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FUNDAMENTAL COORDINATES OF THE PROFILE OF THE FUTURE ARMED CONFLICT

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ABSTRACT:

The importance of the topic in question results from the complexity of the phenomena that mark the evolution of the society that led to the globalization of risks and threats to regional and global stability. A realistic understanding of the conditions under which an armed conflict can take place, coupled with a correct vision of the confrontation environment, makes the chance of success to bow substantially in favour of those who prepare in detail and in advance to effectively manage the possible situations of the armed conflict.

KEYWORDS:

Paradigm of war, informational management, hybrid conflict, technical-material factor

1. Introduction

This paper aims to integrate working concepts and tools specific to information management in order to identify the transformed profile of the armed conflict in the current confrontation environment.

In general, it is difficult to accurately predict how a military conflict will evolve and what will be its specific characteristics, but there are some trends and factors that can be considered indicators for measuring the evolution of the contemporary military phenomenon, in all its forms of manifestation.

The theater of military operations has been permanently transformed and it has reached the stage of being conceived by military specialists as an integrated system of information networks. From this perspective, I believe that information will be both a "force" in the service of the belligerents and an "enemy" of them. Consequently, the armed conflict will therefore be, above all, a war for information and information, and knowing the situation and intentions of the adversary, becomes an important issue for a correct association of the objectives of military operations with the amount of forces used and with the nature of the effects obtained.

2. Paradigm shifts in the approach to conflict

Given that the operational environment in which the military forces operate has changed, military operations have also undergone changes, tending towards a new generation of the

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"multidimensional". From this perspective we find that the most profound transformations occurred in the informational component of the operational environment.

The evolution of the security paradigm has led to the awareness that the confrontation spaces of the national interests (economy, access to resources, cyber environment, information control, asymmetric threats, etc.) require both national defense military capabilities and specialized capabilities of prevention, protection and evolution of the state's development mechanisms.

On the other hand, the tendencies of influence, misinformation and discouragement manifested in the operational environment, produce conceptual mutations and paradigm shifts in the approach to conflict *"... the revitalization of global strategic competition confirms the transition to a new security paradigm. This will accentuate the tendency towards a more sustained activity of the states at bilateral level, with momentary, conjectural interests and alliances, which will further affect the predictability of the international security environment"* (The National Defence Strategy for 2020-2024).

We appreciate the fact that paradigm shifts are driven by the insecurity of the current environment. Factors of insecurity such as ideological, ethnic, religious conflicts, exacerbated nationalism, the struggle for natural resources are conditions for transforming and adapting it to the new conditions in the operational environment. As a result, the paradigm shifts are addressed primarily to the knowledge through which the new conditions created in the space of interest are evaluated and which can generate new forms of conflict.

The paradigm describes the reference system of the security environment, which allows us to identify the changes produced in the operational environment in which a conflict may arise that will escalate towards its violent form / army. The perception of the characteristics of the new reality, through the filter of the security paradigm, at the level of the political and military decision-makers offers a kind of cognitive verbatim report on the ability to manage the new conditions.

The paradigm shift in the approach to armed warfare/conflict has produced mutations at the conceptual, doctrinal, organizational and endowment level of the armed forces and has generated the emergence of new forms of conflict called by the specialists in the field "Aerospace Battle", "Network-Based Warfare", "Effects-Based Operations" and "Intelligent Defense".

The priority spaces of confrontation are no longer those relating to geopolitan ambitions, military rivalries, but economic ones and those relating to the fight for resources, information and communications. In the current strategic operational environment, the paradigm changes in the conflict approach were determined by the emergence of the concept of information management, but also by the development and application of the concept of hybrid warfare.

Informational management is also useful for the design, training, deployment and use of military force, including for updating databases and data banks necessary for the development of elements specific to lessons learned and good practices. For this it is necessary to have concerns regarding the organizational concept, the duties, the need to train and maintain the fighting capacity.

Requiring a concrete, multilateral approach, the paradigm shift of the war phenomenon is due to the strong "militarization" of the fundamental sciences about nature, society and man. Science will become the main vector of military power in the battle space causing changes in the physiognomy of military action.

3. Hybrid conflict – an integrated and holistic approach

The diversity and complexity of armed conflicts, in which strategic concepts, technologies and armies with different degrees of endowment were confronted, accompanied by a specific logistical support, highlighted the emphasis placed on the destruction of the most important military and economic capabilities of the enemy, as well as on its means of reaction, thus paralyzing its potential for retaliation.

