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## Friendly Force's Projection, Training and Engagement

Hybrid warfare is a different kind of warfare than the conventional one that militaries have become accustomed to and trained for over time. In order for the armies to be able to deal with this particular type of conflict, it is necessary, first of all, for them to understand the context in which it appears and manifests itself and to know its particularities, since no two hybrid conflicts are alike. Combating hybrid warfare requires a comprehensive approach that combines all the instruments of power as effectively as possible, and that actions take place in a coordinated manner in all confrontational environments, both physical and informational, cyber or virtual. Countering an adversary using hybrid tactics or strategies requires understanding that the adversary is using the environment and context to its advantage, and that the adversary is trying to exploit the other side's vulnerabilities and create new vulnerabilities, while simultaneously trying to reduce its own vulnerabilities and transform them to its advantage. The nature of hybrid warfare determines how to counter it. Fighting a hybrid adversary requires flexible and adaptable forces capable of operating in a complex, ambiguous, ever-changing environment characterised by a high degree of uncertainty, where situations cannot be catalogued in nuances of black and white, but different shades of grey must be distinguished, which can render a conventional force ineffective and overexposed. Fighting a hybrid adversary involves developing a new, unconventional way of thinking and putting yourself in the attacker's role to better understand their perspective. Fighting means not only the use of force but, above all, increasing the ability to identify the mode of action of hybrid attackers and increasing the resistance capacity, developing the resilience of people and systems, which can be done through intensive, realistic training, through complex and dynamic exercises.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Nicolae Bălcescu" Land Forces Academy.

<sup>2</sup> VIOLAND 2015.

## **Training of forces**

In order for an armed force to be able to counter a hybrid threat, it is necessary to develop specific mechanisms for training the military, but also tools that allow it to identify the threat as early as possible, to understand it in order to determine its mechanism of manifestation, to identify its strengths and vulnerabilities and to act effectively to neutralise the threat with the least possible use of brute force and the least possible use of kinetic, destructive actions. The training of modern forces, capable of operating in varied and difficult operational contexts, in environments characterised by volatility, unpredictability, complexity and ambiguity, must focus on the formation of military structures and leaders capable of conducting full-spectrum operations, in a multinational, joint, inter-governmental and interagency architecture, to combine all the instruments of power available to achieve the objectives.<sup>3</sup> Training of soldiers, commanders, commands and units must be as intensive, realistic, standardised and performance-oriented as possible to enable forces to conduct full-spectrum military operations in diverse areas where adversaries will use both conventional and hybrid means of warfare. After the formation of basic individual and collective skills, the training needs to diversify to include the training of the skills necessary to identify, analyse and combat hybrid threats, of a military and non-military nature. Training in this direction must be generalised to all levels of military art and all military arms/services and include interagency cooperation in the higher phases of training. All structures must benefit from complex training, based on realistic and challenging scenarios to create a basis both at individual and especially at collective level to act in difficult environments, in hybrid contexts. This is all the more necessary today, when it is found that the evolution of a crisis can be galloping, and the transition from the state of normality to the state of conflict can be very fast, which leaves very little time for the preparation of forces. It is also noted that the operational pace is increasingly high, due to the use of modern technologies, and the preparation and adaptation of the forces to the increasingly changing situation is difficult to achieve.<sup>4</sup> The basis of the preparation of the forces that are going to participate in a potential hybrid conflict must be the knowledge and understanding of the threat, which generically can be represented by a combination of regular forces, non-regular

<sup>3</sup> Department of the Army 2008a.

<sup>4</sup> Congressional Research Service 1998.

