2021.

67　See Hurh, W. M. "'I Will Shoot Them from My Loving Heart': Memoir of a South Korean Officer in the Korean War". Jeferson: MacFarland, 2012.

68　Na. "The Transformation," 101–109.

69　Park, I. "The Dragon from the Stream: the ROK Army in transition and the Korean War, 1950–1953". PhD Thesis, Ohio State University, 2002, 151.

70　Ibid. 113.

the US commitment, which meant that the ROK knew it would not have to fight on its own. The ROK army went from a "small and outdated Asian military force" to a "well-trained and effectively equipped first-class army. No longer Asiatic, it had become westernized".[71] This transformation has shown that despite cultural differences, corruption, lack of democracy and other assorted problems, an inferior local military *could* be, relatively fast, become a good fighting force, capable of taking large-scale offensive operations on its own and inflicting significant casualties on the North Korean forces.

Yet, without a long-term US commitment to Korea, all this would have been in vain. The ROK was poor and corrupt (until 1970 there was virtually no difference in the GDP per capita in North and South Korea), authoritarian and far from being a full democracy, and in 1961 suffered a military coup, other coups and assassinations followed; it took almost three decades until free parliamentary elections were held. As late as 1980, the army killed hundreds of civilians during the "Gwangju uprising," and committed numerous atrocities. Democratization and human rights did not come easily to the military.

But the combination of a massive training program, significant equipment supply, and a long-term commitment created effective forces, which in due time turned into the effective forces of a democracy. It is hard to imagine that, had the US withdrawn all its forces and its air support from Korea in 1953 instead of being committed, the ROK would have survived. The same goes for any attempt to turn it into a full liberal democracy in the 1950s.

For years after the war, the US financed most of the ROK budget, including the full cost of the army. It has done so despite the corruption and the misallocation of aid funds, and despite the American feeling, attributed to President Eisenhower, that aid to Korea was "Pouring aid down a rat hole"[72] – much assistance goes in, very little progress goes out. By 1963, "Many American officials were [still] predicting that [South] Korea would never get off the dole".[73] And in the end, it was a success.

C. Partially supported and more independent: The Kurds

The last successful example we will deal with is the Kurdish forces of Kurdistan. Indeed, they were trained in the 1990s by US trainers, and the US enforced the no-fly zone which enabled them to survive against Saddam Hussein's forces. The two main factions fought a limited civil war until 1998. When the US invasion of Iraq came, US ground forces did not fight their war for them. Indeed, even in 2003 the number of American soldiers on the ground was miniscule in Northern Iraq compared to the Kurds. It was not by design, but a constraint: since Turkey did not allow US forces to use it as a base for invasion, there was no way that a large-scale invasion could take place. Instead of the planned attack by the 4th Infantry Division and other forces, the US had to rely on the Kurdish militias, together

[71]   Ibid. 115

[72]   Eberstadt, N. "Western Aid: The Missing Link for North Korea's Economic Revival?" in Park, K. and Snyder, S. (eds.) "North Korea in Transition: Politics, Economy, and Society, New York: Rowman and Littlefield". 2013, 144.; See also Seth, M. J. "An Unpromising Recovery: South Korea's Post-Korean War Economic Development: 1953–1961". Education about Asia 18(3), 2013, 42–45.

[73]   Eberstadt, N. "Policy and Economic Performance in Divided Korea during the Cold War Era: 1945–91". Washington D.C.: the AEI Press, 2010, 228., n. 10.

with US Special Forces, CIA teams, and limited air support, which was still significant.[74] During operation "Viking Hammer," several thousands of Kurdish *Peshmergah* fighters and a few dozen American soldiers and CIA men, nearly destroyed the *Ansar Al Islam* Salafi group. (Its remains would continue to fight as insurgents, but with much less success and influence, until merging with the Islamic State in 2014.) They inflicted hundreds of casualties while suffering only three killed and 23 wounded[75] in an operation commanded by two American Lieutenant Colonels, Keneth Tovo and Robert Weltmeyer. Later, the mostly-Kurd forces would go on to attack Iraqi forces in North-eastern Iraq, and capture Mosul and Kirkuk (abandoned by the collapsing Iraqi army), before having to cede control of the area to David Petreus' 101st Airborne Division.[76] While it would be wrong to idolize the Peshmerga or other Kurdish forces,[77] their performance many times was not that great, and the factional strife made things worse,[78] one fact remains: they fared better in battle when many other Iraqi security forces collapsed. This has happened with the insurgency in Mosul in 2004, and again on a grand scale against ISIS in 2014: while Kurdish forces suffered defeats and withdrawals, fleeing or evacuating some parts of Northeastern Iraq too, their withdrawal did not turn into a rout, unlike what happened to many unfortunate Iraqi soldiers. It did not take long for the Kurdish fighters to reorganize and go on a counter-attack, earlier and more successfully than other Iraqi forces: they had taken control by 18th June, less than two weeks after the start of the ISIS offensive and more than a month before US air strikes began, and they repelled an ISIS attack on Kirkuk. By the end of August, they had succeeded in evacuating many Yazidis from the Sinjar area,[79] and by December (with significant US/NATO air support) they had managed to break through to the besieged Yazidis on Mt. Sinjar,[80] with some coordination between all Kurdish factions.[81] Their forces did not collapse even in the face of such disasters as the 2015 ISIS

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[74] See Andrew L. et al. "Irregular Warfare: A Case Study in CIA and US Army Special Forces Operations in Northern Iraq, 2002–03". Middle East Institute, 2021. https://www.mei.edu/publications/irregular-warfare-case-study-cia-and-us-army-special-forces-operations-northern-iraq

[75] Landsford, T. "Viking Hammer, Operation" in Thomas R. Mockaitis (ed.) "The Iraq War Encyclopedia". Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2013, 472.

[76] On the political side of those events see Abdulrazaq T. and Stansfield, G. "The Enemy Within: ISIS and the Conquest of Mosul". Middle East Journal 70 (4), 2016, 528–530.

[77] On the complicated nature of Kurdish forces in Iraq see Fliervoet, F. "Fighting for Kurdistan? Assessing the nature and functions of the Peshmerga in Iraq". The Hague: The Clingendael Institute, 2018. https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2018-03/fighting-for-kurdistan.pdf. Taking into account such factions as the Anti-Turkish PKK, the Turkish-Supported KDP, etc. complicates them even more. A direct comparison of all Turkish forces is beyond the scope of this article. See also Barfi, B. "Kurds Now Our Best Ally Against ISIS in Syria". Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 9 October 2015. https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/kurds-now-our-best-ally-against-isis-syria

[78] See Hasan, H. and Khaddour, K. "The Making of the Kurdish Frontier: Power, Conflict, and Governance in the Iraqi-Syrian Borderlands". Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2021, 16–24.

[79] Shelton T. "If it was not for the Kurdish fighters, we would have died up there". The World, August 29, 2014. https://theworld.org/dispatch/news/regions/middle-east/140827/if-it-wasn-t-the-kurdish-fighters-we-would-have-died-there

[80] "Kurds break Mount Sinjar siege against 'Islamic State,' free Yazidis". DW, 19 December 2014. https://www.dw.com/en/kurds-break-mount-sinjar-siege-against-islamic-state-free-yazidis/a-18140706

[81] Salih, M. A. "With the Islamic State gone from Sinjar, Kurdish groups battle for control". Al Monitor, December 10, 2015. https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2015/12/iraq-kurdistan-sinjar-liberated-isis-hegemony.html

attack on Kirkuk, in which two Peshmerga generals were killed.[82] The Kurdish forces had the same incentives as any non-Sunny Iraqi (and many Sunnis as well) – group survival and status, at least – but they were probably the least dependent on Western forces, if only because they had decades-long experience of foreign forces helping them and then leaving or abandoning them.[83] They did use air support; some of them (but not all!) were trained by Western forces, and they got some of military equipment and support. Yet many of them were no more than garrison troops, incapable of offensive operations. A third of the Peshmerga Kurdish units had Western training, and another third were not trained at all (the rest were trained, but not by Western trainers). The trained Peshmerga were better than the non-trained units, and Western training improved not only their skills but their morale too[84] (unlike other forces which collapsed); but they were trained as an assistance to what they were already doing, and were much less tied to Western backing in full. They were not a Western-trained-and-equipped Kurd army in the way that there was an Iraqi army or an Afghan army. Much of their equipment was outdated. They certainly did not have better equipment than the Iraqi Army did (actually, in 2014, the Kurds improved their lot by using abandoned Iraqi Army vehicles and weapons). However, unlike the Iraqi Army, they were not *completely* dependent on the US, neither then, nor before. Even Peshmerga units with no training at all did not buckle at such speed as the 2nd division of the Iraqi Army – not before ISIS, and not, later, before the Turkish attack in Syria in 2019, after US support was removed, the YPG Kurdish militia suffered setbacks and lost much of its territory, but did not collapse.[85]

IMPLICATIONS

Strategy

The main lessons of the failures and successes of building successful local forces should be divided into strategic and tactical fields. While some of them may be limited to overseas interventions, others do seem relevant for European nations who, it must be assumed, may find themselves on the receiving side in a hybrid conflict.

   The main strategic lesson seems to be that there is no effective way to do it fast. The failure of local forces is, on the whole, traceable more to the fact that they are dependent on Western backing and collapse when it is gone, than to any one specific deficiency of their own. The British army integrated locals into its own units, with British NCOs and officers

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[82]   "Second Kurdish commander killed as Peshmerga retake villages south of Kirkuk". Rudaw, 31 January 2015, https://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/310120153

[83]   See Marshall, R. "The Kurds' Suffering is Rooted in Past Betrayals". Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, May 16, 1991. https://www.wrmea.org/1991-may-june/the-kurds-suffering-is-rooted-in-past-betrayals.html; On the history of the Kurds see McDowall, D. A "Modern History of the Kurds". 3rd Edition, London: I. B. Tauris, 2004.

[84]   Cancian, M. "Well trained partners are more likely to fight," Association of the United States Army, 7 May 2019. https://www.ausa.org/articles/well-trained-partners-are-more-likely-fight

[85]   See Aziz, L. The Syrian Kurds in the US foreign policy: long-term strategy or tactical ploy?, Louvain-la-Neuve: Centre d'étude des crises et conflits internationaux, 2020; Hubbard, B. et al. "Abandoned by U.S. in Syria, Kurds Find New Ally in American Foe," New York Times, 13 October 2019; al-Hilu, K. The Turkish Intervention in, Northern Syria: One Strategy, Discrepant Policies, Fiesole: European University Institute, 2021.

who knew the local languages, trained their soldiers *and* commanded them, and stayed for a long time.

The Americans in Korea trained military forces on a massive scale at once, and then continued to support them for years, all the while accepting (for a time) levels of corruption and other excess that would be unacceptable for any Western nation, but slightly using their leverage to push things in the right direction. The US in Iraq supported existing Kurdish forces that were already accustomed to fighting on their own, without making them answer to Western forces and to be dependent on them, as happened in Kurdistan. In all cases, it was a long process.

Before getting involved with a country, what is needed is not "exit strategy," but "staying strategy". What are the goals I want to achieve? How to achieve those goals in the long run? Are they worth pursuing, when most likely it will require an indefinite support of some kind? Instead of asking beforehand "How do I get out of this," one has to ask: am I ready to get "in this" for a generation or more? How to do it with the minimal commitment possible, making the burden and cost (first and foremost in human lives, but financially too) sustainable for an indefinite period of time? This requires a very different and long-term thinking.

General Bruce Palmer said about Vietnam that "our leaders should have known that the American people would not stand still for a protracted war of an indeterminate nature with no foreseeable end to the US commitment".[86] The problem may have been more the "indeterminate nature" than the "with no foreseeable end," but even if it was – then intervening only when there is a foreseeable end means avoiding any conflict in which the enemy actually *can* fight for a long time. But this may not be possible, as the enemy has its say. Going in looking for the way out will definitely make sure that a way out would be found, though it may leave unanswered the question why to go in in the first place.

Moreover, it may not even be a faster approach: after all, the US stayed in Afghanistan for twenty years; Israel left Lebanon in 1985 just to be promptly drawn in again for fifteen years; the US left Iraq after a decade and then found out that it was somewhat premature, when ISIS attacked. If a Western nation is likely to find itself entangled for many years in the country in which it chooses to intervene, it may be better to acknowledge it beforehand and plan for a very long stay. One may argue that it is an imperialist approach; but the counter argument would be staying years while wanting to leave at the earliest moment is a *bad* imperialist approach, not a non-imperialist approach.

Of course, there are other possibilities. If Western forces are trying to reach a short-term goal (i.e. removal of Saddam) and get out, then of course it is possible. If they are trying to create a supporting force which will take some of the responsibilities while they are there, it would usually work too (it would be a good idea to plan evacuation of that force beforehand). But trying to create an independent force where none existed, doing it in a short period of time, and expecting that force to take on any determined enemy on its own, without Western air and combat support and sometimes without logistical support – it just does not work. If *that is* the end-state, it will require a long, long investment, or at least backup.

86   Palmer, B. Jr. *The 25-Year War: America's Military Role in Vietnam*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984, 190. In 2009, Retired US Colonel and military historian Andrew Bacevich used this quote to argue that a similar situation unfolds in Afghanistan. Bacevich, A. J. "Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee April 23, 2009". https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/BacevichTestimony090423a1.pdf

A useful analogy can be borrowed here from Michael Shellenberger's *Apocalypse Never*. Though that book is not at all related to military strategy, two of its arguments are very relevant: First, everything is *good* or *bad* not on any absolute merits but only on the basis of the available alternatives. Coal is 'polluting' if the alternative is hydroelectricity, but not if the alternative is burning wood. Second, there is no shortcut to success: "you can't go directly from making bikes to making a satellite. First, you make bikes and that allows you to make motorcycles. From there you go to automobiles. From automobiles you can start thinking about satellites".[87] Having a corrupt army (and government) is bad if the alternative is good government;[88] but it is better than no government and no army. And so forth. A tribal militia probably does not transform into a Western army without being an inefficient or corrupt army earlier etc.; and building an army while ignoring the prevailing political culture needed for a modern, Western-style army, probably will not work too well. The process, as in Korea, may be hastened and influenced. Similar things did happen in other places: for example, Ngô Quang Trưởng's 1st division of the South Vietnamese Army in Hue, 1968, and I Corps in 1972, have shown that it is indeed the case.[89] But on the whole, it will take time.

Still, building an army where none existed or transforming it is a Herculean task – and there are no shortcuts. Therefore, it may be well-nigh impossible to take a militia, or even a third-rate army, and make an independent fighting force within a short period of time; continuous support may be required for years, if only in logistics, air support and the occasional push to get the army up to better standards.[90]

B. Tactics

In addition to the strategic considerations, some tactical factors should be taken into account as well.

The first is, the importance of force protection, and family protection too. In virtually every case here, the collapse of local forces was preceded by a campaign of assassination – either of officers and soldiers, or their families, or, many times, both. Protecting the soldiers/officers off base and their families can be a hard task, but without such protection, the forces under pressure will find it hard to fight. It is no surprise that massacres of family

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[87] Hinh Dinh, quoted in Shellenberger, M. Apocalypse Never: Why Environmental Alarmism Hurts Us All, New York: HarperCollins, 2020, 104.

[88] The US SIGAR 22-03 Audit noted that the Combined Security Transition Command– Afghanistan (CSTC-A), when funding Afghan Forces, "rarely assessed" compliance with the conditions it set or failed to enforce them. However, one may wonder if the problem was the lack of compliance or enforcement of the 684 conditions, 438 penalties and 102 incentives that the CSTC-A set from 2014 to 2019, or the fact that the US tried to make Afghan government and security forces run like a bureaucracy-loving American administration.

[89] I Corps collapsed in 1975 mostly due to contradictory orders from the country's leaders. Not all units of the corps were up to the same standards, showing further that there are limits to the ability to hasten the cultural evolution of an army. Same goes for the career of Trưởng's predecessor, General Hoàng Xuân Lãm.

[90] Sometimes armies may decline and improve very fast, as happened to the IDF – which won Israel's 1948 war of independence, degraded in three years into a force that in one battle had a full infantry battalion retreat in disarray facing a squad of Jordanian national guardsmen, and in another three years turned back into a first-rate army capable of defeating the Egyptian army in Sinai. But in that case, the cultural foundations were there, the institutions were there, and the army built itself on a dual tradition – both members of the Hagana underground and conventional soldiers who served in WWII. See Torgan, S. "No general will come out of me": training field commanders in the IDF, 1946–1956. [Hebrew], Jerusalem: Yad Ben Tsvi, 2017.

members of security forces is a common tactic: a few examples are the Lari massacre during the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya, the Dak Son massacre during the Vietnam war,[91] killings of South Lebanon Army officers and family members, and the assassination campaign against Afghan pilots and family members. Families may have to be evacuated into special, well-protected camps – not a good solution, but probably better than leaving each member of the security forces prone to pressure, threats, or violence. People are not very likely to perform well during their work hours if they know they are likely to be killed off-hours.

Second, it is nearly impossible to stress the importance of air support to local forces. Not only, as said, does it serve as a very useful measure of signalling commitment, but it can also prevent irregular forces from launching conventional, mobile attacks in the open, and bring the collapse of Western-trained force.

The Taliban probably would not have taken Kabul or other major cities had they known that they face credible air threat, which would exact a terrible toll on their forces in the open, especially considering the weakness of the ANA tank and artillery units.[92] ISIS attacked and reached the peak of its influence when Iraq did not have air capability to use against it, and US planes were not readily available for support. The Tigrai forces in Ethiopia suffered a reversal of fortune and their very successful attacks stalled once they had to move through open ground with combat vehicles and were the target of drone attacks by Ethiopian air force.[93] Sometimes (like in the Chechen attack on Grozny in 1996) a military force can succeed in taking a city and forcing a ceasefire even without air superiority.[94] But such cases are the exceptions. Air power does not win guerrilla wars, nor does it always win hybrid conflicts. However, it is critical for not losing such conflicts, and preventing irregular or hybrid forces from crossing the line and becoming regular, mobile forces capable of causing a rapid collapse of local forces.

It is therefore not surprising that the Russians, as they supported local militias in the Donbass and Luhansk areas and sent soldiers without identification patches into Crimea, also put a massive amount of anti-aircraft forces near the border, to prevent the Ukrainian air force from wreaking havoc on the separatists.

Also, using drones as a 'poor man's air force' seems to be a good idea – the Taliban has done it on their final assault of the Panjshir valley, and most air defence systems cannot shoot down a very-low flying drone, thus it can help deny AA protection to the enemy. The Russians in 2014 launched raids on the Ukrainian air force, with the same logic – but a drone force, while no substitute for a 'real' air force, is much more resistant to air strikes

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[91] "The Massacre of Dak Son". Time Magazine, 15 December 1967; Anderson, D. Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire, New York: W. W. Norton, 2005, 119–150.

[92] The ANA had 20 operational Tanks, all old Soviet T-62 and T-55. They were in low readiness, since they didn't have much role during the counterinsurgency in Afghanistan. In addition, the ANA had 109 field guns and 666 mortars – not an insignificant force on the surface, but in reality much less than Iraq (391 tanks, most of them modern) about the same number of guns (Iraq had at least 108 plus three multiple rocket launchers) and less mortars (Iraq had more than 950). Considering the fact that Afghanistan is significantly larger than Iraq and the problems moving tanks and artillery along the country, it means that the role of those forces was limited too. International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), The Military Balance 2020, 250., 353.

[93] Walsh, D. "Foreign Drones Tip the Balance in Ethiopia's Civil War," New York Times, 12 December 2021; Evans, M. and Flanagan, J. "Ethiopia's war turns into a testing ground for the deadliest drones," The Times, 31 December 2021.

[94] Henkin, Y. Either we Win or We Perish! The History of the First Chechen War, 1994–1996. [Hebrew], Tel-Aviv: Maarachot, 2007, 475–502.; Smith, S. Allah's Mountains: The Battle for Chechnya (New Edition). London: I. B. Tauris, 2005, 240–257.

and can be launched almost everywhere. Therefore, investing in drone capabilities of local Western-trained forces seems to be a cheap and effective way to provide significant air support – and investing in counter-drone measures would probably be the new air defence of the 21st century.

As for fighting local, hybrid forces: since local militias, "polite green men" etc. are used in a hybrid war scenario as a substitute for 'official' armed forces, this means that those militias should be considered, from the minute they appear, a military threat. Fighting them is not a police action or mere riots, and not even an 'anti-terrorist' campaign: if they act (and especially if they even look) like soldiers (e.g. in Crimea), the situation is not civil anymore, and then immediately what the government faces is an armed insurgency.

Local forces in a hybrid war scenario usually succeed or fail in direct relation to their ability to coordinate with the states who employ them for their own goals. Therefore, if one is to fight local forces who are part of a hybrid campaign, the targeting should take *that* into account. The Kurds, although relatively effective on their own, could not face Saddam's divisions in 2003 without the coordination with the US airpower through Special Forces teams; those teams were critical. Russian embedded command groups in Syria served much the same purpose. It was said that the Taliban's final offensive was supported by the Pakistani secret service. Taking out such groups would probably hurt the ability of local forces to present an effective threat.

CONCLUSION

In the end, tactics are important, but they have to serve a strategic goal. International defence and peacekeeping forces can help if their goals are more clearly defined, and show commitment. With long-term commitments, in a costly, lengthy, and sometimes painful process, stable local forces can be built and trained, until one day, they can and will fight on their own. But this can hardly be hastened: the process and commitment may well last more than a generation, one way or another. It is not a happy outlook: the illusion of short, victorious interventions is much more tempting. Yet, the alternative is worse, as the way the West "goes in" today and the way it approaches the problem of building and maintaining local forces, almost guarantees that when it leaves, whatever built would amount to a house of cards, soon to collapse.

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János Kemény

A PRELUDE TO THE CONCEPT OF HYBRID CONFLICT – IRAN'S ROLE IN THE WAR IN IRAQ (2003–2011)[1]

ABSTRACT: *The War in Iraq has been an important lesson to Western countries on the issue of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. The emergence of the Islamic State group and other Sunni jihadist organizations has taken up much of the attention focused on this conflict. However, the lessons of the Iranian activities in Iraq got much less attention, despite the multi-layered and large efforts on the information, the political fronts as well as regarding the support for non-state armed groups. In the opinion of the author, these efforts merit closer attention in order to get a better overview on the issues related to hybrid warfare. This paper aims to show, based on the publicly available, declassified and open source information, the depths of efforts tied to Iranian actors, and the limits of these efforts. The paper will use the case study of Qais al-Khazali, who rose to become one of the important leaders of the so-called special groups, and of Asa`ib Ahl al-Haqq, a splinter group from Muqtada al-Sadr's Jaysh al-Mahdi.*

KEYWORDS: *Iran, Iraq, U.S., U.K., hybrid warfare, non-state armed groups, insurgency*

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INTRODUCTION

Hybrid warfare has received great attention lately, and the Iranian experience is unique in this regard. This paper aims to capture some of the known aspects of Iranian hybrid warfare efforts, including organizational, financial, training as well as political aspects based on secondary materials, and thanks to U.S. declassification efforts, some primary documents. Special attention will be given to the case of Qais al-Khazali, the leader of Asa`ib Ahl al-Haqq, one of the special groups, which operates in Iraq at the time of writing.

   For the purposes of this chapter, the author will take a wider view of hybrid warfare, including non-military aspects of the Iranian efforts, giving historical context to these efforts, as well as information provided by U.S. Central Command about the interrogation of Khazali. The article will also give an overview of the Iranian response, and give an outlook on the role of the special groups, as well as the Iranian influence efforts in Iraq.

IRANIAN MOTIVATIONS, MILITARY POSTURE, AND PROXIES

The U.S. report on Iranian military power describes Iranian capabilities, as a "complex set" which combines conventional and unconventional elements. It lays great emphasis on deterrence, for which it built an Anti-Access Area Denial (A2AD) capacity (most notably a large missile force and naval capacities). The Iran-Iraq war also served as a reminder to create military forces that can be supported by domestic production. The Iranian leadership knows that its forces have a significant technological gap in comparison to the U.S., and recognizes the limited possibilities for building alliances in the current international system. Therefore, to compensate for these factors, the Iranian approach also lays heavy emphasis on psychological warfare and supports friendly non-state armed actors (or in simple term, proxies).[2]

It is important to keep in mind that this latter trend is nothing new. Since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Iran has had a long history of building up and supporting proxy forces. The most famous (or notorious) is of course is Lebanese Hizballah, which has maintained very close ties to Tehran. The early period was not easy, as Hizballah was created in a chaotic situation in the midst of the Lebanese civil war, where Iran and Syria had different visions for the organization, and in some aspects Tehran had limited influence on some parts of the organization. It is also worth remembering that the relations between Hizballah and Iran were not always straightforward, as the ending of the Iran-Iraq War, and the early days of Iranian president Hashemi Rafsanjani have shown. Also, Hizballah was not the only Shia group Tehran was supporting. Groups like Amal also got substantial Iranian support, and the rivalry between Hizballah and Amal also got violent, and Hizballah was able to defeat its main Shia rival.[3]

Although Hizballah is the most famous group, it is not the only one by far, and Iraq serves as a primary example that this approach was not unique, but fits a broader pattern. In the course of the Iran-Iraq War, Iranian leadership helped create the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI, nowadays Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, ISCI),[4] and its armed wing, the Badr Brigades (or nowadays Badr Organization).[5]

SCIRI was established in 1982, under the auspices of the Iranian government. Although it was meant to be an umbrella organization for Iraqi Shia political elements opposed to Saddam Hussein, due to the heavy Iranian involvement and its adoption of official Iranian doctrine, it became more like a political party. The Iranians made it possible for the SCIRI to establish the Badr Brigades from Iraqi POWs, and it engaged in active combat operations. After the end of the first Gulf War, SCIRI and Badr supported the Shia uprising in the South of Iraq.[6] Although SCIRI was the most visible Iraqi group Iran was supporting, it was not the only one; there were others, like parts of the Daawa party. There were ideological issues like the adoption of Iranian revolutionary ideology, which showed the depth

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[2] Iran Military Power: Ensuring Regime Survival and Securing Regional Dominance. Defense Intelligence Agency, 2019, 22–23. https://www.dia.mil/Portals/110/Images/News/Military_Powers_Publications/Iran_Military_Power_LR.pdf

[3] Norton, A. R. Hezbollah: A Short History. Princeton University, 2007, 43–44., 72–73.

[4] Karouny, M. Iraq's SCIRI party to change platform: officials. Reuters, May 11, 2007. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-party-idUSYAT15330920070511

[5] Knights, M. et al. Profile: Badr Organization. The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, September 2, 2021. https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-badr-organization

[6] Tripp, C. A History of Iraq, Cambridge University Press, 2007, 237–238., 246.

of commitment: SCIRI adopted the "velayat-e faqih" acknowledging Iran's leading role, while Daawa was split about this issue and never fully backed the Iranians on such ideological issues.[7] (This model was formulated by Ayatollah Khomeini, who advocated that the clerical class was best suited to implement the ideals of Islam, so the most respected cleric needs to be engaged in ruling the faithful; this approach was criticized by other leading Shia clerics, including Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani's mentor.[8])

The two historical examples from Lebanon and Iraq provide a brief overview of how difficult it is to create and maintain ties with non-state armed groups, while trying to maintain some degree of deniability and distance from their activities. Tehran's efforts to create proxy forces were internationally noted, as the U.S. designated Iran as a state sponsor of terrorism as early as January 1984.[9]

The 1990s saw an overall pause in the Iranian efforts in this field, but the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan in 2001 and the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 gave new emphasis and also new opportunities for Iran to utilize its knowledge about supporting non-state armed groups. Iraq, due to its geographical and historical closeness, remained a very important target for Iran, and having influence in the Shia territories as well as some influence in Baghdad seemed to be a paramount effort for Tehran. Therefore, Iran used its economic, political, and cultural leverage, as well as its military capabilities, as the next sections will show.

