

Hybrid warfare: *Development, historical context, challenges and interpretations*

*Guerra híbrida:
Desarrollo, contexto histórico, desafíos e interpretaciones*

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Desenvolvimento, contexto histórico, desafios e interpretações*

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Abstract

Hybrid threats use conventional and unconventional means to achieve their goals. This paper explores the cyber threat as one possible aspect of hybrid threats. It also discusses the background of the term hybrid warfare, how it emerged and travelled as the empirical situations evolved and needed new definitions. Russia aims at attaining this by applying a holistic mix of military, political and economic means to weaken the West and to strengthen its own role as a global player (with the “West” I for simplicity mean the states which constitute EU and NATO, but it is really more a cultural approach than an organizational). The Russian approach builds on a strategy of reflexive control which as such is an old method, but the outcome of the application of this approach results in hybrid warfare which as such is a new emerging concept of warfighting. This short article looks at one particular aspect of this Russian strategy, namely using Hybrid, or non-linear, Warfare against its Western direct neighbors in particular and the West in general. The cyber arena is very important in this practice. The attack of this weaponized situation is that the trust in the West. Primarily the EU (European Union) and NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), is eroded for every day which these countries challenges the international system which the western democracies say that they present and defend. This is part of what can be described as an example of reflexive control, exercised by Russia.

Key Words: *Hybrid warfare; National security policies; East-West conflict; State vulnerabilities; Reflexive control; Cyberspace*

Resumen

Las amenazas híbridas utilizan medios convencionales y no convencionales para lograr sus objetivos. Este documento explora la ciberamenaza como un posible aspecto de las amenazas híbridas. También se analizan los antecedentes del término guerra híbrida, cómo surgió y viajó a medida que las situaciones empíricas evolucionaron y necesitaron nuevas definiciones. Rusia apunta a lograr esto aplicando una combinación holística de medios militares, políticos y económicos para debilitar a Occidente y fortalecer su propio papel como actor global (con “Occidente”, para simplificar, me refiero a los estados que constituyen la UE y la OTAN, pero es más un enfoque cultural que organizativo). El enfoque ruso se basa en una estrategia

de control reflexivo que, como tal, es un método antiguo, pero el resultado de la aplicación de este enfoque da como resultado una guerra híbrida que, como tal, es un nuevo concepto emergente de lucha bélica. Este breve artículo analiza un aspecto particular de esta estrategia rusa, a saber, el uso de Guerra Híbrida, o no lineal, contra sus vecinos directos occidentales en particular y Occidente en general. La arena cibernética es muy importante en esta práctica. El ataque de esta situación armada es que la confianza en Occidente. Principalmente la UE (Unión Europea) y la OTAN (Organización del Tratado del Atlántico Norte), se erosiona cada día que estos países desafían el sistema internacional que las democracias occidentales dicen que presentan y defienden. Esto es parte de lo que puede describirse como un ejemplo de control reflexivo, ejercido por Rusia.

Palabras clave: *Guerra híbrida; Políticas de seguridad nacional; Conflicto Este-Oeste; Vulnerabilidades estatales; Control reflexivo; ciberespacio*

Resumo

Ameaças híbridas usam meios convencionais e não convencionais para atingir seus objetivos. Este artigo explora a ameaça cibernética como um aspecto possível das ameaças híbridas. Ele também discute o pano de fundo do termo guerra híbrida, como surgiu e viajou conforme as situações empíricas evoluíram e precisaram de novas definições. A Rússia pretende atingir isso aplicando uma mistura holística de meios militares, políticos e econômicos para enfraquecer o Ocidente e fortalecer seu próprio papel como um ator global (com o “Ocidente” I para simplificar significa os estados que constituem a UE e a OTAN, mas é realmente mais uma abordagem cultural do que organizacional). A abordagem russa se baseia em uma estratégia de controle reflexivo que, como tal, é um método antigo, mas o resultado da aplicação dessa abordagem resulta em uma guerra híbrida que, como tal, é um novo conceito emergente de combate. Este breve artigo examina um aspecto particular dessa estratégia russa, a saber, o uso da guerra híbrida ou não linear contra seus vizinhos diretos ocidentais em particular e o Ocidente em geral. A arena cibernética é muito importante nesta prática. O ataque desta situação armada é que a confiança no Ocidente. Principalmente a UE (União Europeia) e a OTAN (Organização do Tratado do Atlântico Norte), estão corroídas a cada dia que esses países desafiam o sistema

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internacional que as democracias ocidentais dizem que apresentam e defendem. Isso faz parte do que pode ser descrito como um exemplo de controle reflexivo, exercido pela Rússia.