forces, criminal groups acting jointly to obtain common advantages. It is highly likely that conventional armed forces will face in a future confrontation space an adversary that uses “conventional and irregular tactic, techniques and procedures, all manner of terrorist acts targeting not only military but also civilian populace, and to witness an increase use of crime as a weapon system, an emphasis placed on cyber war, and an exploitation of the media”.<sup>5</sup> To prepare the forces to fight an adversary that uses unconventional tactics of a hybrid nature, it is necessary for them to train in conditions as close as possible to the reality of the operational environment, conditions that must be replicated in the training process. Replicating this environment and context during individual training or exercises is extremely difficult, but planners and commanders must make continuous efforts to adapt training scenarios and incorporate lessons learned from recent conflicts, especially those from Syria and Ukraine, in the process of training the forces. The reason behind this approach is that the more the military are exposed during the training phase to stimuli of a hybrid nature, the more they face complex situations, characterised by ambiguity, the more they are used to make decisions under conditions of uncertainty, in consequence the more easily they will be able to adapt to the real challenges of the hybrid battle space and fulfil their missions, integrate the most diverse effects to achieve the desired end state, including those effects that exceed the military dimension of the confrontation and which are the result of a comprehensive approach. In the process of preparing the forces to participate in military actions in the context of the existence of hybrid threats and, subsequently, during the participation in this type of operations, it must be taken into account that the adversary or potential adversary is very adaptable, it is a good observant and has a high capacity to learn and self improve. That is why it is recommended that in any activity, template-ism, the use of predetermined solutions for a specific set of problems, the use of patterns of thinking and action should be avoided, and creativity, initiative, unconventional thinking and innovation should be encouraged, in order not to allow the adversary to create patterns of the actions of our forces and to identify ways to combat them. The hybrid actor will always try to hit the opponent's weak points and exploit any weakness in their combat functions,<sup>6</sup> and to avoid this, a commander must ensure that his forces are able to identify these weak points and reduce their exposure, the key being

<sup>5</sup> HOFFMAN 2007: 17–35.

<sup>6</sup> HOFFMAN 2009.

preparation, anticipation and adaptation.<sup>7</sup> The preparation of forces to operate in a hybrid context is very important and has the ability to shape how future actions will be conducted. Detailed and thorough planning followed by thorough implementation of the plan can create favourable conditions for military action. Starting from Napoleon Bonaparte's thoughts on the importance of preparing for future actions "if I always appear prepared, it is because before entering an undertaking, I have meditated long and have foreseen what might occur. It is not genius which reveals to me suddenly and secretly what I should do in circumstances unexpected by others; it is thought and preparation",<sup>8</sup> we can extrapolate about the importance of training the forces, the importance of planning their deployment in a new and challenging theatre of operations, and the need to establish clear rules regarding the engagement of forces in military actions to avoid their premature attrition and failure to accomplish their missions and strategic objectives of the operation. The irregular conflict, which favours the use of hybrid tactics, will complicate the way of conducting operations for forces that predominantly use conventional strategies and tactics and will condition the preparation and engagement of forces in operations, requiring the emergence of a new way of thinking and acting, which favours the initiative, independent action, creativity, flexibility and critical thinking at the expense of classic characteristics such as conformity, obedience, etc. The new generations of soldiers, both those at the base level and those at different decision levels, will adapt more easily to these new conditions because their education and way of being allows them to ask themselves more questions, to question decisions and doubt much more easily than in the case of the old generations, and they are also more receptive to the use of new technologies and the implementation of innovations, which allows them to adapt to the hybrid confrontation environment. All this happens because they have greater mental agility and greater tolerance for ambiguity, which allows them to adapt more easily in the face of the unknown and unpredictable. Consequently, in addition to decision-making competencies and tactical leadership skills, the military organisation must focus on creating a conducive training environment that prepares warfighters to face various situations specific to the hybrid combat environment and develop their capacity for resistance, shock absorption and adaptation so as to preserve as

<sup>7</sup> MURRAY 2009.

<sup>8</sup> JEFFREY 2020.

much as possible their freedom of action and fighting capacity. To succeed in this endeavour, we must not only change our way of thinking and relate to new situations, but we must develop our ability to adapt both at the individual and institutional level.<sup>9</sup> In the training phase of individuals, commands and forces, emphasis must be placed on the development of personal and collective skills and competences, on the knowledge and efficient use of new military and civilian technologies, but above all on the development of resilience, which allows them to recover back to normal in the shortest possible time after facing unexpected and unconventional threats. Building resilience is necessary because no training system can adequately replicate the complex reality and anticipate the characteristics of the hybrid combat environment, bearing in mind that each environment is unique and hybrid tactics are in constant evolution. In order to survive the challenges of the hybrid combat environment, it is imperative to develop resilience as it enables the military to survive in complex, hybrid threat environments and complete their missions with minimal exposure to potentially lethal risks.<sup>10</sup> Training is carried out mainly in base units or in joint training centres, individually, by units, joint and even interagency, using dynamic inputs to challenge the entire force to the maximum and open the way to unconventional approaches to various classic or hybrids threats. Training may continue after forces are deployed to the area of operations, particularly if immediate engagement in military operations is not anticipated, with forces having the advantage of training in the same environment and under the same conditions in which they will conduct future missions rather than in the artificially replicated environment from their peace location. In the situation where during the participation in the missions certain deficiencies in the training of the forces, in the synchronisation of the actions are found or new challenges arise that prevent the effective application of the elements of combat power, especially in relation to hybrid threats, the training of the forces can continue for the entire duration of the operations, for the improvement of techniques, tactics and procedures of action or for the identification of new techniques, tactics and procedures, suitable for the newly identified situations, provided that the additional training does not interfere and does not affect the combat capability and the degree of operationalisation and the force response ability. In order for individuals and military