Hybrid conflict falls into the category of complex political-social phenomena, but it does not have as a distinct field of manifestation the armed struggle, which is based on the combination, integration and interconnection of conventional, unconventional, asymmetrical and cyber actions, informational, psychological and media forces and means, as well as political, economic and diplomatic instruments, in order to achieve strategic objectives. The phrase "hybrid conflict" ("hybrid warfare") is used in the military literature to define a military strategy in which specific elements of conventional, unconventional and asymmetric warfare meet. Col. Jack McCuen (U.S. Army) defines hybrid warfare as the quintessence of asymmetric warfare, fought on three decisive battlefields: (1) among the population of the conflict zone, (2) in front of their own nation, and (3) the international community (Amarie, 2017).

In hybrid warfare, essential are not only the military weaknesses, but especially the non-military ones, which the one who generates the aggression tries to capitalize on: ethnic tensions, weak and corrupt institutions, economic/energy dependence, etc. Hybrid threats occur where conventional, irregular, and asymmetric threats overlap in time and space. The conflict can involve participants at different levels: individual, groups or states, operating locally, trans-nationally or globally. Such conflicts may include acts of violence within communities, acts of terrorism, cyberattacks, insurgency, crime or causing disorder.

Hybrid conflict evolved from concept to reality and produced changes in military art through mutations produced at the level of physiognomy and its characteristics, the typology of actors, the place and role of the military factor, the level of violence and physical destructiveness, as well as by alleviating the delimitations between states of peace, crisis, conflict and war. Given its complexity, hybrid conflict has acquired different names, expressed by mosaic, multimode, ambiguous, proxy, perverse geometry conflict, etc.

The evolution of the conflict, regardless of typology, scale and intensity, will be marked by hybridity. It can be concluded that, in the future, the conflict will be of a hybrid type, based on the combination of several types of tools, mechanisms, strategies, tactics, processes, forces and means.

From a political-military point of view, we consider it important to configure, sizing, prepare and equip power structures that are able to effectively manage all the risks and threats of a conventional, unconventional, asymmetrical, non-kinetic and hybrid nature.

Hybrid warfare, as a form of *"synchronized use of power tools, adapted to exploit specific vulnerabilities within the spectrum of societal function, in order to achieve synergistic effects, increases the complexity and ambiguity of the contemporary operational environment"* (Cullen & Reichborn-Kjennerud, 2017, p. 8).

Hybrid threat-specific actions are characterised by a low level of attribution and a low level of intensity. *"The heterogeneous dynamic and complex accumulation of threats materializes in multiple actions, synchronized or not, that cause interdependent effects"* (Georgescu, 2020, p. 74).

The "hot" crises (such as the COVID pandemic, the war in Ukraine) and the "cold" crises (less visible, such as global warming, the aggravation of competition between states and the increased tendency of some state actors to use trade advantages for security

purposes) that humanity is going through have made it more than ever necessary for the study effort to prevent and combat instability factors and threats to be made within a broad framework, involving not only NATO and the EU, but also their partners.

The war triggered by Russia against Ukraine opened a new front for disinformation and influence operations. In the context of the war in Ukraine, it is more obvious than ever that only a cooperation between NATO, the EU and the partner states can stop Russia's aggressive expansionist tendencies. The advance of Western states and international organisations in the fight against disinformation must be transferred as quickly as possible to the Eastern partners, and the framework for this transfer is already provided by the existing cooperation mechanisms (Zamfir, 2022).

In the context of common challenges that easily cross the borders of the EU and NATO, the joint development of solutions and mechanisms of resistance and proactive action can only be mutually beneficial, strengthening the defence posture of all.

4. Anticipation of future conflicts

Anticipating conflicts is essential for preventing wars and maintaining international peace and security. This involves the use of various methods and tools and an integrated and holistic approach, involving cooperation between different agencies and states.

Starting from the consideration that in hybrid conflicts the conduct of military actions involves more than the design of the physical combat power and the engagement of the conventional forces of the enemy, the operational framework must be extended in our opinion beyond the geographically delimited area in which the fight takes place.

The area in which the operations are carried out shall be delimited in such a way that, on the one hand, each entity participating in the operation correctly understands what are the limits imposed by the upper echelon in which it must act and carry out its mission and, on the other hand, to determine which are important areas for the planning and conduct of the military action, which it must influence and those which are of interest to the current and future operation. Scenario analysis involves evaluating possible actions that could lead to conflict and identifying critical points and options to prevent or manage these situations.

Technology will be one of the power multipliers of forces. The scale of evolution of conflicts will be influenced by the technological advance, they will be able to train both state and non-state actors and will have a predominantly local and asymmetrical character. The new characteristics of the conflicts will be determined by a great intensity of combat actions, through the massive use of new generations of "smart weapons", of electronic surveillance, research and hitting systems, of C4I2SR systems, as well as of the components of informational and psychological operations.