Palavras chave: *Guerra híbrida; Políticas de segurança nacional; Conflito Leste-Oeste; Vulnerabilidades do estado; Controle reflexivo; Ciberespaço*

Nothing shall here be more strongly emphasized: knowledge of the cultural significance of concrete historical contexts is the one and only objective even for concept forming and concept critical research.

(Weber, 1991)

1. Method and theory: Hybrid warfare

The purpose of this text is to give an overview of the development of the term hybrid warfare, historical context, challenges and interpretations. The methodological approach is to put the term hybrid warfare in a structured perspective from the subject literature, this combined with own primary research. The method to the purpose is to present the main characteristics of the term, according to the purpose of the text. Some keywords guide this presentation to structure it, such as reflexive control, Effect Based Operations (EBO) and Lawfare, but also a chronological division consisting of before Crimea and Crimea and Forward.

The above Max Weber quote emphasizes something which is easy to forget: namely that all historical events are context based and that it is very difficult to generalize based on ideas regarding culture, social theory or prejudices for that matter. There is always an event, actor or social structure to ruin the beautiful pattern which the researcher or professional pundit is trying to achieve. Generalizations which are likely to be falsified in one way or another should anyhow be made based on empirical fact. However, as reality is so complex, one must allow

empiricism to contradict theory within reason. Your mileage may vary, some refute a theory by the first sign of an anomaly, while some others can allow quite a lot contradicting a theory and still pursuing it. Thomas Kuhn is one of the portal figures for this kind of reasoning, as he discusses normal science and its paradigm. Now his model is for natural science. Social science does not often have this paradigmatic position. Theories can co-exist even if they gainsay each other. Still there is a popper-esque notion which makes theories falling out of style if to many anomalies are heaped against the specific theory. This differs from the type of strict positivism applicable in natural science, where the material really is not as complex and contradictory as that of the human and social sciences. A lot of abstract terms and thinking is something we consume, try the logic of system, come up with findings write about it, and finally move on to the next theory: basic academia. Any number of perspectives can be applied to phenomena related to war and culture, the *rationality perspective* is one of them (I will return to that later). Previous research on modern wars has mentioned the discrepancy against western rationality as an important factor in explaining why actors from other cultures could not be forced to accept defeat (e.g. Hills, 2004). This paper will discuss the term “West” as the states which constitute European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), but it is really more a cultural approach than an organizational. As mentioned above the term deals with rationality more than organization. Other states could of course fit within the description and some EU and NATO states might fit less good in this type of rationality discussed below. The Inglehart–Welzel cultural map can serve as one example of different cultural expressions with a higher resolution (World Values Survey, 2019). The current generalisation will nevertheless be enough servable for this paper.

This leads into the concept of hybrid warfare theory. It has been picked up and discussed by many, picked up and not defined by many others and by some actually been used as a defined tool. Many researchers have already worked with other equally theoretical terms, as for example *full-spectrum warfare*, and have little reason to change track, if not for other reason it would make little sense to consecrate a competing theoretical term from the perspective of the researcher’s previously accumulated academic social capital based on another theory. It is easier to just argue that the term can be interpreted in many ways and just leave it

there, instead of trying to work with it in order to see if a new perspective actually can bring new conclusions. That is, new conclusions in general or on a certain empirical matter. Academia is after all more about trying to comprehend reality than flat out refute things.

1.1. Effect based Operations vs Hybrid Warfare: discursive struggle

Hybrid warfare has been very much in the same shoes as *Effect Based Operations* were (EBO) around the millennium. EBO became a military acronym loaded with potentially a lot of funding and opportunities in the military sector. Without any normative content it was open to interpret the term in any way (Gunneriusson, 2017). The United States Marine Corps (USMC) went with their interpretation and the USAF (USAF) went with their. When the United States Air Force seemed to be winning the narrative of defining EBO the USMC general Mattis was leading the United States Joint Forces Command (USJFC) and EBO was firmly put to rest (Mattis, 2008). It happens on a daily basis that buzz-words fly through the air. Some are without substance while some might be worth to try to construct a meaning to. There is nothing wrong with trying to solve the puzzle of the potential meaning buried in acronyms. One might instead just condemn the concept, as being not truly theoretical, without even making a minimum effort to think about the term as such. The concept of hybrid warfare got momentum with the Lebanon war 2006, this perspective was out forward by Francis G. Hoffman (Hoffman, 2007). The novel concept of hybrid threats first gained recognition when Hezbollah had some tangible military success against the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) in Lebanon 2006 during the Second Lebanon War. That was not deemed as acceptable by the IDF and an explanation had to be brought up. The hybrid element was that an irregular actor disposed of weapon systems which until then had been assumed to be used by states alone (Bachmann & Gunneriusson, 2014, also Hoffman, 2009a).