<sup>9</sup> DASKALOV 2018.

<sup>10</sup> NINDL et al. 2018.

structures to be able to adapt to the specifics of the hybrid confrontation environment, it is necessary for the military, and especially the leaders, to prepare themselves in the physical, intellectual and moral domains,<sup>11</sup> realistically, under conditions as harsh as possible and close to the requirements of the modern and real battlefield. By training in different scenarios, officers can learn how to be flexible and make difficult decisions. Leaders need education and strong intellectual training to meet the challenges of war, of changes and different cultures in the world.<sup>12</sup> Hybrid warfare is not only a confrontation of brute force, a clash of men and weaponry, but also a philosophy of warfare, in which not the strongest wins, but the most patient, the most adaptable, the most resilient and the most innovative. The hybrid combat environment raises many challenges that cannot be fully forecasted, but the soldiers who will be exposed to this environment must be prepared from all points of view. Therefore, they must benefit from a solid education<sup>13</sup> and a specialised training that will develop their cognitive, cultural, communication and action skills, that will allow them to adapt to the ever-changing environment, to understand the cultural peculiarities of the population and potential adversaries, to approach missions in a comprehensive way, which strictly goes beyond the military approach. They must be able to act in conditions of uncertainty, in a continuous change, in the conditions of an information vacuum and of intense manipulation, carried out both in the physical and in the virtual environment, to adapt quickly to the new conditions and to use the new technologies to facilitate mission accomplishment. All these attributes can be developed through a comprehensive training process aimed at not only the accumulation of knowledge and skills as a fighter, but also the development of critical and unconventional thinking and the development of skills that allow them to act and survive in a hybrid, discontinuous and multidimensional environment.<sup>14</sup> No matter how complex the training system and no matter how much time is allocated to training, militaries and commands cannot be fully prepared to face the threats from a hybrid confrontation environment.

<sup>11</sup> THOMAS 2004.

<sup>12</sup> THONG 2019.

<sup>13</sup> ANTON 2016.

<sup>14</sup> ANTON 2016.

## **Projection of forces**

Projecting forces to participate in a military operation is not just about moving them from their peacetime location to where they will perform a combat mission. Force design means more than that, it means activating forces, training them, transporting them, participating in conflict, etc. Combat power projection can be defined as “the ability of a nation to rapidly and effectively deploy and sustain forces in and from multiple dispersed locations to respond to crises, to contribute to deterrence, and to enhance regional stability”.<sup>15</sup> According to the U.S. doctrine of employment of forces in operations, force projection comprises eight stages,<sup>16</sup> starting and ending on the national territory. Thus, the complex process of force projection begins with their mobilisation and continues with the following stages: pre-deployment activities, force deployment, insertion operations in the theatre of operations, main operations, ending the conflict and conducting post-conflict operations, redeployment of forces and their demobilisation. Each stage is of great importance to the success of the whole operation, requiring the necessary support to be given to the forces participating in this projection process. In the context of participating in a hybrid conflict, the forces will have to carry out this projection process taking into account the particularities of the new area of operations and the hybrid tactics used by the adversary, who may target the forces from the very first phases in which they aim to activate and increase combat capacity by intensifying training in a hybrid scenario and influencing, shaping the internal and external environment in order to support the intervention and make the actions of the armed forces more efficient. The mobilisation of forces to participate in a military operation consists of a series of activities aimed at bringing the forces to a level of operationalisation that will enable them to meet future challenges. Mobilisation can mean activating some units, filling them with personnel, intensifying training to deal with a hybrid operating environment, but primarily preparing personnel, commands, equipment for future operations. The activities that precede the deployment of the forces are very important and aim to perfect the preparation of the forces taking into account the specifics of the future operation, but also to increase the cohesion of the military and structures and to test techniques, tactics and action procedures specific to participating in a hybrid conflict and combating hybrid threats.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Marine Corps 2011: 2–21.

