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## HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE HYBRID WAR

### Introduction

The hybrid war between Israel and Hezbollah caused a great interest of military experts and modern war researchers, however these types of wars have been held for ages before now. Through the years the hybrid war was used as the alternative solution for conventional military conflicts. The aftermath of the conflict in the Middle East has a sequence of scientific and doctrinal publications. The first records about hybrid threats in the USA turned up at the 4-year Defence Overview in 2006. Unfortunately, the threats were not precisely characterized and so the final definition of these threats has not been formulated (Quadrennial, 2006). The next records in the US Department of State were available in 2008 (The Joint, 2008), and in 2010 (The Military, 2010) they appeared at the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation. However, there is no certainty that the documents in both are understood in the same way.

Nowadays, we come across a series of alternative definitions (in many senses of awkward contents) as well as a series of alternative concepts which may include such terms as: mixed war, non-linear war, rebellious war, the war of the 4th generation, post-industrial war, asymmetric war and the war of the new generation. In the press articles of the journalist character such expressions appear as: the war of the chaos, war without rules, war without the front line, with the multitude of propaganda half-truths and lies, diplomatic and economic pressure, or the war which is perceived as a concert of many pianos played simultaneously (Milosz, 2015).

In the language of western politicians and media, an information has appeared that the Internet trolls, the representatives of the Kremlin are involved in the war, also the radio with the Internet platform Sputnik, green figurines and hackers. Lively discussions are taking place in USA, NATO and EU, in Baltic countries and Poland. Disputes on the subjects take place among military experts and theoreticians of the art of war. These disputes involve the subjects of the hybrid war and the understanding of its concepts

and outcomes. Some of them treat the hybrid war as a military strategy. Others perceive the hybrid war as a contemporary model of warfare (Clausewitz, 1995), and the rest treat the hybridity as a concept or one of the analytical perspectives of modern wars.

The Western observers, after the annexation of the Crimea and the invasion on the Western part of the Ukraine, often perceive the *hybrid war* as a modern model of handling military activities by the Russian Federation and warn that it may be used against the former USSR republics, even Poland. The hybrid war may be perceived as a doctrinal way of projection of force near the Russian boundaries as well as in distant peripheries. However if we look at the hybrid war from a perspective of the shaping of the global public opinion by Russia, it may appear that these targets of the war are much wider and much more ambitious (Kofman, 2015, p. 1). The separatist rebellions in Donbas called by the Kremlin „the Russian spring”, are nothing else but the attempt of the partition of the independent country.

Some experts indicate that Putin when trying to subordinate Russian neighbouring countries uses a new model of war handling, based on the concept of the former tsarist officer Jewgienij Messner, called the war of the chaos. This concept doesn't predict applying any rules. The war is handled without the stable frontline, and the diplomatic and economic pressure is supported by the propaganda on a large scale. According to L. Sykulski the theory is a prototype for the concepts like asymmetric conflicts and hybrid wars which took place in the second half of the 90's of the XX century, and the beginning of the present century (Sykulski, 2015b, p. 1).

The participants of the debate organized by the Polish National Bureau of Security and the Warsaw University of National Defence indicated that the hybrid war concept, that has been established not long ago, is nothing new but the evolution of armed conflicts (Parzyszek, 2015). In the English literature, the concept of hybrid war alongside with the term „compound wars” which is understood as the simultaneous usage of regular and irregular forces (Huber, 2015, p.1). F. Hofman (2007), when creating the analysis and the evaluation of the Israel – Hezbollah war, formulated the thesis of hybridity. Did Hofman discovered a new quality of conflict in his analysis or whether he paid attention on a certain evolution tendency that took place in the past?

It is also possible to ask the question whether the Russian-Ukrainian conflict changes the analytical prospect of examining contemporary armed conflicts? In my opinion it does not. However one should consider the hybrid warfare as one of prospects of their evaluation. The research results presented in this article are an attempt to solve the

problem manifesting itself in the following question: whether the hybrid military actions constitute the new paradigm of running the contemporary wars?