1.2. Perception of Hybrid Warfare Before Crimea

In 2011, NATO's Allied Command Transformation (ACT) performed a series of hybrid threat experiments. The conclusion of the work was that the member states was encouraged to work with the term hybrid but that NATO would let it rest for

the time being. The cyber threat approach was seen as more urgent for ACT for the time being (Bachmann & Gunneriusson, 2015a).

The term was explored further after that. If it had with availability and new technology to do, as one can summarize the Lebanon case with, what could it then be in the future? Social media is about new technology and mass-availability. 100 years ago, or more, one journalist in Cairo reported to the few subscribers in London with delay. These days everyone reports to everyone at an instant. This is an arena which is very much on topic these days. It leads into the cyber sphere, which also has been discussed at length as a potential area for hybrid cases.

In the early days of the Internet, many wondered about the possibilities that global networking would bring. In historical terms, this was similar to the time when electricity was harnessed for the benefit of society. Such advances in science and technology bring about all-encompassing effects to the entire society, not just specific markets, businesses or governments. Instead of talking about, for example, *the electricity threat* or *the cyber threat*, it might be better to use the hybrid threat concept as a way to describe the interplay between conventional and unconventional threats to our society” (Gunneriusson & Ottis, 2013).

As we can see the mass-availability of a commodity is very much relevant in the cyber sphere and then with information, it is not only limited to accessing weapon-systems as in the Lebanon case. The cyber part will have importance beyond the direct use of Internet. Even the logic of deniability by the originator of an action, which is an infrastructural trait of the Internet, will be transferred to the analogue world in coming hybrid scenarios. Apparent and evident fact will simple be denied and it will be accepted (see the passage about reflexive control in this text). Other more esoteric cases on the same availability of new technology are Nano-technology and biohacking. Technological advances are very often about miniaturization, for example radar-information by radio link was good during the beginning of the Second World War but it is even better when you can fit it in a bomber or even a fighter – or even then on a drone as we can today. The usefulness of drones has been seen many times, most recently seen in the warfare between Armenia and Azerbaijan (Dixon, 2020). Nano technology goes a further step as

the miniaturization includes making things so small so that we cannot see them at all, that is a new quality. Bio-hacking is basically rather mainstream biomedicine these days, good stuff. With mass education it is not a very exclusive knowledge for those who want to study it. One could though in the future see it applied to destruction – as with about any other area of technology and research – with new forms of viruses. Biohacking could be set to building epidemic viruses which only affect people with certain genes for example (Gunneriusson, 2012). The possibilities with genetic scissors, which can modify the genpool got a lot of useful applications.¹ This ability to changes genes can be weaponized in the future.

1.3. Perception of Crimea and forward

The speculations of what hybrid warfare could be ended when Russia invaded Ukraine, in Crimea and in Donetsk/Luhansk. That modus operandi did decidedly affect the explanation of hybrid warfare henceforth. The Russian approach operated in a legal area more than in the area of mass-availability of technology. The scenario was also a bit backwards from a theoretical perspective. It was not an irregular actor with advanced technology. It was more about a regular actor, pretending to be irregular with not so advanced weapon systems. The original Francis Hoffman definition of hybrid warfare was about physical factors as weapon systems being in the hands of non-state actors (Hoffman, 2009b). Physical factors can be seen as one leg which Warfighting Capacity is built on. It is at least so in for example the UK and Swedish military doctrines. The UK uses a model with three circles which in the overlapping area for the three circles represent Warfighting Capacity. Sweden uses a model of an ancient temple with the three areas representing the three pillars holding up the temple of Warfighting Capacity (British Army, 2017 & Swedish Armed Forces, 2012). It is just a question of different pedagogical takes on the same principle. The three principles in the both models are Conceptual Factors (Doctrine, Policies), Morale Factors (Will, Leadership, Ethics) and then Physical Factors (e.g. Units, Personnel). What we see in Ukraine when it comes to discussion of Hybrid Warfare it is much more about Conceptual factors or morale factors, where reflexive control sort under (Seely, 2017).