IRANIAN POLITICAL AND SOFT POWER INFLUENCE IN IRAQ

The soft power side of Iranian influence has a whole of government approach, including trade and economic ties as well as shaping the information environment in Iraq. Iran has incentivized exporting to Iraq to its own companies, but limits import from Iraq. The Iranians also opened banks in Iraq in the 2000s, to facilitate trade. This approach was not limited to the Southern Shia territories, but also was present in the Kurdish region and Baghdad. The Iranians also established foundations, which have founded socially important projects, like housing projects and health care institutions.[10]

It is however not always easy to gauge the extent of Iranian influence, as even in Iraq the concept of Iranian influence is defined in many different ways. Indeed, as the International Crisis Group's report pointed out, the term "Iranian" can mean a lot of different groups in Iraq. This includes:
  – Iraqi Shias with ancestry in Iran,
  – Fayli Kurds,
  – Iraqis who speak Persian,

7   Felter, J. and Fishman, B. Iranian Strategy in Iraq: Politics and "Other Means," Combating Terrorism Center at West Point Occasional Paper, 2008, 7. https://ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Iranian-Strategy-in-Iraq.pdf
8   Nasr, Vali. The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future, Northon and Company, 2006, 125.
9   State Sponsors of Terrorism, U.S. Department of State Bureau of Counterterrorism, undated. https://www.state.gov/state-sponsors-of-terrorism/
10   Eisenstadt, M. et al. Iran's Influence in Iraq Countering Tehran's Whole-of-Government Approach. Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2011, 12. https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/media/3364

  – members of Iraqi groups who are tied to Iran (this can include major Kurdish parties, as they had close relations to Iran in their fight against the Saddam regime),
  – Iraqis who fought against Iraq with Iranian support during the Iran-Iraq War
  – Iraqis with Iranian sounding names.[11]

So, it is important to keep in mind that not all Iranian influence is government influence, and not everybody labelled Iranian is really Iranian in Iraq.

At governmental level, Iran initiated great efforts on energy issues, in order to become a major influence in Iraq. Due to the growing needs and grid issues, Iran also became a very important player on the Iraqi electricity market. Iran supplied electricity to the Shia majority provinces of Iraq. Iran also engaged in the trade of oil products. The territorial issues between the two countries, however, overshadowed some of this cooperation. Iran engaged oil trade with the Iraqi Kurds as well. Thanks to these efforts, Iran was able to exert economic influence (and pressure if needed) on the Southern, as well as the Northern parts of Iraq.[12] Iranian economic influence had political as well as economic reasons, because it offered Iran a very important approach to influence political processes in Iraq through these economic ties, offered a way to make it more difficult for the U.S. to attack Iran by exposing Iraq to the effects of such actions, as well as helping Iran circumvent some sanctions.

Thanks to the shared Shia background, pilgrims were another major cultural and economic source of influence on the Iraqis. According to some estimates, the number of pilgrims went into the millions in the 2000s. The Iranian government also provided support for infrastructure projects in the tourism sector of Iraq. Iranian offers of studying in religious seminars, making family visits easier, offering medical care etc. also motivated Iraqis to travel to Iran.[13]

In religious terms, it is not a one-way street of influence for Iran. Iraqi Shia leaders, most notably Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, was no supporter of the velayat-e faqih approach of the Iranians, and in the post-invasion period, he was able to expand his presence in Iran. Sistani however rarely involved himself in Iraqi politics, and he did not engage in anti-Iranian activities. Iranians tried to get a bigger say in the religious affairs of Najaf to secure more influence.[14]

From media perspective, Iran also tried to create a position of influence for itself. In March 2003, it helped to create Al-Alam television network, an Arabic language broadcaster. Among other media outlets, Iran relied on it to provide the Iranian views to the Iraqi population. The network was created by the Iranian state radio and TV service, and used satellite, terrestrial broadcasting as well as the Internet.[15] According to the BBC, Al-Alam service's terrestrial transmitter was built near the Iraqi border to maximize coverage in

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[11] Iran in Iraq: How Much Influence? International Crisis Group Middle East Report N°38 – 21 March 2005, 4–6. https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/38-iran-in-iraq-how-much-influence.pdf
[12] Eisenstadt et al. 2011, 13.
[13] Eisenstadt et al. 2011, 13–14.
[14] Eisenstadt et al. 2011, 14–15.
[15] Iran TV channel targets Iraq. BBC, April 3, 2003. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2913593.stm

Iraq.[16] Also, organizations close to Iran had their own media networks in Iraq, which could enhance Iranian messages.[17]

Also, it has to be noted that Iranian and U.S. policy goals were not mutually exclusive on every occasion. The Iranian strategy built on the democratic transformation of Iraq, as roughly 60 % of the Iraqi population is Shia, and with a high degree of certainty, the Iranian calculation was that having a democratic process would enable Iranian influence through the old and the new political groups Iran was supporting in Iraq. Accordingly, Iran helped to assemble the United Iraqi Alliance bloc, which consisted of ISCI, Da'awa and Muqtada al-Sadr political faction, and which won the election in 2005.[18] It had its problems, as the first prime minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, a member of the Da'awa party, had to resign after differences with the Kurds and the Sunnis, with the latter accusing the government of supporting sectarian violence. Jaafari's ties to Iran and his close cooperation with Muqtada al-Sadr also was deemed problematic both inside and outside of Iraq.[19] But nevertheless, he oversaw the final stages of the drafting of the new constitution of Iraq.[20]

His successor, Nouri al-Maliki, had also been an exiled Shia politician from the Da'awa party,[21] but he proved to be more flexible, also against Iranian influence, by launching a military operation in 2008 against JAM in Basra.[22] Maliki was able to remain in the prime ministerial position until 2014, breaking away from the Iranian backed United Iraqi Alliance, creating his own State-of-Law coalition.[23] He remained in power until the political fallout of the loss of Mosul to the so-called Islamic State group.[24]

Maliki's nationalistic turn was not the only problem for Iranian influence in this time, as Iranian economic influence also created some anti-Iranian sentiment among Iraqis. This economic influence dampened Iraqi economic activity, and the Iranian water policy had a role in creating problems for Iraqi agriculture, both qualitative and quantitative, which were made more severe by droughts at the time.[25]

TRADITIONAL AND NEW ARMED GROUPS SUPPORTED BY IRAN

As already mentioned, Iran had supported numerous Iraqi Shia groups, including ISCI and the Badr Brigades. These groups played an important role, as many of their leaders were perceived to be loyal or at least friendly to Iran. Their role in the sectarian conflict was also

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[16] Usher, S. Iran's leaders harness media power. BBC, March 14, 2006. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4804328.stm

[17] Ryan, M. and al-Ansary, K. Feature – Iraq media booming, yet still in sectarian grip. Reliefweb, March 11, 2009. https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/feature-iraq-media-booming-yet-still-sectarian-grip

[18] Katzman, K. Iran's Activities and Influence in Iraq. CRS Report for Congress, June 4, 2009, 1. https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA501453.pdf

[19] Fact Sheet: Ibrahim al-Jaafari. Institute for the Study of War, May 12, 2010. https://www.understandingwar.org/reference/fact-sheet-ibrahim-al-jaafari

[20] Profile: Ibrahim al-Jaafari, al Jazeera, April 13, 2006. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2006/4/13/profile-ibrahim-al-jaafari

[21] Profile: Nouri Maliki, BBC, August 12, 2014. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-11733715

[22] Operation Knight's Charge (Saulat al-Fursan), Institute for the Study of War, undated. https://www.understandingwar.org/operation/operation-knights-charge-saulat-al-fursan

[23] Profile: Nouri Maliki, BBC, August 12, 2014. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-11733715

[24] Iraq crisis: Maliki quits as PM to end deadlock. BBC, August 15, 2014. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28798033

[25] Eisenstadt et al. 2011, 12.

significant. The Badr Brigades, for example, with the support of Interior Minister Bayan Jabr, were absorbed into the Iraqi police force.[26] Thanks to this, the Badr Brigades were very active in the sectarian fighting, operating as death squads in the Sunni neighbourhoods of Baghdad.

A new player on the scene was Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army (Jaysh al-Mahdi, JAM), which became prominent in 2004 in its fight against the Coalition forces. It operated in the Shia majority territories including the holy cities of Karbala and Najaf, and also had active operations in Baghdad's Sadr City. Its 2004 operations ended in a defeat, as the majority of the JAM fighters was inexperienced, and organizationally JAM had many limitations. It suffered heavy losses, and had to agree to a ceasefire with the U.S., which was mediated by Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. During the sectarian fighting, JAM was a major force in Baghdad, and it maintained its hostile attitude towards the Coalition forces as well. It also fought Shia rivals, like the Badr Brigades in 2007. A year later Prime Minister Maliki launched an Iraqi-led operation against JAM in Basrah, which led to a flurry of political activities, with Iran getting involved as a mediator to end the fighting.[27] (Iran provided an important safe haven for those Sadrists who did not feel safe in Iraq. Sadr's personal journeys to Iran were however not that well received, as his father had strong differences with the Iranians, and this was well known to his followers.[28] During his interrogation, Khazali also speculated that Sadr and his followers were interested in keeping good relations to Iran, because the Coalition Forces could force them into more or less permanent exile, and Iran would be their best choice.[29])

On the structure of JAM, Khazali reported that it has five "brigades," although one such unit had between 50 and 100 members. These brigades were considered special groups. When planning an attack, some special groups sought religious advice on the admissibility of an attack, although these approaches were made usually to people in close contact with the insurgency and not classical religious scholars. Some special groups did not even seek such advice. Also, a legislative committee of JAM existed, which could provide similar guidance, if requested. Religiously, JAM based its approach on the doctrine of defensive jihad as they understood it, so theoretically proportionality, defence of the innocent etc. was part of the ethos of JAM. Of course, Iraqis seen as collaborators with the Coalition Forces were not perceived as innocent civilians and were considered to be legitimate targets. Civilian state workers were theoretically not to be attacked.[30]

From April 2006, so-called golden companies were established inside JAM. These were considered to be new elite units of the group, receiving better religious and military training as well as more sophisticated weapons. The growth of these units, according to Khazali, was not as rapid as the leadership wanted it to be, as there were logistical problems, it was difficult to find committed members fit for the units. Military training depended on a large part on the location of a golden battalion. For example, training a group in the use of weapons was more difficult in Baghdad. However, the concept of golden companies was

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[26] Katzman 2009, 1.
[27] Al-Mahdi, J. Institute for the Study of War, undated. https://www.understandingwar.org/jaysh-al-mahdi
[28] Tactical Interrogation Report Enclosure TAB-A, 30–31.
[29] Tactical Interrogation Report (TIR) 34, 224.
[30] TIR 31, 207–208.

born out of internal rivalry, and originally a senior JAM commander intended to rival the capabilities of the special groups with the golden companies.[31]

The Shia majority populations were largely secured by British forces in Iraq. They had difficulty in keeping the militant Shia groups at bay. One of the best-known examples of failure of mentoring Iraqi security forces on part of the British forces, was the capture of two British special operations forces personnel by the Iraqi Police, who were suspected of working for the Sadrists. The incident happened in 2005, when the British special operations forces operators, using a civilian vehicle, were challenged by the Iraqi Police, and after a brief chase and firefight, were captured by them. Already in the early reports, it became clear that the captured men were on an intelligence-collecting mission. These reports also pointed out that tensions were already high, because British forces killed a senior JAM leader in the previous days.[32] More than a year later, British forces undertook a major operation, reportedly involving over 1,000 British and Iraqi troops, to storm the headquarters of the Serious Crimes Unit of the Basra Police. In the course of the operation, the British freed 127 prisoners, many of whom were said to have been tortured and some threatened to be killed. The building of the Serious Crimes Unit was demolished by the British Army as part of the operation. The British stated that this police unit was infiltrated by Shia militia and operated as a death squad. The attack on the unit had official Iraqi central government approval, but at the local level, the reception was very negative, with the city council cutting its cooperation with the British.[33]

During his interrogation Khazali said that the security in Basra was lax, and this enabled them to use mortar attacks against the British successfully. He believed that using mortars was a very effective tool and brought success for the special groups in Amarrah. Because of the decentralized nature of the special groups, no central policy was made in this regard, and other Shia groups, such as Badr Brigades, al-Fadila, Thar Allah group etc., also used the same methods against the British.[34]

In all, it was very difficult for the British to effectively contain the Shia armed groups, and the British timetable for withdrawing U.K. forces from Iraq made operational decisions for British commanders difficult.

THE ROLE OF THE SPECIAL GROUPS (K1)

The special groups are Iranian-backed militant Shia Iraqi organizations, which operated in secret under the umbrella of JAM, and later independently. The special groups were the main means to attack Coalition Forces, as they operated in secret and directed their military action only against Coalition Forces.[35] The strategic purpose was to hasten the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq, as well as having leverage over other Shia parties, and the Iraqi political process overall.[36] This included engaging in sectarian violence, conducting oper-

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[31] TIR 31, 209–210.

[32] British troops arrested in Basra. BBC, September 19, 2005. news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4260894.stm

[33] UK troops storm Iraqi police HQ. BBC, December 25, 2006. news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/6208535.stm

[34] TIR 35, 230–231.

[35] Enclosure TAB-A documents for release 18–32, 65.

[36] Knights, M. The Evolution of Iran's Special Groups in Iraq. CTC Sentinel, November 2010. Vol. 3, Issue 11–12, 12. https://ctc.westpoint.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/CTCSentinel-Vol3Iss11-127.pdf

ations against Iraqi government personnel (including kidnappings), and embezzling funds from the Iraqi government,[37] with a sense of deniability. According to Kimberly Kagan's research, the planning for establishing special groups began as early as 2002, and also enlisted the training support of Lebanese Hizballah, utilizing camps inside Iran. She also indicates that Lebanese Hizballah served as an organizational model for the special groups.[38]

The activities of the special groups were not in focus as much as the Sunni insurgency. However, there have been examples of early reporting, which indicated that the U.S. commanders were perceiving the threat of these groups and wanted to make the domestic audiences aware of them. Some of the early reporting indicated that the Iranians were already planning to support new Iraqi groups as early as 2002, when the possibility of the U.S. invasion became abundantly clear.[39]

The special groups have media organizations that are selected by regional commanders. The names of these media groups do not reflect the militant organizations they are working with. With time, multiple groups formed under the umbrella of JAM, so Sadr changed their designation to special battalions.[40] They used a variety of names when they claimed an attack. Khazali's group for example, used the names of six Shia imams and one other religious figure, in combination with the Arabic words battalion or company. Other groups, organizationally unrelated, might use similar or the same names when claiming attacks.[41]

The special groups were divided into three regions, with minimal communications amongst them for ensuring security. In case of emergencies, mobile phones were used (either for initiating calls or sending text messages).[42]

The Legislative Committee is responsible for ensuring that the special groups and JAM respect rules that are made by the Shaara. Sadr took close interest in such decisions, and insisted sometimes that he personally approves decisions regarding JAM. With regard to the special groups, Sadr did not want to be associated with them, so he did not interfere in the decisions concerning them in order not to alienate the Americans any further. According to Khazali, this did not stop him of claiming credit for the establishment and successes of the special groups in private.[43] Kataib Hizb Allah, Asaib Ahl al-Haq and the Promised Day Brigades were the best-known special groups in the 2000s.

QAIS AL-KHAZALI AND ASA'IB AHL AL-HAQ (AAH)

The U.S. provided redacted versions of Khazali interrogation, which is a useful source on his person. According to this data, Khazali was born in 1974, his highest state schooling was middle school, and attended the Shia al-Hawsa Religious Training Institute in Najaf. He paid for getting out of the Iraqi Army in 1997, so the U.S. side did not consider him to have any special military training. He was a close associate of Muhammad al-Sadr, the father of Muqtada al-Sadr. In the aftermath of the U.S. attack on Iraq, Khazali helped form

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[37] Kagan 2009, 173.

[38] Kagan 2009, 159., 165–167.

[39] Ware, M. Inside Iran's Secret War for Iraq. Time Magazine, 15 August 2005. http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/printout/0,8816,1093747,00.html

[40] Enclosure TAB-A documents for release 18–32, 49–50.

[41] TIR 31, 207.

[42] Enclosure TAB-A, 43.

[43] TIR 41, 261–262.

the Office of Martyr Sadr (OMS), which became the political organization of Muqtada al-Sadr.[44] He knew Muqtada al-Sadr from their time at a religious school in 1995. During this time and also later, they developed a close relationship, as both stayed in Iraq after the killing of the elder Sadr. His offices were overtaken by his successor, Ayatollah Ha'ari, but Muqtada al-Sadr was named his official representative and the offices of the elder Sadr took up social roles on Shia majority territories. During the 2003 war, Muqtada al-Sadr took over the offices, which served as a base for power.[45] Contemporary sources identify Khazali in the early days of the Iraq War as a spokesman for Muqtada al-Sadr, who was also receiving Western journalists.[46] Also, according to his testimony given during his in-terrogation, he had an important role in the legislative committee of OMS, which made him partially responsible for the special groups, which functioned parallel to JAM.[47]

A turning point for him and his relations with Muqtada al-Sadr was the 2004 battle in Najaf and its aftermath. During his interrogation, Khazali blamed Abbas al-Kufi, who ac-cording to him was in charge of the military operations, for not knowing anything about military operations and mismanaging the situation, and blamed Sadr as well for making mistakes. However, he also said that Sadr did not break down, as it was reported by some sources.[48] Later on Sadr blamed Khazali for a friendly preacher's open criticism of Sadr, and Khazali was also working on weakening the position of Sadr inside the organization, as he was trying to win over senior leadership for his own causes.[49] He distanced himself from Sadr and began forming his own group, although remained under the wider umbrella of the Sadrist movement for some time. The support for starting independent operations in the U.S. assessment came from the Iranians, the Quds Force. This meant funnelling funds and providing special training for the members of the AAH. According to U.S. analysis, this was an effort to create a more reliable partner, because doubts emerged about the long-term political viability of Sadr for the Iranians. The Iranians continued to support JAM but were increasingly looking for opportunities to support other Shia groups opposed to Sadr.[50]

After his break with OMS, he was able to build up his own forces from breakaway Jaysh al-Mahdi groups, concentrating in Baghdad and the Southern Shia majority city of Basra and operating in many provinces, like al-Hilla, al-Diwaniyah, Najaf and Karbala.[51] Al-though he was not affiliated with Sadr anymore, due to his earlier position he still had some tasks that were related to the special groups. During his interrogation he said, he gave some religious guidance on the permissibility of attacks and Sharia issues, based on his personal relationship with special group leaders. He also mediated when issues arose between JAM and special group leaders. Using his Iranian contacts, he tried to ensure that the members

[44] Tactical Interrogation Report of Qayis al-Khazali, US CENTCOM, 20 March 2007, 18–19. https://www.aei. org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/TIR-1.pdf?x91208
[45] Enclosure TAB-A, 24–25.
[46] Cockburn, P. Muqtada al-Sadr and the Fall of Iraq, Faber and Faber, 2008, 2.
[47] TIR 33, 217.
[48] TIR 42, 267–268.
[49] Enclosure TAB-A Documents for release 18–32, 57.
[50] Rayburn, J. D. et al. (eds.) The U.S. Army in the Iraq War: Volume 2 Surge And Withdrawal 2007–2011, Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, 2019, 70. https://publications.armywarcollege. edu/pubs/3668.pdf
[51] TIR 2, 51–52.

of the special groups received their pay from Iran, as his successor was not prepared for this role. On an occasional basis, he continued his contacts with special group leaders.[52]

The best-known operation of AAH from this period was the attack against the Karbala Provincial Joint Coordination Centre in January 2007. The kidnappers wore U.S. style uniforms, were able to access unopposed the compound where the Americans worked. According to contemporary press reports, a large number of attackers using uniforms and equipment similar to those of U.S. forces and utilizing falsified credentials, passed three checkpoints and gained access to the Centre.[53] The attackers concentrated on U.S. troops, used non-lethal as well as lethal weapons against U.S. troops, and left by the vehicles in which they had arrived.[54] The attackers were able to abduct four U.S. military personnel, who were later killed by the captors while on the run from U.S. forces. It was quickly deemed one of the most sophisticated attacks up until that point in the Iraq War. In all, five U.S. troops were killed.[55]

Due to the sophistication of the attack, it was speculated early on that Iran was involved in the planning and execution of the attack. During his later interrogation, Khazali stated, the objective of the attack was to capture U.S. hostages in order to get people released who were in U.S. captivity at the time.[56]

U.S.-LED COUNTER IRANIAN INFLUENCE OPERATIONS AND THE CAPTURE OF THE KHAZALI BROTHERS

Khazali was captured on 20th March 2007. He provided a false name to his interrogators, and only after the interrogation team managed to convince him that they knew exactly who he was, was he willing to confirm his identity and started to cooperate to a limited extent.[57]

This was an outcome of a U.S.-led effort to target key Iranian and Iraqi personnel who were engaged in the organization of the special groups and several mainstream militant groups. The Coalition Forces captured 20 Iranians in Iraq between December 2006 and October 2007.[58] Just to list a few cases:
  – Mohsen Chizari was captured, who according to the U.S., was the third-ranking official in the Quds Force on 29th December 2006,[59]
  – Coalition Forces detained five Iranians in Erbil on 11th January 2007,[60]
  – Hakim al-Zamili, deputy health minister and special group member, was captured on 19th November 2006.[61]

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[52]   TIR 33, 218–219.

[53]   Karbala attackers posed as U.S. military officials. CNN, January 23, 2007. https://edition.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/meast/01/22/iraq.karbala/index.html

[54]   Report: Gunmen In U.S. Uniforms Killed GIs. CBS News, January 22, 2007. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/report-gunmen-in-us-uniforms-killed-gis/

[55]   Soldiers killed in Karbala were first abducted. CBS News, January 26, 2007. https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna16826151

[56]   TIR 6, 68–69.

[57]   Tactical Interrogation Report of Qayis al-Khazali, US CENTCOM, 20 March 2007, 19. https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/TIR-1.pdf?x91208

[58]   Katzman 2009, 5.

[59]   Kagan 2009, 172.

[60]   Kagan 2009, 172.

[61]   Kagan 2009, 174.

The Coalition Forces also captured members of the Lebanese Hizballah.

The U.S., as part of the Iranian nuclear issue, worked out U.N. Security Council Resolution 1747, which contained a provision for stopping Iranian arms export.[62] The U.S. also designated the IRGC Quds Force as a terrorist organization, as part of Executive Order 13224.[63]

According to the memoirs of General Stanley McChrystal, there was an unofficial list of Shia militants the Coalition Forces were not allowed to attack, in order not to raise political sensitivities with the Iraqi government. Qais al-Khazali was on this unofficial list. His younger brother, Laith was, however, considered to be a target. According to the recollections of McChrystal, the capture mission was designed to catch Laith al-Khazali.[64] Emma Sky, an advisor to General Raymond Odierno, confirmed in her memoirs the existence of such a list of non-targetable Shia leaders. According to her information, Qais knew Maliki personally, and Maliki was convinced that Qais was not sympathetic of Iran.[65]

The raid against Khazali was the outcome of a long intelligence gathering operation, during which British and U.S. forces tried to map the Iranian networks working in Iraq. After receiving information of a meeting, British special operations forces initiated a raid and captured Khazali, along with his brother and a third person on 20th March 2007. Important documentary evidence was also secured during the raid. According to the research of BBC journalist Mark Urban this contained information about the Karbala raid, linking it directly to AAH and also information on Iranian payments going to AAH. The third person, who was detained along with the Khazalis turned out to be Ali Mussa Daqduq, who was identified by the U.S. as a long-time Hizballah operative. Daqduq later also cooperated to some extent with his interrogators, and gave up some information regarding his role.[66] (Later, the U.S. government sanctioned Ali Mussa Daqduq al-Musawi, a member of Lebanese Hizballah, for his part of the planning of the Karbala attack.[67])

General David Petraeus used the capture of the Khazali brothers to generate a more favourable political climate to fight special groups. According to McChrystal, he presented one of the captured documents found at the site, where the brothers had been detained. A presented document had an openly hostile tone towards the Iraqi government, which helped convince Maliki that shielding the special groups will be a political liability for him in the longer term. The two Khazali brothers remained in U.S. custody for years to come.[68] This facilitated a long interrogation process, the redacted versions of these protocols have been cleared for the public in 2018, and the American Enterprise Institute published these

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[62] Resolution 1747 (2007) Adopted by the Security Council at its 5647th meeting on 24 March 2007, United Nations Security Council, 2007. https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N07/281/40/PDF/N0728140.pdf?OpenElement

[63] Katzman 2009, 5.

[64] McChrystal, S. My Share of the Task: A Memoir, Portfolio/Penguin, 2013, 256.

[65] Sky, Emma. The Unraveling: High Hopes and Missed Opportunities in Iraq, Penguin, 2015, 183.

[66] Urban, Mark. Task Force Black: The Explosive True Story of the SAS and the Secret War in Iraq, Abacus, 2011, 224–226.

[67] Treasury Designates Hizballah Commander Responsible for American Deaths in Iraq, Department of the Treasury, November 19, 2012. https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/tg1775

[68] McChrystal, Stanley. My Share of the Task: A Memoir, Portfolio/Penguin, 2013, 257–258.

documents.[69] During these interrogations, Qais al-Khazali gave very interesting insight into how the special groups developed and what role Iran played in this process.

Khazali revealed a lot of useful information during his interrogation. In the early days, he was responsible for finance in the OMS, and headed construction efforts for the organization as well as the daily organizational issues. Thanks to his position and his close relationship with Muqtada al-Sadr in the early days, he had a very good overview of the development of the OMS. Among other information, he described to his interrogators that while he and Sadr were in Iraq, in the early days of the war, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps made a concentrated effort to enlist their support. He described meetings with people who he believed were members of the Qods Force of the IRGC. Later, due to his religious background and his closeness to Sadr, he became responsible for the special groups in the Shaara, and was making principal decisions, thus he was above the military commanders of the special groups.[70]

Regarding his Iranian connection, Khazali told his interrogators that after the fall of the Saddam regime, he visited Tehran for a funeral, where Iranian government representatives approached him, and made an agreement with him for financial support of the group. He made further trips to Iran, where he met with the two officials repeatedly. These Iranian officials also visited Iraq, the city of al-Najaf, where they wanted to approach Muqtada al-Sadr personally, but were rejected. According to Khazali, these were officials of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps' al Quds Force, although officially they were working on cultural matters.[71] He was part of a delegation that visited Tehran in June 2003, meeting with the highest level of Iranian leadership. During this trip, a more formal relationship was worked out, thanks to which Iran could send money more directly to the OMS. Sadr wanted to be at the centre of this relationship, and was aware of the importance of the money received from Iran. At this point, the Sadr-Khazali relationship was in a strong phase, so Khazali was tasked with going to Tehran to work out details on later dates.[72] According to his statements during the interrogation, he visited Iran on five or six occasions, met with his contact person to discuss the support Iran was willing to provide for the OMS.[73]

He told his interrogator that personally he thought that having direct dealings with Iran was unavoidable and for the benefit of Iraq. He insisted that he did not sell out to the Iranians, whom he disliked. At the same time, he also insisted that the majority of the Sadrist leadership shared his opinion about the relations to the Iranians, indeed there were some among them who hated the Iranians.[74] According to Khazali, Iran was using the Iraqis to wear down the Americans, and thus creating strategic opportunities for itself to continue the Iranian nuclear program and other activities.[75]

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[69] The Qayis al-Khazali Papers, American Enterprise Institute, undated. https://www.aei.org/the-qayis-al-khazali-papers/

[70] TIR 43, 273.

[71] TIR 1, 19–20.

[72] TIR 4, 63–64.

[73] TIR 16, 126.

[74] TIR 41, 259.

[75] TIR 42, 269.

