

# Conceptualizing the 'Hybrid Warfare'

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## Contents

- I. Introduction
- II. Review of Divergent Definitions of Hybrid Warfare
- III. Critical Views on the Concept of Hybrid Warfare
- IV. Conclusion

## I. Introduction

When participants at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Defense One Summit, featuring Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, Deputy Defense Secretary Bob Work and others were poised to tackle the theme, “The Age of Everything,” the main focus of meeting was placed on “how commanders and security leaders are meeting the high demand for all types of missions and threats—from the battlefield to the homeland, Kabul to Chattanooga.”<sup>1)</sup> However, it is far from clear in what ‘age’ of the above mentioned catch-all theme we live, and into what direction we

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1) “Defense One Summit 2015 - The Age of Everything,” *Defense One*, 3 November 2015.

are heading, consciously or unconsciously. A ray of apprehension stemming from uncertainties was well reflected in the ‘2005 Defense Strategy.’ The document pinpointed that the uncertainty is the defining feature of today’s strategic situation where precise prediction becomes elusive while ominous trend is being written on the wall. Which means we should be fully prepared to face unforeseen troubles lest be caught off guard at the most vulnerable moment.<sup>2)</sup>

It appears obvious that the international security environment has reached a critical juncture in the post Cold War era which has been maintained more than two decades. During the time, the mankind has witnessed a series of conflicts and warfares that seem to defy the traditional nomenclatures, such as, *inter alia*, unconventional war, combination war, asymmetrical war, the Fourth Generation War, irregular war, limited war, unlimited war, compound war and so on. Prime examples are Iraq War, Afghanistan War, the Second Lebanon War, Chechen Wars, Conflicts in Ukraine, to name a few. Against this back drop, it is noteworthy to describe frame-by-frame regarding the unprecedentedly dramatic scene that unfolded to the utter ‘shock and awe’ of the western society and international community in general.

On the very first day of March 2016, the world was watching a ‘*non-invasive*’ invasion of Ukraine: a group of unmarked armed soldiers with no name tag, insignia, national flag, or troop identification at the multiple locations in the Crimean peninsula took up and blockaded crucial infrastructure including airport, government agencies, parliamentary buildings, military bases, police stations, and broad-

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2) Department of Defense (DOD), *The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: DOD, 2005), p. 2.

casting towers in an orderly and well disciplined manner as if they had rehearsed in advance. And all this drama was revealed against the chilly background of 150,000 Russian troops lined up and Russian jet-fighters thundering through the skies just across the border. The conspicuous absence in this eerie scene was “armed confrontation,” “smoking gun,” or “bloodsheds” on the ground. The civilian airport was still open, and people spent that day mostly as “business as usual.” The US Secretary of State John Kerry promptly condemned Russia’s “incredible act of aggression” in Ukraine and threatened economic sanctions by the international community to isolate Moscow.

Considering the lack of physical evidence to shift blame on Russia for the invasion, some opted for general references to “Russian involvement,” while calling on all parties involved to cease hostilities. In an attempt to tarnish the Western attacks against the Russian aggression, the Russian state-owned media such as RT went so far as to introduce a German political comedy show that ridiculed the way the US presented a host of evidence. In this context, the issue of how to call this illegal act of Russia against Ukraine has come to the front and center in the international politics. In this connection, the heads of the state and heads of the government of the NATO at the Wales summit meeting concluded that they were under the threat of ‘hybrid war’ from the Russia, stressing the imperative of deterring and responding to such threats effectively and effectively.<sup>3)</sup> This was the first time in history that the NATO members as a whole reached

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3) “Wales Summit Declaration: Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales,” *Press Release, NATO*, 5 September 2014.

a consensus with regard to the ‘hybrid’ threats and officially raised the collective need of laying out the pertinent countermeasures. Had it not been for the Wales Summit, the term of ‘hybrid war’ would not have received a global attention in such a dramatic and high-profile manner.

