

NOMOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE HYBRID WARFARE

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Abstract: *The emergence, development and application of the hybrid strategy both by non-state and state actors play a particular role in the evolution of military conflicts. The proliferation of hybrid risks and threats requires the identification and improvement of integrative security solutions, both, nationally and internationally, as well as in terms of instruments. Consequently, the present article aims to identify the stages and some of the fundamental principles of hybrid conflict planning and development.*

Keywords: hybrid conflict, hybrid risks and threats, hybrid conflict stages, nomological aspects

1. Introduction

The new security environment of the beginning of the millennium highlights new ideas for conflict development, new approaches to the use of capabilities, new tools and mechanisms by which state and non-state actors pursue their goals.

It is undeniable that, just like conventional war/conflicts, hybrid conflicts also have specific nomological foundations. The legalities of war are not only abstract creations of some military theorists, but, having an objective basis, they determine the ways of development and the outcome of the confrontation.

2. Methodological aspects

Firstly, the aim is to identify and explain the stages and types of actions specific to hybrid conflicts, and then to base the principles on them.

Formulating and understanding the nomological foundations means, in fact, knowing the realities and requirements of the operational environment/hybrid conflict, which ensures the possibility of scientific anticipation on how to organize, prepare and conduct hybrid actions. This represents the basis for action, and also for the management of the process of preparation of forces (military and civilian), of resources and of the mechanisms necessary for managing the conflict situation.

3. Hybrid conflict stages

Studying the events within the existing hybrid conflicts allowed creating some “patterns”, some gradual frameworks with the main stages and actions involved in reaching the targeted aims.

There are several views on hybrid conflict stages, presented from different

perspectives, but we can easily identify the common ground of these approaches.

Moreover, the evolutionary phases of the hybrid conflict, in general, are similar to those of a political-military crisis: *pre-conflict* - when the intensity of the existing tensions evolves in an ascending sense, *the conflict itself* - situation of maximum gravity, the crisis reaching its peak and manifesting all its implications, *the post-conflict* stage or the period of relaxation that may have as a consequence the organizational-functional remodeling of the social system or the profound change of its structure.

Analyzing the development of the hybrid conflict in Ukraine, more authors[1] consider that it comprises three distinct stages: *the preliminary stage*, *the attack stage*, and *the stabilization stage*.

In the *preliminary stage*, the actions focus on identifying the political, economic, social and critical infrastructure vulnerabilities in the targeted country, as well as on creating means for exploiting these vulnerabilities. The exploitation of the vulnerabilities could be achieved through manipulation of the media, the creation of political and cultural organizations loyal to the enemy entity, as well as by the development of separatist and/or anti-governmental groups.

The *preliminary stage* of the hybrid conflict is divided into three phases, as follows: *political preparation*, *strategic preparation*, and *operational preparation*, each with actions specific to the levels and objectives to be achieved. It is also noted that, during the first stage, the armed violence does not manifest itself visibly, and the measures taken by the hybrid actor do not contravene the principles of international law or try to circumvent it.

In *the attack stage* the vulnerabilities identified during the preparation phase will be tracked and exploited, and the cumulative effects of the actions taken create pressure on the governing institutions, incoherence in the security processes of the adverse party, insecurity and instability. The hybrid war becomes obvious and armed violence also appears in confrontation. Violent or less violent actions aim to take control of the armed forces (force control over the barracks, influencing/bribing military leaders, blocking the ways of supplying military structures, diminishing morale, etc.).

The *attack stage* can be divided into three phases: *escalation of tensions*, *taking control of the power centers in the targeted region* and, not lastly, *imposing a new politico-administrative authority in the controlled region*. Another relevant aspect of this stage is that of the media attacks and blocking the access to independent media for holding the information monopoly, to which there are added actions of misleading and misinforming the local and international public opinion and discrediting the authorities in the target region. The ultimate goal is to obtain information supremacy.

The third stage, *the stabilization and control stage*, is carried out in order to consolidate the obtained results. This phase can be approached from the perspective of two important aspects: "*political stabilization and the separation of the captured/controlled territory*"[2].

Another approach to the phases of the hybrid conflict, where another distinct stage, specific to military aggression, appears is presented in *figure no. 1*.