IRANIAN FINANCIAL SUPPORT
AND WEAPONS SUPPLIES TO SPECIAL GROUPS

During another session, Khazali also stated that he met with General Suleimani and General Hajji Yusef from the IRGC Quds Force, who offered financial support directly, which was neither accepted nor declined at that time. The Sadrist leadership later accepted the Iranian offer of a monthly USD 750,000-1 million support with the caveat that Iran will not have any direct influence over the operations the JAM will be executing, which Iran accepted at this point.[76] Hajji Yusef later travelled personally to Najaf around the end of 2003 or the beginning of 2004, in order to set up the specifics of financial support. The specifics sometimes varied but usually the promised money was sent monthly. It occurred that due to specific reasons larger amounts were sent, USD 2 or 3 million.[77] The money was received by a liaison person in JAM, who transferred it to the group's treasurer, who in turn sent it to regional commanders for salaries and to finance logistical needs.[78]

JAM and special groups operations were financed from the funds received from the IRGC, with half of the money transferred to the special groups, the other half remaining under the control of the Sadrists. The payments had to be made in person, which made travel necessary for members of the group. The payments were given to them in US Dollars.[79] The money was transferred using traditional methods, like hawalas. Four major areas were financed with Iranian money: the special groups, regular JAM, social services, and support of the families of killed JAM members.[80]

Weapons were an important matter, and Iran was well situated in this regard. Khazali pointed out that the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security and the IRGC's Quds Force were the main players when it came to working with Iraqis on issues like operations in Iraq or weapons smuggling.[81] Iran has its own large conventional weapons production capacity, and thanks to the long border with Iraq, it had almost endless possibilities to smuggle weapons to Iraq. According to Khazali, there were trusted smugglers, who did much of the work. But Iran also sold weapons to independent smugglers, who worked with their own contacts. Khazali also stated that Iranians had further ways to smuggle weapons into Iraq, if necessary.[82] Iran preferred to use smugglers using non-Iranian territory, as this provided a degree of deniability for them.[83] Of course, Iran was not the only source of weapons, as there were still unsecured stockpiles of the former Iraqi Army, some weapons were delivered through Syria and Saudi Arabia, and the black market was also a very important source.[84]

According to U.S. sources, large quantities of weapons manufactured in Iran were found by Coalition Forces, including rockets, sniper rifles, and mortar systems. The best example of the Iranian support was the production of explosively formed penetrators (EFP), which

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[76]   TIR 9, 85.
[77]   TIR 16, 126.
[78]   TIR 17, 33.
[79]   TIR 21, 151.
[80]   Enclosure TAB-A, 21–22.
[81]   TIR 47, 300.
[82]   TIR 47, 300.
[83]   TIR 43, 275.
[84]   TIR 35, 231.

needed copper disks and high precision machinery to be manufactured.[85] According to U.S. sources, this included 107 mm artillery rockets, 81 mm mortar shells, and other weapons.[86] The most interesting weapons, which could be linked directly to Iran, were Iranian copies of the Austrian Steyr HS 50 sniper rifles. The system was sold to Iran for law enforcement purposes, but the Iranians reportedly used it to support Iranian-supported non-state armed groups.[87]

Through different liaison channels, the regional commanders could order weapons from Iran, free of charge, through quite a few middle men. This procedure circumvented the OMS. The procedure had its flaws, as the weapons arriving were rarely the ones the regional commanders ordered, what arrived was an Iranian decision.[88] The speed of deliveries was very much affected by the way they were smuggled in, so it was difficult to create larger stockpiles. Also, each group was in charge of its own efforts to store weapons, and they were usually hidden in homes, or some other private property.[89] The most lethal weapon against the Coalition Forces was the Explosively Formed Penetrator, or EFP. The distribution of EFPs was limited to groups that – from the Iranian point of view – were reliable and trained in using them. The devices were brought in through traditional smuggling routes primarily in Maysan Province, but some arrived through Basra Province. The devices were hidden among commercial goods and were delivered to the groups they were designated for. According to Khazali, the same IRGC officers were in charge of this process, who were also responsible for moving Iraqi Shia trainees across the border.[90] Later, a group was created under the command of Khazali, to distribute the weapons among the special groups, as they saw fit.[91] Iran had deep interests in Basra and was especially willing to support groups that operated in the city. Also, a factor was its geographic location and its economic importance, as well as its urban nature, which made it easier to create a difficult environment for Coalition Forces.[92]

IRANIAN TRAINING FOR IRAQI SHIA GROUPS

Khazali did confirm that Iran was providing training for Shia armed groups. Due to their security consciousness, the contacts were based on personal relations, and this made even for Iraqi Shia groups very difficult to know what other Iraqi groups were doing with the Iranians. Usually groups designated for Iranian training remained small, 10-20 trainees at one time and even those had to travel separately to Iran for their training. He identified three camps for the interrogators, and noted that members of different groups could be present at the same time for training in these camps.[93] Training in Iran for special group recruits

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85   Kagan 2009, 160, 179.
86   Kagan 2009, 179.
87   Gao, C. Ready, Aim: Why Iran Loves the Steyr HS 50 Sniper Rifle. The National Interest, July 17, 2020. https://nationalinterest.org/blog/reboot/ready-aim-why-iran-loves-steyr-hs-50-sniper-rifle-164910 and Kraske, M. A Smoking Gun from the Alps. Spiegel, 14 February 2007. https://www.spiegel.de/international/austrian-weapons-in-iraq-a-smoking-gun-from-the-alps-a-466284.html
88   TIR 17, 133.
89   TIR 19, 143.
90   TIR 18, 137.
91   TIR 43, 274–275.
92   TIR 42, 268.
93   TIR 10, 91–92.

included light and crew-served infantry weapons systems and using IEDs. For raw recruits, this basic training lasted for one month. Based on their abilities, Iranians provided options for some to train on specific systems. Advanced training was also provided, such as using mortars and IEDs, which made these courses and the attendees very important for the special groups.[94]

Khazali reported that the Iranians had some important limitations on the technical skills they were providing to the trainees. For example, the Iranians did not provide any training on how to manufacture remote controllers for IEDs. This was a problem for the members of the Shia militant groups, as in urban environments wire controlled IEDs were not practical.[95]

A major part of this training was the use of Explosively Formed Penetrators (EFP), which were one of the most effective weapons the insurgents had against the Coalition Forces. Khazali also stated that the source of EFP manufacturing was Iran, and the devices were smuggled into Iraq. The provided training however, had its limits. For example, it did not include MANPADS training, as it was expensive and the Iranians were concerned that such training could be eventually used against them.[96]

Also, Iran did not provide any MANPADS, Shia groups had only a few such systems, captured from the stockpiles of the Saddam era Iraqi army.[97] In addition, Khazali reported that specific programs for trainers' skills were not on the agenda, the people trained in different skills were teaching their comrades as best they could.[98]

He mentioned that other special groups outside of JAM started receiving training from Iran around 2004. In the early period, the Iranians sought Iraqi Shia militants to come to Iran for training, but later the trend was reversed, and the Iraqis actively sought opportunities to go to Iran for training. This all was facilitated through trusted personal relations between the Iraqis and the IRGC.[99] Khazali also mentioned that Lebanese Hizballah too was involved in the training of some Iraqis.[100] He stated that no Iranian advisors were directly with JAM, although he suspected that some were supporting the Badr Brigades and the Group of Abu Mustafa al-Shaybani.[101] He also pointed out that the Iranians never tried to dictate the special groups the targets to attack, they provided only general guidance.[102]

DYNAMICS OF KEEPING IRANIAN RELATIONS WITH IRAQI MILITANT GROUPS

Khazali also pointed out to his interrogators that relations between the Sadrists and the Iranians were not without problems. He stated that as early as under the elder Sadr, the Iranian approach to government was criticized and that these problems were of a theoretical nature and not based on personal sympathies.[103] Khazali emphasized that the Sadrist movement

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[94] Enclosure TAB-A, 41.
[95] Enclosure TAB-A, 23.
[96] TIR 11, 98.
[97] Enclosure TAB-A documents for release 18–32, 62.
[98] TIR 11, 98.
[99] TIR 16, 126–127.
[100] TIR 19, 142.
[101] TIR 32, 213.
[102] Enclosure TAB-A, 22.
[103] TIR 32, 214.

was not pro-Iranian, but the Badr Brigades were the staunchest pro-Iranian Shia militant group. There had been issues between the two groups, which in some cases led to violence, and Iran had to mediate between the Badrists and the Sadrists.[104] In his opinion, Iran could only influence Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim, the leader of the Badr Brigades and Muqtada al-Sadr not to fight each other, but Iran did not have the influence to control Sadr. The Iranians had much closer relations with the Badr Brigades. Similarly, the Sadrists and the Daawa Party had a difficult relationship.[105]

During his interrogation, Khazali mentioned that the dynamic changes in the Shia militant landscape usually had two reasons: financial and ideological. Financial reasons often meant that militant groups split for a while because of unsanctioned activities, such as kidnapping and theft. According to Khazali, Iran did not financially incentivize for such splits, as it was keen to keep up its good relation with Sadr. Sadr himself did use Iranian money in order to support some breakaway groups. The money coming from Iran was allocated by the Sadrist leadership for different tasks, roughly half of it was used for building and maintaining the military capacity of JAM.[106] Another important organizational aspect in Khazali's view was that in Shia groups, often it was not military competence that was the most important factor when choosing a leader, but his popularity with others in the group.[107]

Khazali also provided some details on meetings after the second battle of Najaf, where the reorganization of the Shia militant groups was discussed and a plan was agreed on to that end. Also, he corroborated information that an Iranian, presumably an advisor, was taking part in combat on the side of the Shia militant groups.[108] At this meeting, the major decision was that special groups were needed, but they had to distance themselves from the official JAM and Muqtada al-Sadr. Khazali had a role in approving special groups operations at later dates.[109]

He also provided information on his role in the emergence of JAM. Around 2005 he was responsible for all aspects of JAM, but was removed from these duties later that year.

Khazali also described, what led to his schism with Sadr. According to him, he was perceived in the movement as having become too influential. Due to his position, he had close contacts with some of the Iraqi political elites, and he also had close ties with the Iranians on the financial side. Inside the organization some accused him of trying to usurp power from the leadership. According to Khazali, a feud broke out in which another close associate of Sadr had to step in and mediate, which was successful in the short term, and Khazali returned to manage the finance of OMS for a short time. It was a political initiative by the Iraqi government, in which Khazali was mediating that brought tensions to the forefront. The objective was to condemn and end sectarian violence, and a preliminary deal was reached, in which Khazali was the negotiator from Sadr. However, OMS leadership demanded the agreement and did not allow Khazali to sign it as its representative. In the second half of 2006, the influence issue came up again; as a result, Khazali broke with

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104 Enclosure TAB-A, 22.
105 Enclosure TAB-A documents for release 18–32, 65., 68.
106 TIR 7, 75.
107 TIR 15, 121–122.
108 TIR 4, 64–65.
109 TIR 6, 70.

Sadr, and became a political actor on his own.[110] He described Sadr as someone who wanted to keep every important decision under his own control, and selected people for important jobs who were respectable but not really qualified for the position he selected them for.[111]

Another issue in the break up was the problematic command and control system of JAM. Khazali was tasked with sorting out "good" and "bad" commanders. He told his interrogators that he tried to convince Sadr which of his commanders he should keep, but Sadr was increasingly in a state of paranoia, and he was unsuccessful, with "bad" commanders (meaning commanders, who did their own missions without central approval) remaining in JAM.[112] He later elaborated that in JAM everyone was loyal to Sadr, but at lower levels the competition was fierce, both among the commanders themselves and for the attention of Sadr. There were also fights over values among JAM leadership. This occurred despite the fact that due to organizational deficiencies JAM leadership was unable to distinguish between groups that were successful, and groups that were less successful, and the leadership feared that this would create a negative environment within JAM.[113] Also, Sadr did not trust his JAM leaders very much, at later stages he regularly changed the head of the force every few months.[114] According to Khazali, Sadr did not value military professionalism, as he perceived that such individual commanders could get popular within the movement and thus would become dangerous to his position.[115] Demotions were sometimes applied to punish brigade commanders, but this usually was in response to personal feuds and not linked to the effectiveness of a commander. It was rare that a brigade commander got dismissed, as it would affect morale in his unit. According to Khazali, the most frequent cause for changes in the brigade command was that individual commanders gave up their position.[116]

During the interrogation, he also mentioned that Iran never tried to force or otherwise motivate JAM to cooperate in military terms with other Iran-backed groups, like the Badr Brigades. In his view, this was due to the deep differences between the leaders.[117] The Iranians tried to exert pressure on Sadr to take part in the political process in Iraq, which Sadr saw as legitimizing the U.S. presence in Iraq, and was opposed to it accordingly. However, Sadr later relented and according to Iranian wishes, he participated in the political process.[118]

After the election in 2005, the OMS had ministerial positions, and thus had access to financial resources of the Iraqi state. The Sadrist leadership used these positions to benefit contractors who were loyal to Sadr, and according to Khazali, some money was paid back to Sadr.[119] According to Khazali, the Sadrist movement was able to build a large network of companies which were in contact with other businesses as well as government institutions.[120] These companies were often linked to one influential family, and were bidding for

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[110] Tactical Interrogation Report of Qayis al-Khazali, US CENTCOM, 20 March 2007, 20–22. https://www.aei. org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/TIR-1.pdf?x91208

[111] TIR 41, 60–261.

[112] TIR 3, 56.

[113] TIR 15, 121.

[114] TIR 28, 34.

[115] TIR 42, 268.

[116] TIR 41, 263.

[117] TIR 15, 122.

[118] TIR 23, 157.

[119] TIR 8, 80.

[120] TIR 21, 152.

government and Coalition reconstruction projects, because these were deemed the most profitable possibilities. In order to create the best chances, companies vying for a contract were often controlled by the economic arm of the Sadrist movement, so no matter who won, the Sadrist side benefited from the contract. According to Khazali, the successful companies had to pay 20 percent of their profits to Sadr.[121]

IRANIAN REACTIONS TO KHAZALI'S CAPTURE

It is not clear when the Iranians became aware of the capture of the Khazali brothers. However, the Iranians were quick to intensify their activities quite visibly against the British presence in Iraq.

The UK was deeply involved in the naval aspects of the Iraq War and its aftermath, and in 2007, the UK was leading the multinational naval forces entrusted with monitoring Iraqi territorial waters. This force operated under UN Security Council's resolution 1723, and under the invitation of the Iraqi government of the time. The British contingent was part of Combined Task Force 158, and its rules of engagements were laid down by CTF 158.[122] The mission of the Royal Navy was to support maritime security, commerce, deter terrorist operations and help secure Iraqi oil platforms in the Arabian Gulf.[123]

On 23rd March 2007, a routine Royal Navy patrol from HMS Cornwall boarded a ship in Iraqi territorial waters, which was suspected of smuggling goods into Iraq. The 15-strong patrol was captured by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps Navy, who stated later that the British sailors and marines had been in Iranian territorial waters and had entered illegally.[124]

The British foreign office summoned the Iranian ambassador to protest against the arrest of their personnel, and a short time later the Iranians summoned the British ambassador, accusing the British Navy personnel of intruding into Iranian territorial waters.[125] The British presented GPS data, which they said was evidence that the British contingent operated in Iraqi territorial waters, which the Iranian embassy in London disputed, claiming the British had been in Iranian territorial waters. Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister personally commented on the incident, suggesting that pressure on Iran needs to be applied to secure the freedom of the British military personnel. Later the British Foreign Secretary told Parliament that Britain was suspending bilateral cooperation with Iran in every way. The British pointed out that the original statement of the Iranians also put the position of the captured British personnel inside Iraqi waters.[126]

The diplomatic row between the UK and Iran deepened after the captured personnel were paraded on Iranian TV and the leading seaman's statement was used to underpin

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[121] TIR 23, 157.

[122] Fulton, R. et al. Inquiry into the Apprehension of 15 RN/RM Personnel form HMS Cornwall by Iranians on 23 March 07 – Operation Deacon, Ministry of Defence, 16 May 2007, 4. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/482260/20151120-Report_Redacted-FINAL_Redacted.pdf

[123] Fulton et al. 2007, 1.

[124] UK sailors captured at gunpoint, BBC News, 23 March 2007. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/6484279.stm

[125] Cobbold, Richard. Analysis: Iranian Seizure of Royal Navy Sailors, RUSI, 26 March 2007. https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/analysis-iranian-seizure-royal-navy-sailors

[126] UK reveals Iran dispute evidence, BBC, 28 March 2007. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/6501555.stm

the Iranian narrative about the incident. The footage of the alleged confession was also aired around the Middle East by the Iranian al-Alam satellite TV channel. The Iranians also released a letter, allegedly written by the lead seaman to her parents.[127] According to media reports, Syrian and Qatari mediation helped end the escalating diplomatic tensions. Iranian President Ahmedinejad personally made the statement about the release, stating humanitarian considerations.[128] The British Royal Navy personnel was finally released on April 4, 2007.[129]

As there was constant monitoring and the British mission was an overt routine mission, it is unlikely that the British sailors entered Iranian territorial waters by mistake. In 2004, there was already a similar incident, when eight sailors and marines were captured and detained for four days.[130] The British post-incident inquiry did not establish a single cause or factor for the incident, neither did it find anyone on the British side culpable (bad communications, inadequate training etc. were cited as reasons). The available British report speculated whether it was a strategic response to Coalition activity or an opportunistic manoeuvre of an IRGCN commander.[131] It also has to be noted that the commander of HMS Cornwall was later removed from his position, and the British Ministry of Defence neither confirmed nor denied that this was an outcome of this incident.[132]

Although available British official statements do not point it out, the timing strongly suggests that the Iranian capture operation was probably at least partially a reaction to the capture of Khazali.

A few months after the capture of Khazali and some of his associates, on 29th May 2007, Peter Moore, a British citizen and four of his British bodyguards were kidnapped. Moore worked as an IT expert for the Iraqi government and was kidnapped during his work at an Iraqi government facility. Another reason for his kidnapping, according to the Guardian, was that he was installing software that would have revealed the embezzlement of foreign aid money.[133]

His capture started an enduring effort to free him. His bodyguards were executed allegedly because the British government did not meet the demands of the kidnappers,[134] and their bodies were traded for the release of Iraqi prisoners. The investigation of the Guardian alleged that Moore was taken to Iran during his captivity, and kept in a facility run by the IRGC's Quds force.[135] This was however not confirmed by the U.K. or the U.S., although

127 Borger, J. and Wintour, P. Fury as Iran shows footage of captured sailors on television. The Guardian, 29 March 2007. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/mar/29/politics.iran2

128 Iran To Free 15 Captured Brits. CBS News, 4 April 2007. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/iran-to-free-15-captured-brits/

129 Fulton et al. 2007, 1.

130 Cobbold, R. Analysis: Iranian Seizure of Royal Navy Sailors, RUSI, 26 March 2007. https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/analysis-iranian-seizure-royal-navy-sailors

131 Fulton et al. 2007, 2–3.

132 Walker, P. and agencies: HMS Cornwall commander removed after Iran hostage debacle. The Guardian, 28 July 2008. https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2008/jul/28/military.iran

133 Mahmood, M. et al. Revealed: hand of Iran behind Britons' Baghdad kidnapping. The Guardian, 30 December 2009. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/dec/30/iran-britons-baghdad-kidnapping

134 Alan McMenemy's body recovered five years after Iraq kidnap. BBC, 21 January 2012. https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-16660750 and Timeline: British hostages in Iraq. BBC, 20 January 2012. https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-13846598

135 Mahmood, M. et al. Revealed: hand of Iran behind Britons' Baghdad kidnapping, The Guardian, 30 December 2009. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/dec/30/iran-britons-baghdad-kidnapping

General Petraeus said, he suspected that Moore was kept in Iran.[136] It was assumed at the time that Khazali's group wanted to exert pressure on the British government in this way to release the Khazali brothers. After Khazali was transferred to Iraqi custody in 2010, Peter Moore was freed. Khazali's brother was released a few months prior.[137]

In June 2009, the U.S. military, in accordance with the security agreement between the U.S. and Iraq, could only operate against special groups with Iraqi approval, and the detainees that the U.S. captured were transferred to Iraq. Due to the elections, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki stopped the operations against special groups, and started to release some detainees.[138] Khazali was also set free by the Iraqi authorities and was able to continue his political career. The official explanation was that he was not accused of any crime under Iraqi law (attack on Coalition Forces was not sanctioned by Iraqi law).[139] It probably can be attributed to these political ambitions that AAH apologized to Peter Moore for kidnapping him.[140]

CONCLUSION

Looking at the publicly available information on Iran's role in Iraq in the last 20 years, we can safely say that the sustainment of hybrid warfare capabilities is not an easy undertaking, as this article has shown. Although the article has a much narrower focus, it still shows important factors from the early days of the Iranian efforts.

The cases of OMS-JAM and AAH show that creating or supporting non-state armed actors is also a very intensive challenge, as political and operational interests can go in different directions. The internal group dynamics are also very important as SCIRI and the Badr Brigades have split up,[141] and now act as political rivals, while Sadr's movement has also taken political turns, which were difficult to predict. Some of the special groups in turn have become more mainstream, like AAH, and began to organize in a political fashion as well, using the democratic process and violence to further their aims.[142] Also, Iran not only invested in Shia groups, the U.S. accused them of supporting militant Sunnis as well, providing EFPs for such groups as well, which shows that a state actor does not have to stick to like-minded groups in order to further its aims at least in the short term.[143]

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[136] 'No evidence' hostage held in Iran, al Jazeera, 1 January 2010. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2010/1/1/no-evidence-hostage-held-in-iran

[137] Chulov, M. Qais al-Khazali: from kidnapper and prisoner to potential leader. The Guardian, December 31, 2009. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/dec/31/iran-hostages-qais-al-khazali

[138] Knights, M. The Evolution of Iran's Special Groups in Iraq. CTC Sentinel, November 2010. Vol 3. Issue 11–12, 12. https://ctc.westpoint.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/CTCSentinel-Vol3Iss11-127.pdf

[139] Chulov, M. Qais al-Khazali: from kidnapper and prisoner to potential leader. The Guardian, December 31, 2009. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/dec/31/iran-hostages-qais-al-khazali

[140] Iraq hostage Peter Moore 'surprised' by Asaib Ahl al-Haq apology. BBC, July 8, 2014. https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-lincolnshire-28207352

[141] Smyth, P. Should Iraq's ISCI Forces Really Be Considered 'Good Militias'? Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2016. https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/should-iraqs-isci-forces-really-be-considered-good-militias

[142] Alaaldin, R. and Felbab-Brown, V. New vulnerabilities for Iraq's resilient Popular Mobilization Forces. Brookings Institute, February 3, 2022. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2022/02/03/new-vulnerabilities-for-iraqs-resilient-popular-mobilization-forces/

[143] Kagan 2009, 168–169.

The moves of the Iraqi government, such as Operation Charge of the Knights in 2008, which Maliki launched against the Sadrists in Basra, was also an important political twist. This caused a rift between Maliki and Sadr, with Sadr withdrawing his political support. Iran made the most of it, creating a ceasefire between the warring sides.[144]

Looking at the wider spectrum of events, the popular October revolution in Iraq in 2019 has also shown some limits, and at times the counterproductive nature of Iranian influence, with many of the Iraqi Shia demonstrators condemning Iranian influence.[145] Indeed, the Iranian consulate in Basra was torched in the forming days of the movement, which shows that this dissatisfaction was not merely philosophical.[146]

Of course, Iranian influence was significantly widened by the actions against the so-called Islamic State group, as the special groups became parts of the Popular Mobilization Forces, which was created after the successful IS offensive in 2014, creating an official structure for the Iran-supported groups.[147] In the last few years, there were signs that the coordination between Iran and the special groups has become strained on some issues.[148]

However, at the same time, it has also been true that Iranian involvement in the special groups had negative effects on its reputation in Iraq, as it has reinforced fears about the intentions of Iran. The infighting between some Iran-backed groups also casts a long shadow.[149]

The case examined in this article also shows that having extensive, close links to non-state armed groups, as much as they have an operational interest, can be very effective in supporting the creation and build-up of other non-state armed groups, although this avenue of research is still somewhat in the dark due to the lack of publicly available information. It also shows the importance of individual leaders, such as Khazali, who still plays an important role in the composition of the special groups. The records of his interrogation provide a unique insight into the organizational challenges of non-state armed groups and their further study is warranted.

The better and deeper understanding of Iran's role and operational approaches to non-state armed groups will no doubt further our knowledge about the issue of hybrid warfare.

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[144] Katzman 2009, 3.

[145] For a brief overview: Iraq's Tishreen Uprising: From Barricades to Ballot Box. International Crisis Group Middle East Report N°223, 2021, 4–11. https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/223-iraq-tishreen.pdf

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Zoltán Prantner

IRAN AS AN EMERGING "CYBER POWER"?

ABSTRACT: *Iran is continuously developing its cyber capabilities to carry out increasingly so-phisticated attacks against its regional and global adversaries, and to suppress certain social and political activities. Enforcers with varying levels of sophistication, acting on behalf of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, are engaged in a wide range of offensive cyber activities, including website content alteration, spear phishing, distributed denial of service attacks, theft of personally identifiable information or, in worse cases, the use of destructive malware, social media influence operations, and cyber-attacks with potential physical con-sequences against critical infrastructure.*

KEYWORDS: *Iran, United States of America, Gulf States, Stuxnet, cyber activity*

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INTRODUCTION

Hybrid warfare includes direct armed confrontation, cyber operations, disinformation cam-paigns and the spread of fake news. In this regard, it can be observed that Iran is currently striving for cyber dominance not only in the MENA region, but also worldwide. This is ev-idenced, inter alia, by the well-documented and varying success of Tehran's cyber-attacks against public and private sector assets to monitor or sabotage them in order to reduce the political and military power of rival states, or the dissemination of pro-Iranian messages and the telling of the 'Iran story' in an attempt to portray a more positive image of the country. The effectiveness of these efforts, however, has so far been severely limited by US economic sanctions and the recently expired UN arms embargo. As a result, Iran has essentially adopted what could be described as a 'soft war' strategy, using less regulated and non-kinetic means to achieve its goals abroad by sustaining low-level conflicts over the long term. In this respect, it sees its cyber programme as a means of asymmetric but proportionate retaliation against its political opponents. In addition, an analysis of Iran's ambitions shows that, while constantly promoting and promoting its revolutionary cause, it is constantly seeking to adapt its goals and capabilities to changes in the international environment and the new challenges it faces.

THE BACKGROUND OF IRANIAN CYBER CAPACITY

The strategy and development of Iran's cyber operations programme, launched in 2009, have been most influenced by the often state-sponsored cyber operations against the regime. In this regard, the Green Revolution of 2009, which Iranian officials simply described as

an 'insurgency', the joint US-Israeli Stuxnet[1] attack on the Natanz nuclear facility in 2010, the Duqu[2] malware identified in 2011, and the Flame[3] malware detected in 2012 were the most significant, revealing the system's vulnerabilities while allowing it to present itself as a victim. It also provided an incentive for Tehran to develop its domestic cyber capabilities in the background in an explosive way. In this respect, the establishment of the Supreme Council for Cyberspace in March 2012, following Ali Khamenei's decree on the subject, was a fundamental change.[4] The new body was tasked with developing a strategy and blueprint for controlling domestic information as well as intelligence abroad. A rather sophisticated bureaucracy has been created to realise the stated goals, while the country's overall cyber budget has more than tripled in five years.[5]

Despite the increased support, international experts say Tehran is still considered a third-tier cyber power in terms of the sophistication of its hackers, significantly below their more

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[1]   A malware spreading on Microsoft operating systems, specifically designed to target industrial process control systems. It is only triggered by the detection of the presence of specific high-speed motors and frequency converters used exclusively in Iranian uranium enrichment plants. It has destroyed at least 1000 nuclear centrifuges at Natanz, which is believed to have set back Iran's nuclear programme by about two years. Warrick, J. "Iran's Natanz nuclear facility recovered quickly from Stuxnet cyberattack". Washington Post, 16 February 2011. https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/15/AR2011021505395.html?tid=a_inl_manual, Accessed on 3 February 2022.

[2]   There is no reliable information about the Duqu's creators and the exact purpose of the series of attacks. The targets identified suggest that Duqu was used to obtain information in an industrial control system environment. Due to its modular design, it could be capable of any specific task, but its components identified so far did not contain any direct malicious programming modules, such as the PLC reprogramming component in the case of Stuxnet. Zetter, K. "Son of Stuxnet Found in the Wild on Systems in Europe". Wired, 10 October 2011. https://www.wired.com/2011/10/son-of-stuxnet-in-the-wild/, Accessed on 27 January 2022.

[3]   Flame was identified by cybersecurity and antivirus firm Kaspersky in 2012. The malware, which was believed to have been present on Iranian computer networks for two years at the time, was capable of both extracting and deleting information (e.g. documents, social media conversations or keystrokes) from hacked devices. Zetter, K. "Meet 'Flame,' The Massive Spy Malware Infiltrating Iranian Computers". Wired, 28 May 2012. https://www.wired.com/2012/05/flame/, Accessed on 27 January 2022.

[4]   The panel included the president, cabinet ministers, the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Broadcasting Service, the commander of the Iranian Republican Guard, and other senior officials from the intelligence and state security agencies. The Council's membership was reorganised in 2015, resulting in an increase in the number of ministers sitting on it. The board is accountable only to the supreme leader and cannot be held to account by parliament. Fassihi, F. "Iran's Censors Tighten Grip". The Wall Street Journal, 16 March 2012. https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702303717304577279381130395906, Accessed on 3 February 2022.