As a matter of fact, there had been heated debates for several years in academic and military communities over the term ‘hybrid’ as a way of approach to new warfare until the publication of the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) in 2010 when the document used the term to describe the refined means that both state and non-state actors would employ to alleviate a conventional disadvantage with the United States.<sup>4)</sup> Secretary Gates’ remarks under the title of “Shifting Operational Landscape” assumed overall descriptions of a hybrid threat that could involve “protracted forms of warfare, use of proxy forces for coercion and intimidation, terrorism and criminality to manipulate the information environment, target energy resources, attack economic vulnerabilities and exploit diplomatic leverage.”<sup>5)</sup>

The primary objective of this essay is to conceptualize the ‘hybrid war’ in view of a wide spectrum of definitions and visualizations of experts and renowned scholars in the military and defense sectors.

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4) Robert M. Gates, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, DC: DOD, 2010).

5) *Ibid*, p. 8.

## **II. Review of Divergent Definitions of Hybrid Warfare**

Whereas hybrid warfare is an old concept, scholarly endeavors in the West mainly began in the post-Col War era, focusing on asymmetrical threats against conventional superiority of western countries such as the US or Israel. The 9/11 attacks and 2006 Israel-Lebanon war marked important milestone for the evolution of hybrid warfare theories. However, there has not been any consensus among scholars on an exact or unique definition of hybrid warfare.

As mentioned earlier, hybrid warfare became one of the main security issues for the West and especially for NATO after the Russia-Ukraine crisis. Russian strategies, called 'hybrid warfare' by the western countries, achieved the successful annexation of Crimea and, caused a serious security problem for the West resulting important structural and functional changes for the military system of NATO. Russian activities, which have been based on surprise, ambiguity and deniability, presented a unique example for hybrid warfare studies.

Most analysts argue that hybrid warfare strategies have been used since time immemorial. For example, Peter R. Mansoor emphasizes that the historical lineage of hybrid warfare goes back at least as far as the Peloponnesian War in the fifth century BC, using seven different conflicts as examples of hybrid war,<sup>6)</sup> while Timothy McCulloh dates it back to 66 A.D.<sup>7)</sup> They emphasized that most wars had a hybrid

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6) Williamson Murray and Peter R. Mansoor, *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012), p. 3.

7) Timothy McCulloh and Richard Johnson, "Hybrid Warfare," *JSOU (Joint Special*

warfare aspect. However, both use of the term and the study of hybrid warfare are new compared to the long history of warfare, with the September 11 attacks and the 2006 Israel-Lebanon war playing important roles in the evolution of hybrid threat studies, emphasizing in particular the asymmetrical dimension of the phenomenon.

Although hybrid warfare emerged as one of the most controversial issues among western countries, there has been no unique and comprehensive definition of the term. As McCulloh pointed out, the problem is the gap between the cognitive logic of definition and the uniqueness of each context in which hybrid warfare manifests itself.<sup>8)</sup> While no single definition sufficiently covers the complex contexts that differ in time, space and logic, it is important to review divergent definitions put forward by scholars and the state and other entities for the purpose of conceptualizing the term of 'hybrid warfare.'

### **1. Frank G. Hoffman**

Frank Hoffman has been a thoughtful contributor on the subject of purposeful hybrid threats. He observes that the future scenarios will more likely present unique combinations and deliberate synergies designed to target Western societies in general.<sup>9)</sup> Competitor states are increasingly veering in the direction of hybrid competition. They prosecute "war" against the US in the absence of a clear *casus belli*. Traditional war with the United States is not an option for these

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*Operation University) Report*, August 2013, p. 3.

