

Chapter 8

Hybrid Warfare and the Threat to NATO

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ABSTRACT

Hybrid warfare has become increasingly prominent since the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula. The phenomenon may become more and more of a concern for security and defense. This chapter provides some explanation of what the phenomenon itself is, a mode of warfare which embraces conventional capabilities, as well as irregular forces, irregular tactics, and formations, but also includes information warfare and involves both state and nonstate actors. It also outlines some of the steps which NATO and NATO member states have taken since the annexation of Crimea and considers some of the potential future hybrid threats and how they could be defended against. It is noted that in order to counter many threats of hybrid warfare a societal level response is required.

INTRODUCTION

The fact that warfare is continuing evolving is not surprising, as a zero sum game those which are unable to keep pace with developments and lose ground become weaker than competing states. The fact is that defense from threats remains one of the main responsibilities of the nation state, Tilly (2015) argues that states carry out the following four activities: war making, the elimination of rivals or potential external threats; state making, the elimination of internal rival forces and insurgents within its own territories; protection, the elimination of potential threats to their population; extraction, the securing of the means to execute the previous three activities, e.g. the collection of taxes or revenue. In order to fulfil their responsibility in changing times, there is a need to understand the general trends of warfare or risk being at a disadvantage.

The golden age of security has passed and many are still grappling with what this epoch will be the age of. One trend which has grown in prominence and has been receiving more and more attention from security experts is that of hybrid warfare. This is a trend which demands attention. It is widely

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acknowledged the concept of hybrid warfare gained increased prominence following the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula (Cullen and Reichborn-Kjennerud, 2016; Fridman, 2018; Galeotti, 2016; Oğuz, 2016; Wither, 2016). However, that may well just be the start of a broad new trend in which hybrid warfare becomes more and more common place, as well as more and more of a concern for security and defense. In order to better understand the implications of the growing prominence of hybrid warfare for NATO's deterrence and defense, this chapter first provides some definitions of what hybrid warfare is and some context for its rise, before explaining existing hybrid deterrence and defense and considering potential future hybrid threats; then finally, taking a look towards the future of hybrid warfare and defense.

Hybrid Warfare

It is impossible to advance without first providing an understanding of what hybrid warfare actually is and some reasons for the rise of the phenomenon. It was clear that the international environment and the nature of warfare was changing in the post-Cold War era, but there were early indicators that the Alliance was preparing and actively planning for new challenges that were very different from defending Western Europe from a Soviet attack (Burton, 2018: 12). Then the events of 9/11 signaled an even bigger change in how warfare was to be experienced in the new century. Following the September 11 attacks, the historian Judt (2001) wrote that *"On Tuesday morning, September 11, from my window in lower Manhattan, I watched the twenty-first century begin. Of that I am certain"*. Continuing to state that *"In the twentieth century, war was made on civilians. In the twenty-first century, war will be made by civilians"* (Judt, 2001). This perhaps better fits the rise in terrorism which was occurring at this time, but how is hybrid warfare different from the other broad changes in warfare of the 21st Century. Starting with the definition, various definitions are available, with Hoffman (2007) providing the following:

'Hybrid wars incorporate a range of different modes of warfare including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal disorder.'

Other definitions tend to be rather similar to this one; for example, Mansoor's, which has hybrid warfare:

as conflict involving a combination of conventional military forces and irregulars (guerrillas, insurgents, and terrorists), which could include both state and nonstate actors, aimed at achieving a common political purpose'. (Murray and Mansoor, 2012: 2).

Additions have been made beyond these rather more conservative definitions of hybrid warfare, additions which include or focus on the role of information warfare. Ofer Fridman, Vitaly Kabernik, and James C. Pearce note that a trend in recent conflicts is that:

a smart employment of newly available technologies to influence the hearts and minds of targeted audiences offers significantly better results than any real actions.

The authors are quick to point out that this is not any particularly new in of itself, but that the technological changes of our times mean that this is a process which is capable of spreading faster and more widely than before.

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