<sup>16</sup> Department of the Army 1994.

The pace and intensity of the actions carried out in the preparation phase of the deployment of the forces are influenced by the level of training of the forces, the security situation and the objectives set for the forces in question. After the completion of the preparations and the realisation of the stocks of materials, fuel, equipment, weapons and ammunition, but also after the identification of the forces and means that will facilitate the projection of the forces, we will proceed to the deployment phase, the projection of the forces in the area of operations, most often outside the national territory. The actual deployment of forces is conditioned by the existence of land, air or naval transport capabilities and the analysis of operational factors, such as the mission, the enemy, the terrain, the time available, etc.<sup>17</sup> At NATO level this process of deployment of forces in an area of operations is known by the acronym of RSOM-I<sup>18</sup> standing for reception, staging, onward movement and integration, which captures the essence of this process. Thus, the armed forces, after being trained, evaluated, after being equipped with all the necessary means to successfully carry out the future mission, even in the context of an operations area where there is a risk of using hybrid tactics, used both in the physical, as well as in the cyberspace are moved to the future area of operations where they will find a permissive environment that allows them to easily insert, or a hostile environment, which involves the conduct of forcible entry operations. Forces to be inserted into a hostile environment and immediately engaged in combat must be transported with intact combat capability and must receive intensive support from all supporting forces and services. If the insertion area is already under the control of the own forces or the threat level is low, the forces will be moved without aiming to maintain the combat capacity, most of the time separating the personnel from the equipment, weapons and ammunition, to increase the speed of deployment and to reduce the risks of accidents. In this case it is necessary to go through the stage of reception, i.e. receiving forces and equipment, storing them and keeping them safe from threats until the forces are sufficiently numerous and meet the conditions to be engaged in operations. After the reception of the forces and equipment, the phase of staging follows, when the units are formed, when the equipment is checked and the personnel are integrated into the units according to the order of battle, and the headquarters are prepared to lead and coordinate the forces. From this moment on the forces will execute the movement to the area of

<sup>17</sup> Department of the Army 2022.

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Defence 2021.



responsibility, where they will carry out combat actions, having the full combat capability and being able to react to any threat, of a conventional or hybrid nature, using all elements of the specific combat power. Once in the area of operations, the forces will integrate with forces already present there, host nation forces, or other elements with whom they will have to cooperate in the future. In the integration phase, the forces will have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the characteristics of the area, with the existing threats, but also to identify the optimal options that allow them to combat these hybrid threats.<sup>19</sup> The most intense phase of force projection in an area of operations where conventional actions are conducted in parallel with hybrid actions, where threats do not come only from armed groups and do not only target the armed forces, but come from paramilitary groups, groups of organised crime, partisan organisations, etc., and which not only conduct kinetic actions against the armed forces, but plan and conduct actions aimed at reducing morale and the will to fight, creating and maintaining a climate of insecurity, sowing doubt about the effectiveness and legality and legitimacy of actions, reducing operational efficiency through actions carried out online and offline, in the physical and virtual space, etc. is represented by the phase of operations conduct. Having all the resources at his disposal, having the possibility of knowing the real operational situation and timely identifying conventional and hybrid threats, the commander will focus his attention on obtaining decisive effects that will contribute to the achievement of the objectives and the creation of the conditions for the successful conclusion of the operation. In this phase the commander must take the most appropriate measures to ensure the protection of the forces and to ensure military actions and to decisively engage the adversary and to gain and maintain the initiative at all levels.<sup>20</sup> The key to success in any type of military operation, but even more so in one where there is a risk of facing an adversary using hybrid tactics, is to successfully mobilise, focus, project, deploy and engage forces before the adversary can be ready for this by maintaining the initiative, thus avoiding time pressure and the obligation to react to the opponent's actions. Projecting forces in a theatre of operations is a very complex, resource-intensive action that involves a concentrated effort from several services and categories of forces, being a joint operation by definition. The success of force projection depends on the ability to use all available resources to control the battlespace, occupy and control key

<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Defence 2018.

