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# The Evolution of Hybrid Warfare

Hybrid warfare has several nuances and can be referred to various tools and means. While some of them are relative new elements related to the current international system, several others represent the last evolution of a long history. This chapter aims to contextualise the notion of hybrid warfare in the broader framework of the contemporary international relations. Hence, the chapter intends to analyse two different contexts in which the notion of hybrid warfare has been used and the way in which that notion has been integrated in the EU official documents like EUGS (European Union Global Strategy) adopted in June 2016.

## Introduction

In recent years, scholars, politicians, think tanks have started to use terms, such as “hybrid–warfare–wars–conflicts–operations”; however, their definition is vague and indistinct. Moreover, the different use of such notions highlights the fact that they have evolved in the last two decades from an effective, albeit contentious, idea to describe a kind of modern and technological insurgency, to a less clear label used to describe very different military and non-military approaches related to the Russian operation in the international system. The main problem using the hybrid warfare notion is that in the literature it is used in order to describe at least two very different military situations both present in the EUGS. On the one hand, it has been used to describe the kind of military operations used by Russia since the occupation of Crimea in 2014. On the other hand, hybrid warfare could describe the warfare of non-state actors that use a mix of conventional and unconventional tactics and modern weapons. This double use of the term is clearly confusing and creates misunderstandings. For instance, if the EUGS referred to hybrid threat from Russia, then the countermeasures would be more conventional, such as an A2/AD system, counter propaganda, military units

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inside the European border and ready to operate. If the EUGS referred to hybrid threat as something related to irregular fighters, then the countermeasures would be more related to counterinsurgency doctrine, counterterrorism, Special Forces in war theatres outside, albeit near to, Europe. Therefore, different meanings of hybrid warfare lead to very different military and political solutions. In other words, if the notion of hybrid warfare is not correctly defined, the risk is to fight the wrong kind of war using the wrong strategy. The paper seeks to describe the different ways of using the notion of hybrid warfare, and, accordingly, is divided into three sections. The first one takes into account hybrid warfare that in the literature refers to irregular fighters and non-state groups, i.e. hybrid warfare understood as a kind of modern insurgency. The second section takes into account the Russian hybrid warfare that is more a Western label than a military doctrine elaborated by Russian military. Finally, the third section deals with the strategic debate in Europe and mainly with EUGS and EUS in order to mark the concepts used to define the EU strategic threats.

### **Hybrid Warfare as modern insurgency**

Since the end of Cold War, a huge debate in the strategic–security studies field has emerged related to how war and warfare have changed. This debate encompasses several different conceptualisations, ideas and scholars, and analysing it is outside the scope of this paper. However, the concept of hybrid warfare was firstly used in the context of this debate that stemmed from the idea that since 1989, but even since 1945, the most common type of war has not been state against state war but an irregular one labelled as guerrilla, insurgency, terrorism. This kind of war differs from conventional state wars because: it does not involve regular armies on both sides and most of its victims are civilians. In this context the notion of hybrid warfare is used to refer to a conflict in which at least one side is not a state in the modern and Western meaning. In this sense the notion of hybrid warfare predates the Russian version because it was used for the first time in 2005 and then in 2007, Hoffman formulated his theory that is the theory used here. It could be argued that any type of war is itself hybrid, but the term “hybrid” refers to the fact that contemporary conflicts present a mixture of regular and irregular elements, of conventional tactics, guerrilla warfare and terrorism. The theory of hybrid warfare stems from the Lebanon War of 2006