### Dilemmas of the hybrid warfare phenomenon

The observers of the conflict point at appearing of many ambiguities, what cause difficulties in categorising the current situation to a state of war. First of all, the Ukrainian government fights with the unspecified side because it is not known whom the separatists are. Whether they are mercenaries, ordinary citizens of the Ukraine, or they could be the Russian GRU officers? Secondly, according to Chief of the Polish National Security Bureau, Stanisław Koziej (2015) opinion<sup>1</sup>, it is a hard explicitly to determine the border between pressure and aggression (Koziej, 2015). Aggression does not necessarily have to be interpreted clearly. According to the Polish National Bureau of Security for the threshold between the a.m. it is possible to regard the transition from the threat to the arms usage. The Chief of the Polish National Bureau of Security pays attention also to the second threshold: between the aggression below the threshold of open war and open war itself. *When the open character of using the military forces takes place, a subliminal-ness is ending, the border between the secretiveness and transparency should be crossed (Polska powinna, 2015)*. So the hybrid actions take place in the so called grey zone. *Today the phenomenon of the war is more blurred, the border between the war and the non-war is not visible. These are not black and white categories. More and more often we start to operate in the grey zone ("Czas wojny"... , 2014)*.

According to D. Barno (2014, p. 1) the contemporary wars assume to take the amorphous form. Such conflicts like this one in the Ukraine which is a clash of irregular groups skilfully administered the asymmetric means in order to achieve the dominance, will be the most popular type of conflict. It will be the evolutionary version of shadows conflicts in which the warriors will be masked and often present no distinct attributes of the statehood. Thirdly, inseparable, violence accompanies the classic war. However, it is hard to notice it, in informational, psychological or diplomatic actions. It is not

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<sup>1</sup>According to S. Koziej's opinion, the specifics of the geopolitical placement of the Republic of Poland means the need of developing Polish own doctrine on the hybrid wars issues. He regards also having maximum adaptation of the NATO structures and the EU for responding to threats below the threshold of wars. He claims that developing the above mentioned concept is an important challenge which the NATO is facing today, it concerns dealing hybrid threats within the allied context (BBN (2015).

possible to notice the physical violence in elements being a component of the political war definition<sup>2</sup> to which M. Boot (2013, p. 1) adds political, economic and propaganda policy actions. These difficulties mentioned above, are tend to think what the concept is manifesting itself in hybridity of contemporary wars and, first of all, the conflict in the Ukraine?

In the history of the military science there are many examples of the combination of applying effects of regular and irregular actions as well as different kind of stratagems. The Chinese philosopher and strategist Sun Tzu (2008) had already called on meaning of shrewdness and ingeniousnesses as well as the so-called applying of clever tricks in the fight (Zawadzki, 2008). In 1920s the Soviet army officers developed conceptions of the so-called *camouflaged war* which included diverse forms of passive and active actions being aimed at misleading the opponent and influencing the public opinion of the west. The Soviet KGB officer Pavel Sudoplatov for over 50 years had been responsible for running the guerrilla warfare outside the USSR. He did not hesitate to manslaughter and kidnap while performing his activities. During many years he conducted the disinformation action on the territory of Germany. Sudoplatov put on the over-the-counter net with the purpose of sabotaging American and NATO installations (Sudoplatow, 2006). He applied the hybrid tactics with a group consisted of approximately 700 Soviet soldiers who dressed up into Afghan uniforms and seized crucial military and civil installations in Kabul (Maigre, 2015, p. 2).

### Hybrid war concept according to Jewgenij Messner

The theory of the rebellious war formulated by Jewgenij Messner (Месснер, 2005, p. 90-91) was a prototype for the concept of hybrid wars. It presented the blurring of differences between a state of war and peace, between regular and irregular action. According to the Russian strategist in the so-called rebellious wars basic form was the irregular action such as sabotage, terror, guerrilla action and uprisings (Ibidem, p. 90-91). The border between the regular army and fighting citizens fades away in the rebellious wars. According to Messner, irrespectively to legal norms every citizen has got the right to participate in the both open and underground fight. The borders fade away in the theatre of war. It is hard to distinguish entities of fighting sides and also the level of aggression has a different fluctuation. There is a lack delimitations between the legal

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<sup>2</sup> The political war is understood as logical usage of the Clausewitz Doctrine in peaceful times. In wider range it is understood as the usage of all possible means for achieving the national purposes (Kennan, 1948, p.1).

and illegal way of conducting the armed struggle, and the sound meaning gain the second one. Regular armies lose the monopoly on conducting the warfare what leads to new forms of running the fight closer, without the observance of the law and wartime ethics (Ibidem, p. 70). Messner uses the notion of half-war which is a result of the serious dispute. He understand the above mentioned notion as acting under the cover without open indications of becoming involved in conflict.

