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**Hybrid Warfare, Wars, and Threats:  
A Conceptual Analysis**

*Master Thesis*

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## **Bibliografický záznam**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis strives to raise and answer three questions about the concept of hybrid warfare: What concepts of hybrid warfare exist so far? How similar or different are they? How useful are they from conceptual standpoint? The questions are answered by a conceptual analysis consisting of survey of existing concepts, their comparison and detailed evaluation of two of them on the basis of criteria of conceptualization. The answers revealed several important issues of the concept. Firstly, there are too many different concepts of hybrid warfare, often formulated with insufficient care for previous debates and already established concepts. Secondly, the formulated concepts of hybrid warfare are often different to a degree, which calls into question the claim, that all of them are trying to capture the same phenomenon. Lastly, even the better elaborated of the hybrid warfare concepts seem to be rather poorly conceptualized and not very useful. These three answers together cast shadow of doubt on the currently popular concept of hybrid warfare. The results of this work call for more careful thinking on whether and how the use of this concept is helping or hurting both our understanding of contemporary conflicts and our defence efforts against contemporary threats.

## **Abstrakt**

Tato práce se snaží o nastolení a zodpovězení tří otázek ke konceptu hybridního vedení války: Jaké koncepty hybridního vedení války existují? Jak podobné či odlišné jsou tyto koncepty? Jak užitečné jsou z konceptuálního hlediska? Otázky jsou zodpovězeny prostřednictvím provedení konceptuální analýzy, skládající se z přehledu existujících konceptů, jejich srovnání a detailního zhodnocení dvou z nich na základě kritérií konceptualizace. Odpovědi na tyto otázky odhalily několik závažných problémů konceptu hybridního vedení války. Za prvé existuje příliš mnoho jeho rozličných konceptů, často formulovaných s nedostatečnými ohledy na předchozí debaty a již zavedené koncepty. Za druhé, formulované koncepty hybridního vedení války jsou často rozdílné do takové míry, která zpochybňuje tvrzení o tom, že se všechny snaží zachytit stejný fenomén. Konečně i ty lépe zpracované z konceptů hybridního vedení války se zdají být slabě konceptualizovány a nepříliš užitečné. Tyto tři závěry dohromady vrhají stín pochybností na v současnosti populární koncept hybridního vedení války. Výsledky této práce volají po opatrnějším zhodnocení, zda a jak užívání tohoto konceptu pomáhá nebo naopak škodí jak našemu porozumění současným konfliktům, tak i naší obraně proti současným hrozbám.

## **Keywords**

Hybrid warfare; hybrid threats; hybrid conflict; hybrid war; a conceptual analysis; conflict; military strategy; military concepts.

## **Klíčová slova**

Hybridní vedení války; hybridní hrozby; hybridní konflikt; hybridní válka; konceptuální analýza; konflikt; vojenská strategie; vojenské koncepty.

**Rozsah práce:** 215 803 znaků včetně mezer

## **Prohlášení**

1. Prohlašuji, že jsem předkládanou práci zpracoval/a samostatně a použil/a jen uvedené prameny a literaturu.
2. Prohlašuji, že práce nebyla využita k získání jiného titulu.
3. Souhlasím s tím, aby práce byla zpřístupněna pro studijní a výzkumné účely.

V Praze dne .....

Vojtěch Bahenský .....

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## **Choice of the topic**

The debate about contemporary conflicts and security environment has in recent years seen surge of a new concept of hybrid warfare. Its growing prominence and popularity seemingly made it a buzzword in defence circles, whether debate is about transformation of NATO or United States military forces, about conflict in Eastern Ukraine, in Lebanon, in Afghanistan or against Islamic State, about proliferation of heavy weaponry and modern technologies to the non-state actors or cyber and energy security.

Such a dramatic rise inadvertently and possibly inevitably wreaked havoc in terminology of the debates about contemporary conflicts. There is no common use of the term and there is only little common understanding of the concepts behind it. Not only many authors use terms “hybrid warfare”, “hybrid threat” and “hybrid war” without explaining relationships between them. Some authors even seem to treat these terms as interchangeable.<sup>1</sup> This just adds to confusion, caused by apparent assumption held by the majority of authors, that previous works using the term “hybrid warfare” are all trying to capture the same phenomenon (which is probably not the case) or even are all referring to the same concept (which is definitely not the case). The issue has indeed only deteriorated by growing use of the word by journalists and other laymen.

To be fair to proponents of hybrid warfare, the debates whose conceptual ranks this concept joined, especially the debate about categorization of war and warfare and about military transformation, were already noted as full of blurry concepts and weak definitions by some authors (see Echevarria, 2005; Echevarria, 2006). As much as this makes hybrid warfare debate look less bad in comparison, it brings further issues to anyone trying to make sense of it, since it makes the higher order concepts used in a number of hybrid warfare definitions part of the problem of understanding them. If you

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<sup>1</sup> This author has to unwillingly join their ranks since it is impossible to explicitly state all used terms each time referring to the debate, yet it is at the same time impossible to treat authors preferring different terms separately. Therefore this work will employ the term “Hybrid Warfare” as an overarching term, unless explicitly stated otherwise.



define Hybrid warfare using concepts of conventional warfare, irregular warfare and terrorism without explicitly stating your definition of these concepts at the same time, space for interpretation of such definition is nearly limitless.

This sorry state not only precludes reaching some advancements in our understanding of contemporary forms of warfare and interstate conflict in general. It may also significantly endanger security of a number of states, that despite arguably unsatisfying current state of debate about hybrid warfare concepts started to take hybrid warfare into account in various strategic documents and doctrines.

This author therefore sees urgent need for review of different concepts and approaches hidden under “hybrid” label aimed at clarifying and systematizing them and in this way providing solid basis for further hopefully more disciplined research into hybrid warfare, so it does not suffer the fate of some notoriously contested concepts such as terrorism.

## **Research questions**

The key overarching aim of this thesis is to review the concepts of hybrid warfare, hybrid threats and hybrid wars since their emergence in 2006. Even though the author of this work is sceptical to claims of proponents of hybrid warfare, it is not the aim of this work to prove them wrong. Indeed, as was rightly noted by Guzzini, “There might be theories involving power that can be checked empirically, but there are no concepts that can be checked in this way. Theories explain, concepts do not.” (Guzzini, 1993, p.445) Authors of different concepts of hybrid warfare may be wrong in their claims that future conflicts will be accurately described by their concepts or they may be wrong in claims that some contemporary or historical conflicts do constitute cases covered by their concepts. But a concept by itself can’t be wrong. What it can be though, is unhelpful or misleading. It can be for example poorly defined and therefore poorly differentiated from other concepts or it can be too broad and therefore capturing too diverse cases to be useful. A concept may also not describe what the author intended. And indeed, any author may (possibly even inadvertently) use an established term for vastly different concept, causing unnecessary misunderstandings. The belief that forms the basis of this work can be accurately expressed in words of David Baldwin: “The advancement of knowledge, however, depends on the ability of scholars

to communicate with one another; and clear concepts seem to help.” (Baldwin, 1980, p.472)

The key questions, which this thesis will attempt to answer are therefore:

- 1) What concepts of Hybrid warfare (Hybrid Threat, Hybrid War) were so far formulated in literature?
- 2) What are the common elements of these concepts and in what they differ?
- 3) How useful are these concepts?

## **Methodology**

This thesis will attempt to answer the above stated research questions by employing rigorous conceptual analysis of various concepts of Hybrid warfare, Hybrid Wars and Hybrid Threats. It will be written from the naturalist metatheoretical standpoint, especially because an overwhelming majority of proponents of Hybrid warfare are naturalists and to challenge them from reflectionist standpoint would not help with answering questions posed above.

In order to answer the research questions, following steps will be taken. First, the author will look for concepts of Hybrid warfare used so far in literature. Since most of the debate about Hybrid warfare was very policy oriented, majority of the reviewed sources are regrettably not scientific journals. That is associated with somewhat lower standards of methodology employed by them. That is one of the reasons, why the next step will be to clarify the found concepts as much as possible by studying the context in which they were presented and other works of authors who presented them. Once these concepts are successfully identified and clarified, they will be compared to identify commonalities and differences, with special attention dedicated to compatibility of different conceptions. Selected concepts that are more prominent and popular than others or represent a group of similar concepts will be then evaluated in terms of their usefulness. And since the usefulness of a concept depends at least to some degree on intended purpose of introducing such a concept, the analysis will take this into account as well. Usefulness of the concepts will be primarily evaluated by employing criteria of conceptualization introduced by John Gerring (Gerring, 2012, p.117). Case studies of conflicts that should according to proponents of individual concepts constitute cases of hybrid warfare will play a supporting role. The case studies should both highlight

similarities and differences of conceptions of hybrid warfare and put to test, how well these conceptions are able to describe the conflict (in comparison with other authors employing different concepts). Conclusion of the work will be dedicated to assessment of usefulness of chosen concepts of hybrid warfare and identification of key areas that need to be addressed to enhance their potential.

## **Preliminary outline of the thesis**

- Introduction
- Chapter 1: Methodology
  - Conceptual Analysis
  - Criteria of conceptualization
- Chapter 2: Development and transformations of hybrid warfare Concepts
  - Origins of Hybrid warfare concept (2005 – 2006)
  - Hybrid warfare orthodoxy (2007 – 2014)
  - Reinvention of Hybrid warfare (2014 – present)
  - Review of the three phases of Hybrid warfare debate
- Chapter 3: Looking for common ground
  - Licence to confuse – anarchy in terminology (Hybrid War, Warfare, Threat, Conflict)
  - One concept is not enough – recognizing irreconcilable differences
  - Back to basics – defining modes of warfare
  - From militaries with love - Traditional concept of Hybrid warfare
  - Die another day – The new concept of Hybrid warfare as employed by Russian Federation
- Chapter 4: Critique of the concept
- Chapter 5: Fighting hybrid wars – recommendation of proponents
  - Implications of the traditional concepts: adaptability
  - Implications of the new concepts: cooperation
- Chapter 6: Facing reality – Hybrid warfare concepts and contemporary conflicts
- Conclusion

## Preliminary core literature

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## Introduction

*“When possibly suffering from intellectual indigestion, one pauses to ask the rather important bottom-line question, ‘What are we talking about?’”<sup>1</sup>* (Gray, 2012, p.41)

The terms hybrid threats, hybrid warfare and hybrid war<sup>2</sup> have undeniably become frequent buzzwords in both academic and policy circles, especially since the conflict in the eastern Ukraine has started. And the terms indeed are no longer just buzzwords. The important security actors, such as EU or NATO embraced one or the other version of the term and are acting (or planning to act) on their basis. (see NATO, 2011; European Commission, 2016a).

Despite this, there is a surprising lack of common understanding of the terms. The concept appears to be fluid and elusive, to a degree that even the ‘Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats’ refrains from explicitly defining it.<sup>3</sup> (European Commission, 2016a)

If someone looked for a more rigorous treatment of the concept in academic literature, he would be probably disappointed, since serious academic inquiry into this concept, especially on pages of peer reviewed journals is rare at best. Where the ‘hybrid’ appears to be present in abundant quantities are policy papers, newspaper articles and press releases, which unsurprisingly often contribute to confusion rather than clarification. Even more worryingly, it is sometimes asserted, that definition of hybrid warfare should remain ‘flexible’ and be changed to fit evolving character of the phenomenon.<sup>4</sup> (Freier, 2009; European Commission, 2016a, p.2)

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<sup>1</sup> Colin Gray’s quote used to introduced this work really refers to hybrid warfare. His criticism of hybrid warfare concept is covered in detail in the subchapter 2.4 of this work.

<sup>2</sup> The terms are often used almost interchangeably and most authors use them to refer to the same concept. The term ‘hybrid warfare’ was generally preferred as a label for the concept in this work, but use of any of three terms should be understood as a reference to the same concept, if not specified otherwise.

<sup>3</sup> This particular phenomenon is further discussed in sections 2.3.5 and 4.3.1 of this work.

<sup>4</sup> This is indeed fallacy threatening to disconnect the phenomenon from the concept and its definition. Definition should tell us, whether the particular case of the phenomenon fits the concept. Changing definition of the concept according to the phenomenon without first knowing whether the case of the phenomenon indeed is or should be the case of the concept effectively moves the possibility of case not being the case of the concept out of the question.

This should be a source of major concern. There is a lively debate about a concept of reportedly new form of warfare, which governments and militaries should plan for and prepare for. At the same time, the content of the concept is deeply contested. Important questions concerning both validity and utility of this concept need to be addressed, should it become solid basis for defence planning. And Colin Gray's question "What are we talking about?" (2012, p.41) is probably the chief among those, rivalled only by question 'What are we not talking about here?'

The question is surprisingly hard to answer in satisfactory manner, given the plethora of existing definitions, general lack of appreciation of problems this number of conflicting definition is causing and resulting lack of effort to find some reasonably broadly accepted definition. This 'no-need-for-definition' approach was formulated already in 2009 in Freier's article 'Describe... Don't Define' (2009). Freier expressed his preference for continual discussion and 'elastic description' over (consensual) definition. (Freier, 2009) It is hard to imagine, how can an (inherently abstract) concept be described without defining it. And taking into account the aspirations of the proponents of the concept, in order for it to be useful in defence planning and decision making, it should be remembered, that "[m]ost out-of-the-box ideas, however brilliant, need to return to the box at some point in order to become practical solutions. "(Echevarria, 2006, p.19)

This work constitutes an attempt to place the idea of hybrid warfare 'in the box' and submit it to a conceptual analysis. This sets this work apart from most of the literature on hybrid warfare. Most of the proponents focus on further study of empirical case and interpretation and reinterpretation of cases through lenses of hybrid warfare concept (or modifying concept of hybrid warfare to fit their case). Most of the critics of the concept of hybrid warfare on the other hand, often attack the empirical validity of some particular concept or contest its application to a particular case. This work however does not explore empirical validity of any particular concept of hybrid warfare in any particular case. Such work naturally cannot study the concept itself. "There might be theories that can be checked empirically, but there are no concepts, that can be checked in this way." (Guzzini, 1993, p.445) The fact, that no concept can be empirically proven to be 'wrong' should not hide the fact, that concepts are not born

equal and that some concepts can be better than others, or more or less useful, to be more precise.

This work aims to capture the lively and interconnected debate about the concept (in all its variants) as a whole, revolving about the same terms and at least perceived by most of its participants as a debate trying to capture the same phenomenon. This work also looks at the developments the concept went through, the differences which emerged among the concepts. Finally, this work's goal is to evaluate the quality of conceptualization of selected concepts of hybrid warfare. These aims can be translated into three general research questions of this work:

- 1) What concepts of hybrid warfare were formulated?
- 2) What are the differences between the existing concepts of hybrid warfare?
- 3) How useful are particular concepts of hybrid warfare?

These questions are the main tenets of this work and they complement each other in an important way. Where first question aims at general understanding of the debate about the idea of hybrid warfare as it was unfolding and tries to look at all different views of hybrid warfare as mere versions of a single overarching idea, the third question looks at particular concepts of hybrid warfare and their definitions as independent objects. The second question represents connection between the first and the third question. It studies, to what degree is the assumption of most of the authors about single phenomenon of hybrid warfare captured by different concepts defensible.

At the same time, answering both the first and the second question is an important precondition for answering the third one, since the answer to the first question provides the list of concepts of hybrid warfare and the answer to the second question offers important clues for selection of some of the concepts for evaluation. Questions about possible reasons of the particular developments in the debate and resulting differences among the concepts of hybrid warfare are also tackled frequently in this work, but they should be understood as only auxiliary to the main questions formulated above. Other relevant and interesting questions had to be completely neglected to maintain this work focused and feasible. Regrettably, originally intended empirical dimension of the work in form of case studies had to be omitted for the same reasons.