8) Ibid, pp. 13-14,

9) Frank G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars* (Arlington, VA: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, December 2007). p. 14.

actors. Their war occurs through alternative ways and means. Here Hoffman suggests, “Future adversaries will not offer up ‘tactics of the weak...’ They will exploit the tactics of the smart and agile.”<sup>10)</sup>

Hoffman played an important role for hybrid warfare theories. “The blend of the lethality of state conflict with the fanatical and protracted fervor of irregular warfare,” in Frank Hoffman’s description has been one of the commonly referenced definitions of hybrid warfare. He argues that “hybrid warfare incorporates a full range of different modes of warfare, including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including *indiscriminate* violence and coercion, and criminal disorder.”<sup>11)</sup> According to Hoffman, in most conflicts regular and irregular components occurred in different theaters and in distinctly different formations. In hybrid wars, these forces became blurred into the same force in the same battle space. While they are operationally integrated and tactically fused, the irregular component of the force attempts to become operationally decisive rather than protract the conflict, provoke overreactions and extend the cost of security for the defender.<sup>12)</sup>

These four elements of Hofman’s definition have been widely accepted by other scholars and official documents, especially in the US. For example, *the US Army’s Field Manual 3.0: Operations*, dated 2011, defined hybrid threats as the combination of regular, irregular, terrorist, and criminal groups who decentralize and syndicate against the US and who possess capabilities previously monopolized by nation states.<sup>13)</sup>

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10) Ibid, p. 43.

11) Ibid, p. 8.

12) Ibid, p. 29.

## 2. John J. McCuen

John J. McCuen also underlines the role of regular and irregular warfare, addressing hybrid war as “a combination of symmetric and asymmetric war in which intervening forces conduct traditional military operations against enemy military forces and targets while they must simultaneously attempt to achieve control of the combat zone’s indigenous populations by securing and stabilizing them.”<sup>14)</sup>

According to McCuen, the unique hybridity can be regarded as “full spectrum wars with both physical and conceptual dimensions: the former, a struggle against an armed enemy and the latter, a wider struggle for, control and support of the combat zone’s indigenous population, the support of the home fronts of the intervening nations, and the support of the international community.”<sup>15)</sup>

According to McCuen, contemporary hybrid wars are fought on three decisive fronts. The first of these is the conventional battleground, where one needs to face both symmetric and asymmetric threats. The second is the battleground of the population of the attacked country, where the often alienated and hostile locals need to be convinced, while the third front is composed of the home population and the international community, whose support is also essential, particularly in the case of long, protracted wars.

A novelty in McCuen’s thinking was the realization that hybrid warfare requires simultaneous success on all three fronts. Therefore, the

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13) US Army, *Field Manual 3.0 - Operations* (Washington, DC: US Army, 2011), Foreword.

14) John J. McCuen, “Hybrid Wars,” *Military Review*, March-April 2008, p. 108.

15) Ibid.

mundane and sequential approach of conventional warfare, which was predicated on the logic of firstly routing the enemy's regular forces, secondly upholding control over the territory, and then initiating state-building and reconstruction projects was less than adequate in contemporary hybrid conflicts. Moreover, owing to the interdependent and interrelated aspect of the three fronts, failure in any of the three may well lead to the overall failure of the entire operation.

Consequently, according to McCuen, in order to chalk up a victory in a hybrid conflict, combat successes and territorial gains need to be instantaneously followed by substantial efforts to rebuild stability and security, civil governance, infrastructure, law and order in the vanquished territories. Otherwise, the enemy would be able to fill the vacuum left by the advancing forces, thereby creating an enduring, protracted insurgency based on the support of dissatisfied locals, and probably of external powers. This is a painful and sober lesson which might reverberate in Ukraine as well, if and when Kyiv is able to recapture full control over the separatist regions.<sup>16)</sup>

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16) McCuen, 2008, p. 109.