<sup>20</sup> Department of the Army 2019.

insertion points and facilities, and sustain military operations in a hostile operating area where hybrid threats can take different forms and may act in unexpected ways against conventional armed forces. In order for the projection operations to be carried out successfully, it is necessary that the physical confrontation space be under the full control of the own forces in order to reduce the risks to the forces, especially in the moments when they are most vulnerable: during transport, disembarkation, the establishment of the devices and the initiation of the movement. Efforts will be focused on controlling the airspace and securing a bridgehead large enough to allow the initial concentration of forces, the establishment of initial combat formation, but also the accumulation of consistent logistical support to provide the necessary support for operations. Maintaining a ring of security can be done by initially deploying forces capable of identifying and eliminating the direct enemy threat with kinetic attacks and creating a multidimensional protective bubble for own forces. However, it will be very difficult to eliminate all threats, especially those of a hybrid nature that manifest in the physical or cyber environment. Protecting forces from these non-conventional threats requires them to be prepared in advance to recognise a hybrid threat and identify optimal countermeasures, which can range from ignoring to observing, deterring, engaging and neutralising.<sup>21</sup> Armed forces involved in projection operations must be prepared for opposed or unopposed entry operations. Projecting forces in a hostile environment with a strong hybrid component implies a force with sufficient full-spectrum immediate adversary engagement capabilities and advanced force protection capabilities that must be ready for combat from the moment of insertion. Projecting forces in a permissive environment allows them to continue to build and strengthen their combat capability against conventional and hybrid threats and after insertion into the area of operations, allows them to train, acclimatise and acculturate to the place. When considering force projection one must consider the combat power requirement that must be present in the area of operations, the type of capabilities needed to accomplish the objectives, and how to use those capabilities to make the force sufficiently credible, lethal and able to operate in the specific conditions of hybrid warfare. Commanders must be prepared to deploy in the field sufficient forces, characterised by a high level of combat power, to resolve the crisis situation or conflict under the conditions established by them, in the shortest possible time and with the least possible losses. Projected force composition must be established

<sup>21</sup> CÎRDEI 2016.

in advance of their deployment to allow for the early accumulation of forces, assets, capabilities and skills and to enable force training and integration. The field-deployed force package must be strong enough to meet threats and accomplish objectives without oversizing the force package, which entails additional exposure.<sup>22</sup> The implementation of new technologies has the potential to increase the range and resilience of deployed forces, and the refinement of long-range strike systems, the multiplication of sensor networks, emerging and disruptive technologies that are becoming more accessible, the generalisation of multidimensional approaches, with an emphasis on the increasing cyber dimension; the use of hybrid techniques and technologies will favour the defender who will be able to strike the attacking forces at any point, at any distance,<sup>23</sup> generalising the risk and forcing the forces to adopt complex and expensive protective measures and will increase the state of tension and anxiety at the level of the forces. The use of unmanned and autonomous air and ground vehicles, as well as other weapon systems that combine human and artificial intelligence, increases the hybrid character of the confrontation and changes the way in which forces can be projected and engaged in combat and gives rise to new options for design and employment of forces.<sup>24</sup>

### **Engagement of forces**

The hybrid threat is a combination of regular, irregular forces and means, criminal groups operating in the physical or virtual environment, which join forces to achieve favourable effects, and their basic characteristics are the ability to innovate, adaptability, the ability to network, using a mix of old and new technologies to create dilemmas and challenges for opponents,<sup>25</sup> both physical, cognitive and moral, through actions carried out by a network of people, capabilities and systems, which combine in actions carried out across the entire spectrum of operations and in all dimensions of the operational environment, affecting or influencing all operational variables.<sup>26</sup> Knowing that

<sup>22</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff 2017.

<sup>23</sup> SMITH-PALAZZO 2016.

<sup>24</sup> Commonwealth of Australia 2016.

<sup>25</sup> Department of the Army 2010b.