Interesting question which are outside the scope of this thesis are discussed in conclusion as promising venues of further research of the concept of hybrid warfare.

Answering the questions posed in the introduction of this work should contribute to the disciplination of the hybrid warfare debate and demonstrate the need for greater clarity and more rigorous research of the hybrid warfare concepts. At the same time, it is a hope of this author, that this work will prove the importance of careful and conscious conceptualization of the policy-oriented concepts born or existing outside of academia. Not holding the policy-oriented concepts to same standards as the concepts in academic research does pose significant risks which can be mitigated by careful evaluation of their conceptual qualities.

The structure of this work follows the structure of the above stated key research questions. It is divided into four chapters, with each chapter further divided into subchapters and sections. The first chapter explains methodology employed by this author in answering the questions and the third question in particular, since it requires robust framework of conceptualization. The second chapter deals with the first question and describes the debate as it unfolded, with contextualizing and describing particular emerging concepts. Apart from answering the first question, this chapter should also familiarise the reader with the development of the concept and mutual influences (or lack of them) between the concepts, both of which is important for complete understanding of the third and the fourth chapter. The third chapter highlights important differences between the concepts covered in the first chapter. Finally, the last chapter evaluates the particular selected concepts based on the methodology outlined in the first chapter.

# 1. Methodology

*“... contemporary American defence debate shows abundant evidence of confusion, poor definitions of key terms and, as a consequence, undisciplined conceptualization.”*  
(Gray, 2012, p.6)

Survey of existing concepts and their comparison is relatively unproblematic from methodological standpoint. It is the third question that has to be approached cautiously and treated rigorously. Selection of methodology to answer the specific question about the quality of the concept and its usefulness certainly does not provide the author with an overwhelming amount of possibilities. Quantitative methods can hardly contribute to this quest and many traditional qualitative methods such as case studies or comparative studies do not fare much better. Case studies could possibly demonstrate the unhelpfulness of the concept in particular cases. But such approach would be not only susceptible to criticism for biased selection of cases, but it would also focus on symptoms of weak concept design rather than design itself.

The remaining venue is conceptual analysis, looking at particular qualities that the concept should have according to contemporary literature and using this as a benchmark for the existing concepts of hybrid warfare. This admittedly abstract approach holds promise of identifying particular weak spots inherent to selected existing hybrid warfare concepts.

Use of a disciplined and to a degree formalised conceptual analysis in contemporary debates relevant to defence is regrettably rather rare. It is the hope of the author, that this work might demonstrate its viability as an acceptably rigorous tool for policing debate and filtering unending influx of new concepts and terms.

## 1.1 Metatheoretical approach

Before going into more details on the selected approach to the conceptual analysis, an important note has to be made on metatheoretical basis of this work. Overwhelming majority of authors writing on the topic of hybrid warfare works from broadly positivist positions and aims at providing policy relevant predictions and outcomes. Approaching the topic from interpretivist positions would possibly provide

some novel thinking but it would start a new debate rather than contributing to the ongoing one, which is the aim of the author. Therefore, this work will adopt positivist metatheoretical approach which is currently dominant in hybrid warfare debate and will leave possible interpretivist reflection of the topic to other authors.

## ***1.2 Concepts and concept evaluation***

Concepts are descriptive arguments about world by themselves, answering questions like ‘what?’ ‘when?’ and others. There is a number of issues, where description is valuable by itself. Additionally, the concepts are necessary basic building blocks of any theory and generally any causal research. Since causal research tends to take shortcuts in conceptual formation (Gerring, 2012, p.109), it is even more surprising, that descriptive arguments seem to take a backseat in contemporary social sciences.

Among the most important differences between concepts and causal theories is their evaluation. Causal relationship can be proved or disapproved. Concepts by themselves as constructs of human thought cannot be proved or disapproved in the same way. To quote Guzzini: “Theories explain, concepts do not.” (Guzzini, 1993, p. 445) Authors of different concepts of hybrid warfare may be wrong in their claims of empirical referents of their concepts or in prediction of population of referents that is to rise in the future. But a concept by itself can’t be wrong. What it can be though, is unhelpful or misleading. Should a concept be abandoned completely, it is not sufficient to rob it of its empirical referents by proving that they do not fulfil the criteria of the particular concept. That is especially true when it comes to concepts that claim to capture some phenomena that are allegedly yet to appear. Intrinsic theoretical usefulness and quality of the concept has to be evaluated, if one strives to reach strong arguments about its quality and usefulness.

Some structured set of criteria is a necessary precondition for any evaluation of a concept. This work will employ a set of criteria presented by John Gerring. Specifically, the criteria introduced in his 2012 book ‘Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework’. (Gerring, 1999; Gerring, 2012) Even though these criteria were intended rather for leading the researcher in his process of concept formation, they can just as well serve as structured set of criteria against which any concept can be evaluated. After

all any lack of quality of a particular concept is nothing but a result of mistakes that its creators made in its formation.

This may seem simple enough, but the criteria are formulated in a way, that makes it almost impossible to get a top score in each category. Some criteria are rather attributes where it is close to impossible to reach a verdict whether the concept is good or bad. Some other criteria are dependent on others, whereas other stand in opposition. What is stated above is certainly by no means meant as a criticism of Gerring. It is rather a tribute to the inherent complexity of a concept formation process. To add to the complexity, there is no single intent behind the formation of all concepts and the intent with which the concept is born to live has to be taken into account when it is evaluated. To illustrate this with an example Gerring himself provides, priorities in concept formation differ depending on whether the concept is intended as independent or dependent variable in causal model. Dependent variables benefit more from fecundity whereas independent are more demanding on differentiation.

The following section will elaborate on individual importance of and relationships among criteria of conceptualisation proposed by Gerring. As was mentioned above, since Gerring's criteria were intended as guidelines for creation of concepts rather than as criteria for their evaluation, what is considered to be good and bad result in some criteria will be explained. Lastly, next section will list criteria which are selected as the ones of particular importance for evaluating a kind of concept covered in this work.

### **1.2.1 Resonance**

Resonance of concept refers to consistency of the term and the definition used for the concept with existing established use and understanding of the term. Significant departure from existing understanding of a particular term may result in evoking among the audience a completely different idea than the concept for which the term was used, whereas use of a neologism may result in a term that fails to resonate at all with the audience (arguably the better case in most scenarios). As much as this is often an issue in academic debates about a number of topics, there are reasons to think that it is even more important in debates led outside academia. Since articles in academic journals provide authors with sufficient space to elaborate and academic audience can

reasonably be expected to dedicate more time and attention to the article, risk of being misled by poor resonance of the term is relatively small. On the other hand, articles or think-tank policy memos that need to put things as simple as possible do need to be shorter and to attract the attention of a reader by well resonating term. Regrettably, a well resonating term does not equate concept doing well in resonance since resonance does not rest solely on the term, but also on the positive relationship between the term, the idea that it evokes in minds of audience and the concept behind the term. (Gerring, 2012, pp.117-118)

Thinking about resonance as criteria of evaluation is relatively easy. When the term fails to resonate at all, it is indeed weakening the concept and impeding its impact in the field, but a real issue lies in misleading resonance, evoking (possibly radically) different concepts than those proposed. Problem arises when it is taken into account, that resonance is ultimately dependent not only on the intrinsic quality of the concept but also on audience. Therefore, any evaluation of resonance has to take into account at bare minimum who the intended audience was in order to prevent criticising the concept for failure to resonate with arbitrarily selected and possibly not relevant audience.

### **1.2.2 Domain**

Domain of concept refers to two particular sub-issues – linguistic domain and empirical domain. Linguistic domain is closely affiliated with the resonance criterion. It expresses both number of languages and number of fields in which the concept retains its resonance. Number of languages in which the term resonates can be an important factor of a concept and it can help its proliferation. Linguistic domain in terms of fields of study in which the concept retains its resonance is even more interesting, but evaluating this rigorously requires distinguishing fields and subfields in which particular contributions to the debate were made.

The issue of empirical domain, that is the range of phenomenon that can be covered by definition, should not be misunderstood as an amount of existing cases covered by the definition. To once again employ an example provided by John Gerring, the right question when asking about empirical domain of a concept is not ‘How many democracies are there according to the definition?’ but ‘What can be democracy/democratic according to this definition?’.



It is obviously almost impossible to criticise some concept for a too large or too small empirical domain, since both arguably do have their pros and cons. But the quality of a concept in this respect can lie in clearly stated domain of concept. That is of crucial importance, since as Gerring notes, some criticised concepts are rather limited in their empirical domain and therefore inadequate in some cases, which does not make them bad per se. (Gerring, 2012, p.121)

### **1.2.3 Consistency**

Concept is consistent (or homogenous) when it captures same phenomenon in all empirical cases to which it is applied. Note has to be made at this point. Intrinsic inconsistency of concept is more or less limited to concept with a number of aggregated attributes, especially if the concept takes a form of indicator aggregated from a number of attributes. (Goertz, 2008, p.110) Otherwise, consistency is more related to use of the concept than its creation. Should the concept be used to capture cases, in which it has different content than in others, it would constitute conceptual ‘stretching’.

As was noted, intrinsic inconsistency of concept is relatively rare, but it indeed provides clear criterion for evaluation of concept. Consistency referring to the use of the concept would without any doubt prove to be much more fertile ground for any critique of a concept (or rather its authors and users), however, it would not be a meaningful way to judge the quality of the concept itself.

### **1.2.4 Fecundity**

Fecundity is the term Gerring uses for the power of the concept. The concept is more powerful if its referents share more common attributes. The additional condition is, that attributes must in some logical manner belong to each other and be coherent. The more powerful concept then tells us more about its cases, is more successful in identifying ‘natural-kinds’ and therefore is useful in more contexts. The pinnacle of fecundity are the essentialist concepts, capturing single attribute encompassing all commonly associated attributes.

There is general preference for ‘thick’ concepts, that are able to find a lot of common attributes in a group of cases. But this preference is not enough to

automatically perceive ‘thinner’ concepts as inherently weak or bad, especially since in different metatheoretical traditions and causal settings, importance of fecundity varies. On the other hand, the coherence of attributes of a concept is non-negotiable. Attributes of a concept have to have some logical relationship among themselves, should the concept make sense.

### **1.2.5 Differentiation**

Differentiation is the other side of the coin to fecundity. Grouping logically coherent segment of reality should at the same time result in a concept that is clearly distinct from other concepts in its empirical field. The key in differentiation of the concept is its definition which should provide clear boundaries of the concept. Indeed, most of the empirical space is already covered by some concepts and any new concept has to be placed in existing taxonomy and terminology. This does not apply only to concepts on the same level (in case of hybrid warfare for example conventional and irregular warfare) but it has to establish its relationship to concepts of higher or lower order as well (for example the concept of ‘warfare’ as such in case of hybrid warfare).

The value of differentiation is not only in maintaining some order and clarity in the field (not disturbing the existing concepts more than necessary) but it is crucial for causal utility of the concept. Causal utility is covered in detail in next subchapter, but practical utility of differentiations can be easily shown even on descriptive level. Even descriptive inference is impossible if we are not able to tell with confidence whether the case is referent of the concept. Additionally, hazy borders of the concept would make maintaining consistency of its use near impossible and inadvertent conceptual stretching is bound to appear. Differentiation of the concept is easily understandable as a criterion for evaluation of the concept, because if it fails to establish clear boundaries, it constitutes its non-negotiable weakness.

### **1.2.6 Causal utility**

Causal utility should be understood as a factor already determined to a large degree by other criteria of concept formation. Judging casual utility as an intrinsic quality of a concept would mean asking question ‘Can the concept be useful in some casual model?’. Since there is no definite number of possible causal models, negative

answer to this question would be impossible. Therefore, similarly to consistency of use, casual utility cannot be meaningfully treated as intrinsic to the concept. Instead, it depends on actual or intended use of concept. If the intended or actual causal use of the concept is known, it is possible to use causal utility as a guide to relative importance of other criteria.<sup>5</sup> Such approach would have to be accompanied by important caveat that the quality of the concept in other setting might be evaluated differently. Despite the above debated issues of evaluating the conceptual utility of a concept, it is undeniable, that causal utility is one of very important aspects of concept for it to be useful.

### **1.2.7 Operationalization**

Operationalization is the process of locating the concept within empirical reality. The question of localisation of empirical cases of the concept is closely related to quality of its differentiation, that is, how clear boundaries the concept has and how well it can be identified against contrast space. The question posed by Gerring, that is “Can a concept be measured easily and unproblematically, i.e., without bias?” (Gerring, 2012, p.117), brings up a rather serious issue. Any answer to this question and especially negative one runs the risk of being accused of omitting some, possibly yet uninvited, way to operationalize the concept. Judging of operationalization therefore often shrinks to particular operationalization proposed or undertaken by particular author. Such criticism may be valid but we once again run into an issue of not judging the concept itself but rather its use or application. Passing verdict on intrinsic lack of operationalizationability of the particular concept is a rather daunting task.

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<sup>5</sup>It may be done the other way around. It would be possible to judge casual utility as aggregate of other relevant criteria, for example differentiation.

### **1.2.8 Selection of the criteria for evaluation of the concept of hybrid warfare**

As is clear from the sections above, many of the criteria are context dependent. Evaluation of resonance is dependent on intended audience and actual audience, importance of differentiation and fecundity as well as to some extent domain is dependent on intended use of the concept and operationalization and consistency are generally speaking dependent on actual use of the concept.

Therefore, it is necessary, to take into account to a certain degree a broader context of the particular concept of hybrid warfare in order to evaluate it in a meaningful way. This clearly poses a risk. The context - such as intended audience - has to be specified for the evaluation. However, validity of the results of such evaluation would be limited to that particular context. Since two individual concepts of hybrid warfare will be evaluated, it is more meaningful to treat context of each of them separately to maintain the evaluation as fair as possible by evaluating on the basis of the original context of each of the concepts.

Thankfully, there are still several common contextual features that can be attributed to most of the hybrid warfare concepts. That makes it possible to select key criteria for evaluating all the hybrid warfare concepts and contain context-sensitive evaluation inside particular criteria. Generally speaking, hybrid warfare concepts are policy (or possibly strategy) oriented concepts, seeking to provide practical guidance helping particular countries to (ironically) defeat hybrid warfare conducted against them. What can be deduced from this description for the importance of the particular criteria?

Firstly, fecundity and differentiation are of crucial importance. In causal context, hybrid warfare concept is usually used implicitly as an independent variable in informal model in which the use of hybrid strategy/tactics by the enemy implies the need for different strategy by the country/alliance in order to succeed. As was already mentioned, the independent variable has to be well differentiated. Fecundity on the other hand captures power of descriptive arguments based on the concepts of hybrid warfare. To add to the reasons for preference of these two criteria, they can be relatively unproblematically evaluated without the need to depend on selected context.

Additionally, the third crucial criterion according to which the concepts will be evaluated in this thesis is resonance. The reason for selecting resonance is the relative vulnerability of intended audience to be misled, which was already elaborated in the section on resonance. Additionally, sheer number of existing concepts of hybrid warfare should make any observer suspicious of resonance quality of at least some of those concepts.