### 3. Nathan Freier

Nathan Freier is another leading scholar who contributed to scholarly defining the term hybrid warfare. In *the 2005 National Defence Strategy*, he inserted the ‘quad chart’ to examine what he termed the new “hybrid norm.”<sup>17)</sup> This quad chart includes four threats or challenges: traditional, irregular, catastrophic terrorism and disruptive.<sup>18)</sup>

According to him, a hybrid actor would have to deftly employ a amalgamation of two or more of these threats, allowing them to neutralize a traditional military superiority. Freier’s quad chart is exceptionally useful when delving into the definition of hybrid warfare. As mentioned, the unique novelty of the term is debated and challenged and Freier’s useful definitions of each of the four threats allow the analysis of differing aspects between irregular warfare and hybrid warfare (Figure 1). In addition, this clarifies that hybrid warfare is not simply another expression for irregular warfare. Indeed, irregular warfare tactics may be one of the defining elements of hybrid warfare but they are most sure not the only component.<sup>19)</sup>

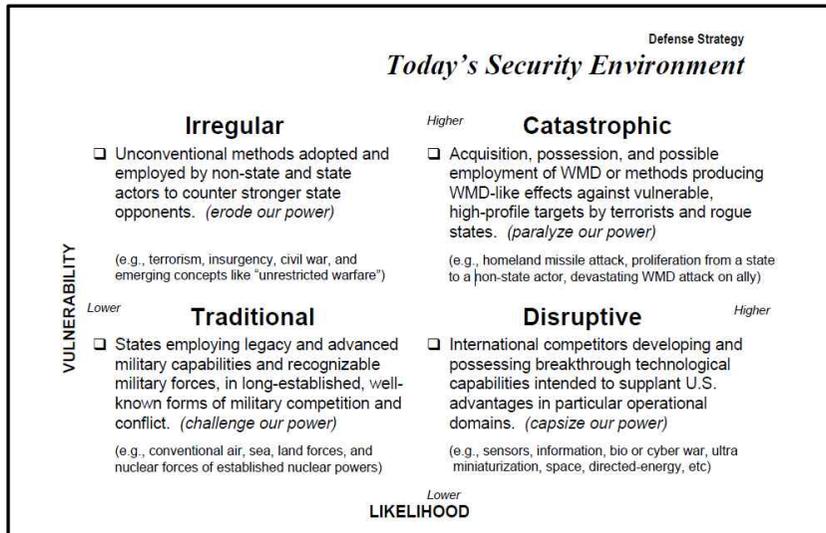
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17) Nathan Freier, *Strategic Competition and Resistance in the 21st Century: Irregular, Catastrophic, Traditional, and Hybrid Challenges in Context* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, May 2007), p. 46.

18) Ibid, p. 2.

19) Ibid.

## Conceptualizing the Hybrid Warfare



<Figure 1> "Quad Chart"<sup>20)</sup>

While the word hybrid warfare is useful, for all intents and purposes, a major roadblock in inducing a rigorous definition of the concept lies within the fact that hybrid warfare is almost always changing and is tailored by the hybrid actor to the context at hand. This means, that in each case of hybrid warfare, differing means and methods of war will be employed and in divergent manners and capacities – there is not a single, unique and precise list of elements or standard to hybrid warfare as it is fluid and complicated. Nathan Freier reiterates this recognition by proposing that it may be more useful to illustrate and analyze, not define the concept – what is crucial in understanding the execution of war in a modern society, he notes, is “not the ‘one time’ precision in defining

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20) Ibid.

hybrid warfare but instead perpetuation of an active dialogue on a new and expanding universe of complex defence-relevant challenges.”<sup>21)</sup>

#### **4. The US Government and the Military**

The military conflicts the western militaries have been embroiled with during the first decade of this century proved to develop in a way that forced them to recalibrate their approaches to tackle such challenges. The Iraq War (2003-2011) and the campaign in Afghanistan (2001-up to date) initially represented military theories in a neat fashion such as Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) and were operationally well conducted to the point where the countries were conquered and the opposing force collapsed. The after-effects of both campaigns surprised the conquerors and were anything but “a mission accomplished and problem solved,” having an improper and misplaced final end state presented a problem – having the enemy force was neutralized, territory vanquished and Saddam Hussein dethroned, and what next?