[5]   Iran's total cyber budget was around $76 million before 2011. Tehran claims that this amount has been increased to around $1 billion per year by 2016. Another striking figure is that the cybersecurity budget of the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology increased more than tenfold (from 42,073 million Iranian rials to 550,000 million) between 2013/2014 and 2015/2016. Finally, the budget for information technology infrastructure was increased by 20% following the nuclear agreement. "Iranian Internet Infrastructure and Policy Report Special Edition: The Rouhani Review (2013–15)". Small Media, February 2015, 7. https://smallmedia.org.uk/sites/default/files/u8/IIIP_Feb15.pdf, Accessed on 3 February 2022; Jones, S. "Cyber warfare: Iran opens a new front". Financial Times, 26 April 2016. https://www.ft.com/content/15e1acf0-0a47-11e6-b0f1-61f222853ff3, Accessed on 3 February 2022; Shafa, E. Iran's Emergence as a Cyber Power. Strategic Studies Institute, 20 August 2014. http://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/index.cfm/articles/Irans-emergence-as-cyber-power/2014/08/20, Accessed on 3 February 2022.

prestigious counterparts in China and Russia. The main reasons for this are international sanctions and a critical economic situation, which make it significantly more difficult for them to procure and develop high-end cybersecurity tools. They are weak on defence and rarely exploit zero-day vulnerabilities. At the same time, they make up for their lack of technical sophistication with social engineering tricks and by exploiting public vulnerabilities. They argue that this is why opportunistic Iranian APT (advanced persistent threat) groups are able to achieve success, especially against weak targets.[6]

THE EXECUTORS OF IRANIAN CYBER OPERATIONS

Following the Stuxnet attacks, the Iranian leadership attempted to set up a permanent, formal cyber organisation, but this proved to be a failure in a short time, as sanctions and insufficient technical support made it an insurmountable challenge to establish a reliable expert base. Although there were a number of suitable young candidates for the task, it was clear to the regime that they were motivated primarily by financial gain rather than political and religious vocation.[7] The response was therefore to develop a three-level approach with a network of individuals who were not formally affiliated with the government or the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, but who were loyal to the regime and religiously committed.

Accordingly, the management and oversight of primary cyber operations fall under the purview of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (Level 1). Their priorities are translated into segmented cyber tasks by their affiliated companies and front companies (Level 2), often outsourced directly to outsiders (Level 3). The process can thus be thought of as a kind of 'government tendering', whereby parties enter into a contractual agreement with each other to carry out part or all of a given target task, with payment only after the expected outcome has been achieved. The implementers therefore form a complex network of entrepreneurs, often competing with each other for contracts and greater government influence,[8] including individuals and groups as well as

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[6]   Warwick, M. "New report says China and Russia are not the cyber superpowers they are made out to be". 29 June 2021. TelecomTV. https://www.telecomtv.com/content/security/new-report-says-china-and-russia-are-not-the-cyber-superpowers-as-they-are-made-out-to-be-41853/, Accessed on 26 January 2022.

[7]   Apart from the potential bribery of candidates and the risk of recruitment by rogue intelligence services, another major problem, especially at the beginning, was that many of the talented Iranian hackers hated the system and lacked the discipline needed to work in government. Gundert, L. et al. "Iran's Hacker Hierarchy Exposed. How the Islamic Republic of Iran Uses Contractors and Universities to Conduct Cyber Operations". Recorded Future. https://go.recordedfuture.com/hubfs/reports/cta-2018-0509.pdf, Accessed on 3 February 2022.

[8]   According to the Insikt Group estimates, more than 50 organisations competed for Iranian government-funded cyber projects in 2019. It also pointed out that the latter were often collaborating with each other, as the government's objectives can often only be achieved with the cooperation of two or more companies. Iran's Cyberattacks Capabilities. King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, January 2020, 12.

private companies and domestic academic institutions.[9] They are thus not a homogeneous group and their capabilities cover a broad spectrum.

At the bottom of the executive ranking is the community of hackers and cybercriminals who are involved in politically motivated disruptive operations. They mainly seek to obtain user credentials to gain access to computer networks, which they usually try to obtain through large-scale, low-skilled, less sophisticated spear phishing attacks. However, there has been an improvement in this area in terms of spear phishing efforts and a much more sophisticated use of so-called Denial of Service (DoS) attacks[10] against Iran's adversaries in the Middle East. At the intermediate level, there are already operators who, following a predictable pattern of tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs), typically target the community network, primarily to monitor the Iranian diaspora and internal opposition groups. At the top are those who specifically seek to develop unique malicious programs and use more advanced techniques to threaten their targets, such as DNA hijacking or more familiar web exploits.[11] The Iranian cyber workforce, on the other hand, includes not only those who organise and carry out attacks, but also those who evaluate the information they obtain. The latter are often mid- and top-level contractors in the hierarchy outlined above, as the diversity of targets means that they have the expertise and technical background necessary to analyse information illegally obtained from various sources.

The specific perpetrators of the Iranian attacks have consistently sought to preserve their anonymity to avoid retaliation, and have therefore diversified their TTPs over time to mask their activity and avoid being traced. The latter has been achieved by creating fictitious groups, using publicly available malware, moving them between companies, sharing their software, code fragments, and attack infrastructure, and engaging and increasingly activating various proxy groups and organisations allied with Iran as the armed conflicts in the Middle East escalated. The latter often benefit from Tehran's material and technical support and operate under the supervision of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. In exchange for ideological conviction and assistance from the Persian state, they often take responsibility for actions against Iran's rivals, thus enabling Tehran to avoid international

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9   Iranian higher education institutions can both provide the system with a way to discover talented young people and be an active participant in Iranian cyber activity. In this respect, Shahid Beheshti University, which has a specialised cyber research institute, and Imam Hossein University, founded by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, have become particularly famous. The latter has even been sanctioned by the US government for supporting Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps operations. And a prime example of recruitment at universities is the case of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who in a speech to the university youth in 2014 asked his audience to prepare for cyber warfare. "Iran's Supreme Leader Tells Students to Prepare for Cyber War". Russia Today, February 13, 2014. https://www.rt.com/news/iran-israel-cyber-war-899/, Accessed on 29 January 2022.

10 Denial of Service (DoS) attacks are designed to overload information systems, services or network resources to the point where they become unavailable or unable to perform their intended functions for their intended users. The objective is usually achieved by flooding the targeted machine or resource with unnecessary requests to overload it with artificially increased traffic and prevent legitimate requests from being fulfilled. The effectiveness of this type of attack is significantly increased when carried out by more complex, interconnected systems from multiple locations at the same time, known as a distributed denial of service (DDoS) attack. The use of this method was particularly popular among Iranian hackers in 2011–2013. Mezei K. "A DDoS-támadások büntetőjogi szabályozása az Egyesült Államokban, Európában és Magyarországon". Pro Futuro, 8(1), 2018, 66–67. https://doi.org/10.26521/Profuturo/2018/1/4674

11 Leyden, J. "Iranian cyber-threat groups make up for lack of technical sophistication with social engineering trickery". The Daily Swing, 1 July 2021. https://portswigger.net/daily-swig/iranian-cyber-threat-groups-make-up-for-lack-of-technical-sophistication-with-social-engineering-trickery, Accessed on 25 January 2022.

condemnation. However, in some cases, the Iranian state has made little effort to conceal its involvement, mainly in actions against civil and financial sector actors, essentially for propaganda purposes. In fact, it has been able to demonstrate both the vulnerability of the rival state and its own cyber capabilities and assertiveness vis-à-vis its global adversaries through the cases that have been brought to light.

TARGETS AND MOTIVES FOR CYBER OPERATIONS

As the background base has developed, expanded and evolved, the motives and targets of Iranian cyber operations have diversified. Reasons for deployment have included the intention of regional power projection, to monitor the regime's political opponents and symbolically attack its historical adversaries (notably the United States, Saudi Arabia,[12] the United Arab Emirates[13] and Israel), to retaliate against sanctions imposed by the international community, to support the growth of key domestic industries, and to steal unpublished research and intellectual property[14] from universities and academic institutions.[15] Accordingly, the targets of the attacks have been mainly government and military facilities, transport and travel companies, telecommunications operators and other critical national infrastructure, key industrial facilities in the Middle East region's economy (such as Saudi Aramco or Qatar's RasGas oil companies), dissidents, scientists, academic and scientific institutions, and defence companies. When all these targets are compared with the types of cyber-attacks commonly used, it can be said that the theft of Internet Protocol (IP) addresses and information mainly affects governments, manufacturers, academia, and dissidents. The wider support for access is mostly seen in the case of telecom operators and travel com-

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[12] According to a survey, 95% of Saudi businesses experienced a cyber-threat to their operations in 2019. 85% of respondents reported a dramatic increase in the number of attacks affecting their business between 2017 and 2019 that severely affected both business operations (e.g. customer and employee data loss, ransomware payouts, theft and other financial losses) and operational technology. Tashkandi, H. "Cyberattacks hit 95% of Saudi businesses last year, says study". Arab News, 12 August 2020. https://www.arabnews.com/node/1718596/saudi-arabia, Accessed on 27 January 2022.

[13] According to the United Arab Emirates' cybersecurity chief, there was a 250% increase in the number of cyberattacks targeting the Gulf state in 2020, following the normalisation of relations with Israel. "Cyberattacks in UAE up 250% during pandemic, Emirati cyber chief says". Al-Monitor, 7 December 2020. https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2020/12/cyber-attacks-uae-israel-kuwaiti-pandemic-whatsapp.html, Accessed on 27 January 2022.

[14] The US Department of Justice, for example, blamed the Mabna Institute, a subsidiary of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, for a targeted spear phishing campaign targeting 144 US and 176 other higher education institutions and more than 100,000 professors' email accounts worldwide between 2013 and 2017. The actions resulted in the illegal access of some 31.5 terabytes of scientific data worth a total of $3.4 billion from US universities alone, which was then used to upgrade Iran's infrastructure and technology or sold to domestic users. Hochberg, L. "Iran's cyber future". MEI@75, 23 February 2021. https://www.mei.edu/publications/irans-cyber-future, Accessed on 27 January 2022; Publicly Reported Iranian Cyber Actions in 2019. https://www.csis.org/programs/technology-policy-program/publicly-reported-iranian-cyber-actions-2019, Accessed on 26 January 2022; US FBI. Iranian Mabna Hackers. https://www.fbi.gov/wanted/cyber/iranian-mabna-hackers, Accessed on 27 January 2022.

[15] Parsons, E. and Michael, G. "Understanding the Cyber Threat from Iran". F-Secure, April 2019. https://www.f-secure.com/en/consulting/our-thinking/understanding-the-cyber-threat-from-iran, Accessed on 26 January 2022.

panies. Finally, the intent to cause harm was most evident in the petrochemical industry and, in some cases, in government targets.[16]

The development of cyber capabilities is closely linked to Iran's nuclear programme at several points. By developing a nuclear weapon, Tehran would have gained a hegemonic position in the region and increased its support among the domestic public, while deterring rivals. With all this theoretically nullified by international sanctions and the nuclear deal, the Iranian state leadership began to use its cyber capabilities as an alternative means to achieve its original objectives and to avenge the restrictions imposed by the international community, especially after the US withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

IRANIAN CYBER ACTIONS

Following the formation of the Supreme Council for Cyberspace, Iran carried out a number of cyber operations around the world over the past ten years, most of which have targeted PCs. All of these attacks were motivated by two main, not necessarily mutually exclusive, reasons. The first and more pronounced effort was primarily aimed at intelligence gathering and discreetly targeting a particular system with targeted and systematically developed malicious software, while not seeking to affect the operation of the facility. The detailed information collected and systematised was clearly intended to be used as power projection against targets following an adverse turn in diplomatic relations.[17] This was illustrated by the global cyber detection and infiltration campaign (Operation Clever[18]) conducted by Iran on a global scale between 2012 and 2014, or the intrusion into the flood protection system of the Bowman Avenue Dam in Rye Brook, New York, in August and September 2013.[19] The second, less dominant reason in terms of its proportions, was the launch of retaliatory attacks using rapid, sloppily planned and less sophisticated methods, which could be seen as a certain response to attacks on specific Iranian interests and facilities. Accordingly, Iranian hackers were involved in DDoS attacks against a number of major US financial firms and banks (Operation Ababil) from December 2011 to May 2013 in retaliation for the financial sanctions imposed by the Obama administration.[20] In addition, proxies linked to the Iranian regime used destructive malware to strike the Sands Casino in Las Vegas in

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[16]   Iran's Cyberattacks Capabilities … 15.

[17]   Brennan, D. "U.S. Expects Iranian Cyber Attacks in Retaliation to New Sanctions, Experts Say". Newsweek, 8 August 2018. https://www.newsweek.com/us-expects-iranian-cyber-attacks-retaliation-new-sanctions-experts-say-1062977, Accessed on 26 January 2022.

[18]   According to research by Cylance Inc., the Iranian cyber operation affected more than 50 entities in 16 countries, including the United States, Israel, China, Saudi Arabia, India, Germany, France and the United Kingdom. Cylance. Operation Clever. https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/Cylance-Operation-Cleaver-Report-1748-1833.pdf, Accessed on 3 February 2022.

[19]   "Iranian hackers 'targeted' New York dam". BBC, 21 December 2015. https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-35151492, Accessed on 26 January 2022.

[20]   During the above-mentioned period, approximately 46 U.S. financial institutions suffered DDoS attacks for a total of at least 176 days, for which the seven-member Iranian Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Cyber Fighters Group claimed responsibility in the most intense phase. Chabrow, E. "7 Iranians Indicted for DDoS Attacks against U.S. Banks". Bankinfo Security, 24 March 2016. https://www.bankinfosecurity.com/7-iranians-indicted-for-ddos-attacks-against-us-banks-a-8989, Accessed on 26 January 2022.

2014 due to the owner's public anti-Iranian statements,[21] while cyber-attacks against Saudi Aramco and RasGas in Qatar were intended to avenge a cyber-attack on an Iranian oil facility in 2012. Iran has also initiated cyber-attacks to protect or support its allies in the region, such as the DDoS attack on Israel Defence Forces infrastructure during the 2014 Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[22]

Since 2016, with the outbreak of the current Saudi-Iranian proxy war, there has been a shift in emphasis in Iran's cyber strategy from intelligence gathering to initiating and executing sophisticated attacks that have caused immediate damage. This was demonstrated, inter alia, by the repeated use of Shamoon, a reverse-designed version of Stuxnet, against a number of Saudi government agencies, oil organisations and ministries.[23] The devastating virus rendered thousands of workstations unusable by destroying hard drives, deleting data, overwriting files, and making computers unavailable for power-up.[24] The attacks were followed by a lack of retaliatory response of similar intensity from rivals, providing an incentive for Tehran not only to continue its cyber operations but also to intensify them.

A year later, an advanced version of the virus targeted the Italian oil company Saipem and caused hundreds of corporate servers and personal computers to crash in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Scotland, and India. A similar action was carried out against Bapco, Bahrain's national oil company in 2019, a series of attacks hit the water infrastructure in Israel in 2020, and Iranian cyber spy groups targeted the 2018 mid-term elections and the 2020 presidential election in the United States. For example, a federal grand jury in New York indicted two Iranian nationals on 16th November 2021 for cyber-based disinformation activities. Among other things, they were charged with illegal obtaining data on more than 100,000 voters. They also sent threatening letters to tens of thousands of Democratic voters on behalf of the far-right Proud Boys in support of Donald Trump's presidential campaign, and disseminated disinformation about alleged vulnerabilities in election infrastructure.[25]

In addition to the attacks abroad, Tehran is also using its cyber capabilities to monitor and contain domestic discontent. Internet access has been cut off for the majority of the population following the killing of hundreds of protesters and bystanders by Iranian security forces over five days in November 2019 during a series of protests over a major fuel price hike.

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[21]   Sheldon Gary Adelson, founder, chairman and CEO of Las Vegas Sands Corporation, publicly proposed in the fall of 2013 that the United States strike Iran with a nuclear weapon. Pagliery, J. "Iran hacked an American casino, U.S. says". CNN Business, 27 February 2015. https://money.cnn.com/2015/02/27/technology/security/iran-hack-casino/index.html, Accessed on 26 January 2022; Shwayder, M. "Adelson: US should drop atomic bomb on Iran". The Jerusalem Post, 24 October 2013. https://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/Adelson-US-should-drop-atomic-bomb-on-Iran-329641, Accessed on 3 February 2022.

[22]   Defense Intelligence Agency. Iran Military Power: Ensuring Regime Survival and Securing Regional Dominance. August 2019, 36. https://www.iranwatch.org/sites/default/files/iran_military_power_v13b_lr.pdf, Accessed on 2 February 2022.

[23]   Iran has used Shamoon to attack targets on at least three occasions, with Shamoon 1 causing the most damage, as the protection developed against the malware has significantly reduced the effectiveness of later versions. Deployments of later versions have therefore focused primarily on less prepared targets and on more vulnerable supply chains to key targets. Iran's Cyberattacks Capabilities … 15–16.

[24]   Ms. Smith. "Saudi Arabia again hit with disk-wiping malware Shamoon 2". CSO, 24 January 2017. https://www.csoonline.com/article/3161146/saudi-arabia-again-hit-with-disk-wiping-malware-shamoon-2.html, Accessed on 26 January 2022.

[25]   Mangan, D. and Breuninger, K. "Two Iranians charged with spreading election disinformation, threatening people to vote for Trump". CNBC, 18 November 2021. https://www.cnbc.com/2021/11/18/two-iranians-charged-by-feds-in-election-interference-to-aid-trump-.html, Accessed on 4 February 2022.

A similar action was taken in February 2021, when internet bandwidth was restricted after days of bloody protests erupted in Baluchistan province following the killing of fuel traders. These drastic measures were accompanied by continued restrictions on digital rights and internet freedom, a clear reaction by the regime to the increasing activity of opposition protest organisers in the digital space. It also regularly infiltrates the websites and email accounts of political dissidents using open source research, and regularly censors their communications and the online content they share. This is complemented by an aggressive and effective disinformation campaign, using social pseudo-media accounts to share and promote false information to influence public opinion, reduce social tensions and create a positive image of the country.

In addition to political opponents and internal opposition groups, the surveillance of the Iranian diaspora is also a continuing priority for the Iranian regime's cyber operations. In this case, the specific individuals are mainly targeted through spear phishing attacks and SMS messages to induce them to open malicious links or attachments. For example, in February 2021, the Dutch public broadcaster Dutch Public Service Broadcasting reported that the Iranian regime used a Dutch server linked to an Iranian base to collect data on dissidents in the Iranian diaspora.

OUTLOOK

The new US foreign policy towards Iran, i.e. to seek a diplomatic solution and negotiate, raises the possibility that Tehran's hostile relationship with the international community could be normalised. However, even if the latter were to happen, it may not significantly reduce the cyber threat posed by Iran. This is evidenced, inter alia, by the fact that the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps is currently lobbying for a parliamentary rewrite of laws governing internet use to improve state control and further increase the effectiveness of intelligence capabilities. Its aim is clearly to establish a national intranet and disconnect Iran from the global internet network. To this end, regime-backed front companies have already produced spyware-enabled mobile apps and VPNs, several of which are already available on the global mobile app market.[26] In addition, it is almost certain that the improvement of Shamoon continues, which Iran will presumably use against its adversaries.

Finally, there is the closer cooperation with China, declared in 2019, and the cybersecurity cooperation agreement signed with Russia on 26th January 2021. Although these agreements are formally aimed at improving information technology and closing defence gaps, they nevertheless increase the challenge for Iran's rivals in the region and provide an opportunity for the transfer of foreign technology to Iranian proxy organisations operating in the region.[27] This being said, even as relations with Tehran improve, it will be of paramount

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[26] Piroti, M. "The Ever-Growing Iranian Cyber Threat". BESA Centre Perspectives Paper, No. 2.160, 26 September 2021. https://besacenter.org/iran-cyber-threat/, Accessed on 25 January 2022.

[27] Doffman, Z. "Cyber Warfare Threat Rises As Iran And China Agree 'United Front' Against U.S.". Forbes, 6 July 2019. https://www.forbes.com/sites/zakdoffman/2019/07/06/iranian-cyber-threat-heightened-by-chinas-support-for-its-cyber-war-on-u-s/?sh=7a4fba5f42eb, Accessed on 27 January 2022. El-Masry, A. "The Abraham Accords and their cyber implications: How Iran is unifying the region's cyberspace". MEI@75, 9 June 2021. https://www.mei.edu/publications/abraham-accords-and-their-cyber-implications-how-iran-unifying-regions-cyberspace, Accessed on 27 January 2022.

importance to continuously monitor the development of Iran's cyber capabilities, identify the challenges they pose and develop effective cyber defence policies to address them.

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Péter Balogh

COMPLEX CHALLENGE OF COMPLEX SOCIETIES: HYBRID THREATS OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM

ABSTRACT: *The paper outlines some remarks concerning the conceptual background of hybrid warfare. Focusing on the wider societal aspect of the phenomenon it suggests that legitimacy can be considered a key element of hybrid conflicts and proposes that such concepts as channels and embeddedness may be fruitful to interpret the processes and patterns on which hybrid threats are based. This section also introduces a kind of network approach. These elements of the presentation may contribute to a better illustration and comprehension of certain characteristics of hybrid warfare in complex societies. After briefly outlining the methodology of the empirical research, the second part of the paper introduces some of the results of case studies. It covers a wide scope of the research problem, so the processes and patterns introduced in the first section are demonstrated using various examples. That is, in the case studies the hybrid operation potential of both interest-driven states and ideologically motivated non-state actors is outlined. The case studies have a specific focus on contemporary cyber operations and the informational and cognitive dimensions of influence operations. The empirical examples cover relevant elements concerning Europe, and imply that hybrid actors can find several ways to enforce their will. Finally, the outcomes and research results are summarized, also addressing the problem of employing non-military and military approaches in light of the complexity of hybrid conflicts.*

KEYWORDS: *hybrid warfare theories and concepts, influence, embeddedness, network*

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INTRODUCTION − HYBRID WARFARE

The concept of hybrid warfare has become a rather important and widely employed model since the notion appeared in the scientific sphere in 2002. Besides that, the theory of hybrid warfare represents a rather complex, multi-faceted phenomenon of the New Millennium. A further notable feature of the concept is a single scholarly interpretation for it does not exist. That is, the concept itself is a subject of debate: in light of the efforts of military scientists Somodi and Kiss[1] to systematize the different international approaches of hybrid warfare, four different directions of interpretation can be explored. Based on their literature review the authors argue that some consider hybrid warfare a (1) completely new phenomenon. In this sense hybrid warfare seems to be a rather flexible form of applying and integrating methods and operations in order to achieve the objectives of the hybrid actor, with

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[1]   Kiss, Á. P. – Somodi, Z. "A hibrid hadviselés fogalmának értelmezése a nemzetközi szakirodalomban". Honvédségi Szemle, 2019, 147 (6), 22–28.

a strategic advantage that stems from uncertainty and the delayed and/or improper reaction of the attacked country.[2] The second – partially different – approach considers hybrid warfare (2) not entirely new, but still it has certain novelties. This perspective argues that certain elements connected to the 21st century form of hybrid warfare can be found in earlier conflicts and wars throughout history, however, in certain aspects hybrid warfare proves to be unique. On the one hand the purposeful and rather effective coordination of several different methods and activities in various domains characterizes hybrid warfare, on the other hand the important role of the cyber sphere can be recognized as a novel feature.[3] Another interpretation emphasizes that the concept of hybrid warfare characterizes much more those who employ it to describe and understand the activities of the adversary (in this case dominantly the Russian Federation), rather than being useful to better comprehend the real picture. Accordingly, this third type of interpretation expresses that (3) hybrid warfare has not got any novelties.[4] In contrast, the fourth group of interpretation can be linked to the scholars of Russian military science and argues that hybrid warfare can be considered as (4) the strategy of the Western states against Russia. In this sense, hybrid warfare can be a new and effective method to destabilize and weaken the Russian Federation[5] – of which the objective is a significant element of the Russian threat perception.[6] The authors emphasize that in the case of the first interpretation – hybrid warfare as a completely new phenomenon – the clashes of narratives prove to be a significant element of hybrid warfare, however – in a somewhat contradictory manner – the concept of hybrid warfare itself also seems to be embedded in a kind of narrative contest.

This specific kind of conflict can be characterized with a high level of complexity: different conceptual sources identify and highlight several sectors or domains that can become affected in the case of a hybrid conflict.

Kiss[7] describes a concept of hybrid warfare in order to illustrate the distinct relevant areas of operation and also highlights the importance of coordination and synchronization of action among these sectors. The model nominates six different segments which represent the system of the society attacked by hybrid operation: the military, political, economic, social, the information and infrastructural areas can be distinguished and utilized in order to illustrate and understand the complex procedures hybrid operators can carry out. The interpretation proves to be rather useful as it differentiates between the direct and indirect effects of an attack, and highlights that certain additional, indirect effects can cross actual segments.

In their model Bekkers, Meessen and Lassche[8] employ a similar approach with an emphasis on the need of synchronization among a total of five different sectors. When investigating the areas of horizontal and vertical escalation, the concept employs DIMEL model

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2   Somodi – Kiss "A hibrid hadviselés fogalmának értelmezése a nemzetközi szakirodalomban". 22–23.

3   Somodi – Kiss "A hibrid hadviselés fogalmának értelmezése a nemzetközi szakirodalomban". 24.

4   Somodi – Kiss "A hibrid hadviselés fogalmának értelmezése a nemzetközi szakirodalomban". 25.

5   Somodi – Kiss "A hibrid hadviselés fogalmának értelmezése a nemzetközi szakirodalomban". 26.

6   In this regard it seems worth to be mentioned, that when characterising the second form of interpretation – hybrid warfare is not novel, but still it is –, the authors also add, that NATO has employed a similar, hybrid-like approach in Iraq and Afghanistan with a coordination of complex methods in different domains (Somodi – Kiss 2019, 24), which indicates that the allied forces could have capabilities, competences and experience in hybrid-like multi-domain approach.

7   Kiss Á. P. "A hibrid hadviselés természetrajza". Honvédségi Szemle, 2019, 147 (4), 17–37.

8   Bekkers, F. et al. "Hybrid Conflicts: The New Normal?" The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2018.

which extends the classical DIME[9] (diplomatic, informational, military, economic instruments) by incorporating the legal (L) segment. They contrast the intentional and perceptional dimensions of hybrid operations and accordingly highlight the role of terminology, narratives, and even the transformation of the interpretation of an actual event in light of the evolution of the situation.

Complexity of hybrid warfare can also be illustrated if we consider the several possible dimensions of attack Richterová[10] introduces. The concept integrates privatized power, terrorist, cyber, diplomatic power to military, political and economic power. Furthermore, it argues that civil power and media power can also be utilized against the national, governmental, international domains, critical infrastructure, financial market, media, the research and scientific sector, education and civil society – a total number of nine particular spheres.

However, the rather multi-faceted and complex conceptual model of hybrid warfare[11] introduces 40 tools that can be applied when trying to organize a hybrid operation against thirteen different possible domains. In this case, the military and defence sector is supplemented with infrastructure, cyber sphere, space, economy, culture, social or societal segment, public administration, legal sphere, intelligence, political domain, diplomacy, and information.

The theoretical frameworks, conceptualisations and models of hybrid warfare briefly introduced above illustrate that the military can be regarded a significant domain of the operations in a hybrid context, but it is not the most important or even the dominant sector when the problem of defence evolves. Before introducing the interpretation applied in our investigation it seems fruitful to highlight the concept and arguments about the role of the military in hybrid warfare by Schmid.[12] The author brings several reasons towards a shift of the perception on hybrid warfare when defining the main characteristics of the phenomena. According to the empirical experience based on the Ukrainian events since 2014, the researcher explores three characteristics of hybrid warfare: (1) a wide range of methods and means of the military domain can be applied in this specific type of conflict, however, the focus of the activities is based on primarily non-military ones – politics, morale, legitimacy. Military forms of power represent essential methods to facilitate and support the non-military domains to succeed. The primacy of non-military activities in the decision of a hybrid war can also be confirmed by the argument that (2) hybrid warfare exists and operates in a transitional space between war and peace, taking advantage of activities in the gray zone and vulnerabilities of combinations of internal and external factors. Therefore, hybrid warfare becomes a highly refined, versatile and integrated form of conflict when (3) applying both civilian and open forms of fighting, and military or covert methods in a coordinated way at the same time. Accordingly, this revised concept of hybrid warfare illustrates an approach that emphasizes the need to move away from a military-centric perception towards a concept of hybrid warfare that is dominantly based on non-military

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9   For a reconstruction and interpretation of hybrid warfare from a DIME perspective see Lowe, D. – Pitinanondha, T. "Conceptualisation of Hybrid Warfare". Defence Science and Technology Group, Australia, 2015.

10 Richterová, J. "NATO and Hybrid Threats". Prague Students Summit, Background report. Asociace pro mezinárodní otázky (AMO), Prague, 2015.

11 Giannopoulos, G. et al. "The Landscape of Hybrid Threats: A conceptual model". EUR 30585 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2021.