The other three criteria (domain, consistency and operationalization) will be reflected only in an auxiliary role. Consistency and operationalization are sentenced to auxiliary role by their context dependency elaborated above. Domain may be an interesting attribute of the concept but it is complicated to be turned into evaluation criteria and is not crucial for most often intended use of the concept. Causal utility was reflected in selection of other criteria and will not be treated as a separate criterion. The criteria are summarised in table 1.

Primary criteria	Questions	Context dependency
Resonance	1: Does the term resonate with its audience? 2: Does the term resonate in accordance with the concept it labels?	Who is intended/appropriate audience?
Fecundity	1: How many attributes do the referents of the concept share? 2: How logically coherent are the attributes of the concepts?	None.
Differentiation	1: How well is the position of the concept specified in established taxonomy? 2: How well are boundaries of the concept established with its neighbouring concepts? 3: How much does the concept disrupt the existing concepts?	None.
<b>Secondary criteria</b>		
Domain	How well specified is the domain of the concept?	None.
Consistency	How consistently is the concept used?	Use of the concept by various authors.
Operationalization	How operationalizable is the concept? How well is the concept operationalised?	Proposed/used operationalization.

Table 1: Selected criteria of conceptualisation. Source: author

### **1.3 Corpus selection**

Both the first and the second questions posed by this work require specification of corpus of literature with which will this thesis operate. It may also be possibly one of the most controversial methodological decisions taken by this author. Hybrid warfare debate is relatively new and suffers gravely from lack of disciplination. There is lack of agreement on terms and phenomenon that they are trying to capture. That makes even very basic question of selecting relevant works that should be reviewed in this thesis challenging.

With few exceptions that will be defended when mentioned in following chapter, key for selection of relevant works will be the term used by authors. The particular terms are:

- Hybrid warfare
- Hybrid threat
- Hybrid war
- Hybrid conflict

This method of selection undeniably has number of problems and possible biases. Each concept consists of four elements – term (label), attributes, indicators and phenomenon. (Gerring, 2009, p.116) It may seem more logical to select literature for the work on basis of phenomenon rather than based on label assigned, since label may be seen as relatively unimportant feature of the concept when compared with its other three components.

But even as such option was considered, current state of the debate does not make such choice viable. The first reason is, that there is little to no agreement on what phenomenon are concepts actually trying to capture. The second and even more important reason is, that much of the current debate on hybrid warfare is centred around the term rather than phenomenon. The most of the authors draws from literature that uses the term, rather than looking more in detail on what the term actually covers. Because of that, selection of literature on basis of phenomenon would result in breaking existing relationships between different pieces of existing research and artificial if not arbitrary restructuring of the debate.

That was by this author considered unhelpful in fulfilling aims of this work. Approach to selection based on the term used was therefore preferred, despite pitfalls that goes with such decision. One such pitfall which has to be compensated is phenomenon of authors 'invent' and use the term while being completely unaware of the fact, that it is already in use for other concept. These authors will not be considered to be part of corpus of literature and will be identified by lack of reference to any work using the term Hybrid warfare (or other of terms, which are covered in this work).

Nature of sources needs to be accounted for as well. The concept of Hybrid warfare originates from policy sphere rather than academic one, and it retained strong policy orientation throughout his existence. This results in scarcity of sources meeting high quality requirements of academic reviewed journals. Most of the sources have form of shorter articles in policy oriented magazines or think-tank papers. As was already noted above, this may explain some of the issues of Hybrid warfare concepts and it is indeed complicating factor in fulfilling the goals of this thesis, since format of most of the articles on hybrid warfare does not demand and often even allow author to fully explain in explicit way his view of concept. That inevitably leads to need of making inductive judgement about authors thinking from what he actually wrote. That constitutes undeniable potential weakness and maximum effort will be made throughout this work to provide sufficiently persuasive argumentation whenever author has to resort to making inferences from what was actually written to have full picture to evaluate.

The issues of the concepts of Hybrid warfare seemed to this author so significant especially when taking account its prominence, that they warrant writing this this work despite scarcity of sources of usually expected academic quality.

Language domain of this work is limited to works written in English language. This is not ideal, but since concept emerged in United States and was mostly further developed and debated in NATO countries, costs are not as severe. Dominance of English language in top ranks of international relations and security studies as well as general English competence of relevant policy-makers and military officers also helps in alleviating the problem. The most significant caveat that needs to be admitted in this respect is Russian language literature on Hybrid warfare. That will be reflected only through other works or if English translation is available. But since it is rarely referenced or reflected in English language literature on Hybrid warfare, the caveat should not hamper attainment goals of this work in significant ways.

In respect to answering third question of this work, that is quality of concepts, one particular issue in terms of corpus has to be addressed. That is the problem of change of opinion of a particular author. This will be addressed by relatively simple assumption, that author's views of hybrid warfare are consistent across his works and if



two or more works of the same author diverges in some aspects, the latest work will be considered canonical and preferred in evaluation.

## **2. Transformations of hybrid warfare concepts**

Following chapter's key goal is to survey the existing concepts, provide their description and generally map the debate about the concepts. This task is far from trivial, since there is no similar comprehensive review of the history of the concept and it will hopefully prove useful in its own right to future authors interested in the concept. At the same time, it strives to provide contextual information on the concepts and relationships between different concepts and their authors. Despite the best efforts of the author, it was impossible to present all the existing concepts and literature on hybrid threats, especially the later ones, but all major and influential concepts are included. It is divided into five separate subchapters. The first, the second and the third subchapter will each deal with distinct phase of debate about hybrid warfare. In the first of more or less chronologically ordered subchapters on the three phases of the hybrid warfare debate, origins and the earliest development of the concept of hybrid warfare will be examined including some prior uses of the term for different concepts. The second subchapter will deal with a crucial 2007 work 'Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars' by Frank Hoffman, which is probably the most cited and influential work on the topic of hybrid warfare, and the subsequent debate. The third subchapter is dedicated to the latest developments and contributions to the debate, with emphasis on transformations the concept underwent in reaction to annexation of Crimea and war in Eastern Ukraine and even later in reaction to the rise of Islamic State in Syria and Iraq.

Even though some works critical to the concept of hybrid warfare will be inevitably mentioned in these subchapters, they are primarily focused on arguments of proponents. Critical works opposing introduction of the hybrid warfare concept will be reviewed in the separate fourth subchapter, since they were regrettably largely ignored by the mainstream of the debate and most of the proponents. The last fifth segment of this chapter will review the debate as a whole and capture the main general trends and themes of the debate as it unfolded and will attempt to illuminate some possible reasons explaining significant shifts that the concept underwent.

## **2.1 Origins of the hybrid warfare concept**

‘Hybrid’ is too common adjective, for it not to be used to describe some war even before establishing the hybrid warfare concept. Indeed, the term ‘hybrid’ was used in 2003 by Tatiana Carayannis to describe contemporary wars in Africa, that are according to her “...complex hybrid wars combining civil war, inter-state war, and cross-border insurgencies...” (Carayannis, 2003, p.232). This use seems to remain unknown to later proponents of the concept. As very different from later uses also seems Eric Simpson’s use of the term to describe conflicts that are neither purely intrastate nor interstate, but fought by one state against one or more non-state groups outside of its territory.<sup>6</sup> (Simpson, 2005) Frank Hoffman cited Robert G. Walker who was reportedly the first to coin the term ‘hybrid wars’ in his unpublished Master Thesis as early as in 1998. (Hoffman, 2007, p.9)

### **2.1.1 Frank Hoffman entering the stage**

Thinking that was to become the later hybrid warfare concept first emerged in a 2005 article ‘Future Warfare: The Rise of Hybrid Wars’ written by General James Mattis and Lieutenant Colonel Frank G. Hoffman and published in U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings. The article, which appeared after publishing of the National Defense Strategy of the United States of America (“NDS”) in March 2005 and before Quadrennial Defence Review, is primarily focused on the nature of a future war to be probably fought by the United States. The authors criticize previous perceived preoccupation of Pentagon with the Revolution in Military Affairs and technological superiority and with reference to wars in Iraq and Afghanistan they reiterate human dimension of the conflicts and need to take into account possible enemy reaction when conducting planning for future wars. Even though they appreciate the 2005 NDS for identifying four emerging challengers (traditional, irregular, catastrophic and disruptive), they maintain, that instead of distinct identified categories, the United States will face “a merger of different modes and means of war” (Mattis and Hoffman, 2005) that they call “Hybrid War”. The concept they are developing is according to the authors an extension of the older concept of “Three Block War” by General Charles

Krulak. Three “blocks” identified by Krulak (essentially fighting, humanitarian and peacekeeping/policing) should be completed with a fourth block including communication and conveying message.

Even though the article addresses war to be fought by the United States, former or contemporary affiliation of both authors with the United States Marine Corps is made apparent by preoccupation with demands these wars are going to have on Marines operating in them. That is not particularly surprising as already noted by Echevarria, who described how different visions of futures were in 1990s influenced by U.S. armed forces service that sponsored them. (Echevarria, 2006, pp.2-3)

Several important and/or problematic aspects of the article have to be highlighted. The first one is slight misinterpretation of the 2005 NDS. Where NDS speaks about “challenges” and explicitly states that single adversaries pose multiple challenges (“North Korea at ones poses traditional, irregular and catastrophic challenges” (Rumsfeld, 2005, p.2), Mattis and Hoffman repeatedly write about “challengers” which term does not appear in the 2005 NDS. This change in meaning significantly weakens their criticism of the 2005 NDS. Indeed, one of authors behind the 2005 NDS later wrote himself, that “Likewise, the dashed lines separating the four quadrants were always intended to symbolize the blending of the challenges and the increased likelihood of hybrid combinations. In hindsight, the hybrid concept was not as well-communicated in the text of the strategy as the author would have preferred.” (Freier, 2007, p.47) and he further clarified that “The challenges are archetypes. None of the four — traditional, irregular, catastrophic, or disruptive — exist now or will exist in the future in pure form. Thus, “hybrid challenges” will remain the norm.” (Freier, 2007, p.46)

The second particular point worth noticing is a part of paragraph providing with admittedly simplified examples of what may a hybrid war look like: “In Hybrid Wars we can expect to simultaneously deal with the fall out of a failed state that owned but lost control of some biological agents or missiles, while combating an ethnically motivated paramilitary force, and a set of radical terrorists who have now been displaced.” (Mattis and Hoffman, 2005) This stands out when compared with later

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<sup>6</sup> Simpson wrote his work with several particular cases in mind, including recent US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, which are also important cases for later hybrid wars scholars.

Hoffman works on hybrid warfare, where he claims that for the warfare to be considered hybrid (and not compound for example), there has to be simultaneous use of distinct modes in single battlespace by one adversary. (see Hoffman, 2009c) The quote above does not suggest at the slightest level the “operational and tactical coordination and fusion” (Hoffman, 2009c) that was later iterated.

### **2.1.2 Hybrid warfare without ‘hybrid’ in its label**

Next important work concerning Hybrid Warfare came once again from Frank Hoffman in the form of his article titled ‘Complex Irregular Warfare: The Next Revolution in Military Affairs’. Even though term “hybrid” is mentioned only few times throughout the article, it addresses the same issues as the later hybrid war concept and Frank Hoffman’s thinking about future conflict in the article is mostly consistent with that presented later. Therefore, because both its content and author are closely related to hybrid warfare, it is considered as a part of development and debate about hybrid warfare in this work, if only for contextual value for the debate as a whole.

In ‘Complex Irregular Warfare: The Next Revolution in Military Affairs’, Hoffman draws extensively on the article ‘Complex Irregular Warfare: The Face of Contemporary Conflict’ (2005), adapting its conclusions slightly and attempting to assess contemporary abilities of the United States armed forces and presenting venues for improvement. After critique of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) Hoffman shortly discusses possible “nature” of new irregular threats, citing the 4<sup>th</sup> Generation Warfare<sup>7</sup>, Three Block War construct and Unrestricted Warfare as possibilities. He continues with the criticism of the 2005 NDS on the basis of its supposed assumption of enemies selecting discrete options of confrontation, with which this work already dealt above<sup>8</sup>. For the purpose of the article, he assumes, that the future will be described in words of Michael Evans ““a world of asymmetric and ethno-political warfare—in which machetes and Microsoft merge, and apocalyptic millenarians wearing Reeboks and Ray Bans dream of acquiring WMD.” (Evans, 2003, p.136) The new aspect this article

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<sup>7</sup> Strong connection of Hoffman’s later hybrid warfare thinking with the earlier concept of 4<sup>th</sup> generation warfare can be clearly seen in his later speech at Boyd 2007 conference where Hoffman essentially claims that both terms are capturing the same phenomenon. (Hoffman, 2007b)

<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the critique once more featured substitution of “challenges” for “challengers”.

brings into the debate is a claim of higher lethality (Hoffman even speaks of “extreme” lethality) of these new irregular conflicts in comparison with the older ones.

What deserves attention are two emerging constants of later hybrid warfare literature appearing in the article. First is the acceptance of War on Terror as actual conflict to which branches of armed forces should adapt (Hoffman, 2006a, p.406). Second is the assumption of highly adaptive nature of future enemies accompanied with a pessimistic view of adaptability of contemporary state-based militaries. On the one hand, it is understandable, since the United States Department of Defence considers terrorism to be a specific kind of irregular warfare, on the other hand, it is problematic, since it presumes military response to terrorism (which is highly controversial and often disputed) and makes the hybrid warfare concept (or complex irregular warfare concept for that matter) suffer from well-known problems of terrorism studies, especially diverse and blurry definitions of terrorism. The incorporation of terrorism probably gives rise to the emphasis on “cunning savagery” of future warfare which is recurrent in later works. Hoffman even claims, that “Cunning savagery and organizational adaptation will be the only constant [of future warfare] ...” (Hoffman, 2006a, p.398)

### **2.1.3 Poster-case introduced**

Roughly at the same time as the article on Complex Irregular Warfare Hoffman also authored an op-ed in Defence News, in which he interpreted 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war as a hybrid conflict. He derived success of Hezbollah from its ability to devise its strategy to target Israeli military vulnerabilities and Israeli failure from their overreliance on stand-off warfare. Apart from what stays the same as in the earlier Hoffman articles briefly reviewed above, the article highlights several points worth of future elaboration. It reiterates the importance of organisational learning and adaptability as key competencies for the future battlefields and the importance of non-kinetic aspects of irregular warfare, especially battle of narratives and strategic communication. Hoffman seems to treat hybrid warfare as a special case of irregular warfare, as in the following passage of the article: “Irregular wars in general, and hybrid wars in particular, reflect a style of war in which ...” (Hoffman, 2006b). Irregular nature of hybrid warfare is also underlined by pointing to its protracted nature (which is somewhat in contrast to the Lebanon War that lasted little over a month). Conventional

aspect of Hezbollah operation is mostly derived from its use of “conventional” weapons (volleys of rockets fired into Israel and use of C802 anti-ship missiles is cited) rather than from tactics. Hoffman generally still counts with hi-tech (or in the words of the 2005 NDS “disruptive”) threats as a part of hybrid warfare throughout the article, however, they will be dropped from the hybrid warfare definitions in later works. What is made apparent in the article is the advocacy for maintaining and expanding land forces that are according to Hoffman “the hard-edged and most relevant of American tools” (Hoffman, 2006b) for hybrid wars. (Antulio Echevarria later identified those labelling future wars as ‘hybrid’ and striving to rethink American Way of War as a ‘landpower advocates’ (Echevarria, 2012)

## **2.2 Hybrid warfare orthodoxy**

### **2.2.1 The rise of hybrid wars**

The year 2007 saw publication of arguably the most important and the most influential work on hybrid warfare. Written by Frank G. Hoffman, ‘Conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: The rise of Hybrid Wars’ started intensive debate about hybrid warfare and remains to be quoted as authoritative work on hybrid warfare. Work is recognized by Hoffman as a result of the ‘Center for Emerging Threats and Opportunities’ research program called “Changing Character of Conflict”, in which Hoffman participated. The article offers the most extensive description of hybrid warfare yet from all works mentioned so far:

*“Hybrid threats incorporate 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. Hybrid Wars can be conducted by both states and a variety of non-state actors. 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 dimensions of conflict. The effects can be gained at all levels of war.*

At the strategic level, many wars have had regular and irregular components. However, in most conflicts, these components occurred in different theatres or in

distinctly different formations. In Hybrid Wars, these forces 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 protracts the conflict, provoke overreactions or extend the costs of security for the defender.” [emphasis added] (Hoffman, 2007a, p.8)

The first sentence of quote is a definition of hybrid warfare by Hoffman. As it is clear from the previous subchapter, this definition of hybrid warfare in this work clearly summarises Hoffman’s previous thinking on hybrid warfare and complex irregular warfare. Other parts, such as those referring to War on Terror, criticism of RMA, ruthlessness of future opponents, unpredictability and adaptability of opponents, importance of information operation and cognitive domain, and 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war as primary case, remain constant and coherent with earlier work and were already discussed above.