<sup>26</sup> Department of the Army 2010a.

the adversary operating in the hybrid environment will try to gain the advantage using decision and action speed, agility and versatility, the major challenge will be to reduce his ability to use the aforementioned advantages. Conventional forces will do their best to win the war in the shortest possible time, with the least human and material costs, and in doing so will plan and execute decisive actions directed against the adversary's centres of gravity. When facing a hybrid type opponent this is no longer possible due to his characteristics, the way of organising and conducting the fight. The objective of the hybrid adversary is not necessarily to win the battle, but rather to prevent conventional armed forces from regaining victory and maintaining a narrative that they have lost or will lose the conflict, while waiting for them to make mistakes and wear out their fighting capacity and the support of the national and local population, as happened during the war between Israel and the Hezbollah group in Lebanon in 2006. More often than not, time is on the side of the warfighter who uses hybrid tactics to compensate for certain deficiencies and correct certain asymmetries, which allows him to establish a convenient operational rhythm and thus affect the ability of forces to engage and to support a military action in the hybrid environment. Once inserted into the area of operations, conventional forces will most likely be under constant pressure in both the physical and virtual environment, with the hybrid adversary having the freedom to choose both the place and time of the confrontation, its scale and the means used to create and maintain a state of tension, of uncertainty among conventional forces, to reduce their fighting capacity and damage their image and credibility. For conventional forces to be able to accomplish their mission, they must act across the entire spectrum and target both adversary combatants and public opinion in home countries, in the host country, while taking all measures to protect critical civilian and military infrastructure, to achieve force protection and to maintain its combat capability at the highest possible level for as long as possible. The participation of forces in a hybrid conflict implies the application of new rules, new concepts and strategies. In a classic conflict, most strategies focus on engaging and destroying the adversary, be it an insurgent group, a terrorist organisation, or a state, so that it no longer poses a threat and can no longer carry out attacks against its own forces and affect its own interests and objectives. When acting in a hybrid context, using the military tool to achieve objectives is no longer sufficient. A new approach is needed, setting objectives that go beyond the military dimension and identifying a complex, comprehensive strategy that goes beyond the military sphere and that also involves other institutions or organisations. In hybrid

conflict, a holistic interinstitutional approach is needed to lead to the elimination “of the military, logistical and ideological support of the groups within the hybrid conflict”;<sup>27</sup> by integrating the effects of other instruments of civil power, such as political, diplomatic, economic, informational and by involving other national or international actors. Depending on the type and intensity of the conflict, the armed forces may have the primary role in countering hybrid threats, the leading role or a secondary, supporting role.<sup>28</sup> Given the complexity of the threat, it is necessary to employ a comprehensive approach that combines political, socio-economic, information and military tools to identify, mitigate, counter, and failing all else, recover from the effects of hybrid warfare.<sup>29</sup> The comprehensive approach to military operations carried out in a hybrid context involves the sharing of efforts, the coordination of actions, the most efficient use of resources, the effective exercise of command and control of all available forces, regardless of the field of action and the institution/agency to which they belong, the integration of effects to achieve common final goals, etc. NATO's strategy for countering hybrid threats<sup>30</sup> and which also has implications for how forces prepare and operate in a potentially hybrid environment is based on a comprehensive approach that considers multiple steps on the scale of military escalation, such as building partnerships and developing knowledge, deterring hybrid actions against NATO states, engaging the threat and stabilising. Depending on the stage in which the NATO forces are, in relation to the evolution of the crisis, the focus must be either on actions carried out in the non-military fields, or on actions carried out in the military field, whether they are kinetic or non-kinetic. In the partnership development phase, the emphasis is on the intensive use of political, diplomatic and economic instruments, in the knowledge development phase, attention is focused on specific intelligence activities, which prepare future actions. In the deterrence stage of hybrid actions, emphasis can be placed on carrying out demonstrations of force in the military field, organising exercises, activating the forces and increasing their level of training, but also on intensifying political and diplomatic actions or even on putting pressure in the economic or financial field to deter the threat. Threat engagement is the most intense and dynamic phase, in which the necessary resources are allocated for the operation

<sup>27</sup> IONIȚĂ et al. 2017: 40–41.

<sup>28</sup> MONAGHAN 2019: 91.

<sup>29</sup> KREMIDAS-COURTNEY 2020.