between the Israeli IDF and Hezbollah.<sup>2</sup> Hezbollah is interpreted as an example of the new enemy because it is structured in a network, is linked to the local population, and is irregular in its tactics. At the same time, Hezbollah employed anti-ship and anti-tank missiles along with small units and hit and run operations in a guerrilla warfare style for halting the advance of the IDF.<sup>3</sup> Then the notion of hybrid warfare has been used for describing the military operations of ISIS, which uses terrorism, guerrilla tactics and more conventional weaponry. Hybrid Warfare is characterised by the concept of *synergy*, that is, the simultaneous application of a multiplicity of ways of fighting to reach the goal.<sup>4</sup> In essence, contemporary conflicts cannot be characterised by a simple dichotomy of black and white, but they have more nuanced characteristics, losing the perception of boundaries between different forms and concepts. The war is therefore hybrid because the enemy's way of fighting combines different methods, tactics and tools, including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics, terrorism, indiscriminate violence, and criminal acts with the most modern technologies.<sup>5</sup> The situation is further complicated by the fact that the "hybrid warfare" battlefield is threefold: conventional; linked to the indigenous population; international. Only by prevailing in all three battlefields is it possible to win. Moreover, what distinguishes "hybrid warfare" from other types of struggles is that it must be fought on all three battlefields simultaneously and non-sequentially. The strategy to be used is defined as "counter organisation", because the aim is to destroy the irregular organisation in order to break their ties with the population and maintain the initiative. According to Frank Hoffman, hybrid warfare "incorporate[s] 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. [...] These multi-modal activities can be conducted by separate units, or even by the same unit, but are generally operationally and tactically directed and coordinated within the main battle space to achieve synergistic effects in the physical and psychological dimension of conflict".<sup>6</sup> As a consequence, hybrid warfare represents a mix of different tactics (from terrorism to guerrilla warfare to more conventional operations) and uses

<sup>2</sup> GLENN 2008.

<sup>3</sup> BIDDLE-FRIEDMAN 2008.

<sup>4</sup> HOFFMAN 2006.

<sup>5</sup> HOFFMAN 2007.

<sup>6</sup> HOFFMAN 2007: 8.

different kinds of weapons (from small arms to more sophisticated missiles to propaganda and media coverage). According to Hoffman's conceptualisation, hybrid warfare is based on four key elements. The first element is that, in hybrid wars, regular and irregular elements "become 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 just protract the conflict."<sup>7</sup> As far as ISIS is concerned, this feature is evident looking at its operation in Iraq and Syria where it has used conventional infantry tactics in several occasions. For instance, in the north of Iraq it used artillery fire to pound Kurds Peshmerga or in al-Anbar it has manoeuvred units composed of several vehicles around the battlefield in order to have the element of surprise. Moreover, during the battle of Ramadi in the spring of 2015, ISIS used a very effective tactics combining suicide attacks to break the defensive lines of Iraqi Security Forces and then waves of foot soldiers. It should also be noted that ISIS used tanks and other military equipment seized from the Iraqi Army. This could represent a major difference between ISIS operations in Iraq and those in Libya because there ISIS has never had the same kind of arsenal it had in Iraq due to the fact that in Libya it was a latecomer militia and has not been able to seize considerable military equipment.<sup>8</sup> However, it has stolen modern weapons then used them in the Sinai Peninsula. As a consequence, the second element of hybrid warfare is that terrorism becomes the main fighting method. This is certainly true for ISIS because terrorist tactics are easier and cheaper to use than more conventional one. Furthermore, they can be used even far away from the main theatre of operation. ISIS has showed its ability to use quasi conventional tactics in theatres of operations where it is the main military force: in Iraq, Syria and to some extent Libya. However, it relays on terrorist tactics in cities where it has not the control of terrain and in those cases mass attack conducted with suicide attackers and car bombs are the norms. However, ISIS warfare is not limited to terrorist tactics and even when it attacks a market or a checkpoint using a terrorist method, it is not a 'pure' terrorist group for at least two main reasons. Firstly, 'pure' terrorist groups do not hold terrain as ISIS did in Iraq and Syria where it controlled vast areas between the two countries and ruled several cities: Raqqa, Mosul, Ramadi, Tikrit, Falluja. Its foothold in Libya has been more limited, yet it conquered and ruled for several months the

<sup>7</sup> HOFFMAN 2007: 8.

<sup>8</sup> BECCARO 2020.