Using the Messner's concept assumes avoiding the formal commitment of the state into the official war. L. Sykulski (2015a, p. 109) underlines that influenzas sabotage participating in actions cannot have reconnaissance badges and their members, in the light of the international law, cannot be treated as the members of military forces. Such a situation allows the possibility of official cutting oneself away from the action of this type through the state is an initiator when events will get out of control. *Formally the phenomenon of "out-of-stateness" of the armed groups occurs and conflict itself can resemble from the outside the civil war and internal chaos. Moreover, the main burden of fights moved into urbanised areas what is one of characteristic factors of Messner's concept* (Sykulski, 2015a, p. 109).

Messner shows that in the rebellious war, an aggressive diplomacy acts the greater role and compares it to the weaker form of the war. He names the diplomacy the politics in *white gloves* that exploits different forms of intimidating, imposing the will or reaching an agreement as for important issues (Месснер, 2005, p. 110). Messner pays a lot of attention to psychological action peculiarly of fighting groups of people who fill the social status below the level of the regular army soldier such as guerrillas, terrorists, party groups, as well as groups of the underground. He supposes that these communities are without any psychological influence so they cannot make long-term effort. He argues that regular troops lean against self-discipline. However in irregular sub-units everything depends on the mental mood of their members. As a rule their morale is on the rock bottom and it requires constant motivation. Information actions are an effective weapon in the rebellious war. As a rule among their purposes are leading social groups to the state of dissatisfaction, setting the political elites at variance as well as lowering of the reputation of the state, political isolation or hostile influence on the international opinion (Ibidem, p. 232-246).

L. Sykulski points out also at competent usage of the intelligence service possibilities and join the results of their activities with effective leading of the information fight *which lets the battlefield converting into the space of the fight including the mental space above all (noosphere), as well as cyberspace. Here long-term psychological and information actions are decisive*

(Sykulski 2015a, s. 110). Psychology of incited to rebel masses is an important foreground and deciding on victory or defeat factor in the rebellious war. The purpose of the war changes as well. In contrast to the classic war a purpose is not to take control of the hostile territory of the state but bring **the awareness of its society under control**.

### The notion of hybrid war

Frank Hoffman emphasizes that features of hybrid wars are prevalence of acts of terror and diverse forms of the crime (Hoffman, 2007, p. 14). He defined hybrid threats as **the opponent which simultaneously and adaptive applies integrated connecting the conventional weapon and irregular tactics, the terrorism and criminal elements in the space of the fight for the political objectives achievement** (Hoffman, 2009). The above definition points out at two groups of actors: government and non-government who apply diverse models of the fight, albeit one should understand that lots of these subjects appear simultaneously. On account of the number of entities coordinating of this action appears to be the greatest challenge.

It is not known whether the model of the fight is attached to one entity and whether all subjects constitute this model. What is more important: the structure or the model of action? Certainly, simultaneity of action is important. Next thing whether criminal elements are participants or only a sources of finance. The definition fully loses the meaning in case of action without the violence usage. This is because it does not refer to the usage of diplomatic, economical, financial instruments, subversive action, non-governmental organizations, information operations, using false portals and Internet addresses (trolls), or the usage of newspapers, radio and television broadcasting stations. Nathan Freier, John McCuen and Helmut Habermayer offer similar definitions. The nature of these definitions bases on simultaneous and effective implementation of diverse forms of the fights (Freier, 2007).

D. Kilcullen claims that the terminology of the hybrid war reflects contemporary conflicts in the best way. He offers the wide range definition and argues that the hybrid war is a phenomenon which bases connection of the both armed and non armed, military and non military actions, government and non government, internal and international influence with violence or without applying violence (Killkullen, 2009, p. 9).