12 Schmid, J. "Hybrid warfare on the Ukrainian battlefield: developing theory based on empirical evidence". Journal on Baltic Security, 2019, 5(1): 5–15.

aspects,[13] also involving the replacement of a hierarchical perspective with a more composite and multi-related structure (Figure 1).
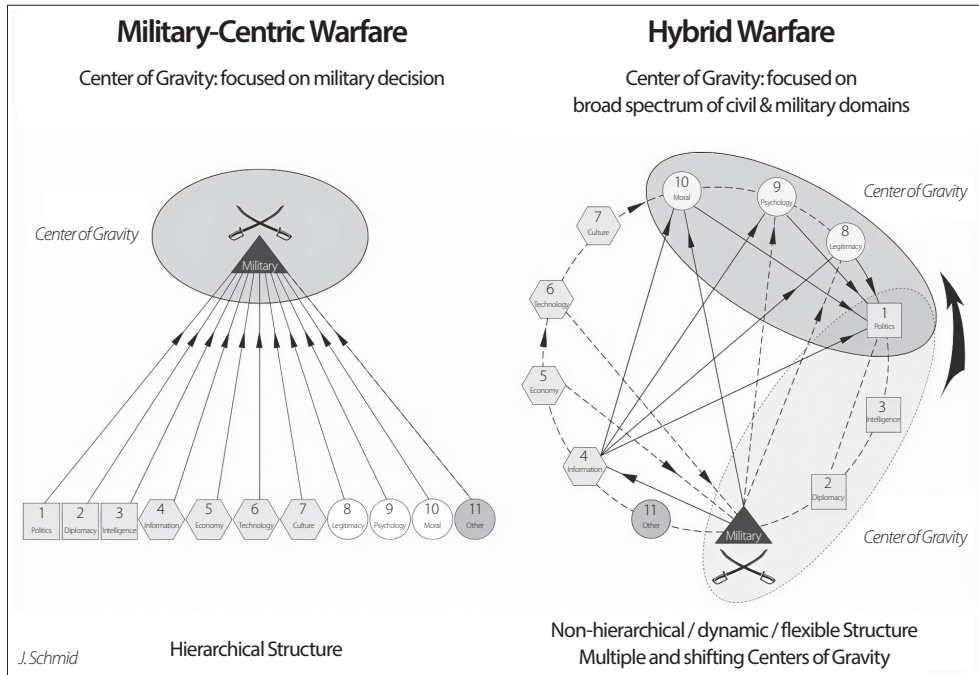

Figure 1 *The difference between Military-Centric Warfare and Hybrid Warfare*
(1: Politics, 2: Diplomacy, 3: Intelligence, 4: Information, 5: Economy, 6: Technology,
7: Culture, 8: Legitimacy, 9: Psychology, 10: Moral, 11: Other)
Source: *Schmid 2015, 15.*[14]

APPROACH OF THE INVESTIGATION

In order to introduce the conceptual approach our study has been based on, it is useful to start with the widely known thought from Clausewitz,[15] that war is a continuation of politics with different measures. Conversely, in this aspect we could also argue that politics is the *continuation of war* using different methods. In this regard, the connection between warfare and politics might direct our attention towards the notion of legitimacy, which can be considered a central element of the problem.

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[13] Regarding the number of different sectors relevant from the perspective of hybrid operations, this concept proves to be an intermediate one as it describes eleven domains – besides military politics, diplomacy, intelligence, information, economy, technology, culture, legitimacy, psychology, moral are included, supplemented with category other as well (Schmid, J. "Hybrid warfare on the Ukrainian battlefield". 15.).

[14] Schmid, J. "Hybrid warfare on the Ukrainian battlefield". 15.

[15] Clausewitz, C. v. "A háborúról". Zrínyi Kiadó, Budapest, 2016.

As classical social scientific arguments point out,[16] an actor can reach his or her objective by using physical pressure or the threat thereof, in order to make others behave according to his will – even against the will of others. This is the case of *power,* which might be related to warfare regarding the possibility of threatening or applying physical pressure or violent methods to make others comply with the actor's will. The other possibility is *authority,* in which case the actor's will is coupled with the acceptance of others regarding the actor's control. *Legitimacy* offers obedience of the ones controlled, which might be based on various factors.[17]

Accordingly, in this investigation we propose that hybrid threats or hybrid warfare might be interpreted as a specific form of attempt by various actors to impose their will: they seek to act – at least seemingly – legitimately and try to appear as actors that have a certain level of authority regarding the ones they wish to control. Similarly, hybrid operations can be considered as measures that *enable the actors to reach their objectives reinforced with authority,* instead of methods based on power.[18] In some cases these operations might even cause the weakening of the actually legitimate actor. At this point, it should be emphasized, that legitimacy and the chance to become an – at least partially or seemingly – authorized actor stem from the population sought to be controlled. This raises the question of how a population can be convinced and encouraged to accept an actor's will.

One possible option is to make the population familiar with the values, objectives, methods etc. offered by the actor and make them feel that these values and objectives are desirable, acceptable, and worth following. At this stage emerges the problem of *influence*.

In order to illustrate the problem of influence in this context, it can be fruitful to invoke the concept of complex security, consisting of six different sectors of security.[19] Hybrid operations enable their initiators to influence the population planned to be controlled by penetrating certain security sectors. By addressing the economic sector with a direct measure – for example with development and investment programs – a possible indirect effect can be reached towards the political sector (see Figure 2).

In our research project we propose to refer to these direct impacts as possible *entry points,* and argue that if certain entry points prove to be functional and effective, then certain kind of *channels of influence* might emerge or be created. In this way, hybrid operations could be interpreted as efforts made by an actor to channel its will towards others to enable control.

We can complement or exceed this static model on the one hand (1) if we suppose, that a certain channel – after some time – can result in changes that *offer further entry points* and create *potential channels* (Figure 3). In this way, an actor can reach more security sectors as well, and might become more and more *embedded* in the targeted society.

On the other hand, if there are (2) multiple channels available, their operation and effects can be organized, coordinated and synchronized in a way that the impacts reinforce each other and multiply the potential of control and influence (see Figure 4).

16 Weber, Max. "Gazdaság és társadalom. A megértő szociológia alapvonalai I". Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyv-kiadó, Budapest, 1987.

17 Weber, M. "Gazdaság és társadalom". 77., 221–225.; see also Farkas, Z. "A hatalom és az uralom fogalma". Politikatudományi Szemle, 2011, XX/2, 31–49.

18 Note that all conceptual frames introduced above identify political sphere as a specific domain of hybrid warfare, furthermore several models contain legal domain as a relevant one (see for example Bekkers – Meessen – Lassche. "Hybrid Conflicts: The New Normal?", Giannopoulos – Smith – Theocharidou. "The Landscape of Hybrid Threats".)

19 Buzan, B. et al. "A biztonsági elemzés új keretei". In Póti, L. (ed.) Nemzetközi biztonsági tanulmányok. Zrínyi Kiadó, Budapest, 2006, 53–112.

Another possible case worth mentioning can emerge when (3) other actors appear in the scene, and the actual legitimate governing actor needs to consider several possible challengers with several possible networks of influence channels (see Figure 5).
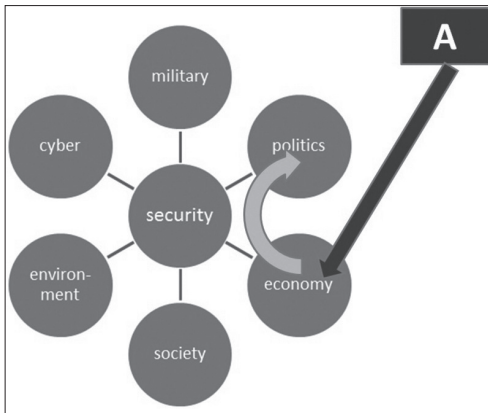

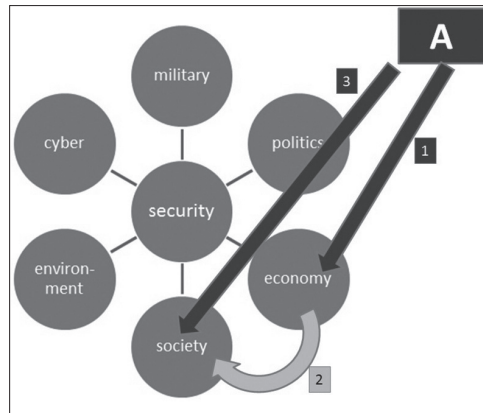Figure 2 *Direct and indirect effects by Actor (A) in the security sector of a society (Edited by the author)*

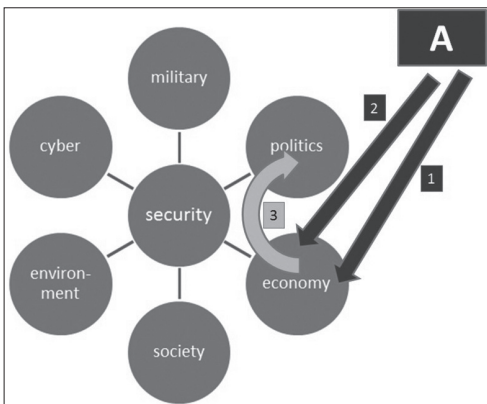Figure 3 *Direct and indirect effects by Actor (A) to create further entry point (Edited by the author)*

Figure 4 *Multiple coordinated direct effects by Actor (A) to increase influence potential (Edited by the author)*
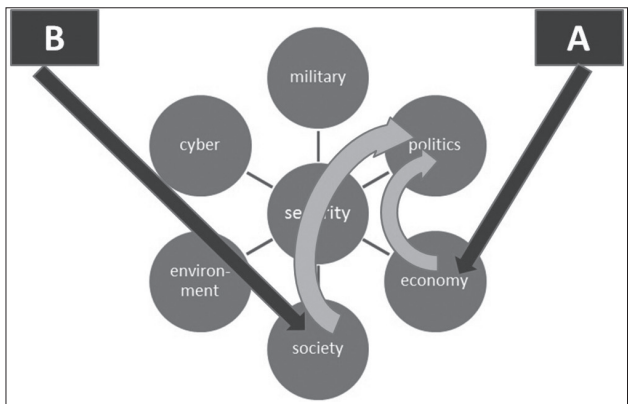
Figure 5 *Multiple actors (A, B) initiating direct and indirect effects (Edited by the author)*

The cases introduced above illustrate different possible forms of channels, effects, and influence. However, other cases can also be described. Furthermore, under realistic conditions these forms can be combined and coordinated by the initiators, leading to rather complex channels of influence adapted to the actual circumstances. It should also be emphasized, that a similar kind of channels can not only be *intentionally created* by a hybrid threat actor, but might also *emerge* due to different social processes, and the latter ones may also play significant roles and have important effects.[20]

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[20] In the empirical investigations we make efforts to illustrate this rather interesting pattern.

Accordingly, we suppose that this *process of channelling control* and the *patterns of embeddedness* seem to be both important and interesting aspects of hybrid threats, and worth investigating in order to better comprehend the challenge they pose. In the next section, we investigate the topic with empirical case studies. Our empirical case studies are based on a quantitative approach supplemented with network analysis methods: we reconstruct control channels and patterns of embeddedness based on two basic, directed dyadic relations: A initiates an action (X) that is directed toward a certain security sector of B, which serves as an intermediary (see Figure 6).
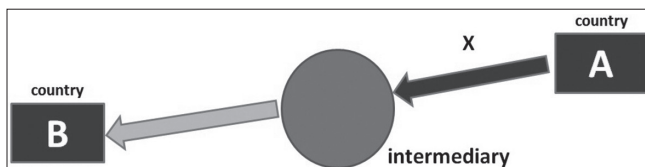
Figure 6 *Basic model of control channels in two-actor relation*
(Edited by the author)

METHODOLOGICAL REMARKS

During the methodological design and preparation of the investigation we made efforts to explore possible data sources and gather data to elaborate quantitative case studies. The sources included academic publications, policy papers, registers available online, official data and statistics, as well as research outputs of other academic and policy research organizations. Based on this information complex datasets were assembled regarding the four case studies.

The case studies included two state actors, and two non-state actors were also investigated. Besides China and Russia as the two potential challengers of Western dominance and primarily the United States, a global inclusive social development movement aiming to facilitate equity and fairness towards discriminated minority groups, finally a jihadist extremist networks were also addressed. The latter ones are to illustrate the importance of the social aspects and that the activities of certain non-state actors might also be relevant in regards to the channelling issue, and may even have – an unintended – effect on the security structure of societies.

The case studies have a focus on, but not limited to, the European Union and NATO countries.

RESEARCH RESULTS − CASE STUDIES (CS)

CS1 and CS2 − China and Russia

Considering global firepower, defence budget values and ranks, it proves to be indisputable that the United States of America is the most significant and powerful state in the global sphere.[21] However, China and Russia seem to be the two main challengers of the US and

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[21] See for example: https://www.statista.com/chart/20418/most-powerful-militaries/, https://www.iiss.org/blogs/military-balance/2019/02/european-nato-defence-spending-up and https://twitter.com/iiss_org/status/1396793354143289348

the recent status quo, with a presumable intent and urge to catch up with and reduce the dominance of the US.

However, China and Russia seem to compensate their relative disadvantage not only in hard power: the non-kinetic domain of cyber activities proves to be a potential area to build capacities and carry out operations without possessing the most advanced physical requisites – for example warships or tanks – of hard power. This can be corroborated if we consider a recent network of state-sponsored cyber operations (see Graph 1), where China and Russia prove to be the first and second most notable actors in a triplet with Iran.
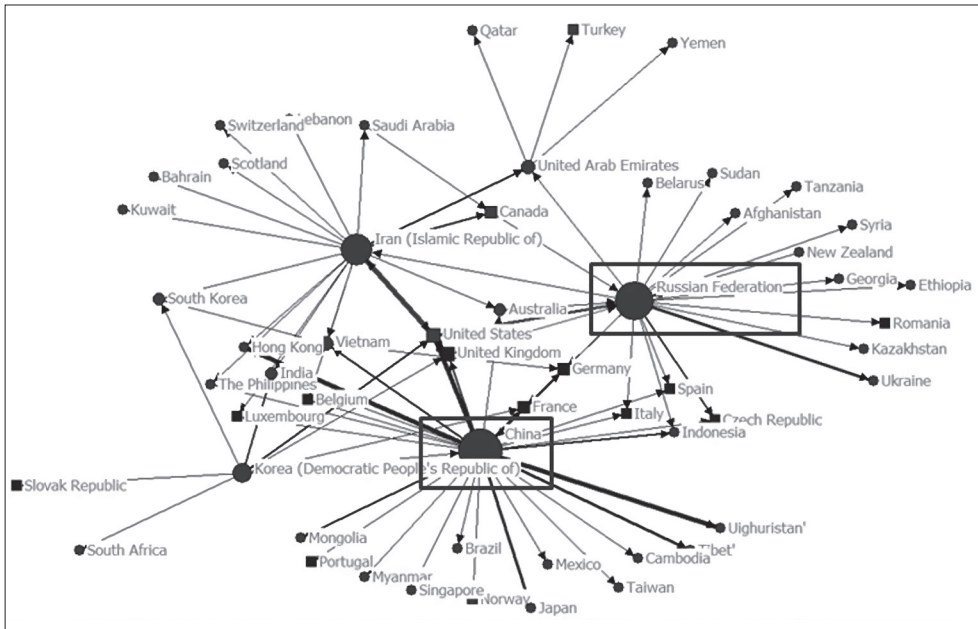
Graph 1 *Network of state-sponsored cyber operations (2019)*
(Edited by the author based on complex database)

Accordingly, in the first case study we made efforts to collect extensive data about possible entry points and channels regarding China. Based on the present results, three types of intermediaries could be mapped: the above mentioned (1) cyber operations, (2) cultural institutes as a form of soft power or cultural diplomacy, and (3) economic investment and development projects. These links and channels create a rather large-scale network of influence potential reaching several countries globally – latter ones can be found in the outer circle on the graph.

Some *multiplex relations* can be explored in the former case of China as well, however, the case study about Russia illustrates better this specific kind of tie, when more types of channels are present in a country – with the potential to multiply influence. This can be seen in the examples of Ukraine or the United States, and might be explained as there can be explored four types of channels in the network of the Russian case: besides (1) cultural institutions and (2) cyber operations, (3) extremist political formations and (4) internet trolls can also be identified as potential mediators between the investigated countries. These characteristics result in a smaller but more structured network in this case.
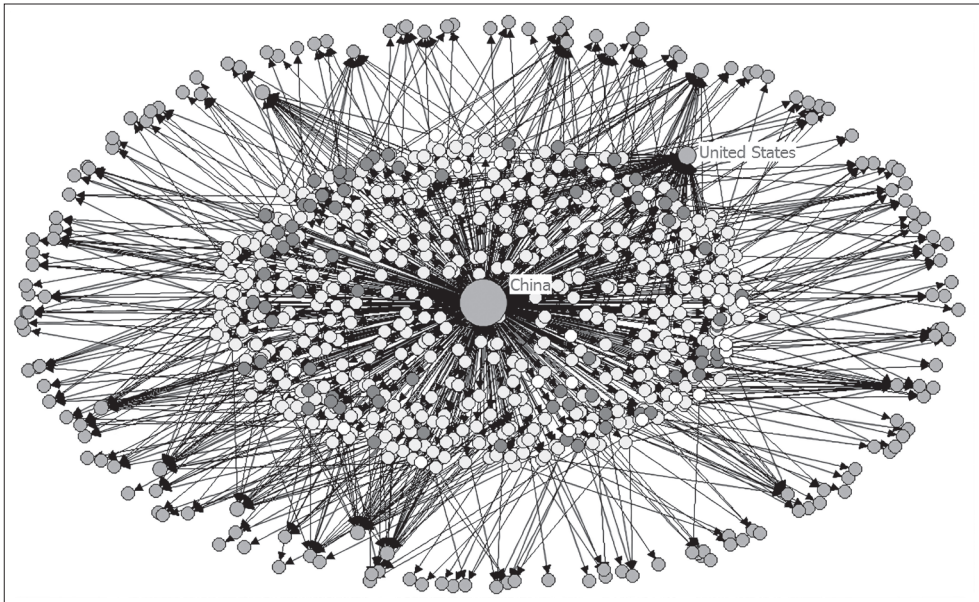
Graph 2 *Network of China illustrating three channel types*
(Edited by the author based on complex database)
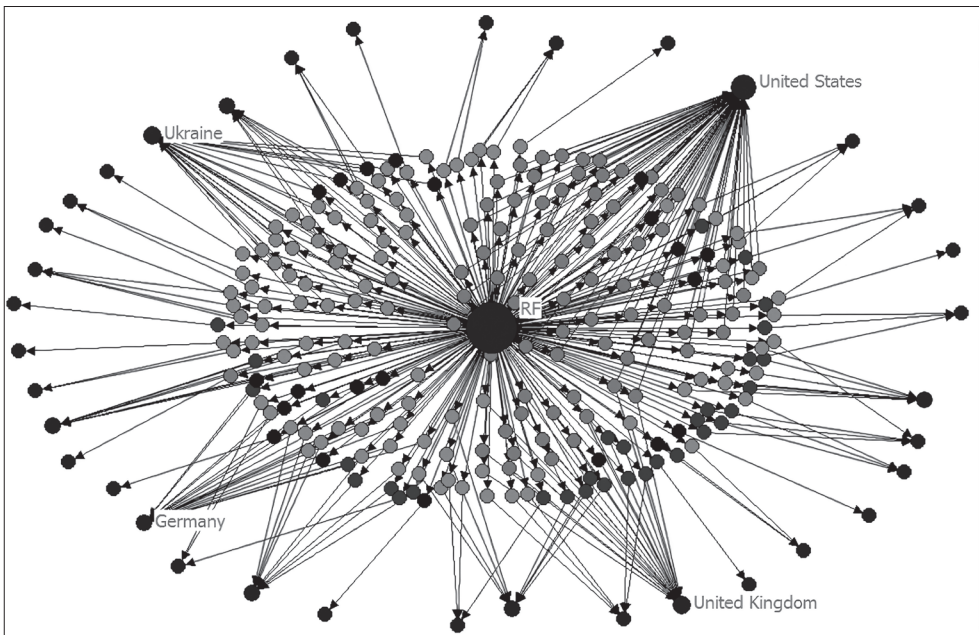
Graph 3 *Network of the Russian Federation illustrating four channel types*
(Edited by the author based on complex database)

Although the data sources and data coverage are not standardised between the case studies of China and Russia – therefore a direct and rigorous comparison cannot be carried out, it is only an illustrative pattern – it might be mentioned that from a network analysis perspective the Russian case proves to be both a *denser* and *more centralised* network as it is shown in density and centralization values (see Table 1). It can also be concluded, that both cases illustrate an orientation towards NATO member states: higher average level of ties can be measured, especially in the Chinese case, and it can also be noted, that there seems to be a difference regarding the ties towards EU-member countries: the distribution of the links implies that in the Russian case a higher focus can be observed towards non-EU-member European countries.

Table 1 *Descriptive statistics of the networks from CS1 and CS2*
(The lower values indicated with bold letter type. Calculations by the author)

	China	Russia
	Network characteristics	
Density (matrix average)	**0,0020**	0,0065
Network Centralization (InDegree)	**10,923**	25,198
Country groups	**Network embeddedness (average InDegree)**	
Non EU member	**3,6**	9,4
EU member	6,0	**4,9**
Non NATO member	**2,9**	**4,0**
NATO member	9,0	7,6
Total	**4,0**	**6,4**

CS3 – inclusive social movement

The third case study about an inclusive and open society movement is built on social development and social empowerment projects organized and financed by the movement represented here as a corporative actor.[22] The structure of the social development and empowerment project network implies a higher level of distribution in less developed Central-Eastern European countries (see Graph 4).

It might also be mentioned, that a weak positive tendency (correlation coefficient R=0,168) can be revealed between network embeddedness and level of fragility of the countries involved, and a similar tendency can also be recognized if we compare embeddedness and the rate of stabilisation / destabilisation in the same time period (see Figure 7).

Although, of course, it is not a causal relation, there seems to be a pattern that the higher level of social improvement projects in less democratic countries (see Table 2) could meet a less supportive, more rejective social climate. That is, these patterns imply – although it requires a deeper and more proper investigation to further elaborate the findings with more advanced methodological tools – that certain social processes under specific circumstances might also play an important role regarding social stability.

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[22]   The data coverage of this case study is limited to the EU and NATO member states.
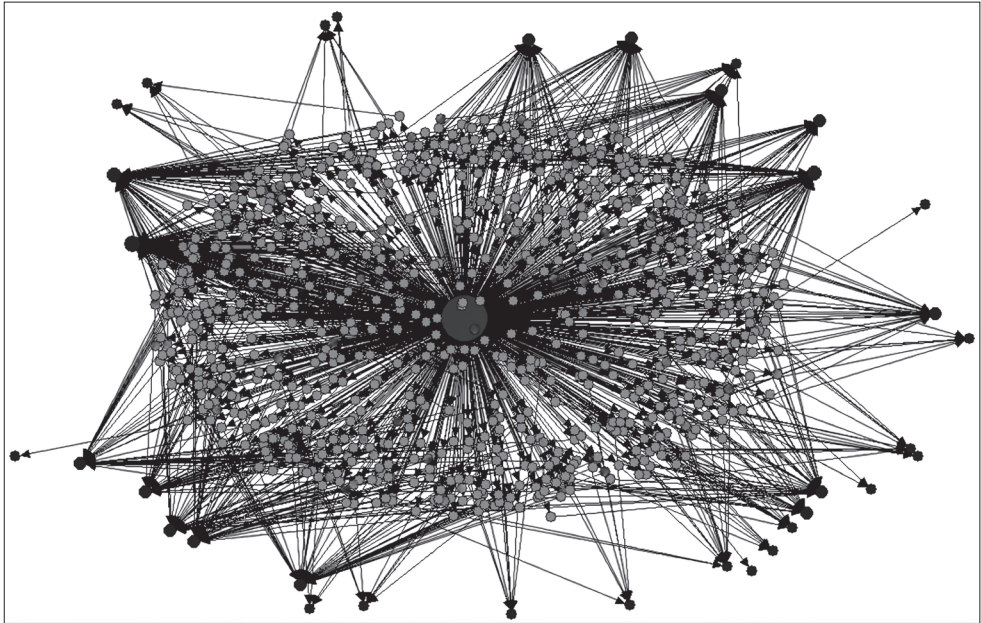
Graph 4 *Network of social development movement (one channel type)*
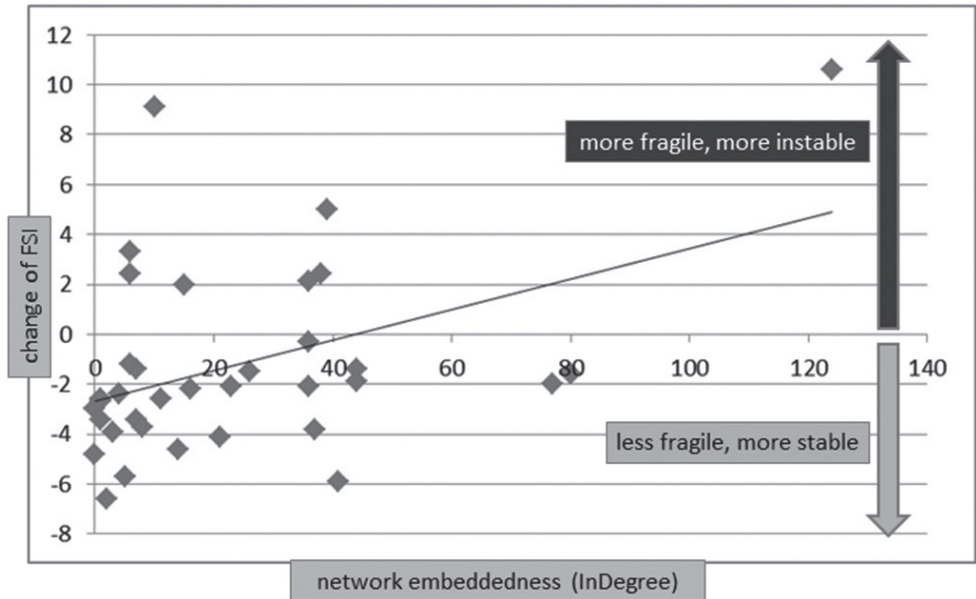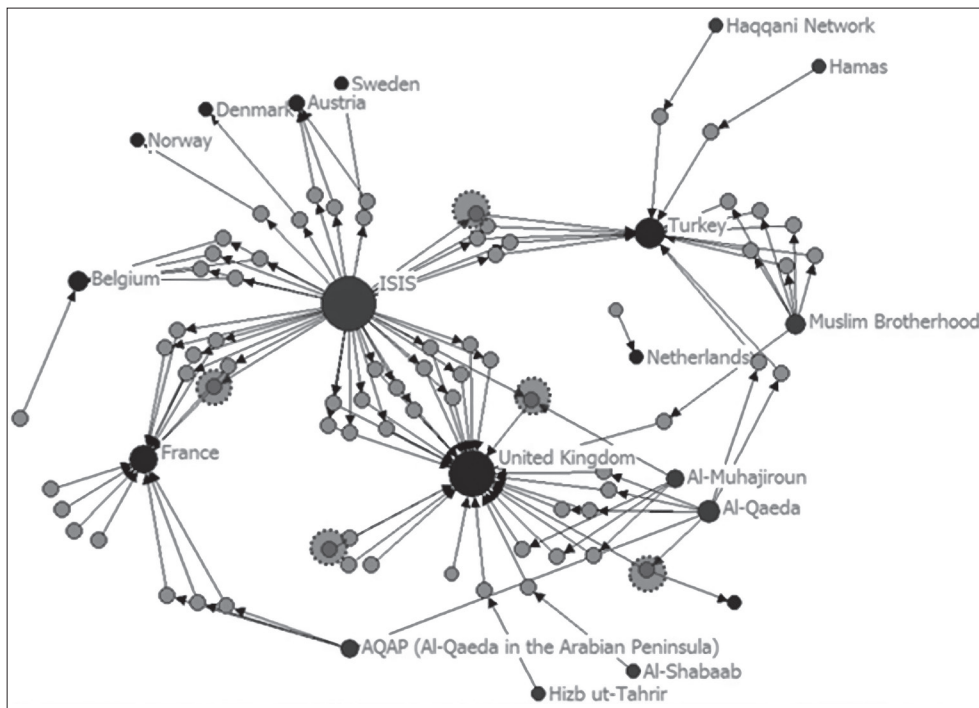*(Edited by the author based on complex database)*

Figure 7 *Illustration of network embeddedness and level of (de)stabilization*
(Calculated and edited by the author)

Table 2 *Descriptive statistics of the development projects (Calculations by the author)*

Democracy Index country groups	Number	Mean
	of social empowerment projects	
Full democracy	195	15,0
Flawed democracy	618	30,9
Hybrid regime	21	7,0
Total	**834**	**23,2**

CS4 – jihadist extremism

The last case study seeks to investigate the role of embeddedness regarding the European jihadist extremism. Based on a research project some basic information has been assembled about jihadist extremists operating in Europe. The data included several different types of actors – spokesmen, supporters, propagandists, facilitators, recruiters, fundraisers, financial managers, representatives of global jihadist movement, some founders, leaders and members of jihadist cells –, and the analysis reveals a rather complex, structured, and partially fragmented network (see Graph 5).