1.4. Reflexive Control: Information Warfare

The Russo- American mathematician/psychologist Vladimir Lefebvre has discussed reflexive control along the lines of “a process by which one enemy transmits the reasons or bases for making decisions to another” (Lefebvre, 2007). The concept is not unknown in sociology, for example can an operational area be conveyed as a social field and the actors on it be pinpointed to act in a way which is beneficial for your own forces (Gunneriusson, 2017). Timothy Thomas writes that reflexive control can be used on all levels of warfare, even in strategy (Thomas, 2004). He states that one of the most complex ways to influence a state’s information resources is by use of reflexive control measures against the state’s decision-making processes. The way of thinking has been held at some importance in the former Soviet Union (Farley, 2012). It is not that surprising that math and sociological behavior is held as important in a country where one of the nation sports is chess. Lefebvre argued along lines of defining “good” and “bad” in a relativistic way, similar to a game-theoretical concept. It is rather striking that there is a stroke of Nietzsche in the concept. He argued that you could strive for defining your own morale if you had the capacity for it - leaving behind the traditional morality (Nietzsche, 2020). But he also argued that your actions could lead to your downfall if you did not pay attention:

He who fights with monsters might take care lest he thereby become a monster. And if you gaze for long into an abyss, the abyss gazes also into you (Nietzsche, 2020).

The connotation to Lefebvre and particularly on the empirical example below is rather clear. The West is governed by its relative morale which it will stay true too, an economical morale based on the globalized economic system. The West will not become what itself might hold as a “monster” by reacting in a symmetrical way on Russian aggression, that is the relative logic in the West post the Cold War. The problem for the West is that this is exactly what Russia expects the West to do. These self-imposed limitations on the West are rather important. We should be reminded of the acronym DIMEFIL, or just DIME. That is an acronym to categories the instruments of *national power* in a theoretical way. The first four letters stands

for *Diplomatic, Informational, Military and Economic*. The latter three letters are an expansion which might be useful if one is specifically interested in these areas, which are: *Financial, Intelligence and Law Enforcement*. All three can be fitted in the first four letters if one wants to frame it that way. All the letters can be said to have been used in Ukraine by Russia, but we will focus on the Law Aspect in the following.

1.5. Lawfare and perception of law

The Law Enforcement apart is of specific interest regarding Hybrid Warfare as *Lawfare* is an integral part of Hybrid Warfare in the shape of misuse of legal systems and principles against an enemy, such as by delegitimizing them. In this case by exposing the West as not standing up for the international system it has said protecting. Peace-keeping has also become an instrument of lawfare. Russia has for example projected its power to the civil-war ridden Syria in the guise of peace-keeping. They have also – beside regular troops - employed Russian Private Military Contractors (So called Wagner troops), who are Governmental NGOs (GON-GOs). That is an acronym for Governmental NGOs, who can switch between the label private non-aligned military force and a (Russian) state organization, all depending on the circumstances, which best suits the state at the moment (Gunneriusson, 2019). The Russian modus operandi of denying things which obviously is not as described by Russia can be recognized from other areas of Diplomacy. For example has Russia insisted that the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) should have a charter in order to gain status as a International legal personality. That is in itself not a requirement for the status of International legal personality, which basically means that an organization has certain privileges and responsibilities. Russia means that the issue with the charter has to do with peculiarities in Russian law. Anyone who reads the Laws in question finds that they are much similar to other laws in Western countries in these respects. But there is not much to do about this, the rather odd Russian claim stands, even as it can be proved wrong (Bogush, 2019).

Without rushing ahead one can conclude that the West is not particularly interested in using the areas of economic or military against Russia, which leaves little

leeway come projecting power over Russia. Russia has built its game of chess on these premises and it gains power by how the West is playing the game. This will be developed more in detail below.

2. Results

Can the current example of warfare in Ukraine be labeled as hybrid warfare? Well it can at least be explained as an example of reflexive control. If one wants to put emphasis on that in ones definition of hybrid warfare then the conflict in Ukraine is an example of hybrid warfare. The hybrid effect is then on the West as a result of the conflict in Ukraine. The inability of the West to react and stand up for values is on display for every authoritarian regime who cares to watch and Russia offers an alternative. The EU and NATO are wary of large-scale military engagements. Certainly hesitant to act military when the adversary got both a strong conventional arsenal as well as a capable nuclear triad (the latter is the combination of land-launched nuclear missiles, nuclear-missile-armed submarines, and strategic aircraft with nuclear bombs and missiles). The post-industrial states of Europe have excluded war and warfare – except in a limited and then only in expeditionary form – from the horizon of possibilities as it is incompatible with economic progressivity (Bachmann & Gunneriusson, 2015b, also Bachmann & Gunneriusson, 2017). An existential war does simply not fit very well with a globalized liberal economy which very much governs the logic of the political field these days. The globalized economic system might in some aspects promise peace, but it also comes with the price tag of being restrained when it comes to act against military aggression.