While discussing the hybrid war, W. Nemeth demonstrates on the example of the Chechen Republic what way the armed groups of underdeveloped societies include highly advanced technologies into their action and adapt tactics of their opponent, and

therefore they are more effective (Nemeth, 2002, p. 53). He claims that the hybrid war is a contemporary form of the guerrilla warfare but more effective taking into consideration application of new technologies and modern methods of mobilization to the fight (Ibidem, p. 29). He notes down, that due to their needs the Chechens easily changed from the classic to the guerrilla tactics and very often were able to combine the guerrilla actions with the terroristic ones (Nemeth, 2002, p. 61).

Also A. Jacobs and G. Lasconjarias show meaning of the technology. Moreover, they think that in the hybrid war various instruments of influence are involved apart from military forces among which are economic pressure, humane and religious means, the intelligence services, sabotage and misinformation. They claim that all traditional, irregular and refined in effects forms of conducting the armed struggle merge together and constitute the combination of tremendous, destructive abilities applied in the framework of the flexible strategy thanks to which the hybrid war assumes to appear as the form of the invisible invasion (Jacobs, Lasconjarias, 2015, p. 2). The space of the influence outweighs in the hybrid war. Unlike the traditional war it does not confine itself to the physics dimension and it is current in other dimensions in which regular military forces did not have influence so far. Its essence is the triggering of planned and desired effects which are synchronized.

According to A. Deep, the effects mentioned above are achieved thanks to applying asymmetrical techniques and tactics, and are being synchronized on the multidimensional battlefield (Deep, 2015, p. 1). Taking into consideration, the conditions, A. Jacobs and G. Lasconjarias (2015, p. 3) propose rather general but at the same time universal definition of the hybrid war which sounds convincing enough. According to them the notion of the hybrid war means the form of conflict with violence applying where the actors employed are governmental and nongovernmental, those who administer means of the conventional and unconventional influence not-limiting themselves to the battlefield or peculiar physically existed territory (Jacobs, Lasconjarias, 2015, p. 3).

T. McCulloh and R. Johnson (2013) pay attention also to diversity of administered centres and cultural aspect. They describe the theory of the hybrid war as the form of the warfare in which on the basis of optimally projected structure of the military forces all the methods and ways available are used, both conventional and not conventional in the peculiar cultural context with the purpose of achieving the synergy effects over the conventionally operating opponent (McCulloh, Johnson, 2013, p. 17).

The British doctrine defines the hybrid war as the variety of the irregular war. It shows that it is run by the irregular armed forces using the precise fire weapon and systems with which the regular forces are equipped usually. The hybrid war can be transformed into a separate campaign if circumstances and resources let it. It is also assumed that the irregular groups will aspire to acquire the sublimated weapon and technology; therefore intervening military forces will be forced to face up the diverse threats which only regular state military forces could create in the past (Ibidem, p. 10). Israel perceives the war and hybrid threats in the wider social context. Hybrid threats does not only use the physical majority thanks to joining conventional technologies with unconventional tactics but use also the cognitive majority.

They can do it on account of the lack of social restrictions in contrast with regular state military forces defending themselves which must follow the principles of the law applicable to the armed conflicts, the Geneva Convention and they must act according to applicable force using rules (Ibidem, p. 10). Using the higher quoted authors achievements the NATO offers the general hybrid threats definition presenting multidimensional character. Hybrid threats are such threats which possess the possibilities of simultaneous and conversion applying of conventional and unconventional means in order to achieve the established effects (Miklauci, 2011). The concept NATO of counteraction for hybrid threats promotes coordinated approach of all possible common allied sources, i.e. diplomatic, economic, intelligence and other.