Graph 5 *Network of jihadist extremist movement (one channel type)*
(Edited by the author based on complex database)

In the network, we can identify the most active groups and organizations in the area, as for example Al-Qaeda, Muslim Brotherhood and ISIS – the latter dominates the network with its notable cluster. On the other hand, among the most affected countries we find the United Kingdom, France, Turkey and Belgium. As for the structure, the overlap between certain groups is noticeable; it is worth to mention that with its Arabian branch Al-Qaeda is also present in the network. Furthermore, we can find intermediaries that are affiliated with more groups, or one who operated in more than one country.[23] Finally, it can be added that several propagators carried out their activities on the internet via social media, which again highlights the importance of the cyber domain.

These channels of jihadist groups prove to be useful regarding the export of violence to Europe: if we investigate the relation between the network embeddedness of the countries and presence of terrorism, a positive tendency can be explored. That is, in countries with a higher share of propagandists, fundraisers, etc., the number of terrorist attacks is higher, and more killed and wounded victims can be measured.
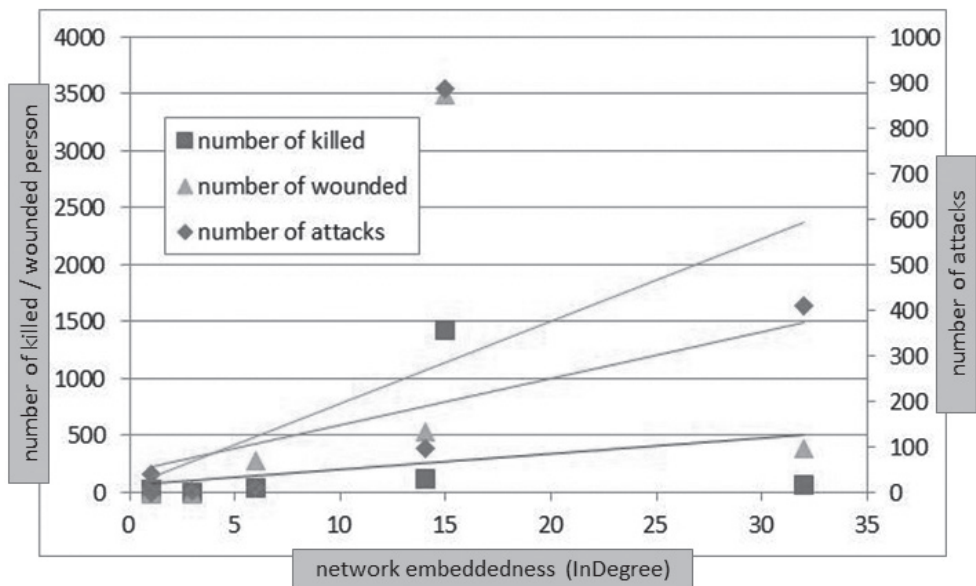
Figure 8 *Illustration of network embeddedness and violent, terrorist activities*
(Calculated and edited by the author)

The case studies illustrate how complex the structures of influence channels can develop to be or can evolve in different segments of the society, and showed some examples about the role of network embeddedness regarding certain security issues.

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[23]   The nodes characterised with the particular positions in the network are highlighted with dashed circles.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Based on the interpretations and conceptual models of hybrid warfare described in the first section, one of the main characteristics proves to be complexity, which implies an emphasis on coordinated employment of dominantly non-military methods, techniques, and means. In the approach of the study, we also made efforts to demonstrate an interpretation of hybrid operations that are somewhere around the border of warfare and politics, power and authority, in a transitional position between war and peace. The introduced case studies also illustrate that channels and networks of influence can evolve into complex structures and in some cases seem to be effective when employed to facilitate the realization of the objectives by the initiators. Example also shows that certain social processes could contribute to the decrease of integration level of the society and the destabilization of the state. Notwithstanding, these results basically imply the need for a complex approach when both investigating and countering hybrid operations, with a proportionate and adequate composition of non-military *and* military methods. Accordingly, it might be useful to constantly monitor the multiple domains, where several processes can have an effect on the activities of potential hybrid actors. In this regard, it might be emphasized, that the cyber sector proves to be a rather important – although it is not the only one – and relevant area. However, perhaps the significance of the proper participation of the military sector in these processes can be illustrated best if we take into consideration that in certain circumstances, highly embedded influence channels might contribute to further escalating the threats, which could result in asymmetric or even more conventional conflicts, so it is important to have the appropriate capacities and forces to manage them.

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Michael Miklaucic

COMPREHENSIVE THREAT MEETS TOTAL DEFENCE

"Gaining and retaining the initiative is the aim of every commander.
To be able to choose the time and place of an attack,
or to keep the enemy guessing as to how we might act, gives a huge advantage.
Yielding the initiative to the enemy puts us at a disadvantage".

Ben Hodges was commanding general of
the United States Army Europe, 2014–17
"Western allies must regain the initiative over Putin in the Black Sea".
(Financial Times 2/26/2022)

ABSTRACT: *The West is at war. The United States, its allies, and partners in Europe, Asia, and throughout the world – whether they recognize it or not – are at war. The enemy in this war is global authoritarianism, particularly as practiced by the Chinese Communist Party and the Putin regime in Russia, but also by lesser adversaries such as North Korea, Iran, and the nebulous global network of Salafi jihadists. To be clear, this is not a war of peoples against peoples; this is not about Chinese, Russians, or Muslims versus Americans or Westerners. This is a war between regimes in which people are among the many weapons wielded in a competition for global influence and power. The distinctive attribute of this war is its non-kinetic dimensions. It is not a war fought by our respective armed forces – though that can, does, and may yet occur. It is fought for the most part in the diplomatic, information, economic, and other domains; what are commonly referred to as the "gray zone". The battlespaces are predominantly, but not exclusively, in the civilian domains.*[1]

KEYWORDS: *hybrid warfare, gray zone, global jihad, Russia, China, total defense, asymmetric response*

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[1]   There is by now an extensive literature on gray zone conflict. See "The Gray Zone," by Philip Kapusta for a brief summary discussion (https://www.soc.mil/SWCS/SWmag/archive/SW2804/GrayZone.pdf). For a more thorough treatment see "Unconventional Warfare in the Gray Zone," by Votel, J. L. et al. in Joint Force Quarterly, January 2016 (https://ndupress.ndu.edu/JFQ/Joint-Force-Quarterly-80/article/643108/unconventional-warfare-in-the-gray-zone/). For an extensive treatment of gray zone conflict see "Gaining Competitive Advantage in the Gray Zone; Response Options for Coercive Aggression Below the Threshold of Major War," by Morris, L. J. et al. (https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR2900/RR2942/RAND_RR2942.pdf)

In their pursuit of power, the West's current adversaries are far less averse to applying all available resources as weapons in the fight. The United States and its allies and partners are being subjected to military competition, political, economic and financial warfare, lawfare, hybrid warfare information attacks, and every other aspect of unconventional warfare. The only rules restraining our adversaries are the rules of in-attributability and of remaining below the threshold of military combat. But this multi-front, multi-domain war is not random. China, Russia, and the Salafi jihadists each seem to be guided by an ice-cold and long-term strategic determination to exploit American and Western weaknesses, and the seams in the fabric that hold the liberal world order together.

We are in an era characterized by persistent and comprehensive, multi-domain threats. Our most potent adversaries are relentless in their pursuit of strategies that know no distinction between war and peace, between military and civilian – and pose an existential threat to the liberal, rules-based global system. To prevail in this era and secure the benefits of liberty for ourselves and our posterity, the United States and its allies must adopt a new paradigm for defence and security to replace the current binary construct of war/peace.

What is required to meet any of today's significant national security challenges – be it international jihadism, or peer rivals, let alone COVID-19 or climate change – is an ambitious – perhaps even audacious – approach integrating all the elements of national power in a whole-of-society mobilization. A "total defence" posture is needed today to confront adversaries who embrace ideologies advocating permanent and comprehensive conflicts with the United States and its allies; indeed, permanent conflicts with our interests, with our values, and with the so-called liberal, rules-based world order. This all-embracing assault on all we hold dear must be met with an equally all-embracing, or total defence. Such a defence posture directly rebuts the many "think small," incrementalistic, restraint-based, and transactional strategic approaches that are often proposed.[2]

There is a template for enlightened discipline in the face of persistent, multi-domain threats in the concept of total defence; therefore, we will briefly survey the approaches developed by the Nordic and Baltic countries, as well as Israel, Singapore, and Taiwan. Even total defence, however, is not enough; in an era of persistent, comprehensive, and multi-domain threats, we also need a concept of agile, pro-active measures. We must develop and actively utilize a toolbox of advanced, asymmetric actions to shift the burden of reaction to our adversaries.

THE GLOBAL JIHAD

Though much strategic attention in the United States has turned to great power competition – divided between China and since the invasion of Ukraine to Russia – it is far too soon to

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[2]   Variations of a limited national security concept were examined by the Center for Strategic and International Studies in a series of Issue Briefs in 2020 including "Getting to Less? Exploring the Press for Less in America's Defence Commitments" (https://www.csis.org/analysis/getting-less-exploring-press-less-americas-Defence-commitments), "Getting to Less? The Progressive Values Strategy" (https://www.csis.org/analysis/getting-less-progressive-values-strategy), "Getting to Less? The Minimal Exposure Strategy" (https://www.csis.org/analysis/getting-less-minimal-exposure-strategy), and "Getting to Less? The Innovation Superiority Strategy" (https://www.csis.org/analysis/getting-less-innovation-superiority-strategy). For a study of the historical expansion of the national security concept and associated dangers see "The Limits of National Security" by Laura K. Donohue. Georgetown University Law Center, 2011 (https://scholarship.law.georgetown.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2027&context=facpub).

claim victory in the global struggle against terrorism.[3] Organizations such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State survive and remain motivated by a Salafist, jihadist ideology that brazenly holds to a Manichean view of the world divided between Dar el-Islam (the Islamic domain of peace) and Dar el-Harb (the non-Islamic domain of war), with people divided into "believers" and "infidels".[4]

Jihadist doctrine is interpreted by these groups in its most conflictual, confrontational, and merciless form. Readings from Dabiq (the magazine of the Islamic State),[5] "The Management of Savagery" by Islamic strategist Abu Bakr Naji,[6] and many other Salafist sources justify violence against infidels. A Boko Haram video of 2016 urges members, "Brethren, wherever you are, I pray this meets you well. I give you the go-ahead, whether you are two or three, take up your weapons and start killing them… all those who refuse Allah… Kill, kill, and kill!"[7]

Evidence of this uncompromising doctrine manifests in the use of indiscriminate violence against civilians, women, children, and the elderly, including beheadings, stoning, lashings, and burnings by al-Qaeda, Islamic State, Boko Haram, al-Shabaab, and other such organizations. There is no reason to anticipate that these organizations, their leaders – the current or the next generation – or their most violent members will abandon such doctrines and accept co-existence with a co-equal Western counterpart in a liberal, rules-based world order. Their war is permanent and comprehensive.

RESURGENT RUSSIA

Russian President Vladimir Putin called the collapse of the Soviet Union "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the (20th) century".[8] Under Putin Russia has obsessed over re-

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[3] Clark, C. "The Future of the Global Jihadist Movement After the Collapse of the Caliphate," RAND Commentary, December 11, 2018 (https://www.rand.org/blog/2018/12/the-future-of-the-global-jihadist-movement-after-the.html). Also "U.S. and U.N. on Jihadi Threat in 2021" by The Wilson Center (https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/us-and-un-jihadi-threat-2021) and Byman, D. "Jihadi Networks Are More Resilient Than We Think" Foreign Policy, November 2, 2021 (https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/11/02/jihadi-terrorism-threat-us-europe/).

[4] Di Carlo, I. "In chaos, they thrive: The resurgence of extremist and terrorist groups during the COVID-19 pandemic," European Policy Centre, May 5, 2020 (https://www.epc.eu/en/Publications/In-chaos-they-thrive-The-resurgence-of-extremist-and-terrorist-group~32c800). O'Donnell, L. "Terrorism Is Making a Comeback, and Africa Is the Hot Spot," Foreign Policy, May 6, 2022 (https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/05/06/terrorism-africa-hotspot-isis-boko-haram/).

[5] Dabiq appears to have published 15 issues between July 2014 and July 2016. They do not appear to be easily accessible online. For a brief overview of Dabiq as of December 2015 see, "Overview of Daesh's Online Recruitment Propaganda Magazine, Dabiq," by The Carter Center, December 2015 (https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/conflict_resolution/countering-isis/dabiq-report-12-17-15.pdf). For a more extensive review of Dabiq and other Islamic State publications see, "Islamic State's English-language magazines, 2014–2017: Trends & implications for CT-CVE strategic communications," by Haroro J. I. International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 2018 (https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep29421.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Abb776bcd63bbe9e17e61eeeb405f9795&ab_segments=&origin=).

[6] The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Umma Will Pass, by Abu Bakr Naji (Translated by William McCants), John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard University, May 23, 2006 (https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/abu-bakr-naji-the-management-of-savagery-the-most-critical-stage-through-which-the-umma-will-pass.pdf).

[7] Quoted in Our Brains at War, by Fitzduff, M. Oxford University Press, 2021.

[8] "Excerpts From Putin's State-Of-The-Nation Speech," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, April 25, 2005 (https://www.rferl.org/a/1058630.html).

claiming the global stature it had during the Soviet period. Former foreign and Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov summed up Russian aspirations advocating the counter-balancing of American power with a concert of major powers in a multipolar world. He argued that Russia must oppose further NATO expansion and undo it if possible, while insisting on Russian primacy in the post-Soviet space and the integration of that region under Russian dominance.[9] In this vision, the global order is redefined "as a great-power management system," providing "ample grounds for the use of force in what Russia views as its sphere of influence and more widely in support of sovereign governments under threat from violent non-state actors".[10]

To achieve this global order Russia has refined an approach to strategic competition based on persistent aggression across the full spectrum of conflict and contestation. Russian armed forces Chief of Staff Valery Gerasimov is credited with an eponymous doctrine that envisions "gray zone" operations, information operations, hybrid warfare, and the use of private, military companies to advance Russian interests, subvert U.S. influence, undermine the American political system, sow discord within the United States and NATO, and dismantle the current global order.[11] The existence of such a doctrine has been debated and Gerasimov's authorship of any new doctrine discredited, though Russian behaviour has at times appeared to align with the supposed doctrine.[12] A better description of Russia's approach is "new generation warfare," a "sophisticated blend of strategic communication, disinformation, cyber-attacks, covert troops, and psychological warfare".[13]

Beneath these irredentist aspirations is a more profound, values-based hostility to the liberal, rules-based world order, which Russian leaders believe is a Western-centric order designed to preserve and advance Western global dominance, fashioned at a time when the Soviet Union was weak, and reinforced in the aftermath of the Cold War when Russia was supine.

The order with which Putin would replace the liberal, rules-based world system might be described as a mystical Eurasianist conservatism. It has roots in the philosophy of Ivan Ilyin, who argued that "'democratization,' 'liberalization,' 'freedom' were only means for destroying the unity and Eurasian spirit of the Russian civilization". Ilyin was in favour of

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[9] Rumer, E. "The Primakov (Not Gerasimov) Doctrine in Action," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2019 (https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Rumer_PrimakovDoctrine_final1.pdf).

[10] Clunan, A. L. "Russia and the Liberal World Order," Ethics and International Affairs, 32, no. 1, 2018 (https://nps.edu/documents/105858948/106279825/Clunan_Russia+and+Liberal+World+Order_2018/b7e24a1c-88ea-4d0a-b60f-681bbcc27c4d).

[11] British scholar Mark Galeotti coined the phrase "Gerasimov Doctrine," but has since regretted it; see Mark Galeotti, "I'm Sorry for Creating the 'Gerasimov Doctrine'," Foreign Policy, March 5, 2018 (https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/05/im-sorry-for-creating-the-gerasimov-doctrine/). Gerasimov's original article, "The Value of Science in Prediction," was published in Military-Industrial Kurier on February 27, 2013. Galeotti translated it and published the translation on his blog-site (https://inmoscowsshadows.wordpress.com/2014/07/06/the-gerasimov-doctrine-and-russian-non-linear-war/).

[12] Giles, A. "Valery Gerasimov's Doctrine," Universitat Potsdam, September 2020 (https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Alexander-Giles-2/publication/346195526_%27Valery_Gerasimov%27s_Doctrine%27/links/5fbcc1b1a6fdcc6cc65e48d6/Valery-Gerasimovs-Doctrine.pdf?origin=publication_detail).

[13] Hadjitodorov, S. and Sokolovm, M."Blending New-generation Warfare and Soft Power: Hybrid Dimensions of Russia-Bulgaria Relations," Connections QJ 17, no. 1, 2018 (https://doi.org/10.11610/Connections.17.1.01). See also, Bērziņš, J. "The Theory and Practice of New Generation Warfare: The Case of Ukraine and Syria," The Journal of Slavic Military Studies, 2000, 33:3, 355–380., DOI: 10.1080/13518046.2020.1824109 (https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13518046.2020.1824109?needAccess=true).

a "Russian National Dictatorship" that would protect and preserve Russian national values.[14] This abject hostility to the West draws further from the views of Russian ultra-nationalist and pro-crypto fascist Aleksandr Dugin, who proclaims, "We are on the side of Stalin and the Soviet Union," and enthusiastically advocates a "genuine, true, radically revolutionary and consistent, fascist fascism"[15] in Russia.[16]

This is an authoritarian vision in which,

… the rulers of the state must exert careful control over the life of the nation. Events cannot be allowed just to happen, they must be controlled and manipulated. By the same token, markets cannot be genuinely open, elections cannot be unpredictable, and the modern equivalent of the Soviet dissidents – the small groups of activists who oppose centralised Kremlin rule – must be carefully controlled through legal pressure, public propaganda and, if necessary, carefully targeted violence.[17]

… all important decisions should be made in Moscow by a small unelected group of people who know how to resist these foreign conspiracies.[18]

There is little if any regard for individual liberties or limitations on government power. The envisioned system reflects a world view built upon a unique combination of nationalism and eastern conservatism; it anticipates permanent conflicts of interest with the West, and justifies seizing soft spots in the Western world, such as Crimea, Georgia, and possibly even the Baltics – locations where a robust Western/American response is least likely – essentially the seizure of all opportunities to reclaim great power status and undermine Western, and especially U.S. interests.

A more contemporary spokesperson for this implacable enmity toward the West and an author of what is referred to as the "Putin Doctrine," is Kremlin advisor Sergey Karaganov. Karganov was recently quoted as stating, "This is a war with the West," and predicting that Russia, "will become a more militant-based and national-based society, pushing out non-patriotic elements from the elite," and boasting that, "We are ready to sacrifice in order to build a more viable and fair international system".[19]

[14]   Tsonchev, T. S. "The Kremlin's New Ideology," The Montreal Review, January 17 (https://www.themontreal review.com/2009/The-Ideology-of-Vladimir-Putin-Regime.php).

[15]   Dugin, A. "Fascism – Borderless and Red". 1997 (https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A2=russian-studies;4a3176b4.0905).

[16]   For a brief description of Dugin's work and influence see Dunlop, J. B. "Aleksandr Dugin's Foundations of Geopolitics," published by The Europe Center at Stanford University, undated (https://tec.fsi.stanford.edu/docs/aleksandr-dugins-foundations-geopolitics).

[17]   Applebaum, A. "Putinism: the Ideology," Strategic Update 13.2, London School of Economics and Political Science, February 2013 (https://www.lse.ac.uk/ideas/Assets/Documents/updates/LSE-IDEAS-Putinism-The-Ideology.pdf).

[18]   Ibid.

[19]   Sergey Karaganov Interviewed by Federico Fubini in L'Economia, April 8, 2022 (https://www.corriere.it/economia/aziende/22_aprile_08/we-are-at-war-with-the-west-the-european-security-order-is-illegitimate-c6b9fa5a-b6b7-11ec-b39d-8a197cc9b19a.shtml).

THE RETURN OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

China's historical self-image is of hegemonic dominance in its geostrategic environment, and today its geopolitical and geoeconomic behaviour and positioning reinforce this self-image. The model of governance practiced by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is authoritarian with regime preservation as the highest priority. Social stability is enforced through draconian restrictions on individual liberties, such as the freedoms of speech, religion, and association.

Today China is considered by the United States as the "pacing threat;" the primary challenger to America's global power and influence and a peer competitor. The 2021 Interim National Security Strategic Guidance of the United States describes China as "the only competitor potentially capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to mount a sustained challenge to a stable and open international system".[20] It is the systemic challenge that is most disconcerting.

The China threat extends beyond the military dimension; China has become an economic superpower as well as a leader in numerous emerging technologies. Its recent economic prowess and dynamism under authoritarian governance offer an attractive alternative to many states that have not prospered in the neoliberal era.

Under President Xi Jinping, China has championed a narrative of Chinese revival under the banner, the "rejuvenation of the Chinese nation".[21] Whereas former Chinese ruler Deng Xiaoping advocated a low profile while building the economy – known as "Bide your time, hide your strength" – President Xi has made China's global aspirations explicit. In a 2013 speech to the Politburo he stated, "we must concentrate our efforts on… building a new socialism that is superior to capitalism and laying the foundation for a future in which we will win the initiative and occupy the dominant position".[22] Singaporean scholar Benjamim Ho Tze Ern cautions against hyperbole and threat exaggeration; "While it is an open secret that China has its eyes on the big prize, that is, to mount a credible challenge to the U.S., I would not want to over-play Chinese capabilities as well as its ability to become a global power in the same manner of the United States".[23] He bases this more cautious view on the insularity – or "inward looking" political priorities of the CCP leadership, noting that few of China's senior leaders have travelled abroad to promote Chinese interests, a view shared by former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in a recent interview.[24]

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[20] Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, March 2021 (https://insideDefence.com/sites/insideDefence.com/files/documents/2021/mar/03032021_nsg.pdf).

[21] Jinping, X. "Achieving Rejuvenation Is the Dream of the Chinese People," Speech made when visiting the exhibition "The Road to Rejuvenation." November 29, 2012 (http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/c23934/2020ChC.06/32191c5bbdb04cbab6df01e5077d1c60.shtml).

[22] Quoted in Nigel Inkster, The Great Decoupling, C. Hurst and Company, 2020.

[23] Private communication with author.

[24] Rudd, K. Interview in PRISM V.10, N.01, July 2022.

Despite these cautionary notes, the Belt and Road Initiative,[25] Made in China 2025,[26] military-civil fusion,[27] and numerous other policies and initiatives clearly support an unspoken but obvious determination to achieve hegemony in the Pacific region, and even global primacy by 2050.[28]

Unrestricted Warfare was published in 1999 by colonels of China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui. The authors argue that warfare has evolved from the traditional military domains and recommend, "…all means, including armed force or non-armed force, military and non-military, and lethal and non-lethal means to compel the enemy to accept one's interests." Recognizing as early as 1999 the profound impact and implications of emerging technologies for global conflict, they conclude that, "When we suddenly realize that all these non-war actions may be the new factors constituting future warfare, we have to come up with a new name for this new form of war: Warfare which transcends all boundaries and limits, in short: unrestricted warfare". Although Chinese officials have denied that "unrestricted warfare" is an official PLA doctrine, it should be read in light of China's internal as well as its external behaviour.[29]

Unrestricted Warfare offers a full menu of non-traditional attack domains, including lawfare, network warfare, economic warfare, commercial warfare, intellectual property theft, irregular warfare, etc.: All designed to avoid direct conventional military confrontation with, while prevailing over the United States. The worldview envisioned in Unrestricted Warfare is of permanent conflict with all competitors, and particularly the United States, until dominance in its domain is achieved, using all national assets and resources.

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[25] The best analysis of the Belt and Road Initiative I have read is Belt and Road: A Chinese World Order, by Bruno Macaes, Hurst and Company, London UK, 2018.

[26] The PRC website "Made in China 2025" provides an official overview of the policy and its programs (https://english.www.gov.cn/2016special/madeinchina2025/). Quite a lot has been written and published on Made in China 2025. A quick start is by McBride, J. and Chatzky, A. "Is 'Made in China 2025' a Threat to Global Trade?" Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder, May 13, 2019 (https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/made-china-2025-threat-global-trade). Also see Kania, E. "Made in China 2025 Explained: A deep dive into China's techno-strategic ambitions for 2025 and beyond, The Diplomat, February 1, 2019 (https://thediplomat.com/2019/02/made-in-china-2025-explained/), and Made in China 2025: The making of a high-tech superpower and consequences for industrial countries, Merics Papers on China, December 2016 (https://merics.org/en/report/made-china-2025).

[27] McMaster describes military-civil fusion as "the most totalitarian" of the three elements of China's quest for global dominance; McMaster, OpCit. The U.S. Department of State provides a brief description at "Military-Civil Fusion and the People's Republic of China," U.S. Department of State One-Pager (https://nam04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.state.gov%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2020%2F05%2FWhat-is-MCF-One-Pager.pdf&data=05%7C01%7Cmiklaucicm%40ndu.edu%7C16a0e60aecd6489da59f08da2f6282f3%7Cabfe949f1dc8462bbf873527168dc052%7C0%7C0%7C637874397396557539%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=BHiu9G6Ef%2F%2Bz6qkx%2FICPAOoEuXpvxiFKwaiUR5kgWHw%3D&reserved=0). For a more in-depth description see. Kania, E. B. and Laskai, L. "Myths and Realities of China's Military-Civil Fusion Strategy," Center for a New American Security, January 28, 2021 (https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/myths-and-realities-of-chinas-military-civil-fusion-strategy).

[28] The long game: China's grand strategy to displace American order, by Rush Doshi, Oxford University Press (July 8, 2021).

[29] Liang, Q. and Xiangsui, W. "Unrestricted Warfare," Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, February 1999 (https://www.c4i.org/unrestricted.pdf).

The more recent Three-Warfares doctrine is built on (1) strategic psychological operations; (2) overt and covert media manipulation; and (3) legal warfare to influence target audiences abroad.[30] It is designed to, "to subdue an enemy ahead of conflict or ensure victory if conflict breaks out".[31] As early as 2013 the U.S. Department of Defence Office of Net Assessment concluded that, "in the decade ahead China's Three Warfares will play an increasing role in China's determination to expand its frontiers, to secure the maritime perimeter encompassing Japan, Taiwan, Korea, the Philippines and the South China Sea. Analysts indicate that China intends to control the First Island Chain by 2015 and the Second Island Chain by 2050."[32]

To accomplish the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, China's global aspirations are advanced aggressively by the *qiaowu* policy, which is a "systematic approach of persuasion, influence, and manipulation," by which, "the CCP has been successful in guiding and directing key groups of OC (overseas Chinese) around the world to be supportive of Beijing". Using the over 50-million Chinese diaspora as voluntary or inadvertent agents, this policy "is an interdisciplinary strategic approach to pro-actively guiding, fostering, manipulating, and influencing OC identity and behaviour for the purposes of constructing an international environment friendly to China's global ambitions".[33]

What does the great "rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" entail, both within China and throughout the world? According to former U.S. National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster China is "promoting a closed, authoritarian model as an alternative to democratic governance and free market economics," that "stifles human freedom," resulting in "a world that is less free and less safe".[34]

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rhetorically embraces lofty and human values,[35] however, careful examination of the regime's domestic and international behaviour betrays a world view hostile to fundamental, progressive concepts such as individual liberty and incompatible with a liberal, rules-based world order.[36] Yuan Peng – President of the China Institute for Contemporary International Relations – in his discussion of the Outline for Studying the Overall National Security Concept notes its call for the "path of peaceful development," while citing the need to "focus efforts on 'total warfare' thinking, to coordinate responses to traditional and non-traditional security challenges, ensuring that responses to traditional security challenges are more proactive while responses to non-traditional

[30] Raska, M. "China and the 'Three Warfares'". The Diplomat, December 18, 2015 (https://thediplomat.com/2015/12/hybrid-warfare-with-chinese-characteristics-2/).

[31] Gershaneck, K. "To Win without Fighting: Defining China's Political Warfare," Marine Corps University Press, June 17, 2020 (https://www.usmcu.edu/Outreach/Marine-Corps-University-Press/Expeditions-with-MCUP-digital-journal/To-Win-without-Fighting/).