city of Sirte. According to Cronin, “[t]errorist networks [...] generally have only dozens or hundreds of members, attack civilians, do not hold territory, and cannot directly confront military forces. ISIS, on the other hand, boasts some 30,000 fighters, holds territory in both Iraq and Syria, maintains extensive military capabilities, controls lines of communication, commands infrastructure, funds itself, and engages in sophisticated military operations. If ISIS is purely and simply anything, it is a pseudo-state led by a conventional army.”<sup>9</sup> As a consequence and this is the second reason, ISIS could be better defined as an insurgent group because insurgency includes both guerrilla tactics and terrorism. From a historical point of view, insurgent groups’ tactics have always ranged from almost conventional operations to guerrilla style warfare to terrorism. The choice between those different tactics is often made based on the local military situation and on the strength of the group. This, for instance, explains why ISIS could not be considered defeated in Libya just because it has lost Sirte. It could use different fighting methods in order to achieve its goals: it could use ‘hit and run’ operations instead of a static defence as that of urban areas. Moreover, the role of terrorism in ISIS warfare is functional to its ideology and its transnational nature. According to Lia, “[un]like ethno-nationalist revolts or revolutionary struggles against national authorities, jihadis are not ideologically bound to fight in only one country or against one specific national regime”.<sup>10</sup> The “transnational nature” is a key element in order to fully comprehend both the regional threat posed by ISIS and the terrorism role. Terrorism is a perfect stand-off tactics to cross national borders and strike targets that are not in the main theatre of operations. Furthermore, ignoring national border means that counterterrorism, or better counterinsurgency, has to be transnational and has to involve more states and agencies. The third element of hybrid groups is their use of modern technology “to avoid predictability and seek advantage in unexpected ways and ruthless modes of attack”.<sup>11</sup> ISIS has been able to use modern technology in order to build new kinds of weaponry and devise different ways of attack, mainly suicide operations. ISIS has used technology in several different ways. First, it broadcasts its propaganda through numerous social media, website and blogs. Second, it uses modern weapons or it has created its own. Mainly in Syria and Iraq it has used chlorine gas, it has manufactured its own tele-operated sniper

<sup>9</sup> CRONIN 2015: 90.

<sup>10</sup> LIA 2016: 83.

<sup>11</sup> HOFFMAN 2007: 16.

rifles and submachine guns. Moreover, during the battle of Mosul in Iraq ISIS has widely used drones in offensive operations. Third, the extensive use of suicide attacks could be explained looking at their tactical benefit. In fact, ISIS has often used this fighting method to soften enemy defence and open gaps where its foot soldiers could get in. In this way, suicide attack represents a kind of “smart bomb” as those used by Western Armed Forces. Finally, the fourth element of hybrid warfare is related to the battle space because hybrid war, like every irregular war, takes place in complex terrain, most likely the burgeoning cities of the developing world. As a consequence of the increasing urbanisation of the world population, today conflicts seem to be fought more often in urban areas. While the “urbanisation of conflicts” is a global trend rooted in “rapid population growth, accelerating urbanization, littoralization (the tendency for things to cluster on coastlines), and increasing connectedness”,<sup>12</sup> the European Southern Neighbourhood is particularly affected as the urban population growth shows: it “grew by 40 million between 1970 and 2000, and three-quarters of that growth was in North Africa and the Middle East”.<sup>13</sup> It is no coincidence that the two countries most affected by urbanisation were Tunisia and Libya. Moreover, the 2011 uprisings showed another key element related to urbanisation of conflicts, i.e. its connectedness, because they “saw the use of cell phones, social media, and text messaging as organizing tools”.<sup>14</sup> ISIS is a “hybrid” threat because in Iraq, in Syria, in Libya and in Egypt it has used both modern advanced weapons, such as armoured vehicles, tanks, missiles, drones, artillery and conventional-like infantry tactics and terrorism and guerrilla warfare. It has also used suicide attackers and suicide vehicle borne IED as a kind of cruise missile able to strike precisely the desired target. At the same time, it used both its great mobility to evade enemy reconnaissance and strike where it wanted, as every guerrilla group had done throughout history; and terrorism attacks in cities where it had a loose presence or the security forces were better armed, such as Baghdad or Paris. Moreover, like successful guerrilla groups of the past it was able to control territory using it as a safe haven where to plan, organise, train and so on. Finally, ISIS uses modern technology to improve its fighting ability and spread its propaganda. As for propaganda, ISIS is well known for its ability to record high quality videos such as that of the burning of the Jordanian pilot or that of pure

<sup>12</sup> KILCULLEN 2013: 25.

<sup>13</sup> KILCULLEN 2013: 23.