The important assertion that is new is that “... the irregular component of the force attempts to become operationally decisive rather than just protracts the conflict, provoke overreactions or extend the costs of security for the defender.” (Hoffman, 2007a, p.8) This is in contrast to Hoffman’s earlier claim that “Rather than short, decisive conflicts, future wars will involve protracted and extremely lethal conflicts of the most savage violence...” (Hoffman, 2006a, p.399) or even other parts of the work that assert that hybrid wars will take place “in the ‘contested zones’ with range of crude yet effective asymmetric approaches ... to draw out conflicts, protract their duration and sap American will.” (Hoffman, 2007a, p.15)

Another important departure from previous works on hybrid warfare is a change of origin of the disruptive element of operations. Earlier works on hybrid warfare remained true to the 2005 NDS definition of disruptive challenges as those possibly emanating from “adversaries who develop and use breakthrough technologies to negate current U.S. advantages in key operational domains.” (Rumsfeld, 2005, p.2) That can be demonstrated by quote from 2006 Hoffman’s article: “This could include states blending high-tech capabilities like anti-satellite weapons, with terrorism and cyber-warfare directed against financial targets.” (Hoffman, 2006b). In ‘Conflict in the 21st century: The rise of Hybrid Wars’, “The disruptive component of Hybrid Wars does not



come from high-end or revolutionary technology but from criminality. Criminal activity is used to sustain the hybrid force or to facilitate the disorder and disruption of target nation.” (Hoffman, 2007a, p.29) The work offers little further elaboration of precise nature or definition of this criminal activity, but it seems probable, that it references to criminal component of Mary Kaldor’s concept of ‘new wars’, which is mentioned in the chapter concerning origins of hybrid warfare concept.

Unfortunately, even this article on hybrid warfare is once more plagued by sometimes convenient interpretation of other works. One example is the passage referring to alleged regret felt by authors of the 2005 NDS for “not having fully documented and explored the Hybrid Warfare phenomena that they believe to pose the most significant threat to U.S. interests in the future.” (Hoffman, 2007a, p.31) Reads the work of Nathan Freier, to which this quote refers, shows that he feels regret for not using the word ‘hybrid’ explicitly and that in his view “The challenges are archetypes. None of the four - traditional, irregular, catastrophic, or disruptive – exist now or will exist in the future in pure form.” (Freier, 2007, p.47) This is indeed substantially different approach to hybridity than the one proposed by Frank Hoffman, since Hoffman treats hybrid warfare as distinct even as broad category of war whereas Freier sees hybridity as an ever-present condition.<sup>9</sup> Hoffman himself indeed militates against the approach to hybrid warfare Freier employed in later works (see Hoffman, 2009a). This makes Hoffman’s claim about feeling of the 2005 NDS authors about hybrid warfare misleading at best.

### **2.2.2 The debate starts**

Years 2008 and 2009 brought a discussion on the topic of hybrid warfare and/or challenges. One part of the debate advocated fairly radically different approach to hybridity in conflict, where second part of debate focused on discussing the concept of hybrid warfare and war as proposed by Hoffman in 2007. Two authors who proposed competing conception about hybrid nature of contemporary conflict are John J. McCuen and Nathan Freier.

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<sup>9</sup> For more detailed discussion of this see subchapter 3.1 of this work.

John McCuen authored the article titled ‘Hybrid Wars’ in March-April 2008 issue of *Military Review*. His take on hybrid wars seems to be largely detached from the mainstream debate, since his take on hybrid war refers to other scholars participating in the debate only by short note “Military theorists have started to call those conflicts “hybrid wars” or “hybrid warfare” (to include the Army Chief of Staff when he recently announced publication of the new Field Manual (FM) 3.0, Full Spectrum Operations) ...” (McCuen, 2008, p.107). It is not entirely surprising that the author considered to be classic of counterinsurgency literature views hybrid war in way notably resembling insurgency-counterinsurgency conflict. His focus on psychological dimension of hybrid wars would be very familiar to any reader of famed FM-3-34 on counterinsurgency. He defines hybrid wars in following way “Although conventional in form, the decisive battles in today’s hybrid wars are fought not on conventional battlegrounds, but on asymmetric battlegrounds within the conflict zone population, the home front population, and the international community population. Irregular, asymmetric battles fought within these populations ultimately determine success or failure.” (McCuen, 2008, p.107) McCuen is in his article primarily concerned with how to win these wars. The key consists in his opinion maintaining legitimacy and minimizing losses to maintain domestic support when simultaneously clearing, controlling and counter-organizing population and rebuilding infrastructure of target countries with legitimacy in mind. The article can be easily perceived as US-centric at best and refighting Vietnam War at worst. Even though the notion of convergence of physical and psychological battlefields is featured in more mainstream works on hybrid warfare, McCuen’s description and approach would easily pass as description of counterinsurgency. But despite its clear divergence with dominant works of Hoffman, many authors seem to continue to follow words rather than content and on this basis continue to consider McCuen’s article a firm part of hybrid warfare debate.

Another major participant of hybrid warfare debate that contested the concept proposed by Hoffman is one of the authors of 2005 NDS, Nathan Freier. He published two articles concerning hybrid warfare debate in 2009, one in ‘Parameters’ and later second in ‘Small Wars Journal’. Since both articles present the same claim and arguments, they will be treated below together. Nathan Freier follows up on his earlier 2007 article ‘Strategic Competition and Resistance in the 21st Century Irregular,

Catastrophic, Traditional, and Hybrid Challenges in Context' (Freier, 2007) with his main argument, that hybridity is ever-present in contemporary environment. He explicitly refuses the term "Hybrid Warfare" since it implies military character of hybrid threat. What he proposes in return is "Hybrid Challenge"<sup>10</sup>, which in his view correctly captures hybridity of threats stemming from a combination of military and non-military components. According to Freier the key for understanding hybrid environment is accepting diverse mission of US Department of Defence, that includes both military and non-military operations with common goal of protecting national interests. According to Freier, what we know is that: "...the strategic environment [is] (more complex) and its challenges [are] (increasingly 'defence-relevant' and not 'defence-specific') ..." (Freier, 2009a, p.2)

There is important point of departure from Hoffman's case for hybrid war. Hoffman speaks about hybridity of strategy of adversaries of the United States in future conflict and hybridity of modes of conflict. Freier, while accepting Hoffman's approach as valid, argues that it is insufficient and too limited to military domain and therefor it allows the Department of Defence to continue to mistakenly focus on armed conflicts rather than acknowledging non-military challenges.

In Freier's view, hybridity lies in a combination of military and civil (non-military) aspects of challenges that the Department of Defence is in his opinion expected to tackle. Freier offers his own description of hybrid threats: "defense-relevant challenges whose origin, character, mode, and principal domain of conflict and/or competition are difficult to identify or classify." (Freier, 2009b, p.7) He elaborates further on defence-relevancy of hybrid threats by stating that: "1) their character is not purely military but military capabilities, by default, are central to their resolution or engagement; and 2) despite the importance of defense contributions they are 'different enough' from classical military problems that they threaten the utility or veracity of key military concepts like threat, attack, defense, defeat, winning, and risk." (Freier, 2009b, p.7)

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<sup>10</sup> That is coherent with the 2005 NDS which spoke as well about challenges.

### 2.2.3 Debate reflected – the first clarifications

Frank G. Hoffman wrote in 2009 several important pieces that reflect on two years of debate since introducing the concept in 2007 and clarify some important aspects of the concept. In reaction to critique of the hybrid warfare concept written by Russle Glenn (Glenn, 2009), Hoffman presented four ways in which the hybrid warfare concept is valuable, since it serves as:

- “• A concept to describe evolving character of conflict (for those looking for a better one or even aware of changes).
- A construct to challenge current “conventional” thinking and the binary intellectual bins that currently frame our debate between Crusaders and Traditionalists.
- A concept that highlights and reinforces the true granularity or breadth of spectrum of human conflict, not as a new bin but as something more reflective of the broader continuum than just COIN.
- A concept that raises awareness of potential risks and informs ongoing threat/force posture debate in the QDR (the most important debate of all given very constrained resources).” (Hoffman, 2009a)

The last point on the role of the concept as a model for future conflicts for which the United States armed forces should prepare was expanded by Hoffman in a separate article in the same year in Strategic Forum, where he proposed hybrid warfare scenario as more likely than conventional warfare and at the same time more dangerous than irregular/insurgency threats and therefore as the best possible ‘focal point’ for designing force posture. (Hoffman, 2009b)

This provides us with an important insight in the ambitions of the concept creator and his view of how utility of concept should be judged. Apart from that, he also somewhat dubiously claims, that utility of the concept was already proven by acceptance it received from a number of defence officials even if the concept itself was not yet proven. (Hoffman, 2009a)

Even more important in clarifying the hybrid warfare concept as presented in 2007 is Hoffman’s article in Armed Forces Journal, which, while primarily dealing with differences between compound warfare and hybrid warfare, features several important

clarifications and slightly changed definition of hybrid threat. In this article Hoffman states, that Hybrid Warfare is waged by “Any adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs a fused mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism and criminal behavior in the battle space to obtain their political objectives.” (Hoffman, 2009c) While any major change is absent, criteria of simultaneity, adaptability, fusion and spatial criteria of battle space are added when we compare this definition with its older version. In addition, what was in 2007 definition described as “conventional capabilities” is clarified as “conventional weapons”. Hoffman provides five binaries capturing his view of the major elements that are understood differently among hybrid warfare scholars.

Modality versus structure: on the question, whether hybrid nature of threat should lie in modes of conflict employed or nature of enemy actor, Hoffman sides with modes of conflict.

Simultaneity: on question, whether enemy has to employ all four modes simultaneously or whether it is sufficient for enemy to demonstrate ability to employ each of modes throughout campaign to be hybrid threat, Hoffman stays with the former.

Fusion: instead of merely employing multiple modes of conflict, a hybrid threat has to fuse those on operational and tactical level, according to Hoffman.

Multimodality: in opposition to those, who deem employing two or more of modes of conflict sufficient, Hoffman sees employing all four modes as necessary for the adversary to be hybrid threat.

Criminality: on matter, whether criminality constitutes separate mode of conflict or it just fulfils supportive role, Hoffman maintains that criminality is deliberate mode of conflict.

On criminality, Hoffman elaborates more than in previous works, when equating it in the context of hybrid warfare with “disruptive social behaviour”. Further, he claims, that “the rise of narco-terrorist and nefarious transnational organizations that use smuggling, drugs, human trafficking, extortion, etc., to undermine the legitimacy of local or national government is fairly evident.” (Hoffman, 2009c) In this part of the article, Hoffman seems to suggest political motives of behaviour of the mentioned

criminal organizations. He writes that the above mentioned organisations *use* those acts *to undermine* the legitimacy of governments.

On the matter of relationship between the compound war concept and the hybrid war concept, Hoffman argues, that compound war requires only a combination of regular with irregular forces coordinated on strategic level and present in different theatres. The hybrid wars can therefore be a specific subset of compound wars, since they demand further fusion and simultaneity on operational and tactical level in single battle space. (Hoffman, 2009c)

Interesting new point on hybrid warfare was brought to surface in public correspondence discussion between Van Riper and Hoffman on Small Wars Journal blog. Van Riper criticised the concept of hybrid warfare as unhelpful, obfuscating reality of fact that ‘warfare is warfare’. Frank Hoffman in his response clarified, that in his opinion, it is true, that ‘war is war’, but warfare as subset of war does indeed change. This may indeed be seen as point towards discarding the term ‘hybrid war’ in favour of the term ‘hybrid warfare’. (Hoffman and Van Riper, 2009) But Hoffman’s usage of the term ‘hybrid war’ throughout his articles even in the same year substantially undermines such argument.

#### **2.2.4 Adoption in the United States Army**

How was the concept of hybrid warfare and hybrid threats adopted in the United States military can be shown by reviewing the United States Army Training Circular 7-100, published by the end of the year 2010. (U.S. Army, 2010) The term was adopted in other official documents, but the army training circular provides much more detailed description, which demonstrates more of thinking behind it.

The circular provides this definition of hybrid threat: “A hybrid threat is the diverse and dynamic combination of regular forces, irregular forces, and/or criminal elements all unified to achieve mutually benefitting effects.” (U.S. Army, 2010, p.v) According to the circular, they operate in four dimensions - diplomatic-political, informational, economic and military-paramilitary.

The relation among the categories is further clarified later in the circular, where it is stated that categories can “... combine, associate, or affiliate...” (U.S. Army, 2010,

p.2-1) There is clearly discernible treatment of hybrid threat as an alliance of actors rather than single actor perpetrating more activities. At the same time, other statements in the text seem to point to hybrid threats as a singular actor, for example when it states that “The intent of hybrid threats [is] to obtain and use weapons of mass destruction (WMD)...” (U.S. Army, 2010, p.2-7) Message therefore remains unclear on whether hybrid threats are actors or a cooperating group of actors.

Especially valuable is the space dedicated in training circular to identification of components, which is something notoriously lacking in other works on hybrid warfare (especially in its more orthodox tradition). The approach to defining the components is at the same time disputable at best. The definition of a terrorist (even though it is not explicitly mentioned in the definition) is present in the training circular, but it is extremely broad “An individual who commits an act or acts of violence or threatens violence in pursuit of political, religious, or ideological objectives.” (U.S. Army, 2010, p.2-6). There is even more detailed part on the criminal component, but it contains no definition of criminal organisation.

The concept of hybrid threat in the circular maintains a number of points specific to ‘orthodox’ tradition of hybrid warfare, including particular US-centric or more broadly western-centric approach. It shows clearly in the distinction among regional operations, transition operations and adaptive operations, described in the circular. The notion behind them is, that the threat conducts one type of operations in the region, and then transition to adaptive operation once it is facing superior intervening opponent. The underlining story is fairly clear-cut. Hybrid threat acts offensively in region exploiting opportunities and should it fail to prevent outside intervention, it shifts to more defensive operations aimed at expulsion of the intervening force, after which it shifts back to offensive regional action.

It is an understandable approach for a training material for the United States army, but it also significantly limits applicability of the concept on number of cases, when compared to more general concepts of hybrid warfare/threat. Despite that, Training Circular 7-100 is one of the most detailed works on hybrid threats to this day with fairly detailed description and definition. It is surprising, that it is not studied or referred to in later works.