In both countries, in Iraq and in Afghanistan, the coalition forces were not fully ready for gargantuan task of nation-building. They were unable to provide the occupied nations and populations with political stability, local security and economic prosperity. These are first and foremost important elements in securing the respect and confidence of the residents of occupied territories and essential elements for moving forward successfully with the reconstruction

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21) Ibid, p. 46.

## Conceptualizing the Hybrid Warfare

stage of an operation. Consequently, in both countries coalition forces became entangled in the fighting with insurgencies at close quarters – something they were not ready to tackle.

While the US soldiers were fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan in the rapidly changing operational environment, they were not the only ones facing startlingly resilient adversaries in the battlefield. For example, Israel Defense Forces (IDF) was overwhelmed by the methods and capabilities of Hezbollah fighters during their Second Lebanon War in the summer of 2006. Hezbollah's military capabilities of adapting to the constantly changing environment was undervalued by the IDF. They were not fighting just a poorly organized paramilitary wing of a terrorist group, but rather a highly motivated, well trained and equipped force with weapons usually seen in the arsenal of nation-states.<sup>22)</sup> The Second Lebanon War is regarded as the best example of hybrid warfare hitherto.

The debate about this new mode of warfare, hybrid warfare, was carried out during the first decade of the 21st century in a host of western military publications, ultimately leading to the necessity for an official statement on the issue. The US Government Accountability Office (GAO) published a study named "Hybrid Warfare" in 2010 and with that study, it desired to put an end to the controversy about hybrid warfare being a new type of warfare.

According to the GAO document, the US Armed Forces were rescinding the term, since in various agencies of the US Armed Forces, hybrid warfare was included in the existing term 'full

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22) Avi Kober, "The Israel Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War: Why the Poor Performance?," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1, February 2008, pp. 15-16.

spectrum operations’, and was included in the existing doctrines on irregular and traditional warfare. Therefore, GAO concluded that hybrid warfare was not to be viewed a new mode of warfare. Because of the GAO report there was a possibility that the term would disappear from the official doctrines, field manuals and discourse of the US Armed Forces and the US Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) within the next few years.<sup>23)</sup>

Notwithstanding, the discussion about hybrid warfare was not terminated, nor did the necessity of recalibrating the existing doctrines. In February 2011, to meet the need to learn and adapt, the US Army TRADOC released *Change 1 of the Field Manual 3-0: “Operations”* to substitute the previous edition from 2008. The commanding general of the TRADOC, Martin E. Dempsey states in the foreword of the new FM 3-0: “Operations”:

“The future operational environment will be characterized by hybrid threats: combinations of regular, irregular, terrorist, and criminal groups who decentralize and syndicate against us and who possess capabilities previously monopolized by nation states. These hybrid threats create a more competitive security environment, and it is for these threats we must prepare.”<sup>24)</sup>

Hybrid threat is now defined officially. This was done to grasp the increased complexity of operations and multiplicity of actors involved in the modern conflicts. This complexity was duly noted due to

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23) United States Government Accountability Office, *Hybrid Warfare* (Washington, DC: US GAO, September 10, 2010), pp. 2-3.

24) Field Manual No 3.0: *Operations, Change 1, Headquarters* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, February 22, 2011).

the experiences in Iraq and in Afghanistan, and the discussion conducted by military experts and scholars. The emergence of a hybrid threat in the discussion brings up the thought of a hybrid antagonist.

In his testimony before the US Senate Armed Services Committee in January 2009, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates brought up the term hybrid for the first time in public when he mentioned that “were going to have to...take a look at the other elements of [the Future Combat System and] see, what is useful in this spectrum of conflict from what I would call hybrid complex wars to those of counter-insurgency.”<sup>25)</sup>

One of the few areas of consensus among military experts is that we are sure to witness the further blurring of warfare classifications. Hybrid threats now have joined the plethora of alternative concepts, but have received the short shrift from critics embedded in military institutions. However, the hybrid threat concept has found traction in policy circles despite its relative novelty. It has been cited by the US Secretary of Defense in articles and speeches, and by policy-makers served in the Pentagon.<sup>26)</sup>

Furthermore, it was also highlighted in the Joint Capstone Concept for Joint Operations, in Joint Forces Command’s Joint Operational

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25) Robert M. Gates, “Challenges Facing the Department of Defense,” US Senate Committee on Armed Services, 111<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> session, 27 January 2009.

