

HYBRID WARS IN THE AGE OF ASYMMETRIC CONFLICTS

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Abstract: *The beginning of the twenty-first century was marked by proliferation of hybrid wars, held between flexible and sophisticated adversaries engaged in asymmetric conflicts using various forms of warfare according to the purpose and timing. The emergence of this new kind of war specifically for the new globalized economy, increasingly integrated and polarized, has questioned the traditional and conventional military thinking, generated a debate on the definition of the new concept of hybrid war and appropriate measures to take in order to adapt to the new reality imposed by it.*

Keywords: *asymmetric warfare, conflict, hybrid wars, hybrid threats, security, warfare*

1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, especially after long periods of peace, has always been difficult for contemporaries to identify changes in the nature, type and character of the war.

In the same time you may see that after periods of economic growth we'll face decline and recession. Are those two connected? Today we assist to a very difficult period for economic environment. Humanity or specialist has no answer for the needs of society itself.

Is that because we traverse a distinct period that we never have faced with or is that because we didn't adapt to society evolution and we didn't learn previous lessons about economy and how these interacts with conflicts, security and societies responses to these events.

Being difficult to make economic predictions changes in economic and political life were determined by circumstances, changes or adjustments in the use of technology and the dynamics of conflict.

Although, there have always been well-established principles and strategies of international relations. Modern prophets of the apocalypse, including Robert Kaplan (1994), Francis Fukuyama (1992), Samuel Huntington (1996) and, to a lesser extent, David Kilcullen (2013) offered a vision of a future world dystopian, characterized by anarchy Thomas Hobbes, while others, such as Martin van Creveld (1996, 1999) and Phillip Bobbitt (2003) found that the state is in terminal decline as an actor in international relations, which pave the way for the establishment of chaos and war (Johnson, 2014: 1).

Others think that future war will bear "amongst the people", "in the presence of civilians", "against civilians" or "civil defense" (Smith, 2006: 5), leading to massive loss of life among them. Britain's official military doctrine from 2009, refers to the character of the war in negative terms and defines future hybrid battlefield of the future as inevitable one "*contested, congested, cluttered, connected and constrained*" (MOD, 2010).

Also, most work on global strategic trends provide a violent future marked by conflicts over diminishing natural resources, climate change and population growth.

On the other hand, in contrast, lies a series of projections of future supporting, based on statistics that the number of wars both major and minor, tend to diminish (Pinker, 2011).

But the best clues about the type of war near future are provided by the current asymmetric conflicts, conflicts that take the form of widespread insurgent movements involving operations in rural and urban areas with the support and sympathy of the local population against coalition interventions West led by the United States (in the Middle East, Africa, Afghanistan, Iraq, etc.) or insurgency backed by a foreign power against their own governments (hybrid warfare waged by Russia in Ukraine).

Conflicts of today's world shows us clearly that we live in a world of conflict unconventional hybrid, becoming more numerous, that they will probably coexist in the future, with classic conventional wars, held directly or through intermediaries. (Johnson: 2014: 71).

2. HYBRID WAR: A DIFFERENT TYPE OF UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE

During the Cold War, all conflicts were analyzed and interpreted in the context of ideological and strategic confrontation between alliances grouped around the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. Cold War led to a strict division of spheres of influence that made potential threats to be much more predictable and resolved. After 1991, the end of the bipolar world stable opened a new era marked by bloody conflict in the Balkans and the former Soviet Union in the 1990's and the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact has triggered a moment of unification in international relations in conditions under which the United States became the sole global power. Numerous conflicts erupted in the aftermath of the Cold War marked a new phase in international relations, the use of force in interstate conflicts has become acceptable again, a situation illustrated by the two Wars against terror, Iraq and Afghanistan initiated by the US after the attacks of September 2001 conflict between Russia and Georgia in the summer of 2008, the NATO-led intervention in Libya in 2011 and Russia's recent military operations in Crimea and Ukraine (Bachmann & Gunneriusson, 2014: 11). It is obvious that strategic stability that has prevented any direct military confrontation between NATO and the Warsaw Pact no longer exists in the twenty-first century.

Military analysts and international relations theorists have noticed that the beginning of the twenty-first century was marked by proliferation of *hybrid wars*, held between flexible and sophisticated adversaries engaged in asymmetric conflicts and using various forms of warfare according to the purpose and time chosen. The emergence of this new kind of war specifically for the new globalized economy, increasingly integrated and polarized, has questioned the traditional and conventional military thinking, generated a debate on the definition of the new concept of *hybrid war* and appropriate measures to take in order to adapt to the new reality imposed by it. (Glenn, 2008: 73).