### **2.2.5 Advocating efforts continue**

In 2010, another article by Hoffman mostly reiterated what he already proposed in the previous articles, defending new terminology as helpful in stimulating new thinking. One point that is worth noticing is another apparent change in terminology, when Hoffman does not use the term ‘hybrid warfare’ and instead consistently speaks about ‘hybrid threat’. The other part worth mentioning in this particular article is the one dealing with close connection between hybrid warfare and irregular warfare in Hoffman’s thinking: “There is a warning here for other advanced naval forces: they cannot afford to overlook force protection and defensive requirements against maritime armed groups or hybrid threats that possess state-like capabilities despite their relative small size or non-state status. Irregular warfare is becoming increasingly lethal and complex, a tactic employed not just by the weak, but the cunning, as well.” (Hoffman, 2010, p.447) This passage of the text seems to be hinting hybrid warfare as a subset or a special case of irregular warfare. This connection could be found already in earlier Hoffman’s works including his articles on ‘complex irregular warfare’ that preceded the appearance of the term ‘hybrid warfare’. Otherwise the article is dedicated to extending hybrid warfare concept beyond land warfare to include naval combat operations, with special attention dedicated to threat posed by Iran to naval forces and maritime transportation in Persian Gulf. Connection of naval dimension of hybrid threat to Hoffman’s preferred definition of hybrid warfare remains unclear despite the article, since Hoffman does not mention terrorist or criminal dimension of Iran’s activities in any way.

Hoffman continued his advocacy of Hybrid warfare concept in 2011 on pages of Infinity Journal, where he once more debated utility of the hybrid warfare concept for informing the debate on designing force posture of the Armed Forces of the United States. The article mostly repeats what Hoffman wrote two years earlier in Strategic Forum (Hoffman, 2009b). However, this article mentions a new case of hybrid warfare in the form of second Anglo-Boer war, which somewhat undermines the claims of connection between modern technologies proliferation and emergence of hybrid warfare (or at least significantly changes the meaning of ‘modern technologies’). (Hoffman, 2011, p.17) Two other points from this particular article deserve at least a brief mention. The first is the explicit connection of hybrid threat scenarios to preparation of



expeditionary forces. (Hoffman, 2011, p.21) The second is placement of ‘HEAT’ concept<sup>11</sup> as lying outside of scope of the hybrid warfare concept. That view is in direct contradiction to what Nathan Freier earlier wrote on hybrid threats, since he explicitly included HEAT in his “Hybrid War Menu”. (Freier, 2009b)

Specific approach to hybrid threats was taken by Christopher Bowers, who authored the article about Hybrid threats in Parameters in 2012. He went beyond a simple combination of different modes of warfare, which he recognized as too common and therefore insufficient for a new concept. Instead, he essentially defined hybrid threat as an enemy, who combines the different modes successfully achieving synergistic effect by sufficient ability in all of aspects. He places hybrid threats at intersection of complexity of terrain (both human and *physical*), capabilities and maturity. The tricky part is, that Bower at the same time explicitly states, that terrain can be too complex for a hybrid threat, it may have too much of a capability (WMD) or it can be too mature (nation state military). (Bower, 2012) Bower’s approach is very much antithesis to the approach of Nathan Freier, since it treats hybrid warfare in extremely exclusive terms, which is indeed rare among its adherents. His work is rather logical extension of Hoffman’s approach attempting more precise definition<sup>12</sup> to deal with criticism of hybrid warfare for its features being common throughout the history.

## 2.2.6 Historical occurrence of hybrid warfare?

Specific approach to hybrid warfare was taken by Williamson Murray and Peter R. Mansoor in their book ‘Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the present’. (Murray and Mansoor, 2012) Their definition of hybrid warfare is much broader than Hoffman’s. They define hybrid war as “conflict involving 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, p.2) As they themselves concede, they do not differentiate between hybrid warfare and compound warfare.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> HEAT stands for ‘High End Asymmetric Threats’.

<sup>12</sup> It can also be understood as an attempt to improve differentiation criterion of the concept.

<sup>13</sup> Hoffman’s differentiation between compound and hybrid warfare was already covered in section 2.2.3 of this work.

That is also clear from the case studies in the book. Based on this, they reach similar conclusions as Colin Gray (2012) that such hybridity is rather common.

The lack of the differentiation between hybrid and compound warfare was also critically noted by Hoffman in his review of the book, in which he stated, that “As there is no universally accepted definition of hybrid threats or warfare, the editors are free to establish their own framework. However, crafting too broad a definition allows everything to be included and diminishes utility of the concept.” (Hoffman, 2012) This incompatibility of the concepts employed by Murray and Mansoor and the one employed by Hoffman went regrettably relatively unnoticed.

### **2.2.7 The great pause**

For this section providing us with more information on Frank Hoffman’s concept of hybrid warfare, we need to fast forward to 2014, when he published the article ‘On Not-So-New Warfare: Political Warfare vs. Hybrid Threats’. He himself seems to reflect notable decrease of activity in discussing hybrid warfare in preceding years, when he complains: “We have retreated from grey area conflicts and Shadow Wars to chase the next big shiny thing, whether it’s the rise of robotic warfare or some imaginary, long shot disruptive threat.” (Hoffman, 2014)

Hoffman’s latest article is especially important for the reason that it is the only article by Hoffman dedicated to application of hybrid warfare concept to describe the conflict in Eastern Ukraine and annexation of Crimea. His application, which is possibly even more important, betrays some of his rather convenient definitions of constitutive parts of his concept of hybrid warfare. Alarming in this respect is the passage asking whether East Ukraine conflict fits Hoffman’s definition: “The criminal aspects of the Ukrainian situation are not as evident so far, but the catastrophic terrorism posed by the shooting down of MH17 is obvious (even if the incident is a gross accident).” (Hoffman, 2014)

Two things about this statement should give a pause to any cautious reader. Firstly, Hoffman claims, that shooting down of MH17 constitutes an act of terrorism even if it was an accident. This does not fit the majority of definitions of terrorism, which explicitly or implicitly presume deliberate intention as necessary for some act to

be considered terrorist. Definitions include deliberate intention, political motivation and deliberate induction of fear, all of which are irreconcilable with accidental action. (Weinberg et al., 2004) Secondly, the term ‘catastrophic terrorism’ was used for an event far more significant than downing of single commercial plane. In the 2005 NDS, catastrophic challenges were posed by use of WMD (or other weapon with WMD-like effect) by terrorists or rogue states. Even earlier definition of catastrophic terrorism cited by Freier spoke about thousands of dead and/or disrupted lives of hundreds of thousands. (Freier, 2007, pp.27-28) Downing of MH17 does not come even close to impact described before as ‘catastrophic’.

In this article, Hoffman also uses Russian-Georgian War in 2008 as another case of hybrid warfare. When comparing hybrid warfare with political warfare, he clarifies that warfare was traditionally used for military/violent aspect of war and actions described by the concept of political warfare, such as creation of alliances, economic measures and others therefore do not fit the general understanding of warfare. Nonetheless, he admits, that definitions of hybrid warfare did not cover these actions before. In his own words: “The problem with the hybrid threats definition is that it focuses on combinations of tactics associated with violence and warfare (except for criminal acts) but completely fails to capture other non-violent actions. Thus, it does not address instruments including economic and financial acts, subversive political acts like creating or covertly exploiting trade unions and NGOs as fronts, or information operations using false websites and planted newspaper articles...” (Hoffman, 2014).

He also deals with the issue, who should be responsible for studying and countering hybrid warfare. Hoffman strongly questions the possibility that the State Department would be responsible. Such decision in his opinion “...dooms the entire enterprise to memo writing.” (Hoffman, 2014) Both of the two last quotes from Hoffman capture particularly well the dramatic change that was already happening at the time to hybrid warfare debate and that has just grown stronger ever since. Military focus of hybrid warfare orthodoxy was to be changed for civilian, military authors were to nearly disappear from discourse.

## **2.3 Reinvention of hybrid warfare**

Before diving into the discourse on Hybrid warfare since 2014, it is necessary to explain the reasons why this subchapter will not follow the inner chronological order of works of preceding subchapters. While in the first subchapter, many works were not connected in any way and there was just a few of them, ordering them chronologically posed no serious risks. In the second subchapter, the whole discourse on hybrid warfare was led only by several authors and most of their works were somehow interconnected. There were not too many radically different views, that would confuse the reader when ordered chronologically together in single subchapter. What helped in this respect was also, that the debate was during this period generally limited geographically to the United States and in terms of authors restricted to serving or former military officers and defence officials. On the contrary, chronological ordering of works allowed tracking of the development that the debate and thinking of individual authors (Hoffman in particular) underwent during what was described in this work as the era of hybrid warfare orthodoxy.

### **2.3.1 The term reintroduced**

Emergence of the term hybrid warfare as the label of choice for Russian interventions in Ukraine caused nothing short of explosion of new contributions to hybrid warfare debate<sup>14</sup>, accompanied by increased demand on part of national governments and militaries and even international organisations.<sup>15</sup> What was previously the topic debated by several expert figures with similar background without much, if any, coverage in media, got instantaneously to the front pages of newspapers and drew attention of numerous experts and think-tanks with radically different backgrounds, fields of expertise and opinions on hybrid warfare. The whole discourse was therefore shattered and while in the era of hybrid warfare orthodoxy it was possible to review almost all concerned works, doing something similar in the period after the

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<sup>14</sup> To back this claim with some admittedly crude data, search of the terms ‘hybrid warfare’, ‘hybrid war’ and ‘hybrid threat’ in google search engine resulted in approximately 20 000 hits before and in the year 2013, when the crisis in Ukraine started. By mid-April 2016, the number of hits quadrupled to more than 80 000.

<sup>15</sup> This popularity of the term was apparently seen in a quite positive light by some Russians. (Popescu, 2015b, p.1)

outbreak of war in Eastern Ukraine borders impossible (and goes far beyond the scope of this work). On the bright side, when compared to previous subchapter, there is no need for tracking development of thinking of individual authors, since most of the authors wrote only a single piece on hybrid warfare.

Chronological order would for the reasons explained above make little sense and would be extremely confusing. This is why this subchapter is further divided according to broadly understood general directions of works. This should be under no circumstances understood as some rigorous categorization of those works and was made only to provide more easily readable narrative about developments of the hybrid warfare concept in reaction to Ukraine crisis (and rise of Islamic State). Each of the further subchapters will revolve around single important or particular well researched work and use further works to complement or illustrate. This is a step necessary in order to make the amount of work manageable.

### **2.3.2 NATO and hybrid warfare**

The NATO debate on hybrid threats started well before the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, but since it shares many common points with later works, it is covered in this subchapter. On the other hand, it is also best connected to hybrid warfare orthodoxy and therefor it deserves being covered first in this subchapter. First obtainable public document<sup>16</sup> concerning hybrid threats was written already in 2010. ‘Bi-SC Input for a New NATO Capstone Concept for the Military Contribution to Countering Hybrid Threats’ was created collectively by offices of ‘Supreme Allied Commander, Europe’ and Supreme Allied Commander, Transformation and in collaboration with other NATO bodies and national subject-matter experts. The document provides the following definition of hybrid threats: “Hybrid threats are those posed by adversaries, with the ability to simultaneously employ conventional and non-conventional means adaptively in pursuit of their objectives.” (NATO, 2010, p.2)

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<sup>16</sup> The Government Accountability Office report contains a definition agreed upon in 2010 by the NATO Military Working Group, which is likely earlier version of the later definition from Input for a new NATO Capstone Concept which is provided in the text above. The definition as quoted in the report is: “A hybrid threat is one posed by any current or potential adversary, including state, non-state and terrorists, with the ability, whether demonstrated or likely, to simultaneously employ conventional and

Apart from the definition, the document further elaborates on increasingly unconstrained operational environment, in which “globalisation and increased access to international resources and modern communication enablers” (NATO, 2010, p.3) and regional instability are making Hybrid threats more challenging. Several particular points about contemporary hybrid threats are discussed further in the document. Interconnectedness bringing together a number of adversaries to collaborate, use of misinformation facilitated by near-instantaneous information systems, exploiting rules and laws, including national restrictions and rules of engagements and international law and finally diverse means and ways. This last point deserves more attention since it lies at the core of definition and also lied at core of most definitions in orthodox tradition of hybrid warfare. The document cites, that “Hybrid threats may contain both nonlethal and lethal fusions of conventional weaponry, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) materials, terrorism, espionage, cyber attack and criminality, supported by maliciously designed information operations and legitimate business organisations.” (NATO, 2010, p.3)

These means and ways correspond to those cited by Frank Hoffman. Components of criminality, terrorism and conventional weaponry remain the same. Information operations were usually mentioned by Hoffman but never included in the definition. What constitutes divergence in this respect is explicit mention of espionage and cyber attacks, CBRN materials, explicit mention of the possibility of non-lethal form. This is especially interesting, since Hoffman did build most of his articles on hybrid warfare as especially lethal form of warfare (indeed more lethal than regular insurgency). (for example Hoffman, 2007a, p.16) Another important definitional difference is that NATO’s definition enumerates possible elements of hybrid threat where Hoffman cites necessary components of hybrid warfare.

The last important divergence from Hybrid warfare orthodoxy is clear already from the title of the work. In point 11 of the concept paper, it is stated, that “Hybrid threats will have elements that are relevant to defence. Their character is not purely military but military capabilities may contribute to aspects of their prevention,

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non conventional means adaptively, in pursuit of their objectives.” (United States Government Accountability Office, 2010, p.15)

resolution or consequence management. Their breadth will demand that NATO be better able to provide a coordinated response between Alliance members and also with the international community in the framework of a wider civil-military response.” (NATO, 2010, p.3) This constitutes important break with the tradition. The issue of whether responsibility for countering hybrid threats lies with civilian or military institutions was introduced before by Freier and Hoffman, but the answer of both preferred military. (Hoffman, 2014; Freier, 2009a) The NATO concept paper makes it evident, that preference for military is no longer the case. This just heralded the emerging trend of civilianization of hybrid warfare.

This document probably belongs to the best prepared papers so far on hybrid threats/hybrid warfare but probably because it is hard to find, it seems to be mostly forgotten by most of the later authors, especially after the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. Three works followed and expanded the line of thought introduced in the NATO concept paper. The first one was written by a team of authors in the Prism magazine. (Aaronson et al., 2011) One or more of the authors probably participated in experiments conducted by NATO before and after publishing of the above mentioned concept paper, since reflexions of these experiments are mentioned in the paper and offer interesting insight in pre-Ukraine NATO thinking on hybrid threats. Issues raised by the experiments were, according to the paper, the cooperation of NATO with important civilian players, NATO engagement with industry, particularly in cyber and energy sectors, dealing with non-military security threats and adaptability of NATO bureaucracy and processes in rapidly changing world and emerging security threats. (Aaronson et al., 2011, p.112) It also states, that nearly one hundred participants of a week-long experiment were from private sector, which constitutes further evidence for civilianization of the hybrid warfare debate. (Aaronson et al., 2011, p.122) Both the highlighted issues and participation of private sector professionals can further illustrate new non-military approach to hybrid threats.