[32] China: The Three Warfares, U.S. Department of Defence, Office of Net Assessment, May 2013 (https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/FOID/Reading%20Room/Litigation_Release/Litigation%20Release%20-%20China-%20The%20Three%20Warfares%20%20201305.pdf).

[33] Qiaowu: Extra-Territorial Policies for the Overseas Chinese, by James Jiann Hua To, Koninklijke Brill nv, Leiden, The Netherlands, 2014 (https://media.oiipdf.com/pdf/b391832b-b758-40ff-9246-d8b6ee3566de.pdf).

[34] McMaster, H. R. "How China Sees the World: And How We Should See China," The Atlantic, May 2020 (https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/05/mcmaster-china-strategy/609088/).

[35] Yan, X. "Chinese Values vs. Liberalism: What Ideology Will Shape the International Normative Order?" The Chinese Journal of International Politics, Volume 11, Issue 1, Spring 2018 (https://academic.oup.com/cjip/article/11/1/4844055).

[36] Hurlock, M. H. "Review: Social Harmony and Individual Rights in China". Columbia Law Review Vol. 93, No. 5, June 1993 (https://www.jstor.org/stable/1122966?seq=1).

security challenges keep pace with the times." The Outline promotes a "common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable global security outlook," while committing China to "resolutely winning the people's war, total war," and "resolutely winning ideological struggle."[37]

President Xi Jinping makes no secret of his commitment to CCP domination and its leading role in all aspects of life in China.[38] Under Xi the CCP "wants to lead on everything."[39] Pervasive state surveillance and control of media and information severely constrain political activity, and the recently introduced social credit system empowers state authorities to exercise universal behavioural control through positive and negative incentives.[40] Xi has developed a true whole of society approach to competition with the West, and to the achievement of future great power, and perhaps even hegemonic power status.

China's governing regime is intolerant of religious diversity or ethnic sensitivity. The treatment of Falun Gong adherents is well-documented,[41] as is the brutal repression of Uighur[42] and Tibetan[43] nationalities. It is built on a rigid domestic hierarchy and a China-centric international hierarchy.

These long-term strategic approaches aspire to a China-centric world order guaranteed by China's military and economic dominance. That world order would reflect the value system of the CCP and "be more coercive than the present order, consensual in ways that primarily benefit connected elites even at the expense of voting publics and considered legitimate mostly to those few who it directly rewards. China would deploy this order in ways that damage liberal values, with authoritarian winds blowing stronger across the region.

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[37] Peng, Y. "Fundamentals to Observe for Maintaining and Shaping National Security in the New Era: Study the Outline for Studying the Overall National Security Outlook," People's Daily, April 26, 2022 (translated and published by CSIS Interpret: China (https://interpret.csis.org/translations/fundamentals-to-observe-for-maintaining-and-shaping-national-security-in-the-new-era-study-the-outline-for-studying-the-overall-national-security-outlook/).

[38] Xi Jinping speech on the CCP's 100th anniversary, July 1, 2021 (https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Full-text-of-Xi-Jinping-s-speech-on-the-CCP-s-100th-anniversary).

[39] "The Party leads on everything: China's changing governance in Xi Jinping's new era," MERICS China Monitor, Sept. 24, 2019 (https://merics.org/en/report/party-leads-everything).

[40] Liang, F. et al. "Constructing a Data-Driven Society: China's Social Credit System as a State Surveillance Infrastructure," Policy and Internet Volume 10, Issue 4, December 2018 (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/poi3.183).

[41] Hintjens, H. "Is The Persecution Of Falun Gong In China Tantamount To Genocide?," Journal of Political Risk, Vol. 9, No. 9, September 2021 (https://www.jpolrisk.com/is-the-persecution-of-falun-gong-in-china-tantamount-to-genocide/).

[42] Maizland, L. "China's Repression of Uyghurs in Xinjiang," Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder, March 1, 2021 (https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-repression-uyghurs-xinjiang). A recently released study by Bradley Jardine describes how China's repression of the Uighur nationality has become a transnational campaign extending to 44 countries; Jardine, B. "Great Wall of Steel China's Global Campaign to Suppress the Uyghurs," The Wilson Center, March 2022 (https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/uploads/documents/Great%20Wall_of_Steel_rpt_web.pdf).

[43] Bradsher, H. S. "Tibet Struggles to Survive," Foreign Affairs, July 1969 (https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/1969-07-01/tibet-struggles-survive?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=gap_ds&gclid=CjwKCAjwjtOTBhAvEiwASG4bCPlk90gAgGnbLqWYgYa5V5PTkHfJwvkY0_ndFMxq-EWu1kMJualu-BoCd1gQAvD_BwE). For a more recent treatment see Cimmino, R. "Threat from Tibet? Systematic Repression of Tibetan Buddhism in China," Harvard International Review, Fall 2018 (https://hir.harvard.edu/repression-tibetan-buddhism-china/).

Order abroad is often a reflection of order at home, and China's order-building would be distinctly illiberal relative to U.S. order-building."[44]

ANTI-STRATEGY

The Western response to the emerging global threat environment has been ad hoc and disjointed. The pre-eminent elements of the response have been economic sanctions (sometimes coordinated, sometimes not), diplomatic pressure (again sometimes coordinated, sometimes not), and a dramatic increase in defence spending. Under former President Donald Trump, America embraced a unilateralist foreign policy, alienating both allies and adversaries, setting back an aligned strategic approach four years. The Biden Administration's Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, published in March 2021, softened the "America First" obsession of its predecessor but suffers from many of the flaws that have plagued earlier versions.[45] The process of crafting the National Security Strategy for the United States is bureaucratic and unwieldly, described by one scholar as "a rhetorical exercise, characterized by grandiose ambitions and laundry lists of priorities."[46] The strategic processes of America's allies and partners are no less so.

The Western countries are conceptually handicapped in strategy by their adherence to a binary concept of war; either our armed forces are engaged in violent combat (war!), or they are not (peace!). As the late American diplomat George Kennan put it, "We have been handicapped by a popular attachment to the concept of a basic difference between peace and war."[47] Though there is a burgeoning literature on hybrid conflict and gray zone conflict to complement the mature and abundant literature on irregular and unconventional warfare,[48] no Western nation has yet designed a strategy for deploying all the elements of national strength (diplomatic, informational, military, and economic – the so-called DIME) in a coordinated and continuous posture to counter the relentless assault. There is no coherent

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[44] Excerpt from "The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order" by former Brookings Fellow Rush Doshi, by Doshi, R. Brookings Institution, August 2, 2021 (https://www.brookings.edu/essay/the-long-game-chinas-grand-strategy-to-displace-american-order/).

[45] Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, The White House, March 2021 (https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf).

[46] Lissner, R. F. "The National Security Strategy Is Not a Strategy: Trump's Incoherence Is a Reminder of Why a New Approach Is Needed," Foreign Affairs, December 19, 2017 (https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2017-12-19/national-security-strategy-not-strategy?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=gap_ds&gclid=Cj0KCQjwhLKUBhDiARIsAMaTLnGTsKdjiJCEv7TRc7FJV4XUL1RkyEBvM_WaQ4Lbauuj19SWkg0fN7UaAuOpEALw_wcB).

[47] Kennan, G. "The Inauguration of Organized Political Warfare," [Redacted Version], April 30, 1948, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Obtained and contributed by A. Ross Johnson. Cited in his book 'Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, Ch1 n4. NARA release courtesy of Douglas Selvage. Redacted final draft of a memorandum dated May 4, 1948, and published with additional redactions as document 269, 'FRUS, Emergence of the Intelligence Establishment.' https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114320.

[48] See Footnote 1. See also Hoffman, F. "Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars," Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, December 2007 (https://www.potomacinstitute.org/images/stories/publications/potomac_hybridwar_0108.pdf). A later refinement of Hoffman's interpretation is here, Hoffman, F. "Examining Complex Forms of Conflict: Gray Zone and Hybrid Challenges," PRISM Volume 7, No. 4, November 2018 (https://cco.ndu.edu/news/article/1680696/examining-complex-forms-of-conflict-gray-zone-and-hybrid-challenges/).

set of principles or options for countering the persistent threat posed by our adversaries nor is there a strategic framework for rationalizing, coordinating, or synchronizing a response.

This anti-strategic handicap is compounded in coalition operations, which have historically been compromised by conflicting interests and priorities, free-riding, and intra-coalition competition. Though NATO and its close partners have been surprisingly aligned in responding to Russia's brutal 2022 invasion of Ukraine, there are certainly cracks in the firmament; and only time will tell how long the basic consensus will hold.

This ad hoc and disjointed anti-strategy is rife with risk, and patently unsuited to the challenges of persistent and comprehensive gray zone conflict, especially when our adversaries – peer and non-peer competitors – operate freely in the gray zone.

THE PERSISTENT THREAT...

As discussed, China, Russia, and the global Salafist jihadi movement each view the liberal, rules-based world order championed by the United States and its allies and partners as a permanent and implacable adversary, impeding the realization of their respective strategic visions. For each compromise is merely a short-term posture, with the demise of American global power the ultimate objective. Though vastly different in culture, resources, and power, they share an authoritarian vision of world order irrevocably opposed to the freedoms that we embrace. Human rights, freedom of religion, of the press, of assembly, and especially the freedom to choose our own governors and governments are anathema to their regimes and ideologies. Typically, they pursue their strategic objectives independently, but their shared hostility to the liberal, rules-based system on occasion makes them partners of convenience. In addition, their corrosive impact on the liberal, rules-based system is additive and cumulative.

This multi-front, multi-domain war is not random. China, Russia, and the Salafi jihadists persistently demonstrate strategic determination to exploit American and Western weaknesses, and the seams in the fabric that hold the liberal world order together. Untroubled by bi-annual elections, quarterly earnings, or television ratings, though they embrace distinct and ultimately incompatible ideologies, they are each driven to supplant U.S. or Western dominance, without remorse, without empathy, and without restraint. And they will not cease, at least not in the near future.

... MEETS TOTAL DEFENCE

Confronting adversaries adamantly opposed to the fundamental principles of the liberal world order, the United States and its allies and partners need a far more comprehensive response than interagency collaboration or even "whole of government" can deliver. In the United States segmented defence, where only parts, or even the whole U.S. government defends while the rest of America carries on with business as usual, is a losing proposition. To counter irreconcilable adversaries – and to ensure that our children enjoy the fruits of freedom as we have – will require a comprehensive strategy built upon the conjoined and synchronized efforts of all the elements of American and allied power, including governments, the private and civil society sectors, the technology leaders, and the information and educational sectors.

Fortunately, a model exists for such a comprehensive national security construct; Total Defence. Total Defence is not an abstract or theoretical concept; there are several real-world

models worthy of examination, or even emulation. Several of the Nordic countries (Sweden, Finland, Norway) and the Baltics (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) embrace some version of total defence, as do Israel, Singapore, and even the Republic of Georgia. What these countries have in common is a visceral and existential sense of endangerment by a predatory neighbour, Russia in the cases of the Nordics, Baltics, and Georgia, historically hostile Arab states, and today Iran in Israel's case, and emerging China for Singapore.

Many critics of the "militarization" of foreign policy[49] who demand the end of endless wars will be harshly critical of this; unfortunately, as the saying goes, "the enemy gets a vote;" the endless wars will not end until the enemy votes to end them.

In essence, the total defence concept is a whole-of-nation mobilization for the purpose of national survival, built on the concepts of resistance (in the case of territorial aggression) and resilience.[50] Each of these countries' governments has asked its citizens, companies, and civil society to join in partnership to be on constant alert for potential aggression, to deter aggression from adversaries large and small, and to energetically resist physical encroachments. Total defence is viewed as a national mission requiring firm resolve, enduring commitment, and both personal and collective sacrifice, and differing from conventional military defence by the direct involvement of civil society.[51]

For the Nordic and Baltic states, the goal of total defence is to "become a porcupine;" indigestible to a prospective attacker. Acknowledging their respective inability to withstand a sustained and full-on Russian military assault their objective is to stall the enemy offensive as long as possible (hopefully until allied reinforcements arrive), then to aggressively resist occupation. They would accomplish this indigestibility through a combination of territorial defence and national resilience, thus raising the cost of aggression by an enemy and diminishing the prospect of its success. It is in other words a whole-of-society deterrence posture intended to signal preparation for resolute resistance to domination.

Sweden

Total defence was the guiding principle of Sweden's security strategy during the Cold War, however, successive post-Cold War governments chose to cash in on the peace dividend following the Cold War's end in 1991. Sweden effectively demobilized; however, the concept was revived following the Russian invasion of the Republic of Georgia in 2008 and the occupation and annexation of Crimea and support for separatists in Ukraine's Donbas region in 2014. The Swedish defence policy bill of 2015 included a call to "re-establish the total defence," and in 2018 military conscription resumed.

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49 And there are many. Start here, Mission Creep: The Militarization of US Foreign Policy? Edited by Adams, G. and Murray, S. Georgetown University Press, 2014. Sjurson, Danny. "Militarization of U.S. Foreign Policy: How to Lose a Cold War With China". The Diplomat, January 12, 2022 (https://thediplomat.com/tag/militarization-of-u-s-foreign-policy/). Coyne, C. J. "Delusions of Grandeur: On the Creeping Militarization of U.S. Foreign Policy," Working Paper no. 11-11, Mercatus Center, George Mason University, February 2011 (https://ppe.mercatus.org/system/files/wp1111-creeping-militarization-of-us-foreign-policy.pdf).

50 Fiala, O. and Pettersson, U. "ROC(K) Solid Preparedness: Resistance Operations Concept in the Shadow of Russia," PRISM Vol. 8, N.4, June 11, 2020 (https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/2217669/rock-solid-preparedness-resistance-operations-concept-in-the-shadow-of-russia/).

51 Wither, J. K. "Back to the Future? Nordic total defence concepts," Defence Studies, 20:1, January 26, 2020 (https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14702436.2020.1718498?scroll=top&needAccess=true).

In 2018 the Swedish government sent all Swedish families a notice entitled "If Crisis or War Comes," informing citizens that, "The term 'total defence' denotes all activities that are needed in order to prepare Sweden for war. Sweden's total defence consists of military defence and civil defence," and that, "All of us have a duty to act if Sweden is threatened."[52] A Swedish Defence Commission secretariat report summary specifies further that in the case of an armed attack, "The Swedish Armed Forces, supported by the rest of our total defence, will defend Sweden to win time and create room for manoeuvre and options in order to secure Sweden's independence. A resolute and permanent resistance will be mobilized." To further emphasize the comprehensive nature of total defence the summary states that, "According to Swedish law, there is also a requirement for businesses to participate in the total defence planning process. Enterprises important for the war effort should be identified and regulated."[53] Indeed, "the Parliament, the Government, government authorities, municipalities, private enterprises, voluntary defence organizations as well as individuals are all part of the total defence."[54] To this date, private sector participation is required in total defence planning though no provisions are yet in place to specify the exact details of public-private burden sharing in total defence.

Finland

Unlike Sweden, Finland resisted the peace dividend temptation and did not demobilize at the end of the Cold War but maintained mandatory military conscription and a robust defence capability. Having ceded 11 percent of its territory to the Soviet Union in the Treaty of Moscow in 1940, and with a 1,300 km border with Russia today, Finland has remained vigilant and wary of Russian intentions. Finland's overall posture is articulated in the Security Strategy for Society, according to which, "preparedness is based on the principle of comprehensive security in which the vital functions of society are jointly safeguarded by the authorities, business operators, organizations and citizens."[55]

Finland's emphasis is territorial defence provided by a combined conscript and professional soldier force that can rapidly mobilize up to 280,000, in the context of "comprehensive security." In 2015, Finland's defence authorities sent letters to all 900,000 reservists informing them of their responsibilities and roles in total defence in the case of a crisis.[56] The Government's Defence Report of 2017 states, "In addition to traditional military threats Finland prepares to meet increasingly complex challenges which amalgamate both military and non-military means. External and internal security are ever more distinctly intertwined." It goes on to say, "The maintenance of the defence capability requires close cooperation among the different actors of society. The rapid deployment of the resources

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[52]   "If Crisis or War Comes," Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, 2018 (https://rib.msb.se/filer/pdf/28706.pdf).

[53]   "The Swedish Defence Commission secretariat – unofficial summary, "Resilience: The total defence concept and the development of civil defence 2021–2025," The Swedish Defence Commission secretariat, December 20, 2017 (https://www.government.se/4afeb9/globalassets/government/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/resilience---report-summary---20171220ny.pdf).

[54]   Ibid.

[55]   Security Strategy for Society, Finland Government Resolution / 2. 11. 2017 (https://turvallisuuskomitea.fi/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/YTS_2017_english.pdf).

[56]   Stone, J. "Finland writes to 900,000 military reservists amid heightened tensions with Russia," The Independent, May 22, 2015 (https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/finland-writes-to-900-000-military-reservists-amid-heightened-tensions-with-russia-a38941.html).

and capabilities of the authorities and partners is ensured through partnership and security agreements, memoranda of understanding and joint exercises," thus reinforcing the "comprehensive security" dimension of Finland's total defence.

Singapore

Singapore was forged in Southeast Asia's post-colonial cauldron, attaining independence from Malaysia in 1965. Surrounded by Islamic countries and vulnerable during a period of global and regional communist/anti-communist tension Singapore adopted the "poisonous shrimp" metaphor for its defence concept. "This metaphor was based on the fact that predators would face the high probability of sustaining unacceptably high operational losses from an attack on Singapore."[57] Like a poisonous shrimp it might be eaten, but not without unacceptable pain and loss to its adversary.

Total defence was formally launched in Singapore in 1984 as a national initiative to rally all citizens behind the Singapore Armed Forces during wartime borrowing from the Swiss model of comprehensive or general defence. It was envisaged to build a sense of determination for Singaporeans to defend the country under all circumstances. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the subsequent global war on terror accelerated its adoption.

The six pillars of total defence are military, civil, economic, social, psychological, and digital defence. The concept was designed to "unite all sectors of society – government, business and the people – in defence of Singapore." The government "Total Defence Website" states, "Total defence involves every Singaporean playing a part, individually and collectively, to build a strong, secure and cohesive nation. When we are strong, we are able to deal with any crisis."[58]

Singapore's total defence rests on the foundation of compulsory military service for males over 18 years of age. With a population of less than 6 million, Singapore has a highly trained and exercised active strength force of over 71,000 with over 350,000 reservists that can be mobilized in case of war or crisis. But the military's role in total defence is tightly integrated with the other five pillars of defence in what has been called "civil-military fusion," pre-dating the common use of that phrase to describe civil-military relations in today's China.[59]

Israel

Possibly the most advanced and comprehensive total defence state, though it may not be known by that name, is Israel. Since its birth in 1948, Israel has fought multiple wars against Arab adversaries. Though Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994 signed peace treaties with Israel, and other Arab states have more or less acquiesced to Israel's permanence, they remain implacable enemies. As long as it is ruled by the Islamic regime, Iran will not

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[57] Matthews, R. & Yan, N. Z. (2007) Small Country 'Total Defence': A Case Study of Singapore, Defence Studies, 7:3, 376–395. DOI: 10.1080/14702430701559289 (https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/14702430701559289).

[58] Total Defence 2022, Ministry of Defence, Government of Singapore (https://www.mindef.gov.sg/oms/imindef/mindef_websites/topics/totaldefence/index.html).

[59] Tan, T. Y. Singapore: Civil-Military Fusion. In M. Alagappa (ed.) Coercion and Governance: The Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia (276–293.), Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.

embrace peace with Israel, nor will its proxies Syria or Hezbollah in Lebanon. In Israel's "near abroad" there is Hamas.

Recognizing its geostrategic vulnerabilities and existential threats, Israel's fundamental security posture is inherently comprehensive. Its "national security then consists of a gamut of components that go beyond the purely military aspect. It deals with security, political, economic, social, demographic, and other components that together form the foundation on which the nation's and people's security rests."[60] Though resting upon the formidable Israel Defence Forces, Israel's national security is broad-based; "The economic component of national security is aimed at developing society, education, and culture to strengthen the state and bolster social cohesion and solidarity."[61]

Israel has had mandatory universal military conscription and long-term reserve requirements (with some exceptions) since its birth. Uniquely military service in Israel is compulsory for both men and women. The highly educated force includes 169,500 current active personnel (~130,000 conscripts and ~ 40,000 career officers and NCOs) with over 400,000 reservists. The country is on constant alert and ready for instant mobilization. Both the military and the civilian rear – indeed all of Israel and all Israelis are under the threat of rockets of all kinds, and as a result, after 1991 the government subsidized home shelters. In addition, Israel has a very well-developed alert system, school drills and other civil defence features. With a highly developed defence innovation base, a high defence/GDP ratio (5.6 percent), and technology dominance partially provided by substantial military collaboration with the United States Israel is prepared for any national security its leadership may perceive.

Others

Several other countries have embraced or are embracing the total defence concept in the face of an increasingly volatile and dangerous global threat environment. The Republic of Georgia already experienced in 2008, the kind of aggression from Russia that the Baltic and Nordic states fear. In 2018, Georgia adopted a total defence concept and began the build-up of an "active" and "mobilization" reserve to complement its regular armed forces. According to former Georgian Defence Minister Levan Izoria, "The Total Defence Concept means a broad involvement of society in the defence of the country and it's not just military component."[62] The total defence responsibilities will be mandatory for all adult Georgian citizens who have not reached retirement age. Every citizen of Georgia aged 18 to 65 will be obliged to serve in the "mobilization reserve" for 45 days a year if drafted. "Within the framework of the 'Total Defence' approach, the MoD recognises the importance of actively participating in all efforts to improve interagency coordination and cooperation with the President and the Prime Minister's offices to enhance the whole-of-government approach to defence planning."[63]

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[60]   Eisenkot, G. and Saboni, G. "Guidelines for israel's National Security Strategy," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, October 2019 (https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/media/4613).

[61]   Ibid.

[62]   Republic of Georgia, Ministry of Defence, News, December 20, 2017 (https://mod.gov.ge/en/news/read/6261/total-defence-concept).

[63]   Republic of Georgia, Ministry of Defence, "Strategic Defence Review, 2017–2020" (https://mod.gov.ge/uploads/2018/pdf/SDR-ENG.pdf).

In response to Russia's increasingly aggressive behaviour, in recent years the Baltic states – Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia – have each adopted a version of total defence to complement their NATO membership. Bordering Russia, the Baltic states are perhaps the most vulnerable in Europe to Russian interference. With strong histories of citizen participation in security the Baltic countries are developing more robust defence capabilities as well as resistance planning to hopefully deter or defend against Russian aggression.

PARADIGM SHIFT

The United States and its Western allies and partners for most part persist with a 20th century paradigm for meeting the national security challenges of the 21st century. The binary war/peace paradigm was adequate in the pre-globalized, pre-informationized world of the Cold War period, but it is not a suitable response to the persistent and comprehensive threat posed by their 21st century adversaries. Failure to recognize acts of economic, information, proxy and other "gray zone" forms of belligerence as acts of war, prevents early recognition of and response to adversary aggression. Scruples over proportionality and attribution become effective self-deterrents.

Nearly as detrimental to U.S., allied, and partner security as an outdated conceptual paradigm is the comparatively limited participation of the private sector and of civil society in their respective national security efforts. None of the major Western powers maintains mandatory national service of any kind let alone military conscription. As a result, the burdens of national security are carried disproportionally by a small segment of the population, while the remainder of the population becomes increasingly detached from the national security efforts. This is a formula for defeat in today's global competition for power. The great strength of the Western powers is their dynamic political and economic systems, but without alignment and mobilization those advantages are moot.

While the resumption of compulsory military service may be politically unachievable in these countries today, there are certainly aspects and principles of total defence employed by its current practitioners that might be applied in the United States and its major allies and partners. Universal national service extended to both military and civilian service, improved civic education in schools, national security education in schools, greater civil-military collaboration in community events, public information campaigns, and development of a national doctrine of corporate national security responsibility are possible initiatives to explore.

ADVANCED ASYMMETRIC ACTION

Even total defence however is primarily reactive and anticipates the initiative being taken by an adversary. If the Russians occupy Donbas, the democratic coalition will apply draconian sanctions. If China militarizes the South and East China Seas, we will boost weapons sales to regional allies. In this posture we are always on the back foot ceding the initiative to our adversaries. As General Ben Hodges said, "Yielding the initiative to the enemy puts us at a disadvantage."[64] I can think of no organized competition in which perpetually being on the defence is a winning strategy.

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[64] See footnote 1.

Our adversaries today include both peer or near-peer competitors and non-state armed groups such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. Peer or near-peer competitors by definition bring to the battlespace equal or near-equal assets and resources with which to wage war. However, no two states are identical in their assets; thus, battlespace dominance is most likely to accrue to the state that best uses asymmetrical advantage. Carefully identifying our asymmetric advantages is critical to our national (and allied and partner) security.

Certain non-state armed groups excel at asymmetric assaults. For example, the Islamic State was extremely successful in using online applications and anonymous communication networks to recruit members throughout the world to their cause, and used various media very effectively for its information and influence campaigns. By their very nature, such organizations employ asymmetric methods to achieve their strategic objectives as direct and symmetrical competition with the United States or its main allies or partners would be suicidal. Terrorist attacks, cyber-attacks, information warfare and other oblique means are their most common modalities.[65]

As we inventory our asymmetric advantages, it is vital that we examine all the elements of national strength (the so-called DIME – defence, information, military, economic – construct) across the full conflict spectrum and in all domains. Key to successful asymmetric strategy is that an action 1) needs not be directly in response to an adversary action, 2) needs not utilize the same modalities as the adversary, and 3) needs not be taken in the same geographic location that is threatened by an adversary. To shift the burden of reaction to our adversaries, and to prevent them from seizing initiatives of their choosing, action in advance of their initiatives – advanced action – is required.

Diplomatically the collective West – when it works together – has significant clout both in bilateral and multilateral fora. Diplomatic initiatives to put our adversaries on the defensive should be pursued. For example, the recent NATO applications of Sweden and Finland are a fitting asymmetric reprisal for Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, and dramatically alter Russia's security calculus in the northern region. This is a clear demonstration of the significant price to be paid for Russia's unacceptable breach of the international norms of national sovereignty and against military seizure of territory.

Likewise, assertive Western diplomacy could catalyse broader condemnation of China's mistreatment of its Uighur population, which is already considered genocidal by some. The West could also achieve much greater diplomatic leverage with robust support for the recent World Court decision supporting the Philippines' territorial claims against China, and China's brazen insistence on flouting this unequivocal statement of international law at the expense of a smaller nation.[66] This could be built into an information campaign denouncing China's attitude that "China is a big country and other countries are small coun-

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[65] It is noteworthy that when the Islamic State did try to confront the conventional forces of Iraq on a symmetrical battlefield, despite initial success, they were quickly routed by anti-ISIS coalition forces.

[66] "In the Matter of the South China Sea Arbitration before An Arbitral Tribunal Constituted Under Annex VII to the 1982 United nations Convention on the Law of the Sea," July 12, 2016 (https://web.archive.org/web/20190129031833/https://pca-cpa.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/175/2016/07/PH-CN-20160712-Award.pdf). For insight into the Chinese reaction see, "Whatever happened to the South China Sea ruling?" by Pratik Jakhar, Lowy Institute, July 12, 2021 (https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/whatever-happened-south-china-sea-ruling).

tries, and that's just a fact," with the clear implication that big countries do what they wish to and smaller countries suffer what they must.[67]

Our collective Western information and intelligence assets and resources are potentially extremely powerful, as was proven throughout the Cold War. Recently the strategic and selective release of intelligence regarding Putin's "false flag" strategy and justification for invading Ukraine caught Russia by surprise and forced it to shift its starting position several times. Regrettably, this clever use of intelligence and information was insufficient to deter Russia's invasion of Ukraine. However, it is an innovative asymmetric action that increased Russia's costs by debunking its claims of self-defence against Nazification and anti-Russian actions in Ukraine.

A more effective and assertive use of information warfare – what diplomat George Kennan called "political warfare" – could create asymmetric advantage in a variety of ways.[68] For example, wide dissemination of the riches and sybaritic lifestyles of Russian oligarchs, or privileges enjoyed by the children of the Chinese party elite within those countries could inflame domestic opinion regarding the hypocrisy of their leaders.[69]

As Russia has attempted to sow discontent within the Russian-speaking communities of the Baltic states, Western influence operations aimed at sowing similar discontent among non-Russian minorities within the Russian Federation – such as Chechens or Buryats[70] – might prove effective in sending a message that "two can play at this game." Likewise, an anti-Russification influence campaign in Kazakhstan or Uzbekistan might help to move those countries toward greater scepticism with respect to their northern neighbour.