26) Robert M. Gates, “The National Defense Strategy: striking the right balance,” *Joint Force Quarterly*, 1st Quarter 2009, pp. 2-7; Robert Gates, “A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April, 2009; Michele A. Flournoy, and Shawn Brimley, “The Defense Inheritance: Challenges and Choices for the Next Pentagon Team,” *Washington Quarterly*, Summer 2008.

Environment 2012, in the latest Maritime Strategy signed by three Service chiefs. It is the core to the Marine Corps' latest strategic vision.<sup>27)</sup> Additionally, the US allies in the UK, NATO and Israel are studying this phenomenon as well. The Chief of Naval Operations, speaking at the Naval War College last summer, explicitly mentioned the need to study hybrid warfare at the Current Strategy Forum.<sup>28)</sup>

In the past, we adjusted our vocabulary and definitions to adapt to fastly changing technologies or unique approaches of opponents. New language and new classification help us in thinking differently and characterizing what is genuine new, without overlooking what is enduring in war. Military culture tends to stick to the past and tradition, providing a powerful prism through which ongoing and future trends are seen. "Armed forces," notes Sir John Kiszely of the British Army, "need to be highly aware of this prism, and the distorting effect it may be having on their perspective, if they are to see military affairs clearly and objectively."<sup>29)</sup>

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27) James N. Mattis, *US Joint Forces Command, Joint Operational Environment, 2008*; Admiral Mike Mullen, USN, *Joint Chiefs of Staff, Capstone Concept for Joint Operations, Version 3.0*. Washington, DC, Feb. 2009; Conway James T., General, USMC, Admiral Gary Roughead, USN and Admiral Thad W. Allen, USCG, *A Cooperative Strategy For Maritime Security*, Washington, D.C., October 2007, James Conway, James, *Marine Corps Vision and Strategy 2025*, Washington DC: Headquarters, US Marine Corps, June 2008.

28) Admiral Gary Roughead, USN, "Remarks at the Current Strategy Forum," Naval War College, Newport, RI on June 16, 2009.

29) John Kiszely, "The relevance of history to the military profession: a British view," in Williamson Murray and Richard Hart Sinnreich (eds.), *The Past as Prologue: The Importance of History to the Military Profession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 31.

## 5. NATO

A few months later in September 2014, during the Wales NATO Summit, the term hybrid warfare was mentioned on several occasions to describe Russian invasion in Ukraine that had occurred earlier that year in March 2014. Although there was no Alliance consensus on the single definition of the term and no official NATO doctrine or concept on hybrid warfare, since the Wales Summit, NATO has coherently used the following definition in public statements and exercises:

“Hybrid warfare is where a wide range of overt and covert military, paramilitary and civilian measures are employed in a highly integrated design. The adversary tries to influence influential policy-makers and key decision makers by combining kinetic operations with subversive effort. The aggressor often resorts to clandestine actions, to avoid attribution or retribution.”<sup>30)</sup>

Actually, NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) Philippe M. Breedlove said Russia’s illegal occupation of Crimea and continued actions in the rest of Eastern Ukraine was a form of hybrid war. He added that Russia was employing diplomacy, information warfare, and military and economic means to wage this campaign.<sup>31)</sup> A NATO Review video posted on July 3 2014 was the

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30) Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales, “Wales Summit Declaration,” *North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)*, 5 September 2014.