The creation of modern information systems essentially influences both the command and control (managerial) processes and the activity of the operational (execution) bodies, *"... in any (managerial) command and control activity, but especially in military actions, the ability of a structure to successfully execute a mission, in accordance with the objective laws acting in the respective field, depends to a great extent on the degree of satisfaction of the information needs and on the possibilities of obtaining the informational advantage, determined by the informational capacities at the disposal*" (Alexandrescu, Alexandrescu & Boaru, 2009, p. 189).

The essential operational requirement of a military information system is that each user should have access to the information and means of processing the data necessary to carry out his mission, regardless of his physical position and resources.

Turning information into action is a complex task that could go beyond the cognitive and sensory limits of the military. That is why the information must be processed by a computer system and presented synthetically, filtered, according to the degree of interest of the military in each echelon.

Information management guides and directs the informational processes carried out at the decision-making and shareholder level and involves a succession of activities, operations, procedures and intermediate states that are interconnected with each other, ensuring the function of collecting, transmitting and processing the information necessary for the exercise of management.

The growing dependence on information technology can be a multiplier of fighting power and, at the same time, a great vulnerability that must be protected. As demonstrated by these three cyber-attacks carried out by Russia, confrontation in the virtual environment should be seriously considered in future conflicts. Cyber threats are present in the current operational security environment and are very sensitive issues for nations. The operations performed for different purposes in the virtual confrontation environment join those that manifest themselves in the physical environment of the confrontation and will constitute the preface of future hybrid conflicts.

Regardless of the level of military art at which the military action takes place, the military forces design and apply their fighting power in the plan of the actions carried out at the tactical level. The performances of collecting, transmitting, processing and disseminating information can considerably reduce the time required for decision-making cycles. At the same time, the advantages offered by the transfer of knowledge and technology from the information and military field will lead to new types of approaches to the conduct of military operations, subsumed in what is currently defined as "*network-based warfare (NCW)*". Intelligence analysis involves collecting, analyzing, and interpreting information on potential threats and other factors that could lead to conflict. Intelligence analysis may include data on military movements, political changes, ethnic or religious tensions, the economy, the environment and other relevant factors in the targeted geographical area.

Developing the capacity to respond quickly and effectively to crisis situations can help prevent conflict escalation and minimize damage. This requires, among other things, the use of military capabilities in accordance with all instruments of power.

Major trends in the evolution of the world and the physiognomy of the current military conflicts require measures to find the best solutions for the future profile of the armed forces. They must be able to manage complex military operations, to implement new technologies, to use intelligence efficiently, to have the capacity of rapid reaction and joint action as well as of projection at great distances with their support in theatre.

From the point of view of the kinetic aspect, the future conflicts will be aimed not so much at the physical destruction of the opponent but at making it impossible for him to carry out military actions, in the shortest possible time frame and, thus, at imposing the cessation of hostilities in the established political terms. In conclusion, anticipating conflicts is essential for preventing wars and for maintaining international peace and security. This involves the use of various methods and tools and an integrated and holistic approach, involving cooperation between different agencies and states.

5. Conclusions

The greatest challenge of our day is to understand the complex world in which we live and the tendencies that are looming for the future. Both change and continuity accompany mankind. Constants are the

struggle for power, influence, wealth, and the continuing need to adapt to endless change.

In the conditions of the present war, the control of the three-dimensional space and of the objectives arranged in this space is achieved only with the help of specialized forces and means, organized in an efficient system. The final product of the work of this system is information, the raw material of all major states.

Information has increased in value, becoming a power factor. It can be treated differently from military force to military force, becoming an amplifying factor of power or a compensatory factor of power. The major objective of any operation is to gather sufficient information about the adversary in order to design a force capable of achieving the expected success, with the allocation of minimal resources.

The paradigm of change lies in the fact that the war is no longer fought only with purely military means, the kinetic effort dispersing towards the informational and psycho-sociological one. The war will have a multidimensional character and will take place in all environments: terrestrial, air, sea, space, cosmic, in the electromagnetic spectrum and in the informational sphere, the achievement of superiority will target all these environments, but especially those concerning the cosmos, the information sphere and the electromagnetic spectrum.

The complexity of modern military information systems, determined by the incorporation into them of the most advanced knowledge from cybernetics, systems and information theory, operational research, electronics and computer science, as well as from artificial intelligence, as an eloquent expression of the advantages obtained through the use of modern information and communication technology, requires the personnel of the commands but also the operators a high professional performance.

We consider that the sensitive elements targeted mainly by the hybrid adversary are the civilian population and the environment, and therefore the key to countering this type of threat lies in adopting those measures of education, supervision, monitoring, protection and action to reduce their level of vulnerability.

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