<sup>30</sup> NATO 2010.

and forces are projected into the theatre of operations and engaged in combat actions, based on the mandate received, the specific rules of engagement, so as to fulfil their mission, by engaging and neutralising the hybrid threat, with the adapted means, aiming more at achieving the desired effects than the physical destruction of the adversary. The reconstruction phase focuses on rebuilding the infrastructure and institutions of the host state and creating the right security climate for the transfer of authority.<sup>31</sup> The hybrid adversary can act to force conventional forces to disperse their resources, forces, combat assets and attention, limit their freedom of action and initiative, etc. and to create and maintain economic instability, to amplify the lack of trust in defaulters, to attack information networks, to cause humanitarian crises, etc. The armed forces must have an organisation and equipment, but also a command and control system that allows them to be as supple as possible, more agile in training and employment, to have a proactive posture, which can be achieved in peacetime by carrying out complex, realistic exercises that take soldiers and commanders out of their comfort zone and expose them to the greatest possible challenges and force them to have a comprehensive approach, to recognise the need to understand the operating environment and cooperate with other agencies, institutions and organisations to achieve the objectives.<sup>32</sup> The further the operations are conducted from the country of origin, the greater is the effort of the country sending the forces and the longer is the time required to provide support and the duration of their support in the operations. Also the extended distance and duration of operations “tends to tire soldiers out and weaken their morale as a result of exhaustion. In addition, the further the forces are from the home country, the longer the logistics line becomes; defense capabilities will thus become depleted as a result of the need for security.”<sup>33</sup> The effort of the attacking or expeditionary country is all the greater as the resource consumption of a highly mechanised and technological force is greater these days, requiring impressive amounts of fuel, spare parts and other equipment to fuel the machinery of war and to provide soldiers with the necessary means of combat, survival and morale. The impact of distance can be reduced in hybrid cyber conflicts because distance is no longer an essential factor in this equation, and “information technology has demolished

<sup>31</sup> Department of the Army 2008b.

<sup>32</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff 2016.

<sup>33</sup> SAKAGUCHI 2011: 83.

time and distance”<sup>34</sup> and “changing technology has reduced the value of propinquity”.<sup>35</sup> The problem that arises is represented by the fact that a state actor in conflict with another state actor cannot limit himself only to the hybrid tactics of distance warfare, using the cyber environment, and cannot achieve victory in this way, being obliged to project, employ and sustain conventional forces to enable it to achieve its military and political objectives and to put continuous pressure on the adversary. In carrying out military actions, an important aspect that must be developed from the preparation phase is maintaining situational awareness in a hybrid environment, where the emphasis must be placed on monitoring “known unknowns” and discovering “unknown unknowns”,<sup>36</sup> to reduce operational fog and be able to anticipate the evolution of events and find the right answers to complex questions regarding the opponent’s mode of action and his objectives.<sup>37</sup> The evolution of society in all areas, the rapid integration of modern and emerging technologies into military actions have given rise to new threats and allowed old ones to manifest in new and unpredictable ways, which puts the armed forces in a great difficulty. Starting from these ideas, we can say that conventional conflicts between states will be replaced by new hybrid conflicts, which will require conventional forces to quickly adapt and force them to find new ways of dealing with both old and new problems and challenges, “this requiring a rapid change in existing warfare tactics and techniques so that security and military organizations can respond in a timely manner to the challenges of the modern security environment”.<sup>38</sup> The engagement of forces in operations implies not only the preparation of forces to act and fulfil their missions in a hybrid, unpredictable and multidimensional environment, but also the development of new capabilities, which will improve the abilities of forces to obtain information, to analyse it, to identify and engage the threat, etc., as well as developing analysis algorithms that involve developing creative and unconventional thinking at all levels to understand and counter hybrid threats. As with countering hybrid threats, there is also likely to be a trade-off assuming limited resources between capabilities to counter hybrid warfare and those to

<sup>34</sup> WRISTON 1997: 172.

<sup>35</sup> BANDOW 2004.

<sup>36</sup> MONAGHAN et al. 2019: 64–65.

<sup>37</sup> NEAG 2018.