31) “NATO Commander Breedlove Discusses Implications of Hybrid War,” *Small Wars Journal*, 23 March 2015.

first official NATO media release to use the term hybrid warfare in the context of the situation in Ukraine.<sup>32)</sup> Much like the above NATO definition of hybrid warfare, officials at the Canadian Department of Defence emphasize that hybrid actors skillfully operate on the fine line that is just below the threshold of triggering a military response from their opponent. In addition, the officials add that the Russian model of hybrid warfare operates on a much more fluid continuum from non-military, military and civilian means, that is of an unprecedented and sophisticated level and that terms such as asymmetrical warfare or compound wars cannot fully grasp or explain.

It is important to note that the definitions have evolved over time, beginning with Bill Nemeth's definition to NATO's current working definition of how hybrid warfare was used in Ukraine in 2014. The older academic examples of hybrid warfare (Chechnya, Hezbollah, actors in the Arab Spring, etc.) seem to limit hybrid actors to non-state actors (although their theoretical definitions do include the state as a possible hybrid actor), whereas in the situation in Ukraine, it was a state actor who used hybrid tools. In addition, previous academic examples seem to suggest that hybrid tactics were used against opponents who were stronger or more powerful than them, in order to maintain a tactical and strategic edge. This is certainly not the case in Ukraine, as Russia, the more powerful actor, used hybrid tools against a smaller weaker actor in comparison. The use of hybrid warfare by a powerful state actor is a significant development. The advantage for Russia in doing so was

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32) North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "A hybrid war—a hybrid response?" July 2014.

that it allows them to reduce their exposure to international political and legal attribution and shape a narrative within the context of information/psychological warfare.

### **III. Critical Views on the Concept of Hybrid Warfare**

It appears that not every one would be inclined to greet the arrival of new term of 'hybrid warfare' with open arms. From the viewpoint of some critics, 'hybrid war' is merely a label attributed to Russian actions in Ukraine by the West, in an attempt to make sense of cascading phases of a security crisis in which all sides but Russia seem to have been caught off balance.<sup>33)</sup> Critics say that Western observers have fallen into a now familiar parlance for describing Russia's annexation of Crimea and subsequent invasion of Eastern Ukraine. Frequently termed Russia's 'hybrid war' against Ukraine, it is seen by the West as a precarious precedent for future conflicts on Russia's neighbors. In this view, a Russian campaign against the Baltic States, Kazakhstan or even Poland might employ a variety of tools, ranging from conventional to irregular combat operations, sponsorship of political protests, economic coercion, and an information campaign.

From the critical standpoint, the first part of the misconception around 'hybrid war' is the term itself. Despite sounding novel and in vogue, its analytical advantage is limited. The hybridity of the term

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33) Michael Kofman and Matthew Rojansky, "A Closer look at Russia's 'Hybrid War'," *Kennan Cable*, No. 7 (April 2015), pp. 1-2.

simply signifies a combination of previously defined modes of warfare, whether conventional, irregular, political or information. Even those who have proposed such a definition must concede that the combination of war across domains is not new, but in fact is as old as warfare itself. It is helpful to think beyond the contemporary definitions of war we have become familiar with, but the term is inherently imprecise, and does not denote a new type of warfare.

From the Russian perspective, critics point out, an approach to war that combines different types of power projection is not itself reflective of any newly designed strategy. Rather, it is just an illustration of how wars are waged, whoever may be fighting them. Modern wars, simply put, are waged through a combination of various components of national power. In the US, this conventional wisdom has long been characterized by the catchphrase of “using all the tools in the toolkit,” or the recent mantra of so-called “smart power.”

Thanks to the dysfunction of the Soviet system and the post-Soviet collapse, many elements of Russia’s national power were significantly underdeveloped, frail or simply ineffective, including the military establishment itself. However, Moscow has long recognized the prevalence of combined power projection in conflicts on its neighboring region and globally. Accordingly, Russia has cited in official statements and published documents for more than a decade the West’s use of economic, diplomatic, information and cyber capabilities, in conjunction with military operations.