2.1. Kosovo as an example

Kosovo has been discussed as a blueprint for the Crimea annexation. The intervention and further separation of Kosovo from Serbia was an ad hoc solution by NATO. It was not meant as a precedent, certainly not for Russia who a new pattern to use in this. They reused that logic of practice on their neighbors like Georgia and Ukraine. The *illusio*, which is the unwritten rules of the social field of International community – to speak with the words of Pierre Bourdieu – was changed

with the Kosovo intervention. It was then confirmed with the Crimea annexation. Then two major international actors on the field, NATO and Russia, had each used this new *logic of practice* (Gunneriusson, 2017). Russia used the narrative from the case of Kosovo, even if not openly stating it, as a legitimating tool for the annexation of Crimea. It helped them in their effort to build the required minimum veil of legitimization for their annexation, no matter how flimsy.

2.2. The Information arena and rationality

What's new with today's Russian hybrid warfare is that the West (EU/NATO) got a limited acceptance of – even if they of course do not believe – the narrative that Russia's not waging warfare in Ukraine. The limited acceptance comes from the fact that the West has not called out Russia for a *War of Aggression*, against international convention, on Ukraine and determined to solve the conflict with military means. Limited sanctions against Russia is within what Russia can and has calculated with, it is within the acceptable for Russia and it is not a NATO reaction. *The limited sanctions* is an indicator of the unwillingness of the West to actually engage in full come economic warfare (which is one of the tools for a state according to DIME(FIL)).

As EU has no problem with importing Russian gas with the Nordstream pipeline, designed to bypass Ukraine. This is important as Russia is heavily dependent on exporting its gas and oil; Russia is close to a mono-economy, heavily dependent on its energy sector. Germany on the other hand is making itself more dependent on importing natural gas. In 2017 Germany purchased a record high of 53.4 billion cubic meters of Russian gas (Gazprom, 2018). One can expect the dependence on gas to increase in Germany with the phase out of nuclear power in Germany being scheduled to be complete at the end of 2022 (Greenpeace, 2016). This comes from a range of reasons. One can see this as a range of different options for NATO, containment; peaceful coexistence; or a mixed solution (Aust, 2014). These options are within the article 5 framework of the North Atlantic treaty, to protect member states. None of these options address acting against a war of aggression on a non-member state. This is part of the game for NATO, as well as it is for Russia. One important thing to understand is that it is more about the West than it is about Russia. Russia is using

reflexive control so that the West opts out from calling out Russia as an active invasive warring part in Ukraine. Russia knows the *rationality* of the West and plays on it. Reflexive control in a military context is about acting in a way so that the enemy in its turn acts according to a plan favorable to the plan of the first part. The cyber arena is a great way to reach the population of the adversary. It can be illustrated as follows, comparing an old way of looking at warfare to a new one.

Triad of Carl von Clausewitz

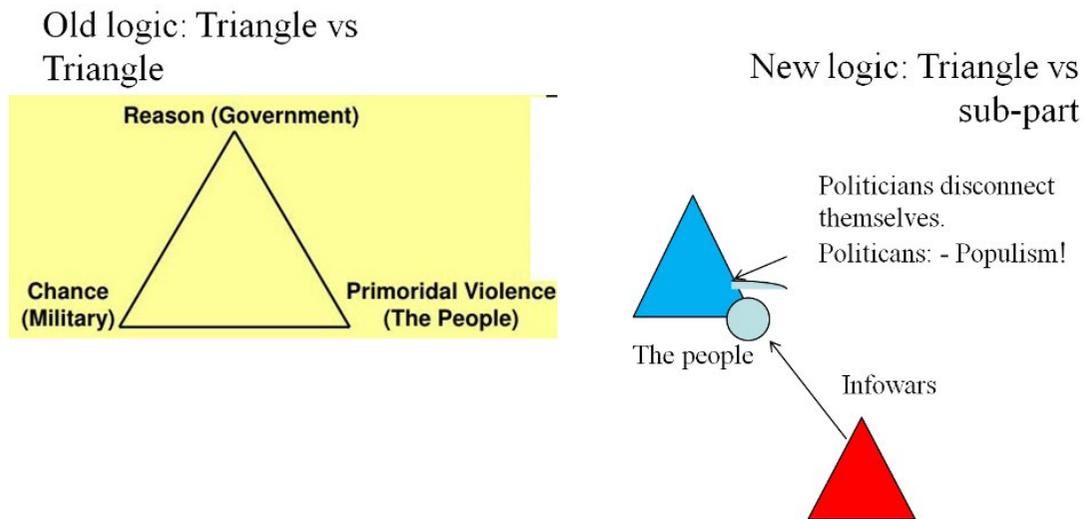


Figure 1: Picture by article author.