<sup>38</sup> VUKOVIĆ et al. 2013: 136.

counter leading conventional combat adversaries.<sup>39</sup> Combating hybrid adversaries or those using hybrid tactics must be done on multiple levels, as victory on the battlefield is not sufficient to eliminate the source of the hybrid threat. The engagement of forces in counter-hybrid threat operations can make a decisive contribution to shaping the environment and the area, facilitating the end of the conflict, but victory can only be achieved through the adoption of coordinated, multi-pronged measures based on a plan focused on the comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach.<sup>40</sup>

## Conclusion

The complexity of hybrid warfare, and the fact that adversaries are everywhere and can take any form, can lead us to think that preparing forces to combat hybrid threats is an impossible task, involving training warfighters and commanders to fight anyone, anytime, with an omnipresent and invisible opponent at the same time, who can take different forms and act in extremely diverse ways. However, hybrid threats can be fought and even defeated, but for this the fighters, especially the commanders and planners of military actions, must fully understand the confrontation environment, their own forces, but also the nature of the threats they face. Only by understanding the adversary or potential adversary is it possible for it to be defeated, and for one's own forces to take the initiative, to act proactively, not just to react to the adversary's movements and try to limit the effects of his actions. The solution is to prepare leaders to understand that potential enemies may use different and innovative strategies, but that they are not infinite, and therefore can be anticipated, learned and countered. The current security environment is very complex, unpredictable and changing, and conflicts can no longer be classically defined, no longer have clearly defined three phases of evolution and are no longer fought only by military means, by identifiable adversaries.<sup>41</sup> There are many actions that can endanger the security of a state and which are far below the limit of a military attack, such as cyberattacks, campaigns carried out on social media, buying influence and creating currents of opinion, using Trojan horses among local politicians, supporting organised crime, etc.,

<sup>39</sup> MONAGHAN 2019.

<sup>40</sup> ELONHEIMO 2021.

<sup>41</sup> RÜHLE–ROBERTS 2021.



which can destabilise a state without the need for military intervention. These threats being undetectable and hard to attribute to a hostile state are impossible to fight by classical means. Armed forces can intervene only when a serious violation of international rules is found and when security and territorial integrity are threatened by an adversary that has moved to the next stage: the combined use of hybrid strategies and armed force to achieve objectives which cannot be accomplished without the use of military power. In this case, the armed forces will have to act to limit the effects of these actions but to be able to do this they must be properly prepared to face an unconventional adversary, who is everywhere and nowhere and who uses all the means at their disposal, trying to avoid the rules of armed conflict and trying to stay as much as possible in the gray area, where they can hide, take refuge and strike by surprise. This training must be carried out both in the action field, by intensifying complex exercises, based on realistic, adaptable and challenging scenarios, but also in the cognitive and intellectual field. In addition to specialised training, it is necessary that especially leaders, but also fighters, develop their critical thinking and broaden their horizons in order to better understand the particularities of other cultures, other societies, to be able to understand, know and even model the confrontational environment and to maintain situational awareness at the highest possible level, in parallel with the development and strengthening of individual and organisational resilience. Hybrid threats are increasingly diverse and manifest in all areas, with direct and indirect implications for the safety and security of individuals and states. Actors who use hybrid warfare-specific tactics aim to achieve their goals as quickly as possible, with the lowest possible human and material costs, and want to surprise the adversary in all areas and environments and exploit their vulnerabilities. Countering hybrid threats is done by various methods, in all areas of interest, but it is very possible that the use of armed force in this regard will also be necessary. Modern armies are prepared to deal with conventional adversaries and successfully conduct combat or stability and support operations, but are not so well prepared to act in an unconventional, hybrid conflict. In order to deal with opponents who use hybrid tactics on a large scale, it is necessary to change the way we think, to adapt our training and even to modify and adapt the rules of employment, in order to fight threats as effectively as possible, while respecting national and international law on the use of force. In hybrid warfare, the armed forces often have to adapt, anticipate and act unconventionally and this requires additional training, clear rules for insertion into the area of operation and concerning the mode of action.

## Questions

1. Why is there a need for a special training of the forces in order for them to be able to deal with the hybrid confrontation environment?
2. Which are the essential elements to be taken in consideration when training a force to operate in the context of the existence of hybrid threats?
3. Which are the main steps in the force projection process?
4. Which are the key aspects of engaging forces in an environment with a hybrid operational component?
5. What does the comprehensive approach during the engagement in a hybrid threat environment consist of?

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