According to Echevarria, security experts, military and policy scholars have struggled to come to grips with such uses, assigning labels such as ‘hybrid’ wars, ‘gray zone’ conflicts, ‘unrestricted war-

## Conceptualizing the Hybrid Warfare

fare, among others, to carve out contemporary practices from those associated with traditional wars.<sup>34)</sup> Uses of the term hybrid war, however, have drifted far away from its inventors' original objective, which was to raise awareness of threats that cannot be defeated solely by the superior military forces. Nonetheless, the term now represents the use of more than one 'mode' of warfare or component of national power.

In short, the critics stress that the focus on Russia's hybrid warfare has led to the creation of a bogeyman. Western analysis gives the impression that Russia is actually conducting hybrid war against the West. To the critical view, this is a outrageous misuse of the word 'war'. Moreover, the focus on the ostensible success of Russian hybrid war in Ukraine has led to a view that there is a Russian doctrine that could be applied to a NATO member state. However, critics argue that this view ignores key aspects of the Ukraine operation and draws the wrong lessons from it.<sup>35)</sup>

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34) Andrew Echevarria, *Operating in the Gray Zone: An Alternative Paradigm for US Military Strategy* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2016), pp. 1-2.

35) Samuel Charap, "The Ghost of Hybrid War," *Survival* (December 2015), p. 52.

## VI. Conclusion and Discussion

Clausewitz' claim that war is "a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means" implies a distinct point where political discourse stops and military contest starts.<sup>36)</sup> Hybrid warfare needs not such a delineation. Clausewitz distinguishes between two modes of warfare: the first maintains the objective to defeat an enemy military force and conquer its territory, the second maintains the objective to attain desired political goals by exhausting the enemy's forces, but without aiming at a conclusive victory and/or the conquest of territory.<sup>37)</sup> This second type of warfare, the type that is more indirect, can be viewed as the fundamental logics to modern hybrid warfare.

Despite the differing afore-mentioned definitions of hybrid warfare, there has still remained a broad consistency: it is a new mode of warfare that involves a wide range of multi-modal activities that can be carried out by state or non-state actors. Emphasis is placed on simultaneous and unprecedented fusion of a variety of means such as political, military, economic/financial, social and informational using conventional, irregular, catastrophic, terrorist and disruptive/criminal methods to achieve political objectives. The hybrid actor can amalgamate these means and methods in a way that is tailor-made to the context at hand. As there is a blurring between modes of war, there is a blurring between combatants and non-combatants, resulting in a whole of

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36) Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (eds.) (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 87.

37) Ibid.

society integration into the permanent state of conflict.

Hybrid state and nonstate antagonists demonstrate a propensity for leveraging surrogate violence, political and social agitation, and sophisticated economic and information warfare to nullify opponents' advantages. Quite often these actors possess or seek relatively sophisticated traditional or catastrophic capacity to compliment other decidedly irregular approaches. Though typically less violent than traditional warfare, this hybrid form of competition is in the aggregate no less harmful to operational objectives and core interests. At the same time, it also runs counter to traditional fealty for decisive military action. Purposeful hybrid state competitors include Iran and North Korea. In the future, they might include a more bellicose China or Russia. As nonstate actors grow in their quasi-military capabilities and political clout, they too will increasingly leverage hybrid methods and capabilities to decisive effect.<sup>38)</sup>

The 2005 National Defense Strategy document argued that the adversaries would acquire these capabilities to challenge the conventional warfare superiority of the US, underlining the asymmetric dimension of hybrid warfare. The Strategy mentioned Al Qaeda and North Korea as examples of adversaries that try to acquire different forms of warfare capabilities, accepting that both state and non-state actors can pursue hybrid warfare capabilities. In this regard, it is high time for us to guard against the dark cloud of hybrid warfare looming on the not so distant horizon.

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38) Nathan Freier, *DoD Leaders, Strategists, and Operators in an Era of Persistent* (Washington, DC: CSIS, 2009), p. 11.

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