### Evolution of hybrid war in the military doctrine of the Russian Federation

On account of the Soviet Union collapse many elements of the Russian Federation force expressed in influence instruments were retarded, albeit in the last decade they were tracking and officially a new approach was being quoted which is applied in conflicts resolving by the West on *the comprehensive approach*<sup>3</sup> principle. New elements in running the war and solving contingencies appeared at the Wartime Doctrine in 2010 but they refer more to the contemporary conflicts characteristic than the own armed forces. The Doctrine points the integrated usage of the military and non-military objects together with their resources. The Doctrine emphasizes the meaning of the cosmic and

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<sup>3</sup> At present there is the lack of agreed definition in the NATO. Nevertheless it must be understood as widely agreed action which has the aim of integration at security level, political sphere, laws, human rights and international missions conduction.



information dimension. It assumes that the information war lets to achieve political objectives without using military forces or can shape conditions for their application (The Military, 2010, p. 7).

The next Doctrine in 2014 shows regulations on asymmetrical modes of action that allows eliminating the opponent majority, the participation of irregular military forces sub-units and private military companies in conflict<sup>4</sup>. The important accent is put on exploiting political powers and social movements which are directed and financed from the outside (Военная, 2014. It is possible to notice any changes in Russian strategists' views on running the war expressed in articles and public addresses of the Chief of the Staff General of Russian Federation, V. Gerasimov (2014). In February 2013 he wrote that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century he is observing the fading away border between the war and the peace in classic understanding of these notions and also the border among the uniformed staff and actions performed under the cover. The wars are not being declared but are simply started so far unknown and with unpredictable events as a rule (the lack of common outlines). He puts the thesis on the basics of the colour revolutions experience in North Africa and the Middle East that a well-functioning state within a few months or even few days can be thrown into chaos as a result of the armed conflict and strange intervention to afflict a humanitarian disaster, and what is more to turn into the civil war state (Герасимов, 2013).

A conclusion that runs out of the above stated, is that Russia can knock down and destroy the state without direct military intervention conducted on a large scale. Gerasimov states that the meaning of non-military means changes and their effectiveness in many cases exceeds the usage of the regular military armed forces. He underlines the greater role of special operations conduction against the internal opposition with the aim of creating the constantly operating front supported with information operations on the whole territory of the hostile state. Regular military forces can be used under the

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<sup>4</sup> Russian Ministry of Defense and the State Duma are currently working on the legal act concerning private military companies. It will concern the legal framework of existing commercial military organizations in the Russian Federation which will be able to use the weapon. According to Ria Novosti the new legal act would be supposed to concern non-state owned/commercial organizations of military character. The new law will regulate not only their actions outside of the Russian Federation but also on the territory of the Russian Federation. The Crimea is the top one spot where such companies can be used. Such organizations are an effective "colonization" tool which lets someone's hands keep clean. In the future the private military companies can be used on foreign territories which "will join" the Russian Federation. They will be also a good tool for the protection of the Russian interests (Sabak, 2015).

pretence of conducting peaceful operations on the defined phase of conflict and only with the aim of achieving the ultimate success<sup>5</sup>. While achieving political-military purposes Gerasimov notices the role and meaning of political, diplomatic, economic and other kinds of influence, and among others also such with the secret character as well as the actions of international non-governmental organizations (Герасимов 2013 a).

Gerasimov names the war of the future *the war of a new generation* or the non-linear war where other laws will be applicable. Military action will start during the peace by smaller groups of sub-units with applying aggression below the threshold of the open war. In the new generation war the non-contact clashes will take place between highly manoeuvred groups of hybrid sub-units and surgical strikes to military and civil infrastructure with the aim of defeating the opponent armed forces and his economic power (Герасимов 2013 b). Perhaps thinking about the future war without the development of science and raise own defence industry abilities should be annulated. The dominating thesis in the Gerasimov's address is expressed in the concept of the so-called network-centric warfare and nonlinearity that is the basis of the Russian Federation armed forces reforms planned for 2008-2020 (McDermott, 2014).

### The new generation war

Past experiences in the Ukraine show that the hybrid conflict includes multi-storey efforts directed for destabilizing of the state functioning and polarising its society. In contrast to the conventional war the gravity centre of the hybrid war is focussed upon the society. In spite of long-term discussions on methods of running the hybrid war in the Ukraine by the Russian operation in 2014 underlines the importance of the information war in the era of the new generation war.