<sup>14</sup> KILCULLEN 2013: 23.

propaganda in which it is stated that ISIS will conquer Rome. However, ISIS has even produced reviews, such as *Dabiq*, that reflect the glossy magazines of the West. The combination of all of these elements is not entirely new, but it represents a different kind of threat compared to conventional ones. As for the Russian concept of hybrid warfare, it is not a novelty, but simply an evolution of modern warfare, which is neither original nor typical of Russia; this meaning of hybrid warfare has a long history. However, there is a substantial difference between the links to strategic history of these two concepts of hybrid warfare. While the Russian version does not add anything really new compared to previous conventional operations fought in the same way, the ISIS version has some new features compared to the long history of irregular warfare. It is true that throughout history insurgent groups have used terrorism, guerrilla warfare and more conventional tactics, depending on their resources, strategic and tactical situation and political context; however, the real difference between modern hybrid warfare and the older one lies in the use of technology. In the past, it was difficult for them to acquire and use modern weapons; today, it is not only simpler but these weapons can also be created by irregular groups, as ISIS has already demonstrated, with its suicide vehicles, drones, and the use of social media and the Internet.

### **A Russian Hybrid Warfare?**

The question mark in title of this section<sup>15</sup> is not accidental, because after the Russian military operations in Ukraine and Crimea in 2014, several Western scholars labelled the Russian operations as hybrid warfare. The term ‘hybrid war’ to describe Russian military operations gradually gained ascendancy in the second half of 2014; however, two problems arise from this label. First, the hybrid warfare term was used by western pundits only and it was not present in Russian official doctrine back then.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, hybrid warfare is a western label used to describe Russian operations, rather than a military doctrine that Russians used to achieve their goals. Secondly, the kind of operations labelled as hybrid actually resemble the same kind of operations used by the U.S. over the last few decades, that is, a combination of Special Forces, conventional forces,

<sup>15</sup> BECCARO 2021.

<sup>16</sup> BARTLES 2016a; McDERMOTT 2016.

local allies and propaganda. According to Keir Giles, the notion of hybrid warfare was “originally introduced by NATO’s Allied Command Transformation as part of planning for out-of-area activities” and then it “gained a foothold in NATO Headquarters in mid-2014 as ‘the Russian hybrid model in Ukraine’ became a means of explaining operations that did not fit neatly into NATO’s operational concepts”.<sup>17</sup> The problem with hybrid warfare is that it misses a key point. “Hybrid war can hardly be considered a definitive doctrine for Russia’s future power projection in its neighborhood, much less a model that could be easily reproduced in far flung and diverse corners of the post-Soviet space.”<sup>18</sup> This is clear looking at Russian operations in Syria. They followed short after the operations in Ukraine, yet they fit into a completely different pattern because in Syria, Russia used its airpower, tested modern weapons, implemented an A2/AD strategy, and used its Special Operations forces in their classic role of training and support forces to local ally. The problem to label Russian operations as hybrid warfare lies in the fact that “[t]he ‘hybrid’ aspect of the term simply denotes a combination of previously defined types of warfare, whether conventional, irregular, political or information”.<sup>19</sup> However, neither the combination of different types of warfare nor their uses are new in history or particularly original to justify the use of a new label to differentiate it from the old ones. At least since the 1990s, the U.S. has recognised the key role of information in modern warfare; accordingly, Russia has recognised the nature of modern warfare and has used it. Even the idea to use non-military tools to fight modern wars is hardly new. For instance, in a widely discussed book of the 1990s, two Chinese colonels described the modern warfare as *Unrestricted Warfare* because modern warfare is not limited to military tools anymore. The key idea of the book is that modern warfare erodes the traditional boundaries of war, and looking at modern operations, such as *Desert Storm* and *Deliberate Force*, it suggests a warfare that eludes traditional military borders and enters into the world of economics and finance, or employs those weapons in unexpected ways.<sup>20</sup> According to Michael Kofman and Matthew Rojansky, Russia describes modern warfare as “the integrated utilization of military force and forces and resources of a nonmilitary character” that is exactly the idea of unrestricted warfare aforementioned. Moreover, the Russians

<sup>17</sup> GILES 2016: 8.

<sup>18</sup> KOFMAN–ROJANSKY 2015: 1.

<sup>19</sup> KOFMAN–ROJANSKY 2015: 2.