Currently, the traditional classification of conflicts between *Big and Small* versus *Conventional and Irregular* is too simplistic and does not reflect the realities of the contemporary world, a world in which both non-state actors and state using increasingly more unconventional forms of warfare and simultaneously support, encourage and participate in conventional armed conflicts (Hoffman, 2007: 5).

Conflicts are becoming more characterized by a hybrid combination of traditional and unconventional tactics planning and execution of decentralized and involve state actors and non-state technology that uses both simple and sophisticated in innovative ways (Conway, Roughead Allen, 2007). An important feature of contemporary art of war is how to wear war convergence in the sense that we are witnessing a *convergence* of factors both physical and psychological, of the kinetic and non-kinetic, combatants and non-combatants, of state and non-state actors. This convergence has made irrelevant classical distinction between types of warfare - conventional warfare, unconventional, terrorism or criminal activity - given that we are witnessing a proliferation of a diffuse type of war, worn in different ways having many variants (Gray, 2006). In the view of many military analysts, the *hybrid war* will be the new type of war that will characterize the twenty-first century, a war in which opponents will use unique combinations and hybrid threats to attack enemy targets by speculating vulnerabilities. Distinct challenges caused by opponents that use fundamentally different approaches, conventional or unconventional terrorist will be replaced by some from the opponents *simultaneously* using all forms and all conventional and unconventional warfare tactics, including criminal activities (smuggling, narco-terrorism, illegal trade with last generation gangs, exploiting urban criminal networks, etc.) that destabilize governments and provide resources insurgents. Security challenges currently not come only from a State which selects one of the forms of waging war, but increasingly more from the states and/or groups of non-state actors that selects the whole arsenal strategies, tactics and technologies best suited to achieve the goal and combine them in unique and innovative ways according to their own strategic culture, geography and purposes. In the contemporary world, globalized and technologically prepared, asymmetric conflicts fought between opponents in diffuse conflicts, the line between insurgency, terror and conventional warfare are increasingly irrelevant, have shown that organized groups in the networks have a capacity of warfare similar to that of nation-states, managing a series of victories against them (Arquilla, 2007: 369).

Hybrid war that can be worn as well by nation-states, and by non-state actors, incorporating the entire spectrum modes of warfare, including all conventional military capabilities, tactics and combat units unconventional terrorist acts challenge chaos, violence discriminatory, cyber-war, financial, media, etc.

These multi-modal operations can be performed by separate units or even the same unit but generally are conducted and coordinated tactical operations in the same battlefield in order to achieve *synergies* both in terms of physical size and psychological conflict.

Results can be obtained at all levels of war and, therefore, there is a *compression* levels at which wage war situation is complicated by the simultaneous *convergence* of modes of warfare.

The novelty of this combination of types of war used and innovative adaptations of existing weapons systems and hybrid threats is the *complexity* of increasingly large.

The hybrid forces and weapons systems can effectively incorporate advanced technology in their structure and strength of their strategy that you can use in innovative ways, different and sometimes more effective compared to standard parameters and ways in which they are usually operated. Therefore, from an operational perspective, the spectrum of limited operational capabilities, hybrids are *superior* military forces available to Western countries (Nemeth, 2002).

Hybrid wars are nothing new, but they turn to have different approach.

The history of military conflicts revealed that in most wars were no military operations both conventional and unconventional.

In cases where there was a significant degree of strategic coordination between conventional and unconventional forces that operate separately these wars were described as *compound wars*.

The combination of conventional and non-conventional military capabilities, whether tactical or operational have been integrated, not an entirely new historical phenomenon, as evidenced by the military history of the American Revolution, the Napoleonic invasion of Spain, the American Civil War, the Boer wars, Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire during the reign of T.E. Lawrence, the war in Vietnam when the unconventional tactics of the Viet Cong's were combined with the conventional North Vietnamese Army, the Russian-Chechen war, etc.

The major difference between the wars and the hybrid combination is given by the extreme complexity of how merging conventional and unconventional military capabilities. Compound wars provides synergy and a high degree of combining conventional and unconventional capabilities at the *strategic* level, but do not reach the complexity, the simultaneous fusion and *operational* tactical battlefield of hybrid wars. If compound wars unconventional capabilities were more distractions role opponent, harassing thereof in a theater of war separately or in adjacent rear and due to the fact that it is based on a separation of forces operating concept compound war does not cover the full spectrum of war diffuse mode hybrid conceptualized war.