Based on both W. Gerasimov's oral and text forms it is possible to state that the new generation war includes the following characteristic elements:

- 1) military action starts during the peace time without declaring the war;
- 2) high-manoeuvre clashes, specialist (hybrid) of armed groups are non-contacted;

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<sup>5</sup> It is doubtful that G. Gerasimov is the author of the theory of the hybrid war of the Russian Federation because of the reason that at the moment of publishing the article he had occupied his position since 3 months. Secondly, he was not a well-known thinker pondering problems of the future of wars. Thirdly, it is a tradition still from the times of the Soviet Union that articles of staff officers are being published under the name of the Chief of the General Staff. In spite of the fact that a notion caught on Gerasimov's Doctrine, lots of features of the Crimea operation show its author was the previous Chief of the Staff, Nikolai Makarov.

- 3) neutralization of military and economic force take place through surgical strikes to the critical infrastructure (civil and military);
- 4) the mass usage of the precise weapon, special operations, the robotics and new technologies (laser of directional energy and microwave weapon);
- 5) exploiting civil armed people;
- 6) simultaneous attacks on sub-units and military devices on the whole opponent territory;
- 7) simultaneous fights in the land, air, sea, cosmic dimension, cyberspace, information sphere;
- 8) asymmetrical and non direct methods of influence usage;
- 9) managing the objects which influence the information sphere, driving them and financing from the outside (Герасимов b, 2013) .

As Messner (2005) indicates the perceiving by the Russians the modern war is based on the idea of playing fight in people's minds. In consequence it leads to information and psychological influence implementation on the wide scale with the aim to achieve the majority in morale sphere morale and lead to psychological depression both the armed sub-units and civilian population.

The main objective of the new generation war is to reduce to the minimum the need of deploying the battle sub-units of military forces, and at the same time to force the opponent for entire employing its potential and, in consequence, the destructive influence on the government and the entire state. It is important here to underline the fact that the notion of the permanent war appears along with the notion of the permanent opponent. In the current geopolitical structure it is evident that a west civilization with its culture, the political system and the ideology is an opponent for Russia (Bērziņš, 2014, p. 4).

## Conclusion

G. Oberleitner reflects well enough what is going on nowadays in the Ukraine, at the same time he describes future armed conflicts. He claims that states lost the monopoly on running the war. Today the violence is asymmetrical, civil, criminal, commercial and networked. Such new wars are run by private entities starting from local headmen (landlords) to criminal organizations, from networked terrorists to private armed sub-units. Operations are conducted in the cyberspace and supported financially by the organised

crime. They are fading away the border between the war and the peace, and the international law is losing on its meaning. Such new wars are characterized by civility and in this sense civilian people is both victims and perpetrators. It is also the lack of distinct dichotomies between the civilian people and people who fight. The distinct marked out borders lose on their meaning both geographical and acceptable combat assets, as well as applied methods. Nowadays modern technologies are applicable to the wide scale starting from non-pilot centres running through the automatic weapon to information technologies. The hybrid wars break conventional criteria of the public and private space, governmental and non-governmental regulations and formal and unofficial response to the violence (Oberleitner, 2015, p. 195).

The results of conducted research show that the Russian Federation's actions so far it has undertaken in the Ukraine are not an improvisation but the reflection of the application of entire tools spectrum available to the opponent. In the aspect of the entire sequence of events it is possible to put the thesis forward that well they are putting their name down in Clausewitz paradigm of conducting the armed struggle which claims that the war is only a continuation of the politics with other centres. To my mind that hybrid action refers exactly to these means. However principles of running the war, its character and purposes still remain the same.

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## How to understand the hybrid war

### Abstract

Despite the fact that the hybrid wars were conducted for centuries, the annexation of the Crimea and the involvement of the Russian Federation in the conflict in the Ukraine calls new discussions over its essence. Evaluation of the theory and practice of the activities carried out by FR indicates that we are dealing with the new generation of war. However, it is not in contradiction with the “Clausewitzian paradigm” of conducting armed struggle, which says that war is merely a continuation of politics by other means. The hybrid actions refer precisely to these measures, whereas the rules of warfare, its nature and objectives are still the same.

**Keywords:** *Hybrid war, Hybrid threats, conflict, Ukraine, Russian Federation*

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