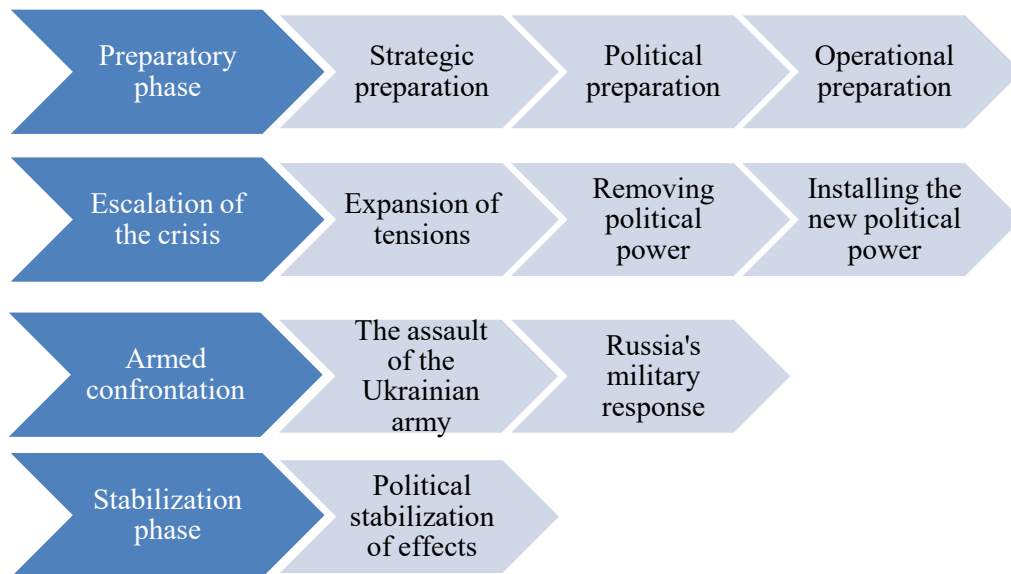


Figure 1: Hybrid crisis stages[3]

Other experts and theorists analyze the phases of the hybrid conflict from the perspective of *social impact*, highlighting some stages of imposing control on the target society, such as: "demoralization, destabilization, precipitation of the crisis and imposing the dual control"[4], as it can be seen in figure no. 2.

In the same way, the hybrid war produces a fundamental overturn of the way of thinking and planning actions in order to reach the desired aims. This way of thinking starts from the idea that society cannot be defended against/protected from the effects of a wide range of information operations:

- "rumors, the premeditated and biased mixing of the true and the fake news, represent a major way of influencing public opinion/common consciousness;
- fake news, flagrant misrepresentations - fear and insecurity contaminate and destroy the individual psychical resistance at macro social level;
- misinformation, deception, manipulation, increased visibility of messages addressed distinctly to well-defined human targets, network penetration, automatic message generation (spam)"[5].

Temporal phases of social impact			
Demoralization	Destabilization	Crisis precipitation	Imposing dual control
Frequent cultivation of distrust in the current situation and in the capacity of leaders to solve complex problems, splitting communities along fault lines	Divisions of groups, accentuated antagonization, generating radicalized focal points. Support with experts and specialists from the strong state, massive assurance of major equipment	Generalization of instability and war, extension of confrontations in multiple focal points. Involving experts and specialists, providing military assistance	Massive involvement of external specialists in successfully conducting actions from focal points to destroy the host state's authority and impose control, according to their own interests

Figure 2: Stages of imposing control over target society[6]

The hybrid conflict thus focuses on neutralizing the ability of the target entity to respond effectively to challenges and actions through hybrid methods, without using large-scale military attacks. This type of conflict involves a combination of classical and unconventional methods, including political, economic, diplomatic, social, informational, military means, *very well organized in stages* and rigorously planned, sequentially and/or synchronously, to achieve all the proposed objectives.

4. Nomological foundations of the hybrid conflict

In the light of the nomological issue of the war phenomenon, *principles* are formulated based on objective laws; principles are people's conscious creation and through them the general and specific requirements of the fields (political, military, social, psychological, etc.) of confrontation are met. In the same line, principles are presented as fundamental elements, fundamental ideas a science, a theory is based on; in our situation, the theory that attempts to manage hybrid conflicts.

Thus, among the principles according to which hybrid conflict is conceived, prepared and led or prevented and discouraged, we can mention the following:

1. The principle of existence or creation of conditions conducive to hybrid conflicts. The existence of political, economic and/or social instability, high level corruption, incoherence in public policies, as well as a large number of vulnerabilities in the political-military leadership structures are the aggravating circumstances for the manifestation of hybrid threats. In the event that there is no such "fertile field", the attacking entity must have substantial resources to feed some movements or opposition forces within the target entity and to operate through a complex range of subversive political-diplomatic, economic, informational, psychological, military actions to create a state of insecurity and instability.