As we can see in the picture above we have the triad of warfighting capability by Carl von Clausewitz as a model. A country builds as good a triangle it can and sends it out to duel with another triangle. That is the old way to look at warfare. The model to the right shows how easily you can reach part of the triangle these days, because of the Internet and information warfare. This information warfare happens in conjunction with genuine populism and lacerates the very fabric of society. These days it still holds truth. With modern means of communication one can reach the adversaries population directly and with high information quality. This compared with leaf-lets and similar analog communications of the past.

In a globalized Post Cold War world there is no economic rationality in waging an existential war. Certainly not against a locally military strong adversary which on top of that dispose of nuclear weapons and also makes an impression to stand its ground if show comes to push.² Stating that Russia is at war with Ukraine would lead to the West acting accordingly to the convention against *War of Aggression*, which would escalate the conflict which no one really want – especially not Ukraine.

So Russia being relatively military strong and the West being set on a globalist economic rationality is things which affect the behavior of the West in the Case of Russia in general and in the case of the conflict in Ukraine in particular. Each of these factors can be seen in the terms of the French historian Ferdinand Braudel as a *Courte Durée* and a *Moyenne Durée*. There is a wide range of alternatives to throw the book at Russia if the West would chose to do so. E.g. Responsibility to Protect (R2P); Nuremberg trial; Crimes against Peace; UN Resolution 3314; ICC Rome Statute Article 5.2. Ferdinand Braudel of the French historical Annales School, which was orientated towards the history of mentalities, created a set of terms to describe different degrees of cultural inertia. The most well-known degree is *longue durée*, which entails a cultural idiosyncrasy which is extremely inert, *almost* static as the changes are hard to perceive in a lifetime if at all. The positivistic cultural view of science is an example of *longue durée*, and in extension it affects warfare. Braudel also utilizes the concept *moyenne durée*, which is used for medium length cycles such as economic and political systems within the current context; one example being the economic system on the Italian peninsula during the Renaissance or the Cold War. The shortest cycle, *courte durée*, is not determined by what we would commonly call culture. This may instead involve the agenda of influential individuals, e.g. that of individual despots as Putin. It may also refer to purely structural events that alter society in a radical way but for a relatively short duration, e.g. a war. From this perspective the relative strong Russian military should be seen as a *courte durée*. It can be equaled by the forces of the West, regionally that is. USA could theoretically mass their regular forces in Ukraine and get an upper hand. Just the fact that the USAF began MQ-9 Reaper Drone Operations out of Poland with short notice in May 2018 is one example of how fast certain *already existing* capabilities can deploy (*The Aviationist*, 2018). That will not happen as long as Russia got the nuclear option and a relative strong credibility to use it too. What

EU and NATO need to do is to have a military force so strong that a Russian conventional threat onto EU/NATO is unlikely to have lasting impact. Europe taking military responsibility is a process which can be done in decades; military buildup is slow these days with great dependency on high technology. It still fits well into the range of a *courte durée*, even if the time is counted in decades. That is something which can be decided upon and does not go any long term cultural entities inherent for the NATO and EU countries. How about long term factors then?

The global economic pursuit of the West is an economic rationality which currently has a strong position on the political rationality of the West, as it benefits the West with cheap goods from primarily Asia. Ideological challenges based on non-economic rationality – as for example the Cold War's struggle between communism and liberal democracy – is currently not within the scope of the logic of practice for the political establishment in the West. The Cold War can be classified as an era, a period of *moyenne durée*. Then the two super-powers did everything to reveal obscure action and proxy-behavior by the opponent. What we see post-cold war, sometime after the dust has settled, is that global economy is strong and that the logic on the political field at least when it comes to international relations are governed by the same logic as the global economy. Political decisions which might disturb the economical rationality are treated as extreme or outright unwanted. Compared to the logic during the Cold War when the ideological dimension was important and it was accepted that it did cost money, directly through military investments and indirectly through missed opportunities of trade between the two blocks. The political rationality of today is mostly focused on having the globalized economic system working, which an ideologically driven conflict – as during the Cold War - might undermine. Due to this rationality the West is not very interested in challenging authoritative states when they challenge the international system, as this might disrupt the globalized economy. We are currently in what can be described as a globalized era, a globalized economic *moyenne durée*. With that said, the globalized economy will likely not change within short even if it is not a natural law by any means. This can be said with some certainty as the willingness to change the globalized economy is rather weak. Even the more isolationistic tendencies in European or US politics talk more about political autonomy and adjustment of trade deficits rather than a ban of global trade; life is too good