<sup>20</sup> LIANG–XIANGSUI 1999.



understand modern military operations as integrated with information and propaganda: “The prior implementation of measures of information warfare in order to achieve political objectives without the utilization of military force and, subsequently, in the interest of shaping a favorable response from the world community to the utilization of military force.”<sup>21</sup> However, they did not invent this approach, for instance a very well-known example of this approach is the famous discourse of the then Secretary of State Colin Powell to the UN showing a vial “full” of “anthrax” supposedly produced by Iraq that was later demonstrated to be a total fake news. Even the “participation of irregular armed force elements and private military companies in military operations,” and “use of indirect and asymmetric methods of operations” is not new nor only Russian.<sup>22</sup> This is a key element of modern western operations that some scholars have even labelled as “Afghan model”<sup>23</sup> indicating the fact that U.S. and Western states used their SOF to support local allies. Russia seems to have learnt this lesson, since according to McDermott one of the most outstanding features “of advances in Russia’s application of military power [...] in Syria relate to the success of training proxy forces [...] introducing new or advanced systems in these operations and supporting operations adequately through predominantly air and sea lines of communication”.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the use of contractors in different roles and theatres of operation is a widely known aspect of modern Western Warfare since the conflict in the Balkans. Russian operations in Crimea in 2014 began with a covert military operation, combining ambiguity, disinformation and the element of surprise; then, a more conventional military invasion and occupation of the peninsula, using Russia’s airborne, naval infantry and motor rifle brigades followed completing the annexation. However, this kind of operations were possible in Crimea where the majority of the population is Russian and where Russia had already had a strategic naval base in Sevastopol where, before the beginning of the operation, it sent secretly several members of its Special Forces. However, the strategic importance of Crimea, the local population, the geographical proximity and the presence of Russian military assets are crucial elements that could not be replicated elsewhere. To conclude, according to Kofman and Rojansky Russian operations in Ukraine are not a new

<sup>21</sup> KOFMAN–ROJANSKY 2015: 3.

<sup>22</sup> KOFMAN–ROJANSKY 2015: 3.

<sup>23</sup> BIDDLE 2002.

<sup>24</sup> McDERMOTT 2016: 8.

type of warfare or a hybrid one, instead they “should be understood in more flexible and basic terms – as an attempt to employ diplomatic, economic, military, and information instruments in a neighboring state where it perceives vital national interests to be at stake”.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, this pattern, from diplomatic actions to military operations, is very Clausewitzian rather than hybrid. In fact, according to Charap both in Crimea–Ukraine and Syria “the use of force has come after other non-kinetic means have been tried” and failed. Accordingly, from a Russian point of view the use of force represents just a last resort. “In the six months before the invasion of Crimea, Moscow threatened and then implemented economic sanctions (July–September 2013), offered a whopping \$15 billion in economic assistance (December 2013), and engaged in diplomacy with the West (the February 21, 2014 agreement) prior to using the military.” Equally, Russia in Syria had engaged in extensive diplomatic outreach, conducted arms transfers, and even attempted to organise the opposition before using directly its military mean.<sup>26</sup> In Crimea, Russia used a combination of covert operations, Special Forces and propaganda. Clearly, this is not a conventional operation but, at the same time, it is a very common way to employ military forces. Furthermore, the use of Special Forces, paratrooper units and raids against key enemy targets has always been a central element of Soviet and then Russian military doctrine. Moreover, denying the presence of regular forces where they are on the ground is an old tool to frustrate enemy response and has numerous precedents. The USSR did it during the Cold War with troops secretly deployed in Egypt, Syria and Angola. However, the United States has also used such tools several times. The “new” Russian operations in Crimea could be better understood as an evolution of the old Soviet military doctrine in which the use of partisan forces and special operations forces (SOF), intelligence services and propaganda to conduct provocations and shape the area of operations were certainly part of the military operations. However, these activities were secondary in comparison to the major actions of the conventional war fighter.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, today the role played by indirect tools such as SOF, propaganda, intelligence and so on, is bigger and more visible than in the past. Yet, this is not true only for Russia, but it is a strategic reality for every modern Army. Nothing in the notion of “hybrid warfare” is really new. According to Peter Mansoor: “Hybrid warfare has been

<sup>25</sup> KOFMAN–ROJANSKY 2015: 7.

<sup>26</sup> CHARAP 2016.