Another important illustration of the changed approach to hybrid threats is the introduction of the element of problematic attribution of hybrid threats to a particular actor, issue possibly connected to introduction of far more subtle elements in hybrid warfare including cyber-attacks and inclusion of non-lethal possibility of hybrid threat scenario. This broadening of understanding is at least partially acknowledged by the

authors, when they write, that “Admittedly, hybrid threat is an umbrella term encompassing a wide variety of existing adverse circumstances and actions, such as terrorism, migration, piracy, corruption, ethnic conflict, and so forth. What is new, however, is the possibility of NATO facing the adaptive and systematic use of such means singularly and in combination by adversaries in pursuit of long-term political objectives, as opposed to their more random occurrence, driven by coincidental factors.” (Aaronson et al., 2011, p.115)

Finally, unfortunately we do not know, with what sources the authors of NATO concept paper worked (even though the means identified by them would suggest that they did use the work of Frank Hoffman). But interestingly enough, when the authors of the article in Prism mention, that NATO is not alone in preparing for hybrid scenarios and that the United States do work on this, none of the work of Freier or Hoffman or even McCuen or any other author interested in hybrid warfare is mentioned. Instead, they cite U.S. Department of Defence directive definition of ‘irregular warfare’ and ‘National Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime’. (Aaronson et al., 2011, pp.115-116) This is regrettably also indicative of the trend of lacking (sufficient) knowledge of previous works on the topic and usage of the term ‘hybrid threat’ that was to develop even more later after the war in the Eastern Ukraine.

Another article published in 2011 and reflecting the effort of NATO to cope with hybrid threats was written by Sascha-Dominik Bachmann. Focusing almost solely on cyber-attacks, it demonstrates practical impact of different approach to hybrid threats. Since new definition works with possible components instead of necessary components, Bachmann uses hybrid threat as general term encompassing different emerging threats and works with cyber attacks, which according to him “resemble a kind of hybrid threat which gained more publicity in recent years”. (Bachmann, 2011, p.25) There is clear understanding that cyber attack in itself is hybrid threat. Such understanding may possibly go against the NATO concept and it would be certainly incompatible with Hoffman concept since both base their understanding on mixing or combining different means and ways.

This representation of Hybrid threat may be well traced back to already mentioned NATO experiment, since Gunneriusson after participating in that experiment



took very similar approach to hybrid warfare, but managed to make his approach more explicit than Bachmann. (Gunneriusson, 2012) Gunneriusson essentially follows technological heritage of the orthodox concept, that is a combination of advanced technology, its availability and non-state or weak actors.<sup>17</sup> Gunneriusson therefore treats cyber-attacks and even social media as existing hybrid threats. Additionally, he describes the Nanotechnologies and Bio-hacking as emerging hybrid threats. He does not provide much in way of definition of a hybrid threat, but he treats it as a term encompassing future technological surprises, using even the term ‘hybrid opportunities’. Based on this, he calls for closer cooperation of military and civilian sector, especially private sector. (Gunneriusson, 2012)

Should the reader have the feeling at this point, that something went horribly wrong during that experiment, which resulted in hybrid threat concept being turned upside down, Rex Brynen blog post about his experience from the experiment and Milante’s reaction to it may help provide some tangible ground to support that feeling. Brynen explains that debating conceptual utility was missing the NATO debate revolving around hybrid threats. Writing about problems NATO had with reorienting on other task than conventional warfare (against Warsaw Pact), Brynen notes that hybrid threat concept “seems to serve as something of a sugar-coating to facilitate a shift of focus, and as a terminological lever intended to open up issues of preparation, training, capacity, analysis, and necessary partnerships for 21<sup>st</sup> century security challenges.” (Brynen, 2011) An ambiguous concept as way through bureaucracy is not an unknown case. As Rosa Brooks noted when commenting on the concept of Regionally Aligned Forces of U.S. Army: “In that context, RAF’s ambiguity enables the concept to be sold in half a dozen different ways to as many different constituencies.” (Brooks, 2014)

Focus in several recently mentioned articles (Aaronson et al., 2011; Gunneriusson, 2012) on civilian-military cooperation may also originate in the experiment, which is praised by Brynen for developing contacts between NATO and ‘everyone else’, which may have been one of central intentions of organizing the experiment, since clear majority of 75 participants were civilians. The focus of the

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<sup>17</sup> Clear formulation of those views in work belonging more to the orthodox tradition of hybrid warfare can be the publication of Joint Irregular Warfare centre of U.S. Army. (Joint Irregular Warfare Centre of

experiment may be illustrated by its identification as a “a conference introducing elements of statebuilding, peacebuilding and nationbuilding in the context of 21<sup>st</sup> century violence and threats to stability” (Milante, 2011).

The picture about hybrid threats concept, with which the participants were leaving the conference may plausibly be summarised by quoting Brynen, that “It seems to work fine as a shorthand for ‘all that messy, non-conventional war stuff NATO might do.’ I’m not sure the alliance could agree on anything that would work any better.” (Brynen, 2011) That can be just complemented by part of Milante’s response: “Furthermore, hybrid threats just ended up, eventually, by the end of the week, being anything we don’t expect – I guess it wouldn’t be particularly compelling for a new doctrine to just call itself, ‘Responding to unexpected threats’... “(Milante, 2011)

In June 2012, NATO stopped its work on countering hybrid threats reportedly due to lack of financial resources and political will. (Bachmann and Gunneriusson, 2015, p.79)

### **2.3.3 Russian hybrid warfare**

Russian intervention in Crimea and later in the Eastern Ukraine was probably the single most important moment for the discourse on hybrid warfare and threats. It certainly gave hybrid warfare theorist a new poster case superseding previously favoured case of 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war. It is hard to trace, who was the first one, who in the general confusion in the west about how to call Russian actions used the hybrid warfare label. According to Rácz, hybrid warfare label gained traction “when NATO decided to adopt the expression. In a NATO Review video posted on 3 July 2014 NATO publicly declared this new form of warfare to be a ‘hybrid war’.” (Rácz, 2015, p.41)

There is huge amount of literature attempting to describe Russian conduct in Ukraine, however this work focuses only on those, which employ the label of hybrid warfare, hybrid threat or hybrid war. Large number of articles written by journalists or

published in regular media will be treated only peripherally since concern of this work is expert discourse about the concept, rather than popular understanding of the concept.

An important point on distinguishing post-2014 works on hybrid warfare has to be made here. Those works, that use the term hybrid warfare (and other mentioned terms) to describe conflict in Eastern Ukraine usually also often provide some framework for putting Russian operations in Eastern Ukraine in the tradition of similar tactics and strategies of Russian Federation and even Soviet Union. They often treat hybrid warfare label as a new overarching term for those tactics and strategies. This allows us to identify this body of work as another more or less identifiable group of post-2014 work on hybrid warfare, which can be treated separately.

When taking the interest in views of hybrid warfare stemming from the case of Eastern Ukraine and Crimea, it is necessary to at least briefly review what is called the Gerasimov doctrine. General Valery Gerasimov, the Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Federation formulated his views on changing character of conflict in the article in *Military-Industrial Courier* in 2013. Many of the authors who assessed later the conflict between Ukraine and Russia in terms of hybrid warfare still see the Gerasimov doctrine essentially as a ‘hybrid’ doctrine and it is logical, that a lot of their thinking has roots in his writing and therefore would be hard to interpret them without at least general review of the main points he raised.

The main claims of Gerasimov’s article consist in blurring of war and peace in 21<sup>st</sup> century and growing importance of non-military and even non-violent means in reaching political objectives. As a main case supporting these claims Gerasimov cites events of coloured revolutions which he sees as a result of deliberate manipulation by external actors. In his words, these events confirm, that “a perfectly thriving state can, in a matter of months and even days, be transformed into an arena of fierce armed conflict, become a victim of foreign intervention, and sink into a web of chaos, humanitarian catastrophe, and civil war.” (Galeotti, 2014) He sees such results of externally induced action as comparable to ‘real war’.

We can find some common ground between Hoffman and Gerasimov, since Gerasimov is also concerned with coordination between different means. But Gerasimov writes about political, economic, informational and humanitarian measures,

the protest potential of the population and concealed military involvement of special-operation forces and information operations. Overt use of force (still under some legitimate guise) is seen only as a finishing move cementing gains.

He places emphasis on asymmetric warfare and creation of “permanently operating front through the entire territory of the enemy state”, since both do reappear under the label of hybrid warfare later. It is important to note that Gerasimov does not use any particular term to cover his concept of contemporary and future warfare. It is admittedly a speculation, but this possibly helped to fuel later hunt for the term to cover this concept, which resulted in a number of different labels including new generation war, non-linear war, special war and also hybrid war. (Galeotti, 2014; Rácz, 2015)

As a centrepiece, embodying most of ideas of this part of literature treating hybrid warfare as Russian phenomenon, can be used already cited book by András Rácz ‘Russia’s Hybrid War in Ukraine: Breaking the Enemy’s Ability to Resist’. As already noted above, there is plenty of literature of this kind, but Rácz’s account stands out as particularly complete, coherent and well-argued and the rest of similar works which were surveyed will be cited only to complement or contrast his account.

Rácz used inductive method to identify functioning of hybrid warfare from the case of Russian operations in Ukraine since 2014. He divides hybrid war in three phases, each consisting of three sections. The first phase of hybrid war is preparatory, in which aggressor is making preparations for later operations. All actions in the first phase are non-violent, often legal and also unknown to the target country or international audience. The three sections of the first phase are strategic preparation, political preparation and operational preparation. Strategic preparation includes identifying vulnerabilities of military and administration of the target state and preparing position for forming opinion both inside the target country and internationally. Political preparation consists of exaggerating cleavages in target country’s society, bribing officials and establishing connection to local business and criminal networks. Operational preparation consists of launching political pressure and disinformation campaign against target country and mobilizing both acquired actors

inside the target country and military forces of aggressor country<sup>18</sup> under the pretext of military exercise.

Second phase is ‘hybrid’ attack itself. First section of the attack phase is called by Rácz ‘Exploding the tension’. In this section, the aggressor employs violence through inducing and organising domestic protest, using provocation, sabotage and special forces accompanied by massive information/disinformation campaign. While attempting to gain control of government buildings and information infrastructure, aggressor deters attacked government from counteracting by threatening conventional invasion. The second section of the attack phase is ‘Ousting the central government from target region’. In this section, getting complete control of both information and administrative infrastructure, achieving monopoly on information exchange. Military of targeted country in the region is to be dealt with in non-violent manner by undermining moral, blockading, and bribing officers. While this goes on, other military and economic pressure is to be made on target country by aggressor state, while the central government’s international position is discredited and undermined and view of the nature of the conflict in the eyes of international audience is distorted through informational campaign.

Third and last section of hybrid campaign is according to Rácz stabilization phase, in which assaulting state is cementing its gains. This is supposed to be achieved by the first section of the third phase, political stabilization, which consists of organizing referendums in targeted regions resulting in independence or joining attacking country with strong diplomatic support of attacking side. Second section is either (possibly covert) employment of military forces of the attacking state or annexing of the territory. The last section of the last phase is permanent limitation of strategic freedom of the attacked country, which suffered loss of economic resources and people, domestic instability and lack of control over its territory, which limits its ability to enter alliances.

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<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, despite framing phases in general terms, Rácz explicitly names Russian forces in his table of the sections of the first phase. This is further evidence of only limited attempt at generalization of findings beyond the case of Russian Federation.

Apart from discussion of the phases, Rácz debates reasons why Russian hybrid war succeeded in Ukraine and from these reasons he deduces prerequisites for successful hybrid attack. These are conventional superiority of attacking states (preventing attacked side from escalating), weak government and security forces of targeted country, lasting regional and concentrated dissatisfaction with central government in the targeted country, presence of dissatisfied (Russian) minority as a source of a legitimacy for aggressor, media presence both in the targeted nation and internationally, and proximity or ability to provide logistic support to the elements within targeted nation.

Rácz does not argue that hybrid warfare would be a novel phenomenon in international security. As he states: “Basically, all the tools and means employed by Russia in the framework of hybrid warfare have long been parts of the Soviet/Russian foreign and security policy inventory, as well as of the history of asymmetric warfare.” (Rácz, 2015, p.87) This quote at the same time to a degree betrays primary focus on Russian affairs and strategy, both historical and present, which takes precedence over broader utility of concept for more diverse cases and circumstances.

### **2.3.4 Middle-eastern hybrid warfare**

In parallel with the outburst of literature covering the alleged case of Hybrid warfare in Ukraine, some authors find hybridity in other serious security issue – rise of Islamic State (IS) in Syria. Cases of hybrid warfare in middle east is hardly anything new, since the first poster-case of hybrid warfare was Lebanese Hezbollah and Hoffman also explored possibilities of hybrid warfare on sea on case of Iran (Hoffman, 2010), so the case of IS constitutes rather a return to old empirical field than exploration of a new one.

One article explicitly advocating categorization of IS as a Hybrid threat was written by Jasper and Moreland in 2014 and published in Small Wars Journal. (Jasper and Moreland, 2014) It represents continuation of what is in this work called hybrid warfare orthodoxy that is more military and American tradition of thought on hybrid threats. Despite Ukraine crisis well on its way and hybrid warfare label being used to describe it for half a year, there is not a single reference in the article to any of events or literature concerning Hybrid warfare in Ukraine. Instead, the primary point of reference

on hybrid warfare was Hoffman's article in *Armed Forces Journal* in 2009 (Hoffman, 2009c). This can be seen just as another example of fractured character of hybrid warfare/threats debate, which hampers any progress on issues of concepts.

The authors tried to expand on Hoffman's concept from 2009 by adding other features (some of which were proposed earlier). Their proposed definition is: the hybrid threats "simultaneously and adaptively employ a fused mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, cyber attacks, and criminal behavior, supported by a malicious information campaign." (Jasper and Moreland., 2014) Importance of information campaign is stressed when compared with earlier Hoffman's works as are WMDs. When compared with literature published at the same time on hybrid warfare in Ukraine, there is much more attention given to use of terror and ambition and ability of non-state actor to control and govern territory. Authors also comment on marriage of zeal and capability in IS.

The article in general suffers from all too common shortcoming of works on hybrid warfare, which is somewhat circular logic of adjusting the definition of the concept based on case and then demonstrating, that the case fits adjusted concept. This indeed does not contribute much to improving general professional lexicon and producing more widely acceptable categorization of war or warfare.

These differences between literature on 'Russian' hybrid warfare and 'IS' hybrid warfare can be shown even better on the case of conference on 'NATO and New Ways of Warfare: Defeating Hybrid Threats'.<sup>19</sup> The conference tried to cover common points of threats posed both by Russia and IS, describing both as a hybrid threat. It is not hard to imagine; how difficult it would be to produce one set of answers to so different actors. And despite the effort of rapporteur of the conference, professor Julian Lindley-French, the difficulty of coming with a single set of recommendations for both threats is

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<sup>19</sup> It is admittedly somewhat arbitrary to place this conference report in this section, since it would fit as well in other section of this subchapter, since it lies in the intersection of NATO and hybrid warfare, Russian hybrid warfare and Middle-Eastern hybrid warfare. It is placed in Middle-Eastern hybrid warfare because it is one of few works in this category and for this reason it brings more novel information in this topic than in other ones.

clearly visible in the report from conference<sup>20</sup>. There is no single definition of hybrid warfare in the report, but there are several statements about its nature. On the first page of the report it is stated, that “Defined as the denial of – and defection from – standard norms and principles of international relations in pursuit of narrow interests, hybrid warfare in today’s world is strategic in its ambition and employs a mix of disinformation, destabilising gambits and intimidation to force an adversary to comply with those interests. The essential purpose of hybrid warfare is to keep adversary politically, militarily and societally off-balance.” (Lindley-French, 2015, p.1) Some of the elements of this quote should sound familiar to the reader. Disregard for international law as an element of hybrid threats already appeared in NATO document reviewed earlier in this chapter (NATO, 2010). Keeping enemy of balance is a significant feature of literature on Russian hybrid warfare. (Rácz, 2015) What is mostly new is alleged coercive nature of hybrid warfare. That was implicitly present in works of some previous authors, mostly as feature that is common to hybrid warfare and insurgency (both are trying to achieve their goals through sapping will of enemy rather than by destroying his forces and achieving them directly). But coercion was in none of previous works one of central features of hybrid warfare. Apart from coercion and keeping opponent off-balance, the statement also cites disinformation, which is well in accordance with most of the latest literature on hybrid warfare.