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for that from a consumer standpoint to be hardline about it. Further there is evidently a change in the perception of singular truth in society these days which makes the interpretation of war and the relativisation of war easier. This is not primarily about manipulation by the adversaries *troll factories* or any such thing; it is a deeper more profound change. Even if there have been a massive production of academic texts about media no one puts the impact of Internet better than David Bowie did when he was interviewed on the subject of Internet as a phenomenon, by Jeremy Paxman in 1999:

And the idea of a duality in the way that we live—there were always two, three, four, five sides to every question. That the singularity disappeared. And that I believe has produced such a medium as the Internet, which absolutely establishes and shows us that we are living in total fragmentation. [- - -] I don't think we've even seen the tip of the iceberg. I think the potential of what the Internet is going to do to society both good and bad is unimaginable. I think we're on the cusp of something exhilarating and terrifying (Bowie, 1999).

This is subject for another paper, but it is an accurate comment to apply on the problems of perception which we face today and in the future. The competing perspectives can come in shades of relative truth and falseness, we choose our own belief. That is why Russian reflexive control on the West works, because the West is left the choice of choosing what kind of war it does perceive in Ukraine: either a Russian War of Aggression or a war in Ukraine which Russia meddles in but strictly seen does not invade. This is not a temporary (*Courte*) change. The same can be said with China's relationship towards international law where China apparently is on the same tab as Russia. It is noteworthy that the propaganda channels - Sputnik and Global Times - for both countries have agreed to share information to share news content (Global Times, 2017). The same goes with Sputnik and the Chinese Alibaba Group, who have signed a memorandum of strategic international cooperation "aimed to create a common information space" (*Sputnik*, 2017). Further the China Media Group (CMG) signed an international strategic cooperation agreement with Russia's Rossiya Segodnya news agency (*CGTN*, 2018). The same goes with Rossiya Segodnya and Huawei (*RT*, 2019). The latter is of course of great importance as Huawei has a lot of the cellphone market in the world. Efforts have

been taken to limit their influence, as for example Sweden's ban on Huawei on the national 5G net (*The Diplomat*, 2020). Sputnik also has an agreement with Xinhua for sharing programming in Spanish and Arabic (*China Daily*, 2019). Sputnik has also made agreements with Chinese local media (Bugayova & Barros, 2020). New technology, more specifically communication technology is a focal point in the warfare performed by Russia and China. It is apparent with China's offensive practice in the South Chinese Sea, disregarding any legal boundaries. The International Court of Arbitration invalidated 2016 China's claims in the South Chinese Sea. The case was brought to the court by the Philippines. They are now not acting against China under the Duterte leadership, who has taken a very lax attitude towards objecting China's activities at the South Chinese Sea (Gunneriusson, 2019 & Bachmann et al., 2019). China is not denying their action, which differs versus Russia in Ukraine. But in both cases they erode the international systems. Further, in both cases does the smaller state bow-out. China's expansionist policy in the South Chinese Sea has been described as *paramilitary operations short of war* (POSOW) (Malik, 2016). That description overlaps Hybrid Warfare as seen in this text to a large extent. Ukraine does not clearly proclaim that Russia is waging a War of Aggression in Luhansk and Donetsk, as an open existential war against Russia is not on Ukraine's agenda any time soon. The Philippines does not take action against China, even after a positive verdict that the Philippines are right to do so. There is a strand of logic here which is unsettling for those who believe in the International systems versus the strong realistic approach of China and Russia. This practice is made possible as now one really uphold these systems with force. Another researcher who identifies the Chinese rationality as one close to the Russian is James J. Wirtz in his article "Life in the 'Gray Zone': observations for contemporary strategists". In the prolongation of this we will see a world govern by the logic of the Realism school of thought in International relations (Wirtz, 2017). If China and Russia is unopposed in their pursuit it is just a matter of fact. There is a vivid discussion about NATO's future role in Asia. There is still much to show for the alliance to be seen as an actor in the area. Meanwhile it is the presence of the US which still covers the nation's interests there, more than NATO's.³ As China is one of the biggest players on the globalized market as the biggest manufacturer and exporter of goods one can see it all come together in a consolidated political, economic and military strategy for China's part. There is no interest in the West to