The economic strength and leverage of the West is far superior to that of its adversaries. While China's economy may be growing at a more rapid rate than those of the Western states, Russia's is not (and China's economy is experiencing its own troubles – there is no guarantee that its future growth will match its recent growth). The U.S. dollar remains the global trading currency and the global SWIFT system of bank transfers is a powerful tool of economic influence. Sanctions and other economic weapons have been used increasingly by the United States and its allies against terrorist and other criminal organizations, rogue states such as Iran, Venezuela, and North Korea, and more recently against China, and especially Russia since its 2022 invasion of Ukraine. They can certainly be used pro-actively as opposed to a retaliation for adversary misbehaviour.

Another advanced asymmetric action worthy of consideration is something resembling the Stuxnet attack on Iranian nuclear centrifuges uncovered in 2010, which set back Iran's nuclear development significantly.[71] This digital weapon surreptitiously implanted into the

[67] China Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi statement at he ASEAN Ministers Conference in Hanoi in July 2010. Yang is a high-ranking member of the CCP leadership.

[68] Kennan, Op. Cit.

[69] "Alexei Navalny: Millions watch jailed critic's 'Putin palace' film," BBC News, January 20, 2021 (https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-55732296). "Xi Jinping's daughter Xi Mingze living in America, reveals US Senator Hartzler," The Economic Times, February 21, 2022 (https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/xi-jinpings-daughter-xi-mingze-living-in-america-reveals-us-senator-hartzler/articleshow/89728856.cms?from=mdr).

[70] Kovalev, A. "For Opposition to Putin's War, Look to the Fringes of His Empire," Foreign Policy, May 20, 2022 (https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/05/20/russia-ukraine-war-casualties-deaths-putin-ethnic-minorities-racism/).

[71] Zetter, K. Countdown to Zero Day: Stuxnet and the Launch of the World's First Digital Weapon, Crown Publishers, November 2014.

uranium enrichment facility in Natanz is now commonly assumed to have been developed by U.S. and Israeli intelligence; far below the threshold of an armed conflict it demonstrated the reach and potential of technology-based tools in advancing national security interests.

A profound and legitimate concern regarding advanced asymmetric actions is that the traditional principles of the laws of war cannot be easily applied. For example, since advanced asymmetric action is not intended to be directly retaliatory it might be considered unprovoked. As with cyber conflict though the distinction in the gray zone between offensive and defensive and between peremptory and retaliatory is ambiguous. Here the role of proportionality is elusive. To what would an advanced asymmetric action be proportional? Arguably, an asymmetric action could be justified on the basis that it responds to persistent gray-zone aggression across all domains by our adversaries and thus is an appropriate counteraction. It may be difficult to justify an advanced asymmetric action in terms of military necessity, but military necessity is not a criterion for justifying non-military, asymmetric or gray-zone action.

Escalation is another concern, but escalation is an inevitable risk of any action or reaction in war, and we must accept that risk if we intend to remain competitive in the global competition for influence in the evolving world order. Advanced, asymmetric actions are demonstrations below the threshold of armed conflict for deterrence purposes. It is crucial that the United States and its allies and partners have a robust and credible deterrence toolbox in order to avoid the unenviable position of being self-deterred for lack of options, and in order to effectively defend the liberal, rules-based world order, and prevail in the contemporary struggle for global dominance.

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Nebojsa Nikolic

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT METHODS IN SUPPORT OF DEFENCE PREPARATION AGAINST HYBRID WARFARE

ABSTRACT: *This paper presents an integrative approach for education of security and defence personnel at postgraduate level for analytical thinking in role-playing exercise scenarios related to hybrid warfare and defence against hybrid threats. The main goal is the development of capabilities and resilience of defence personnel to timely perceive hybrid threats, to manage them, and successfully respond. Combined and successive application of several methods from strategic management field could be beneficial for effective education and training of defence personnel. We start with content analysis and comparative reviews in basic lessons about hybrid warfare and hybrid threats. Next step is the scenario method as it is a very useful tool for connecting theoretical issues with practical applications that are, in the end, the most important. Role-playing in a hypothetical scenario helps students check themselves how they understand the phenomenon of hybrid warfare and how they would respond to hybrid threats. Then a PESTLE (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environmental) analysis follows that helps make a comprehensive and structured approach to the problem exposed in the exercise scenario. Next step is oriented towards identifying weaknesses and vulnerabilities, as well as the strengths and advantages of the country in the given scenario. For this step we use SWOT, (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis. SWOT obtains an upgrade over the PESTLE analysis. PESTLE gives a comprehensive structured presentation of the country's situation, while SWOT identifies weak points as well as strong ones. The priority of the hybrid adversary is to find and exploit weak points of the target of the hybrid attack and avoid or neutralize its strengths.*

KEYWORDS: *hybrid warfare, military education and training, strategic management, scenario, PESTLE, SWOT*

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INTRODUCTION

Hybrid warfare became a popular research topic in many countries, particularly during the last decade when many conflicts appeared bringing along a variety of models and contents. Having in mind the richness of hybrid warfare phenomenon and many aspects for research, this paper is narrow in scope and content with the intention to contribute to the clarification of some aspects of the role and place of the armed forces. In that sense, this paper is limited to the presentation of an integrative approach for education and training of security

and defence personnel at postgraduate level, in order to foster analytical thinking, exercise role playing, and deal with scenarios related to hybrid warfare and defence against hybrid threats. The primary purpose is the development of capabilities and resilience of defence personnel to perceive hybrid threats in time, manage them, and successfully respond.

The combined and successive application of several methods from the field of strategic management and organizational sciences could be beneficial for the effective education and training of defence personnel. An aspect of the possible use of strategic management methods in education and training of defence and security personnel for countering hybrid threats may start with such logical questions as how to perceive hybrid threats, how to prepare defence personnel to respond to hybrid threats, how to motivate students to think in an analytical and critical way, how to obtain a systematic and comprehensive approach in dealing with hybrid threats, etc.

EVOLVING PERCEPTION OF HYBRID WARFARE

In order to answer the triggering questions above, it is useful to start the discussion on basic views about hybrid warfare, as well as some possible relations of hybrid warfare to other concepts of conflicts. In the very beginning, we must say that there is no universally accepted definition of the phenomenon marked with the term "hybrid warfare." At the same time, it is hard to discuss, analyse and study something that is not defined in some way. In fact, there are several definitions for hybrid warfare. One of the first descriptions comes from the inventors of the concept,[1] and relates to four main domains of applications: conventional activities, irregular activities, terrorism, and criminal activities.[2]

The perception of hybrid warfare evolved during the last two decades widening the scope of hybrid threat domains (they have evolved from four to many), while the main characteristics have remained unchanged. An older European perception of hybrid warfare recognized several application domains: economic means, political means, diplomatic means, technological means, violence (ethnic/religion conflicts, terrorism, migration, criminal etc.), military intimidation, covert military actions.

The tendency to widen the set of hybrid warfare domains is never ending. In recent times the main idea and spirit of the concept of hybrid warfare allow us to think about putting no limits on the perceptions of threats to national security and defence. That is, we can call on an earlier conflict concept known as "unrestricted warfare", suggested by two Chinese senior colonels at the end of 20th century (Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui). In their book[3] "Unrestricted warfare" they offered 24 types of warfare and additionally suggested all possible combinations of them. We think that the modern perception of hybrid warfare tends to contain all forms of unrestricted warfare, while maintaining the original characteristics and a flexible approach.

1   Mattis, J. and Hoffman, F. "Future Warfare: The rise of Hybrid Wars", Proceedings Magazine, US Naval Institute, 2005.
2   Hoffman, F. "Conflicts in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars", Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, Arlington, Virginia, 2007.
3   Liang, Q. and Xiangsui, W. "Unrestricted Warfare," PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, Beijing, China, 1999.

A working definition of hybrid warfare used here[4] is as follows: "Hybrid warfare is a postmodern concept of low-intensity conflict, which combines, in a flexible and non-linear way, conventional and non-conventional forms of engagement against defensive capabilities of the targeted state, with a main goal to force the object of hybrid attack to fulfil all demands and wishes of the attacker, while trying to stay hidden, ambiguous, innovative, patient, and not willing to be blamed for crossing the threshold of open conflict."

ON THE ROLE AND PLACE OF THE MILITARY
IN THE HYBRID WARFARE CONTEXT

Some of the novel results[5] produced by relevant institutions (e.g. the Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats), confirm our perception of the development dynamics of the hybrid warfare concept where many activities, military and non-military, could be used as tools for hybrid attacks. Among many possible hybrid activities,[6] there are some that are directly related and connected with the roles and missions of the armed forces:

– Proliferation of weapons;
– Armed forces' conventional/sub-conventional operations;
– Paramilitary organizations (proxies);
– Military exercises;
– Airspace violation;
– Territorial water violation;
– Clandestine operations;
– Infiltration;
– Intelligence preparations;
– Electronic warfare operations (jamming, spoofing);
– Cyber operations;
– Physical operations against infrastructure.

Of course, the original list is much longer. The activities listed here are only those where the military was positioned at the first place. The question here is the choice of a particular hybrid activity in a given context. In fact, this question of choice could be put not only in a military aspect but in general for all possible aspects of hybrid threats and hybrid warfare.

Almost infinite combinations of hybrid tools could be generated from the concept of unrestricted warfare, inducing a new problem for making the optimal decision on the appropriate choice among many options. When faced with a lot of options of choice, some kind of systematization is welcomed. Here, it could be useful to connect[7] with some other conflict concepts. In our case, it is the concept of Warden's rings.

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4   Mitrovic, M. and Nikolic, N. "Hybrid Warfare – Contribution to Concept Definition, Content and Models".
5   Giannopoulos G., H. Smith and M. Theocharidou. 2020, "The Landscape of Hybrid Threats: A Conceptual model".
6   Ibid.
7   Nikolic, N. Connecting Conflict Concepts: Hybrid Warfare and Warden's Rings. Information & Security: An International Journal, Vol. 41, 2018, 21–34.

ENEMY AS A SYSTEM – THE CONCEPT OF WARDEN'S RINGS

While the concept of unrestricted warfare is very useful in perceiving and understanding the wide scope of possible hybrid methods of threats and violations, the concept known as Warden's rings may help us in their systematization. The concept of Warden's rings[8] helps us answer questions like what kind of "war" could we face, when, why and how, and which part of the targeted society will be attacked by hybrid activities, why, when and how.

John Warden (a US Air Force colonel, one of the main planners of the air operations during the First Gulf War in 1991) proposed a new concept of perceiving an enemy state in the context of making decisions for planning and conducting military operations. He proposed to consider the enemy state as a system, which has several main entities, and displays them in a form of concentric rings:

– The first (external) ring is the fielded military (protection/shield).
– The second ring is the population (body).
– The third ring is infrastructure (non-critical organs that sustain the body).
– The fourth ring is system essentials (critical organs/blood, heart),
– The fifth ring, in the centre, is the leadership (head).

This concept became very popular and is known as Warden's rings. Although it was developed in a specific context of air operations,[9] we found it very useful in the context of hybrid warfare. Having in mind the strategic ends, means, and ways, as well as the wider context of the problem, it could be easier to predict which part (or ring) could be violated and how.

SYSTEM THINKING – SMART DECISION-MAKING

As we have seen, there is a complex situation with plenty of possible variations and a wide scope of different domains. Now, we can put any of the 24 types of "war" defined in the concept of "unrestricted warfare" in relations with any of the five main system entities (rings) of a state that is the object of a hybrid violation. Because of the many possible simultaneous combinations, there could be more cases than 24×5, the complexity of possible situations is evident. There are many possible threats to any part of the targeted society. To stay focused on the role of the armed forces, a question can be formulated as how to prepare defence personnel to face and respond to hybrid threats.

The complexities of dealing with the hybrid warfare phenomenon generates need for:
– Good situation awareness (monitoring, informing, reconnaissance).
– Accurate and timely content analysis and estimations.
– Systematic thinking and analysis.
– Smart decision-making.
– Careful execution.

This approach leads to the need for education and training of senior defence personnel in applications of various methods of strategic management and organizational sciences for successful preparation for countering hybrid threats. The richness of hybrid warfare tools,

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8   Warden, J. The Enemy as a System. Airpower Journal, Spring 1995, 41–55.
9   Warden, J. Air Theory for the Twenty-first Century. In Battlefield of the Future: 21st Century Warfare Issues, 1995, 103–124. Air War College.

together with the ambiguity of events and behaviour of potential hybrid actors generates confusion in the perception of threats to national security. Therefore, a kind of intellectual exercise is needed to free minds of rigid thinking and initiate an innovative, flexible, and comprehensive approach. Instead of preparing for a single case of hybrid violation, which is not enough, or preparing for all cases of hybrid violations, which is almost impossible, the main goal is the development of capabilities and resilience of defence personnel to timely perceive and manage hybrid threats, and successfully respond to them.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT TOOLS

To enhance capabilities for responding to hybrid challenges the combined and iterative application of several methods from the strategic management field, decision-making theory and other disciplines could be beneficial for the initial approach to the problem of dealing with the hybrid warfare phenomenon and to the effective education and training of defence personnel. Some of these methods are:

– MONITORING (situational awareness, observation) is the first step in introducing the problem. All information is welcome, but it is essential that it be relevant, objective, accurate, and unbiased. The information should be comprehensive as well, covering all aspects of interest. The sources of information could be open or classified, news (newspapers, TV, radio, internet), informal statements, speeches, interviews of state leaders; personal relationships among leaders/stakeholders; official statements; academic papers; think tank reports/reviews,[10] special reports/case studies by NGOs, the UN, World Bank, etc., strategic documents, formal agreements.

– CONTENT ANALYSIS. The purpose of content analysis and comparative reviews in basic lessons about hybrid warfare and hybrid threats is to obtain good insight of all relevant aspects of the situation of interest. It requires good capacity for information selection (important/unimportant, relevant/irrelevant, true/false, etc). The information for content analysis should be credible, comprehensive, relevant, unbiased, and up-to-date.

– SCENARIO and role playing are very useful tools for connecting theoretical issues with practical applications that are, in the end, the most important. A scenario obtains insight in the context of the problem under study. Usually, scenarios are prepared by lecturers and course leaders in advance. The main role of a scenario is to present the situation and the problem in a narrative form. Furthermore, a predictive approach is possible, which means that more scenario variants could be generated from the initial one in order to analyse possible future options and consequently to prepare for them.

Additionally, an innovative approach could be applied here. Instead of giving students an already prepared textual scenario, they could be tasked to produce their own scenario by using information collected and selected from several open sources (as it was explained above – methods of monitoring and content analysis). When a scenario is formulated, students could be given different roles for making decisions (example: prime minister, minister of defence or interior, chief of general staff, unit commander, etc). Role playing in a hy-

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[10]   A good example for the context of conflict at the Western Balkans is the book by Craig Nation, R. "War in the Balkans, 1991–2002", Strategic Studies Institute, 2003.

pothetical scenario helps students check themselves how they understand the phenomenon of hybrid warfare and how they would communicate and respond to hybrid threats.

A scenario is a textual description of the situation. It should contain all relevant information. For creating a good and comprehensive scenario description, it is of crucial importance to apply various methodological tools of monitoring and content analysis in a skilful and combined manner. After creating the initial scenario as a descriptive presentation of an actual situation, more variants of it can be generated as predictions. Actually, forecasting is the main value of scenario analysis.[11] Annex I. at the end of this paper shows an example for an initial scenario:

– PESTLE analysis is the next useful tool. PESTLE analysis stands for analysis of Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, and Environmental issues. This analysis helps us make a comprehensive and structured approach to the problem identified in the exercise scenario. PESTLE should offer a comprehensive, structured and systematic review of all relevant information. Annex II. at the end of this paper shows an example of PESTLE analysis.

– SWOT. The SWOT method is oriented towards identifying weaknesses and vulnerabilities of the country under hybrid threat as described in the scenario, as well as identifying some of its strengths and advantages. SWOT stands for Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat. The priority of a rational and smart hybrid adversary is to find and exploit weak points of the target of hybrid attack and to avoid or neutralize its strengths. In that sense, the attacked country should be aware of its weak points and undertake some preventive steps to strengthen them, or at least to expect hybrid attacks against them. SWOT analysis uses data and information from previous steps and transforms data into a new information structure. The new structure has to clearly point out weaknesses (vulnerabilities) but also some advantages (strengths) of the country under hybrid threat. It also identifies some possible opportunities and probable threats to the security of the country in the given scenario.

If we are to summarize the methodological flow of activities related to the application of the strategic management tools discussed here, then it will be as follows:

– We start with monitoring activities that obtains relevant information collection and selection.

– Then content analysis and comparative reviews follow.

– The next step is initial scenario creation and development of several possible hypothetical variants of the future. Role playing in a hypothetical scenario helps students check themselves how they understand the phenomenon of hybrid warfare and how they would respond to hybrid threats.

– Then a PESTLE analysis follows, which helps developing a comprehensive and structured approach to the problem exposed in the exercise scenario.

– The next step is oriented towards distilling weaknesses and vulnerabilities of the country under hybrid threat, which is described in the scenario, as well as some strengths and advantages of that country in the given scenario. For this step, we use SWOT analysis.

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[11] Huss, W. "A Move Toward Scenario Analysis", International Journal of Forecasting, 4(1988), 377–388.

The power of the methods of strategic analysis lies in their joint application. It is good to note this transformative sequence of successive application of those methods: SCENARIO-PESTLE-SWOT. PESTLE gives a comprehensive and structured presentation of the country's situation, while SWOT distils weak points as well as strong ones. A SWOT analysis obtains a kind of upgrade over the previous step with PESTLE analysis. The practical importance of SWOT analysis lies in the fact that the priority of a smart hybrid adversary is to find and exploit weak points of the object of hybrid attack and to avoid or neutralize the strengths.

Strategic management methods could be used in considering some concrete and actual questions related to the roles and places of the military in contemporary security context in Europe. Some of the possible questions are related to the enlargement of military capabilities of small states through strengthening reserve[12] military forces, territorial defence forces[13] and considering their roles in war and peace,[14] and even the reintroduction of conscription.[15] Scenario analysis, PESTLE and SWOT methods are good tools to check various options that main stakeholders want to consider.

CONCLUSIONS

Hybrid warfare has evolved through the past two decades towards a wide set of possible modes and models of violation of national security. Earlier concepts of conflicts, together with methods from other fields, like management science and strategic analysis, are useful tools for capability enhancing countering hybrid threats.

The defence and security sectors are not the only ones tasked with defence against hybrid attacks. However, usually they are chosen and mandated to lead defence preparation. Also, interorganizational cooperation is of special importance when countering hybrid threats. Interorganizational cooperation in its wider sense assumes all kinds of inter-agency, inter-ministerial, inter-sectoral, and international cooperation. The richness of possible hybrid threats and the accompanying ambiguity, deception and uncertainty, require that the defender should be well prepared and ready for various options. The hybrid adversary should be perceived as a smart, rational, flexible, cunning and patient player. As such, the hybrid adversary tends to hit the weak points of the defender country and society. PESTLE and SWOT methods are helpful to identify those weak points and obtain directions for building resilience by eliminating those weaknesses.

Good knowledge of other and earlier concepts of conflicts, together with methods from other fields, like management science and strategic analysis, could help the education and training of senior defence and security personnel, and enlarge their analytical capabilities for countering hybrid threats.

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[12]   Nikolic, N. "Former Soldiers Attitudes Towards Active Reserve Service," XV International symposium, SymOrg-2016, Faculty of Organizational Sciences, 2016, 708–712.

[13]   Takács, G. A. and Kiss Á. P. "Territorial Defence Forces: a key element of Hungary's resilience in postmodern war," Proceedings of the conference on National Resilience: Opportunities and Challenges in a Changing Security Environment, May 9–10, 2018, Budapest, 2018, 295–317.

[14]   Kiss, Á. P. "The Role of Territorial Defence Forces in a Peace and War," Proceedings of The 19th Annual Conference of the Conflict Studies Working Group," Budapest, Hungary, 27–31 May 2019, 2020, 159–170.

[15]   Nikolic, N. "Models of Selective Military Service in Modern Conditions." Vojno Delo, No. 4, a journal of the University of Defence in Belgrade, 2021, 90–109.

ANNEX I.

Example of an initial scenario

The initial scenario is a descriptive and comprehensive presentation of the situation in all relevant aspects in the country under study. It should be generated from various relevant sources of information through a monitoring process.

Country X is strategically determined towards democracy, capitalism and the European integration. But, it is constrained with its hard historical heritage, weak infrastructure, dependency on energy import, high level of corruption, sharp political division, significant percent of ethnic minority Y, and internal reluctance to change. Main economical players in country X are, in its essence, state monopolies or privileged selected private companies. Unemployment is high, wages are low, organized crime is present everywhere and connected with informal centres of power. Country X has received a huge international assistance in money, material, and counselling, however, most of that aid didn't reach the common people and economy but was misused by corrupted political elites.
Country Y is a big and strong neighbour of country X. Both used to be in a common state Z before its dissolution decades ago. Political ambitions, military might, and economic prosperity of country Y generate aspirations of Y to project its influence towards neighbouring countries including X. Poor relations between country Y and the EU make the situation even worse.
In regard of social and ethnic relationships, there are several sharp divisions (political, ideological, regional, and ethnic). Minority Y in country X is strongly supported by its parent country Y (dual citizenship, free scholarships, free health insurance).

ANNEX II.

Example of applied PESTLE analysis[16]

Factors	Aspects, forms, actors	Threats and challenges	Deterrence and counters
P–Political	Officials (government leadership, members of parliament…)	Desinformation	Transparency
			Public relations
		Blackmail	HR management
			Public security
		Spin	Responsibility
	Processes (making laws and regulations)	Blocking	Legality
			Negotiations
		Ignoring	Consistency
		Impositions	Lobbing
	International Affairs	Isolation	Allies finding
		Tensional impositions	Active peaceful politics
	Internal Security	Public security erosion	Awareness improvement
		Border porosity	Strengthening border police
		Confusing crisis management	Advancement of procedures and decision maker training
	National Security (Defence)	Arms race	Priorities trade-off
		Demobilization forcing	Smart recruitment
		Demilitarization	Optimizing resources
		Bureaucratization	Optimizing management
		Decline of standards	Sustaining high quality
E–Economic	Public debt	Conditioning	Restrictive budget politics
	GDP	Economic sanctions	Diversification
	Living costs	Monopolies	Liberalization
		Supply chain interruptions	Market stability
			Infrastructure protection
	Inflation, taxes	Distrust	Stability
	Unemployment rate	Social turmoil	Economic grow, Social aid

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16 Nebojsa, N. Comparative Review of Hybrid Warfare and Special Warfare. In Thematic Conference Proceedings of International Scientific Conference "Archibald Reiss Days 2017", 253–262.

Factors	Aspects, forms, actors	Threats and challenges	Deterrence and counters
S-Social	Values, lifestyle	Corruption	Accountability
		Nepotism	Transparency
		Negative selection	Positive selection
	Cultural identity	Ignoring	Promotion
		Oblivion	Memorial
	Education	Erosion	Nurture
	Religion	Mockery	Respect
T-Technological	Production	Sabotage	Safety prevention measures
		Dirty technology import	High standards requirements
	Power supply	Sabotage	Safety prevention measures
	Water supply	Sabotage	Safety prevention measures
		Pollution	Safety prevention measures
	Research & Development	Obstruction	Cooperation
		Theft	Prevention
L-Legal	Business rules	Unpredictability	Stable, long term
	Taxation rules	Frequent changes	Constant
	Employment rules	Uncertainty	Syndicate strengthens
E-Environmental	Weather & climate	Misuse of disasters	Emergency management
	Pollution, contamination	Man-made accidents	Detection & Warning system
	Infrastructure	Violation	Protection
	Energy availability	Interruption	Diversification

PESTLE analysis could be upgraded with concrete details, such as actors, threats, and possible means. The classical PESTLE analysis can be expanded by adding possible deterrence and countermeasures. This expanded approach of identifying concrete counter measures has good practical value as it offers answers to the identified problems. PESTLE analysis may be prepared as a plain text, in a tabular form as shown here, or in both formats.

ANNEX III.

An example of applied SWOT analysis

SWOT analysis	
(It could be perceived as a 'user-friendly' systematic presentation of the weak and strong points, as well as opportunities and threats)	
STRENGTHS: – Willingness to change – Good geographical position for transportation and trade between the EU and YY country – Good international position (allies, supporters) – Good education system	**WEAKNESSES:** – Corruption – Low culture for tolerance of differences – Dissipations of resources due to wrong agenda – Economic weakness – Energy dependence – Overlaps of mandates
OPPORTUNITIES: – International support – Good aspects of historical relations with YY – Geopolitical position as a bridge, instead of as a border wall – Good prospects for international trade	**THREATS:** – Obstructions – Sabotage – Deviation of priorities – Ethnic and/or religious violence – Bad aspects of historical relations with YY

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Use double quotation marks for quotations. Long quotations (40 words or more) are usually indented and blocked, without quotation marks. Do not use italics in these indented paragraphs. Use square brackets to indicate authors' insertions and changes to the original. Additional emphases are noted as [my italics/emphasis]. Omitted text is indicated by an ellipsis in square brackets […]

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Footnote and reference list: Department of Defence Archives (hereafter DOD Archives), Chief of the General Staff (hereafter CGS) 607, CGS/3/2/1Vol. 1, CGS Adjutant General (hereafter AG), 6 June 1952.
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Two or more authors:

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Last name, Initials. "Title of Chapter". In Last name, Initials and Last name, Initials (eds), *Title of Book.* Place of publication: Publisher, Year, pages.

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Footnote: Kiras, J. "Irregular Warfare: Terrorism and Insurgency". In Baylis, J., Wirtz, J. J. and Gray, C. S. (eds), *Strategy in the Contemporary World: An Introduction to Strategic Studies.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. 189.

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Footnote: Engelbrecht, L. "Analysts Welcome Defence Budget Boost". defenceWeb. 28 October 2009. http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4918&Itemid=379, Accessed on 3 June 2010.

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Newspaper article

Last name, Initials. "Title of Article". *Name of Newspaper,* Date. Section. Page.

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   Examples:

Footnote: Jordaan, E. "South African Defence since 1994: A Study in Policy-Making". Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the MMil in Military Sciences. Stellenbosch University, 2005. 25.

Subsequent reference: Jordaan. "South African Defence since 1994…" 28.

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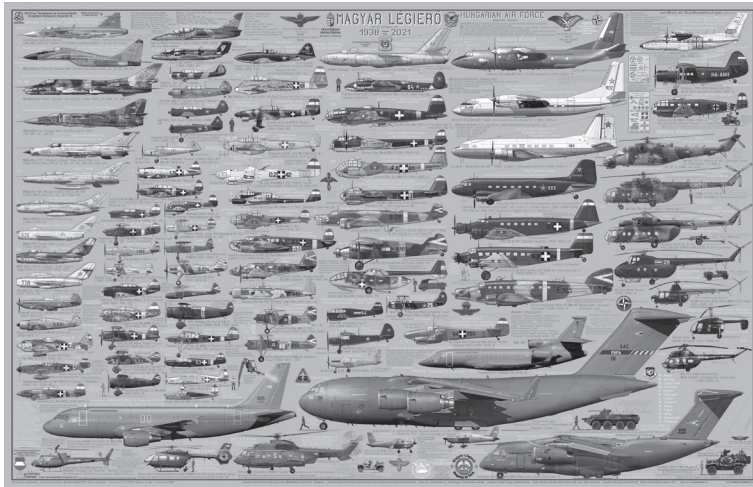This journal does not offer any honoraria, and does not charge any author fee, either.

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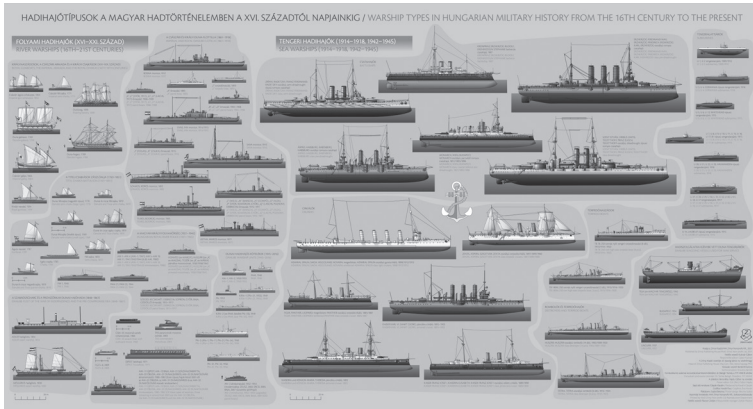
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