<sup>27</sup> BARTLES 2016b.

an integral part of the historical landscape since the ancient world, but only recently have analysts – incorrectly – categorized these conflicts as unique.”<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, looking exclusively to Russia: “Many elements of this ‘new’ warfare: subversion, physical and informational provocation, economic threats, posturing with regular forces, the use of special forces, and the military intelligence coordinating paramilitary groups and political front organizations, have been part of the Russian/Soviet lexicon of conflict for generations.”<sup>29</sup> Consequently, what Western scholars have called “hybrid warfare” indicating with this notion a new Russian doctrine is, on the contrary, a classic example of covert operations that Western practitioners should know very well.

### **The EUGS and the concept of Hybrid Warfare**

The wide use of “hybrid warfare”, and accordingly its relevance in today’s security debate, is also shown by the fact that it is currently used in official EU documents, i.e. EUGS, which refers to “hybrid threats” five times. Nevertheless, every reference is very general and does not define any specific kind of threat or risk. Therefore, EUGS fails to define precisely what a hybrid threat is or is not. The publication of the EU Global Strategy (EUGS) on 28 June 2016 by the EU’s High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy Federica Mogherini represented the final result of a two-year-long work that involved extensive consultations with EU member states, European experts and scholars, and third country representatives. It also represented a key step by the EU in order to improve its foreign policy, its understanding of current security threats to its neighbourhood, and a needed revise of its strategy after the publication of the European Security Strategy (ESS) in 2003. The geopolitical and security situation is dramatically changed since 2003. ESS was clearly outdated because, for example, it stated: “The violence of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has given way to a period of peace and stability unprecedented in European history.”<sup>30</sup> Such an *incipit* has been made obsolete by the deteriorating geopolitical situation in the Southern and Eastern neighbourhood of the EU where several different types of conflicts are taking place. The war in Ukraine underscores the complex

<sup>28</sup> MANSOOR 2012.

<sup>29</sup> JONSSON–SEELY 2015.

<sup>30</sup> Council of the European Union 2003.

relations between the EU and Russia and epitomises a state against state conflict, albeit with some differences compared to the past. Libya has become a failed state, is divided between two governments, and several militias representing a completely different threat. Besides, Islamist groups are active in Libya but even in the Sinai Peninsula and Tunisia where they risk to destabilise those countries. The war in Syria represents another type of conflict with deep and important geopolitical consequences linked to the involvement of Russia, Iran and Turkey<sup>31</sup> and to a broader and growing instability in the Middle East. The EU published EUGS in order to deal with the aforementioned complex political and security issues; however, with regard to conflicts in its neighbourhoods, EUGS seems to be vague at least when it seeks to clearly define and identify security problems. It does offer an in-depth analysis of current conflicts in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) area, moreover the use of terms such as “terrorism” or “hybrid war” are vague using it for labelling two very different political and military contexts and EUGS is able only partially to understand the complexity of these violent phenomena. ESS and EUGS are very different documents mainly because their geopolitical background is completely different. ESS was published in 2003 when the security on the ENP seemed certain and guaranteed mainly by the United State military forces in the area. At the time, Russia was still recovering from the Soviet collapse in 1990 and Putin was nearly at the end of his first presidential term. The Mediterranean region was stable and the war in Iraq was just at its early stages, but the country was slowly descending in a violent and bloody insurgency. This chaos offered new possibilities to groups such as al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) that became ISIS in those times. On the contrary, the EUGS was published in a completely different and extremely more violent geopolitical situation. First, the U.S. under the Obama Administration started to withdraw from the Mediterranean region giving political space to other actors. The U.S. withdrawal from Iraq in 2011, for instance, was a major blow to the security of that country and consequently to the entire region in a historical moment deeply influenced by the so-called Arab Spring that spread instability along the entire Mediterranean region creating failed state in Libya, increasing instability in Egypt, civil war in Syria. Meanwhile, Iraq increasingly became a sort of failed state where ISIS militias, Shia militias, the Iraqi Army and Kurdish Peshmerga fought for their own political goals. Furthermore, ISIS

<sup>31</sup> It should be noted that when EUGS was published the trilateral agreement between Russia, Iran and Turkey has not yet been reached.