go against the globalized economy and if there is no such willingness the West's political field will be harnessed by the economic logic which excludes disturbance on the market by ideological acts for example upholding as International law (Bachmann et al., 2019). We might think that we live in a world where the international system works, but it might just as well be a feature from the past. Or as the science fiction author William Gibson accurately put it: "The future is already here, it is just not very evenly distributed" (Gibson, 1999). The near future looks rather bleak with both China and Russia pursuing their agendas without any regard to what the international community thinks about it.

Conclusion

The term hybrid warfare has travelled, from being an irregular actor disposing of relatively advanced weapons to a regular actor pretending to be an irregular actor. The hardware explanation has been mainly replaced with an informational explanation. The West, i.e. NATO and the EU - is under constant attack today, this along with attacks on the international systems which is undermined by the inactivity of the West. The attacks are from a hybrid warfare perspective communicative, authorities states sends a messages by acting on the military arena they expose the West as being passive. Which is true as our mainly economic rationality governs our behavior. Theoretical terms tend to mutate and be consumed as new perspectives are demanded from society to explain the reality we live in. The term hybrid warfare is no exception to this. It is important to understand that the term is a theoretical term and not an empirical one. One will not find hybrid warfare in the wild, so to speak, it is a way to simplify and rationalize reality. The logic of this follows the same lines as for EBO earlier during beginning of the century. Hybrid warfare has gone from being a description of irregular actors disposing of systems (primarily weapon systems) which one usually argues that states solely possess. From there the mass availability of high technological innovations, with the globalized economy, has been discussed as possible new threats. Then, with the Russian annexation of Crimea the focus of the term once again shifted to another direction. Now the focus was more subtle, aiming at Russian deniability, reflexive control and what that could mean when it comes to the credibility of NATO and the EU. Organizations which to some extent can be expected to stand up for the international system of law and order.

Deniability is the Russian ability to deny waging war on Ukraine, despite the West being sufficiently informed. There is a profound unwillingness for the West to act on for example Russian aggression in Ukraine and call Russia out. Neither are West stating that there is a war of aggression performed upon Ukraine by Russia, nor does Europe stop importing gas from Russia which the Russian mono-economy is clearly dependent on to continue. Russia is clearly playing this hand, as can be seen in showing tactical restraint in Ukraine. The tactical restraint is most clearly manifested in the absence of any type of airpower except for the initial days of the conflict (Inter-fax-Ukraine, 2014), which actually is a show of restraint only explainable by the Russian willingness to allow the West to look the other way – which we do and not being forced to admit that Russia wages a war of aggression in Ukraine (i.e. reflexive control). China is following suit by defying international law in plain sight in the South Chinese Sea and by that further undermining the West who stands for the values instituted in the international systems. Further the article shows a rift in the West on the military social field on one hand and the political social field on the other hand when it comes to the interpretation of Russian and Chinese actions. This is because the logic of practice on those social fields differs. The politicians do not want to disturb the global economic system which currently governs the political rationality. Such an action would lead both to an inevitable a confrontation, and also a breach for the relative morale which the logic prescribes. The military on the other hand have no real reason to look the other way and also have a rationality which demands objectivity as the trade of war cannot be based on half-truths. With this trend continuing, we might see a burgeoning challenge to the Westphalian system of early modern times – the foundation for modern international relations.

The signals have been sent that this is vulnerability for the international system. China has recently been seen to act similar to Russia both in the South Chinese Sea but also in the information arena. The cyber arena is important in this, as the actual damage done on the West is primarily conceptual and informational; it is an information war where the passivity of the West (which is a real issue) is enhanced and the trust in both the West and the international system is slowly eroded.

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Notes

- [1] See the motive for awarding the Nobel prize in Chemistry to Emmanuelle Charpentier and Jennifer A. Doudna for further explanation of the term: <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/chemistry/2020/press-release/>
- [2] For an analysis of the Russian military program see Julian Cooper's "The Russian State Armament Programme, 2018-2027" (Cooper, 2018).
- [3] For some contributions to this discussion, see Alexander Moens and Brooke A. Smith-Windsor.



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