But what is missing are otherwise traditional central features of hybrid warfare, which are its conventional, irregular, terrorist and criminal elements, established by Hoffman (Hoffman, 2007a) and honoured more or less by majority of later authors.

The report also lists six lines of operation of hybrid warfare. The use of conventional military force (even if unmarked), threatened use of nuclear forces, destabilisation and disruption through cyber capabilities, use of economic levers to undermine states and their cohesion and institutions, massive propaganda and disinformation and twisted public diplomacy. (Lindley-French, 2015, p.5) In addition, seven domains of strategic hybrid warfare are also listed in the report: air, sea, land, space, cyber, information and knowledge. (Lindley-French, 2015, p.10) Especially the

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<sup>20</sup> It has to be iterated that the conference report is by nature specific type of literature that has to cover different opinions of speakers, so some contradictions or at least disagreements in the report are



first list once again follows established lines of arguments about Russian hybrid warfare, but applicability of those lines of operation and dimensions in the case of IS is disputable at best (nuclear line of operation or space domain).

In further statements about hybrid warfare, it is interpreted in terms of shift of power from liberal powers to illiberal powers (both state and non-state). (Lindley-French, 2015, pp.3-4) Hybrid warfare is supposedly “a generic form of warfare, by which illiberal power seeks to paralyse the policy and action of liberal states by attacking their open societies.” This once again follows the tradition of much of literature on Russian hybrid warfare, which is focusing on informational dimension and exploiting weaknesses of targets. (Rácz, 2015; Cederberg and Eronen, 2015) What it adds is distinct normative dimension to the concept of hybrid warfare. Not that it would be completely new – in earlier work of Frank Hoffman, the inclusion of terrorism in definition carried normative dimension with itself, as well as claimed savagery and ruthlessness of ‘hybrid’ enemies. (Hoffman, 2007a) But it is neither just a notion of capability of authoritarian regime to better coordinate instruments of national power. (Johnson, 2015) Ascription of hybrid warfare to illiberal state and non-state powers, accompanied by speaking about disinformation as an element of hybrid warfare rather than information operations gives clear negative normative connotations to hybrid warfare. As much as it is understandable from the position of NATO, it is doubtful, whether it will help to further understanding of hybrid warfare, or whether it will rather hamper it (for example by excluding possible case studies).

Another interesting point consists in explicit distinction between hybrid warfare and ‘strategic hybrid warfare’. The debate whether hybrid warfare is tactics or strategy was ongoing (Cox, Brusolino and Ryan, 2015), but no other author recognised existence of two parallel concepts. Whereas hybrid warfare is not new, “Strategic hybrid warfare is not simply an alternative form of warfare; it is the new way of warfare.” (Lindley-French, 2015, p.3) Despite commendable effort to acknowledge differences between concepts of hybrid warfare (by labelling the latter as ‘strategic’), both terms (‘strategic hybrid warfare’ and ‘hybrid warfare’) are used throughout the conference report, so it is

not clear, whether and if so, which statements should be attributed to strategic hybrid warfare and which to 'regular' hybrid warfare.

Strategic hybrid warfare is also ascribed broad meaning of 'the new form of warfare', which is similar to earlier approach of Freier (Freier, 2009a), that is treating 'hybridity' as a general feature of contemporary warfare, but in stark contradiction to the majority of literature, which treats the hybrid warfare as a distinct option (explicitly for example in Hoffman, 2009b).

### **2.3.5 European Union and hybrid warfare**

Among the latest published official documents on hybrid threats is the Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats of European Union. (European Commission, 2016a) The framework is heavily focused on the strategy to counter hybrid threats and attention paid to defining hybrid threats is rather limited. It nevertheless provides us important information on officially accepted formulation by EU. Before the definition, the framework asserts that the definitions of hybrid warfare vary but that they need to remain flexible to respond to their evolving nature. This standpoint was already criticised in this work because it according to the author misses the point about defining the phenomenon. If the phenomenon no longer fits the definition, it is not a phenomenon previously defined. Call for broad definition that would allow for inclusion of more diverse cases would be, on the other hand, understandable. The European Commission indeed showed a great deal of flexibility when it comes to defining the hybrid threats, since it managed to publish three different definitions on the same day.

The definition proposed in the framework is: "...the mixture of coercive and subversive activity, conventional and unconventional methods (i.e. diplomatic, military, economic, technological), which can be used in a coordinated manner by state or non-state actors to achieve specific objectives while remaining below the threshold of formally declared warfare." (European Commission, 2016a, p.2) Slightly different definition is proposed in FAQ section to the very framework on website of European Commission: "...the mixture of conventional and unconventional, military and non-military, overt and covert actions that can be used in a coordinated manner by state or non-state actors to achieve specific objectives while remaining below the threshold of formally declared warfare." (European Commission, 2016b) The third different

definition of hybrid warfare was then provided in the press release accompanying the framework, where it is stated, that: “Hybrid threats refer to mixture of activities often combining conventional and unconventional methods that can be used in a coordinated manner by state and non-state actors while remaining below the threshold of formally declared warfare. The objective is not only to cause direct damage and exploit vulnerabilities, but also to destabilise societies and create ambiguity to hinder decision-making.” (European Commission, 2016c)

Differences are not significant but still confusing. It clearly honours some of roots of hybrid warfare with reference to conventional and unconventional means, state and non-state actors and coordination of means. Covertness stressed in second variant as well as subversion in the first clearly show roots in the other hybrid warfare works reacting to Russian conduct in Ukraine and beyond. The shared attribute of the threshold of formally declared warfare points very much to common attribute of hybrid warfare stressed understandably by NATO (also in relation to the Ukraine scenario). Meaning of the ‘threshold of formally declared warfare’ is regrettably not further elaborated anywhere in the document. Understandably in case of EU, focus is on civilian aspects of hybrid warfare and on eliminating exploitable vulnerabilities in various areas including food security, critical infrastructure and cyberspace.

## ***2.4 Critics of hybrid warfare***

The hybrid warfare concept draws its deal of criticism, but not as much as one might expect. One of the possible reasons may be that critics voice their opinion by simply not using the concept or the term (which may explain noticeable lack of hybrid warfare in peer-reviewed journals). That seems to be the case, since should someone venture deeper in Small Wars Council forums, he would find no shortage of criticism. Regrettably, quoting short exchanges of opinion from internet forum is not appropriate for this work, and therefore it will be up to an interested reader to find and study these opinions.

Still, some authors voiced their opposition, but regrettably, more often than not this opposition remained without the reaction or reflection from the other camp. This is

indeed the reason, why most of the criticism is treated in separate section<sup>21</sup>. The rest of criticism will be reviewed in this section, since despite the fact they did not have impact on hybrid concepts, they can point us to some of the weaknesses of the concepts.

One of the earliest criticism of the concept of hybrid warfare can be found in short essay that Daniel Ford published on his blog in 2009. Despite not having any apparent influence whatsoever on the debate, he was the first one (to the best knowledge of the author) who voiced some arguments that were to become recurring themes of criticism of hybrid warfare. The main one is, that combining more instruments at the same time is nothing new in history of warfare. As Ford writes: “But really, what is new about any of that? The Irish Republican Army were robbing banks, murdering judges, ambushing army columns, and proselytising in the United States—in 1920!—and the Viet Cong were doing much the same in 1960.” (Ford, 2010) The other recurring criticism is allegedly unnecessary creation of new category, which will be just as broken as regular and irregular categories.

Similar themes can be read in much more detail in the monograph written by Colin Gray in 2012. In his broader criticism of categorization of challenges either as regular (or traditional/conventional) and irregular, he also treated critically addition of the category of hybrid challenges as a possible solution for shortcomings of binary regular/irregular distinction.<sup>22</sup> His criticism revolves about utility of a concept, that is so broad, that no longer tells us much about the case, yet maintains pretention of exclusivity so it cannot pass as a universal feature. In his words: “It dawns on the scholar as a less-than-startling epiphany that the hybrid thesis is not wrong, but rather is so fundamentally correct that it defies robust concept containment in its own allegedly distinctive tent.” (Gray, 2012, pp.15-16) “These concepts are not empirically wrong—quite the reverse. Depending upon the definitions preferred, some unmistakable evidence of irregularity, regularity, and hybridity is unlikely to be absent from many, if not most, wars.” (Gray, 2012, p.27)

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<sup>21</sup> Some criticism was already covered in previous section precisely because it gained some reaction or had an impact on the debate and narrative would not be complete without covering it.

<sup>22</sup> His monograph precedes the renewed interest in hybrid warfare after Ukraine crisis, but his criticism loses in the opinion of this author nothing of its value when applied to newer concepts of hybrid warfare. Nonetheless, it has to be kept in mind, that he primarily criticised what is in this work labelled as hybrid warfare ,orthodoxy‘.

Colin Gray continues to elaborate on this problem when he also mentions the issues of concepts on the basis of which the hybrid warfare concept is built, when in reaction to the definition proposed by Hoffman in his key work back in 2007 Gray states: “When possibly suffering from intellectual indigestion, one pauses to ask the rather important bottom-line question, ‘What are we talking about?’ the answer appears to be potentially everything other than pure criminal or military behavior, to the degree to which even these superficially distinctive activities are unambiguously distinguishable.” (Gray, 2012, pp.40-41)

In footnotes of his work, a rare venture into the issue of selected label (meaning the word for a concept) can be seen, as Gray notes, that the term ‘hybrid’ - coming from the field of biology - carries meaning not entirely useful in the field of strategic studies. “My point is that dictionaries provide quite permissive definitions of hybridity. This could be important if one seeks to argue for this concept having seriously exclusive defining potency and therefore practical utility.” (Gray, 2012, p.53)

One last point needs to be noted from this excellent monograph. The notion that in hybrid scenarios steps of opponent have to be countered in all dimensions is ubiquitous in the latest works on hybrid warfare, especially those on Russian hybrid warfare (see for example Rácz, 2015; Cederberg and Eronen, 2015). Colin Gray disapproves this notion, maintaining, that both sides have a vote on what form will the combat take. “For example, a challenge posed by irregular means and methods (though most probably for regular goals), need not translate as an irregular war. We have a vote on how and by what means the conflict is conducted.” (Gray, 2010, p.32)

Criticism from other perspective (but with some similar notions) came in 2015 in *Infinity Journal*. (Cox, Bruscino and Ryan, 2015) Before continuing with the content of their article, it is prudent to note, that despite the year in which was the article published, the authors do not mention Ukraine or any of the articles reflecting it in hybrid terms. This is just a telling example of how fractured the debate on hybrid warfare is.

Authors of this article share the concerns of Colin Gray about conceptual quality of the concept of hybrid warfare, calling it both unclear and incomplete.<sup>23</sup> (Cox, Bruscino and Ryan, 2015, p.25) But unlike Colin Gray, authors attack the hybrid warfare concept not only from conceptual perspective (more on this later) but also on empirical grounds. Noting efforts of Hoffman and other proponents of hybrid warfare to differentiate the hybrid warfare from similar concepts such as compound warfare (Hoffman, 2009c) by emphasising close coordination and blurring of modes of warfare on tactical level, the group of the authors deem depicted hypothetical enemy unrealistically competent. This may seem too harsh, but should one see Bower's interpretation of hybrid warfare (Bowers, 2012) which is in the opinion of the author just logical extension of Hoffman's argument, it seems rather well founded.<sup>24</sup> The authors illustrated that in satirical and admittedly amusing way, writing that "One comes away with the image of a single hybrid warrior simultaneously targeting and firing artillery, setting an ambush with IED, hiding among the population to which he is selling drugs and setting up protection rackets, developing and deploying biological and/or nuclear weapons, and hacking into the Pentagon mainframe to insert computer virus, all while conducting an interview on Al Jazeera specifically targeted to destroy morale among civilian population in the American heartland." (Cox, Bruscino and Ryan, 2015, p.26) It is almost unnecessary to further explain, that the authors viewed such scenario implausible at best, when looking at the issues the United States military has with its vast resources to maintain different combat capabilities at the same time and imagining opposing forces with inferior resources being able to achieve such feat.

Following on this line of argument, they once again agree with Colin Gray, that logical response to such scenario would not be to become 'hybrid warriors', but asymmetrical response of proficient eliminating of those 'multi-tasking' units. (Cox, Bruscino and Ryan, 2015, p.27)

The conceptual criticism of the authors (already mentioned above) is claim of proponents of hybrid warfare, that it is strategy, when according to Cox and co-authors

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<sup>23</sup> It is ironic, that on the next page, the authors list Colin Gray among adherent of hybrid warfare based on a note made by Frank Hoffman, apparently unaware of his opinion on hybrid warfare written in 2012 and reviewed in this work previously.

<sup>24</sup> More about the Bower's approach to Hybrid warfare can be found in section 2.2.5 of this work.

it actually is tactics which are in Hoffman's works hybrid. This in their opinion unduly reduces actual value of the concept, since it captures only a fraction of possible variables that should be taken into account when strategy is prepared. "That is why the estimate of the situation ... includes mission, friendly forces, terrain, weather, technologies, and enemy. The estimate of just enemy includes strength, intentions, morale, techniques, and tactical capabilities." (Cox, Bruscino and Ryan, 2015, p.28)

As many other critics, authors do agree with number of trends captured by Hoffman, including convergence (they indeed propose less catchy but more accurate label for the concept: 'convergent trends in tactics') and they explicitly mention their more positive attitude to the way U.S. Army adopted the hybrid concept, focusing more on combination of different actors.<sup>25</sup>

Van Puyvelde was probably among the first to publish criticism of concepts of hybrid warfare emerging after Ukraine crisis. His criticism focused on claimed novelty (which would be according to him claimed solely on basis of introducing new term) and loose or non-existent definition. (Van Puyvelde, 2015) He cites failure of NATO countries to come up with a common definition and problem of vagueness of the concept. "In practice, any threat can be hybrid as long as it is not limited to a single form and dimension of warfare. When any threat or use of force is defined as hybrid, the term loses its value and causes confusion instead of clarifying the "reality" of modern warfare." (Van Puyvelde, 2015) Indeed, even this general notion of involving more than single dimension or form would not capture the approach to hybrid threat taken by the authors such as Gunneriusson or Bachmann (Gunneriusson, 2012; Bachmann, 2011). Van Puyvelde concludes his article with essentially the same recommendation as Colin Gray. To forget about hybrid category and instead "focus on the specificity and the interconnectedness of the threats they face." (Van Puyvelde, 2015)

Samuel Charap fairly recently published in *Survival* magazine probably the best argued critique yet of post-Ukraine hybrid frenzy. He criticises both hybrid warfare concept in Russian literature (focused on destabilisation and mostly non-military regime changes through use of 'fifth column') and western concepts of Russian 'hybrid'

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<sup>25</sup> More on this was already covered earlier in this work, in section 2.2.4.

conduct. Western approach is according to Charap engineering non-existent threat to NATO members by describing alleged hybrid warfare as more dangerous and successful than it actually is. Indeed, Charap refuses even the claim, that Russia has some ‘hybrid’ doctrine and instead convincingly argues, that all Moscow achieved is being able to coordinate the arms of national power. He views both western and Russian understanding of hybrid warfare as flawed for same reasons. To quote Charap on this:

“Firstly, Russian strategists believe that the US is willing to risk conducting a limited, hybrid operation in Russia – that is, on the territory of a nuclear power – just as NATO strategists believe Russia is willing to risk the same on the territory of a nuclear alliance. Secondly, Russian analysts project well-founded fears about their country’s long-term political cohesion onto the West’s intentions. ... In the same way, NATO analysts know there are divergences regarding threat perceptions inside the Alliance, so therefore Russia must be planning to take advantage of them. Finally, each side believes that Ukraine represents the other’s successful hybrid operation, and a potential precursor to such an operation being directed against it.” (Charap, 2015, p.57)

## ***2.5 Review of three phases of hybrid warfare debate***

The author attempted throughout the course of the whole chapter, to familiarize the reader with the complicated long way that the concept of hybrid warfare went through since its beginnings ten years ago. Despite the best efforts put into organizing the chapter, the reader may justifiably feel confused, since the amount of literature covered in detail is certainly not negligible. Before advancing to next chapter, which shall through comparison of the different concepts ordered this time in chronological order fully expose confusion about hybrid warfare, it is important to reiterate the main themes and trends in the debate for the sake of comprehension on reader’s part.