The most important change, distinctive character in terms of modern warfare is the *blurring* and *blending* modes and types of war. Hybrid war combines lethality of conventional armed conflict between states with fervor and fanaticism unconventional war. For such hybrid wars, opponents (states, groups sponsored by states, non-state actors that are self-financing) will try to gain access to modern military capabilities, advanced weapons systems technologically, to create and support large-scale insurgency whose tactics will involve the creation of ambushes, the use of improvised explosive devices and assassinations that they will combine with high-tech capabilities such anti-satellite weapons, terrorism and cyber war directed against financial targets. For example, if it was between Israel and Hezbollah in 2006, during which it was clearly demonstrated that non-state actors have the ability to study and exploit vulnerabilities to deconstruct Western style of warfare by highly efficient countermeasures (Johnson, 2010). State actors, in turn, to turn their conventional armed forces units that adopt new tactics of unconventional warfare adapted hybrid (as was the case of the Fedayeen in Iraq in 2003) or opt for a merger between conventional forces with some unconventional, such militias highly trained fighters, equipped with sophisticated weapons. A good example of a *hybrid war* is ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The Russian offensive policy was manifested by territorial annexation of Crimea in April 2014 by threatening the use of military force by separatist groups operating support provided in Ukraine through initiation of covert operations of Russian Special Forces. That happened by hiring mercenaries by cyber-war, economic and media, against Ukraine. Russian operations shows that hybrid warfare can be adopted with very great success by state actors in asymmetric conflicts and highlights some defining characteristics of the new type of war: the non-declaration of the state of war; the use of armed civilians in military operations along the lines of asymmetric conflict; collisions without direct contact by blocking military installations by the so-called protesters; using asymmetric and indirect methods; simultaneous battles on land, air, sea and cyberspace; advantage using media in a manner that demonstrates that, far from being a peripheral component, it is the backbone of the new type of war in the post-industrial; troops management in a unified informational sphere (Berzins, 2014: 4). Russia does not recognize the existence of a state of war in Ukraine and simultaneously organizing complex military operations planned in a holistic manner, involving regular armed forces, special forces, armed and unarmed civilians, paramilitary forces, all in a hybrid war, whose nature remains largely undefined (conventional war or civil war? aggression interstate or intra-state conflict?) (Bachmann & Gunneriusson, 2014: 15).

The conflict in Ukraine may lead to a new balance of power in the region, given that NATO and the Western world in general were unable to respond quickly, coherent and concerted Russian aggression. The fact is that the *hybrid war* in Ukraine has brought Russia into leading player position in the region and exposed, on the one hand, vulnerabilities EU states dependent on Russian gas and, on the other, NATO, whose hesitant reactions were determined so the limitations imposed by Article 5 of the Treaty authorizing the use of force only for collective defense against an attack of the Member States and the frictions between the Member States were unable to reach an agreement regarding actions against Russia. Also, at least so far, the failure to adopt effective economic sanctions against Russia revealed the weaknesses of contemporary globalized economic system.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Hybrid wars require redefining rules requiring international order, as to date, the international community and the law of war were directed by limiting the opportunities for action in conventional conflicts like those in the twentieth century. The new type of hybrid war will cause a paradigm shift in the military doctrines, extremely complicated endeavor, as shown if NATO abandoned in 2012 the so-called Comprehensive Approach doctrine based on recognition of the existence of *hybrid threats* in NATO's *Bi-Strategic Command Capstone Concept* of 2010, while the National Security Strategy of the United States in 2002, reconfirmed in 2012, is clear on certain *hybrid threats* (NSSUSA, 2002, 2012). Also, to make hybrid threats to international security is necessary to rethink the role of states, non-state actors such as transnational corporations and NGO's in a globalized, interconnected and interdependent, increasingly more conflicts, military, economic, cyber, information and media takes place in a battlefield universal and abstract.

Lethal capacity and capabilities of organized groups whether or not sponsored by state actors are increasing and state actors are increasingly inclined to adopt unconventional ways of warfare. These trends require a review of the way tactics are viewed and unconventional means that until now they were considered to be the only weapons they could use in asymmetric conflicts non-state opponents weaker in confrontations with state actors that had the overwhelming superiority. In the future, it is likely to assist in the adoption and use of specific capabilities of hybrid war by more and more state actors. Instead of weakness, future opponents may exploit such means because of their effectiveness, and they may, as Frank G. Hoffman stated, come to be seen as *tactics of the smart and nimble*. (Hoffman, 2009: 37-38).

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