2. The principle of uniqueness. Hybrid conflicts do not have many similarities. Therefore, the principle refers to the need to build unique *hybrid* forces and capabilities for a given context, the effects achieved by them being also hybrid and unique/specific. The situation in which they act is unique from the perspective of the historical, political-military, geographical, socio-cultural or temporal characteristics of the conflict. The specificity of hybrid conflict management strategies, methods, mechanisms and tools starts precisely from an in-depth analysis of these factors and the need for their modeling.

3. The principle of causality. The real or false perception of the superiority of the opponent determines a grouping/force to reduce the options for using conventional forces or even to abandon the traditional military thinking, in order to ensure long-term survival and to achieve the objectives through a hybrid approach.

4. The principle of completeness indicates that the hybrid force has and uses both conventional and unconventional capabilities. These capabilities refer, most often, to military and nonmilitary technological means, to classic or atypical, guerrilla, terrorist methods and tactics.

5. The principle of complementarity postulates that in a conflict, most of the times, the party having inferior conventional military capabilities is forced to find alternative methods, forces and/or technologies to compensate for this disadvantage. Although, apparently, there is inferiority, the addition of consistent unconventional elements and this combination of capabilities creates a hybrid context, hybrid means, hybrid actions, which ultimately translates into an advantage.

6. The principle of freedom of action consists in creating the conditions necessary for autonomy of action, because hybrid forces pursue both offensive and defensive actions, although not necessarily in the sense of conventional operations. Depending on the proposed objectives,

these types of actions are used either to maintain the initiative of action or to preserve a winning position in relation to the opponent or in relation to the civilian population.

7. *The principle of omnidirectionality* refers to the orientation on multiple planes and directions of effort of the forces and resources. The general picture of the hybrid approach will include violent and non-violent operations and activities carried out simultaneously in all fields (political, military, economic-financial, cultural, social, religious and moral), in traditional (land, air, naval) and non-traditional (informational, cosmic) spaces, from the outside as well as from the inside, with kinetic and non-kinetic means.

8. *The principle of ambiguity* implies the use of some *forces* with uncertain belonging (proxy forces), specific *technologies* and *methods* that are not recognized as aggression, other subversive actions that can be denied, which extend the ambiguity and which contribute to increasing the difficulty of precisely identifying the opponent.

9. *The principle of ideological support for actions* - requires that, in order to create a state of mind conducive to the development of the planned actions, a specific ideology must exist or be articulated and transmitted. The ideology establishes the organization members' internal conduct and relationship with other actors and is the link between the strategic context and the socio-cultural and religious identity of the hybrid force. Also, through ideology, the leaders/decision makers justify externally their actions and the relations within the organization that facilitate control.

10. *The principle of achieving psychological effects*. This principle refers to the use of methods that involve obtaining both physical and especially *psychological* effects not only on the opponent, but also on the local population. The actions specific to the field can aim to discredit important state institutions, to lower the morale of the

security forces, to diminish population's trust in the mechanisms and the institutions of government, to weaken the cohesion of the civil society etc. In this context the media plays a decisive role. Therefore, the power represented by the *media* must be analyzed from two points of view:

- The hybrid methods benefit from the "support" of the media, which in its pursuit after sensationality[7], does a huge advertising and even financial service to the groups that embrace this strategy. In fact, public opinion is the main force a hybrid actor addresses to by certain methods, such as: mass executions, aggression and violence against civilians, exploitation of vulnerable categories of population, etc.;
- The role of the media controlled by the actor applying a hybrid type scenario is that of concealing and distorting reality according to interests. The methods of action of the media are materialized by attacks of denigration of political leaders and of the management structures within the entity concerned, deliberately omitting some truths, which will lead to influence over the local population, the international community and to the justification and/or diplomatic support of the actions taken.

5. Conclusions

The analysis of hybrid conflicts reveals that this type of conflict has a set of principles and a series of common characteristics. However, each conflict has some distinct features, which differentiate it from the others.

As a consequence, within the hybrid approach, the priority will no longer be held by the military force, defined by the number of the military, the quantity of armament and the existing equipment, but is transferred to the information capabilities, intelligence, espionage, diversion, manipulation and influence of leaders/commanders' decisions and of forces' morale.

The essential problem regarding hybrid conflicts/wars is represented both by the

need to know the phenomenon and especially by the identification of comprehensive solutions to counteract their effects.

More than that, by comprehensively addressing the actions of the various civil-military instruments from all means of

manifestation of hybrid threats, based on some *principles*, mechanisms, norms, etc., indirect, cumulative or cascading effects can be obtained, which would make the mission more efficient, it would reduce costs and the necessary time to reach the end goal.

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