and similar jihadist militias expanded their operative range not only inside the Mediterranean region exploiting this increasing instability, but also inside the EU carrying out several terrorist attacks. Even the Eastern Neighbourhood became more unstable with a more active Russia that waged wars in Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine in 2014 to defend its geopolitical interests and military bases. The European Security Strategy (ESS) stated that: “Large-scale aggression against any Member State is now improbable. Instead, Europe faces new threats which are more diverse, less visible and less predictable.”<sup>32</sup> Amongst them the ESS listed: terrorism highlighting that it arises out of several causes such as “modernisation, cultural, social and political crises, and the alienation of young people living in foreign societies”;<sup>33</sup> state failure caused by bad governance, corruption, weak institutions and civil conflict; organised crime that was labelled as internal threat but with an important external dimension with regard to “cross-border trafficking in drugs, women, illegal migrants and weapons” and to links with terrorism associated with failing states.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, the ESS listed more conventional threats: Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction;<sup>35</sup> regional conflicts yet far from the EU. The aforementioned enormous geopolitical difference between 2003 and 2016 has influenced the EUGS even if it has strong links to ESS. For example, the EUGS refers often to the problem of weapons of mass destruction, simply changing the label used, that is, non-proliferation meaning in this way even arms control.<sup>36</sup> The EUGS does not rule out the risk of external and more conventional threats, since it states that EU members: “Must be ready and able to deter, respond to, and protect [them]selves against external threats.” As a consequence, the EUGS calls Europeans to “be better equipped, trained and organized”.<sup>37</sup> In the EUGS, the notion of failed states is not present; instead, it uses notions such as “fragile states” and stresses the idea of resilience in order to underline the need to address stability processes, peace enforcement operations, etc. Moreover, the EUGS stresses the idea to invest more in “artificial intelligence, robotics and remotely piloted systems”.<sup>38</sup> In fact, the EUGS underlines the fact that EU members have to improve their

<sup>32</sup> Council of the European Union 2003: 3.

<sup>33</sup> Council of the European Union 2003: 3.

<sup>34</sup> Council of the European Union 2003: 4.

<sup>35</sup> Council of the European Union 2003.

<sup>36</sup> Council of the European Union 2016.

<sup>37</sup> Council of the European Union 2016: 19.

<sup>38</sup> Council of the European Union 2016: 43.

cooperation in intelligence and in sharing crucial information. While terrorism remains a key issue, the EUGS expands the spectrum of threats including the concept of “hybrid warfare”. Both terrorism and hybrid warfare, however, are not precisely defined in the EUGS and even in the literature they are difficult to define. With regard to terrorism, the term misleadingly describes the conflicts in the Mediterranean region. Terrorism simply does not describe the real nature of the threat posed by groups such as ISIS, al-Qaeda, al-Nusra and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. They use often tactics that could be defined as terrorist, but on the other hand they control territories, people, and have a very well structured and deep-rooted web of relationship inside and outside Europe. Concerning, instead, the notion of hybrid warfare it should be noted that in the EUGS it refers to the Russian operations in Ukraine; however, this term is misleading because in the literature “hybrid warfare” refers to non-state actors that use some conventional capabilities in order to fight against a stronger enemy. All things considered, if the notions of terrorism and hybrid warfare used by the EUGS are misleading and incorrect to clarify the kind of conflicts that affects ENP and so the EU security, how could they be defined? It is simply impossible to answer this question, in-depth analyses remain of the academic debate that focuses on how contemporary wars are fought. This will enable a better comprehension of the conflicts that the EUGS would confront.

## **Conclusion**

First of all, “hybrid warfare” is challenging to define because every kind of warfare is somehow in itself “hybrid”, so the notion of “hybrid warfare” has to be understood in relation to the conventional warfare, i.e. state against state warfare. Consequently, “hybrid warfare” represents a mixture of different tactics and/or weapons that then creates a warfare that has some elements of the conventional one but which is not the same. The problem with the notion of “hybrid warfare” is that it is used to describe two very different kinds of armed conflicts, i.e. the Russia “doctrine” used in Crimea and the terrorist strategy employed by groups such as ISIS, that have nothing in common and that represent deeply different military threats and political context.

## Questions

1. Which are the main features of the notion of hybrid warfare as modern insurgency?
2. Why is the notion of hybrid warfare contentious referred to Russian operations?
3. In which way does the EUGS use the notion of hybrid warfare?
4. Why is the notion of hybrid warfare so challenging?

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