Before the year 2010, the debate about hybrid warfare was considerably restricted in terms of participants. Almost exclusively debated in U.S. military circles<sup>26</sup>, the great deal of debate was probably on informal level and despite a number of disagreements (already covered in section of this chapter) the participants shared similar

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<sup>26</sup> Other authors also recognized fundamentally military roots of hybrid warfare concept and implications of these roots. (see for example Bērziņš, 2015, p.43)



background and to a certain degree even language they used (including some basic concepts on which hybrid warfare concept is built). The debate was strongly influenced by other debates, which were going on by that time, especially the debate about designing future U.S. military, balancing preparedness for large scale interstate warfare and intrastate conflict, lesson that should be learned from Afghanistan and Iraq (including question of civil-military cooperation) and indeed possible future threats to the United States.

We cannot be sure, but it is quite plausible, that this mutual influence of different ongoing debates reinforced already ‘encyclopaedic’ nature of hybrid warfare (to quote Colin Gray) and was the reason, why if taken as a whole hybrid warfare debate would encompass so many possible features of future warfare and scenarios.

When this debate was still ongoing, hybrid threats were introduced in NATO. Pioneered by Bi-SC Input to a New NATO Capstone Concept for the Military Contribution to Countering Hybrid Threats, noticeable changes to the concept were introduced, especially reinforcing encyclopaedic listing of possibilities and further loosening of the concept. It is impossible to know for certain what was the reasoning behind this shift, but suggestion made by Brynen and Milante, that NATO was not able to agree on anything more rigorous or concrete, seems very plausible. (Brynen, 2011; Milante, 2011) Indeed, as much as it is speculation, motivation of those introducing the term may have very well been different from motivation of U.S. military scholars who ‘invented’ the term.<sup>27</sup> Especially since NATO needs to address substantially different concerns of various member states.<sup>28</sup>

This implementation of the concept of hybrid warfare<sup>29</sup> culminated by the experiment organized in Tallinn in 2011 and articles that were later written by its participants. Wide array of participants from different fields, majority of which were civilians were introduced to the concept of hybrid warfare. Since there is not enough public information available about the experiment, it is impossible to pinpoint which

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<sup>27</sup> For more detailed discussion, see subchapter 3.1 and section 2.3.2.

<sup>28</sup> Inclination of NATO to reconcile concerns of Western, Southern and Eastern European countries as well as North American ones is not surprising. It was already touched on when discussing NATO’s effort to cover ISIS and Russian threats by the same concept. See section 2.3.4.

<sup>29</sup> Or rather hybrid threats concept – the term preferred by that time in NATO debates.

one of the then existing variants the hybrid warfare concept was presented to participants, but it is not unreasonable to presume, that it was the variant formulated in Bi-SC Input.

Those articles went in somewhat dubious and diverging ways when it comes to hybrid warfare. But that should not come as much of a surprise. The concept that was even in its original form deemed as ‘encyclopaedic’ by Colin Gray became even more loosened when adopted by NATO and finally introduced in dubious way to far more diverse audience than the one from which it originated. As a result, many authors treated the hybrid warfare concept as a grocery store, in which everybody can find something he likes. To be fair to the participants of the experiment in Tallinn, adoption of hybrid warfare concept by U.S. Army shows similar signs as well as a number of later works.<sup>30</sup>

Some works chose to follow more technological aspect of ‘orthodox’ debate on hybrid warfare, elaborating on new technologies in hands of state and non-state actors, including emerging cyber threat (Gunneriusson, 2012; Bachmann, 2011). Other authors focused on civilian-military cooperation and political dimension of hybrid warfare (Aaronson et al., 2011, Gunneriusson, 2012) Many authors bought more than single item from hybrid warfare store. This resulted in seemingly unending wealth of possible combinations of elements of original concepts of hybrid warfare. This would not be necessarily bad thing, looking for inspiration in existing concept or modifying it to be more useful would be a commendable thing. And as even critics of hybrid warfare concede (Cox, Bruscino and Ryan, 2015), many of the aspects of original concept of hybrid warfare may well be empirically sound, even should they not warrant creation of new term or should they not be logically coherently subsumable under single concept.<sup>31</sup> But all authors reviewed in this work decided to maintain the label of hybrid threat/warfare for their own remixes of original concept, generally without explicitly

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<sup>30</sup> To illustrate, that fact, we may look at U.S. Government Accountability Report from 2010 which revealed, that most of U.S. military uses the word ‘hybrid’ as a fitting adjective to capture complexity, rather than some particular concept, not to speak about definition. (United States Government Accountability Office, 2010) Adoption in European defence discourse was not all that different.

<sup>31</sup> See more detailed discussion of this in section 4.2.4 of this work.

acknowledging, that they are actually modifying it.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, most of authors on hybrid warfare from this point on show only extremely limited knowledge of the rich debate of military professionals on hybrid threats that were previously (and even simultaneously) going on.

By the year 2012, two separate debates on hybrid warfare were going on simultaneously. One NATO/European, mostly focused on civilian-military relationship and various new threats without much of a rigor. Second older in the United States still debating hybrid warfare as a military concept, possibly a separate mode of warfare. Differences between those two debates will be covered in more detail in the next chapter, right now it is important just to assert, that the two debates were ongoing without any sensible interaction (or quite possibly even knowledge of each other's existence). This unfortunate development necessarily had to cause confusion, especially in terminology. And indeed, it did. Keep that in mind since we will return to that shortly.

In 2014 crisis in Ukraine and involvement of Russia became the topic of the day. And in shock<sup>33</sup>, fervent search for a new term that would capture unfolding events started (Bērziņš, 2015, p.42; Galeotti, 2016, pp.286-287; Rácz, 2015, pp.40-43), as if finding name for it should serve as reassurance healing the shock from Russian actions. Among the great variety of emerging terms<sup>34</sup> hybrid warfare label coined by NATO took deep roots. What was the thinking behind the video made by NATO Review, with the proud title 'Hybrid war - hybrid response?'<sup>35</sup> or whether the authors had in mind any particular concept of hybrid warfare, remains regrettably unknown.<sup>36</sup> (NATO Review, 2014) But it was the first semi-official use of the term to describe events on Ukraine.

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<sup>32</sup> It should be noted, that there might be many authors, who were inspired by hybrid warfare concept or modified it, but are not covered in this work, since they decided for another label which placed them outside the scope of this thesis.

<sup>33</sup> It is not exactly clear in hindsight, why was everyone so surprised. More on this in Kofman, 2016.

<sup>34</sup> Should the reader be interested in alternative names, some were already covered in this chapter and Andreas Rácz made a decent even if not exhaustive list of them. (Rácz, 2015, pp.40-41)

<sup>35</sup> It is unsurprising if a little ironic, that with events in Ukraine, the terms 'hybrid warfare' or 'hybrid war' returned into discourse after the term 'hybrid threats' was preferred for a number of years, especially in European part of the debate.

<sup>36</sup> Not to mention, that apart from title, the hybrid warfare is mentioned only once during the 5 minutes long video and it is mentioned not by any of experts interviewed, but by commentator.

Wales NATO summit followed with frequent use of the term<sup>37</sup>, leading to its entrenchment in the debate about Ukraine and more broadly Russian military affairs. (Rácz, 2015, p.41)

The term previously still largely unknown outside military and defence circles was suddenly catapulted onto the pages of newspapers and into the papers of most of the think-tanks in Europe and beyond. Wide variety of experts, commentators and journalist happily adopted the term with only rudimentary knowledge of its complicated history and several possible meanings and with little or no concern over its actual usefulness or quality. A number of experts on Russia happily adopted the term as a label, under which they could continue to study Russian affairs. A number of people with interest in cyber-security adopted the label when actually writing about Russian cyber-attacks or online propaganda. (Schmidt, 2014) And when those new proponents (or maybe rather ‘users’) of hybrid warfare looked for further resources on this apparently attractive concept, they found variety of combinations of articles, often at the same time from both separate and hardly compatible debates that were described earlier. Only few authors did sufficiently thorough research to recognize important change that the concept of hybrid warfare underwent (for example Rácz, 2015 or to a lesser degree Jacobs and Lasconjarias, 2015) and those as well as the authors who refused or rightly criticised the hybrid label for Russian conduct (for example Johnson, 2015 or Kříž, Shevchuk and Števkov, 2015) were not able to refrain from its use (see Rácz, 2015, p.87).

Typical result is short chapter of a work, quoting approximately two to five previous works on hybrid warfare (with original Hoffman’s work from 2007 still reigning supreme among those), selecting several quotes from these that do not contradict each other (at least without knowing their original context), possibly bringing new definition of hybrid warfare at the end of this chapter (for example Jacobs and Lasconjarias, 2015, p.3; Kříž, Shevchuk and Števkov, 2015). Almost pure example of

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<sup>37</sup> The NATO Summit declaration states, that „hybrid warfare threats, ...[are] a wide range of overt and covert military, paramilitary, and civilian measures employed in a highly integrated design.“ (NATO; 2014) It is even more vague then the previous definitions of hybrid warfare in NATO and it was not included in detail in this chapter, since it lacks any further explanation or comments and at the same time is unclear, to what degree it is a result of political compromise during the Summit. But it remains the fact, that it set the tone for upcoming works.

such approach is the paper written by Eve Hunter and Piret Pernik, which first quotes what they describe as Hoffman's definition of hybrid war (while it actually is not his definition) and continuing by describing the definition published in Military Balance in 2015 as 'expanded definition' without any concerns about hardly reconcilable differences between Hoffman's (actual) definition and the definition from Military Balance. (Hunter and Pernik, 2015, p.3)

After such chapter, a straight dive into empirical information (usually about Russian strategy, actual conduct or previous conduct) continues without much attention paid to theoretical framework that the author selected by employing hybrid warfare concept. (for example: IISS, 2014) Content of hybrid warfare concept therefor started to be mostly filled by whatever are the Russians doing and real debate is no longer about merit of hybrid warfare concept, but about empirical realities of Russian strategy and conduct. General disinterest in previous concepts of hybrid warfare led to virtual disappearance of much of by that point existing rich debate from references of contemporary work. Hybrid label celebrated victory, not the hybrid warfare concept.

NATO itself, which could be expected to hold to its definitions and approaches from its previous albeit muddy experience with hybrid warfare debate, seemingly failed to find one common voice when it comes to the topic. Difficulties already mentioned above, such as balancing interest of different member states together with other interests (for example hope for some military mobilisation of European states) resulted in same confused borrowing from different concepts. This was not only observed by other authors already (for example Kofman, 2016) but it also becomes painfully clear from the report from conference organized by NATO Defence Collage, which was already covered. (more in Lindley-French, 2015)

It is no surprise, that in such environment, confusion rules supreme (even though it seems nobody has much of a problem with it). As Jacobs and Lasconjarias noted: "Despite this [Hoffman's] definition, the term hybrid warfare is used arbitrarily and without any clear conceptualization." (Jacobs and Lasconjarias, 2015, p.2)

This section can be concluded with already quoted remark of Gary Milante, which proved almost prophetic: "...hybrid threats just ended up ... being anything we don't expect..." (Milante, 2011). Indeed, the Russian intervention in Ukraine was

something NATO did not expect, so based on this remark, it would well deserve the hybrid label. The rise of Islamic State was no less surprising, which may help explain, how it received the hybrid label as well. Kofman concurs in stating that: “If you torture hybrid warfare long enough it will tell you anything, and torture it we have.” (Kofman, 2016) This chaos with no even nearly universally accepted definition of hybrid warfare led to situations which are almost comical, as an attempt of NATO conference to bring one set of recommendations for combating both Russia and ISIS. (Lindley-French, 2015) It may well be the popularity of hybrid warfare, that will cause its actual downfall since it will be used for the sake of being used and in this way devoid of any meaning.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> The appearance of articles, which use the term just in title and do not use it nor define it in actual text may well be the first signs of what is coming (see Pawlak and Petkova, 2015)

### 3. Comparison of competing concepts of hybrid warfare

Rather extensive review of literature in previous chapter reveals some rather unexpected obstacles for accomplishing chief goal of this work, which is evaluating the conceptual quality of the hybrid warfare concept. This obstacle obviously consists in the question which of the myriad of existing concepts should be evaluated? This quest is intimately connected to second key goal of this paper, which is to compare the existing concepts of hybrid warfare. The most detailed comprehensive comparison would go to the level of definitions proposed by authors and proponents of concepts and compare presence or absence of particular definitional attributes. Regrettably, this originally intended form would end up in confusing the reader rather than informing, since the conducted survey of existing concepts of hybrid warfare generated far more concepts than originally expected. To add to complexity, those concepts are more diverse among themselves than expected. Therefore, somewhat reduced approach to the comparison will be taken, attempting to show the most significant differences between different concepts. With practical relevance of this conceptual analysis in mind, these differences are far more important than minor differences in particular definitional attributes, since they may lead the unsuspecting policy maker or researcher into merging findings about vastly different concepts.<sup>39</sup>

This chapter is structured around particular attributes of concepts (not necessarily the definitional attributes) in which large differences exist among the existing concepts. Each observed attribute is covered in separate subchapter, which will elaborate on the occurring variances of the attribute and implication of different attributes or lack of recognition of this difference. Particular examples will be provided throughout these subchapters. All concepts surveyed in the previous chapter and known to the author were taken into account in the following comparison, even though not all are used as examples in any of the subchapters.

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<sup>39</sup> Problems that already emerged from this phenomenon were covered in the conclusion of the second chapter.

### **3.1 Category/feature dichotomy**

Difference among concepts in treating them as a category of warfare and treating them as feature of contemporary/future warfare is one of the most profound differences existing within the hybrid warfare debate. It is one of the almost completely unrecognized and at the same time very important differences. Majority of the authors perceive hybrid warfare as one of categories of the warfare among other kinds of warfare, such as guerrilla warfare or conventional warfare. In this paradigm, the hybrid warfare is/will be more or less common distinctive category of warfare which will coexist with other kinds of warfare at any given time. In the opposition are those authors who see the concept of hybrid warfare as *the* future warfare, in other words as an inherent feature of any kind of future warfare. This debate can also be understood in terms of conceptualisation as the issue of exclusiveness/inclusiveness of the definition.

The first approach can be well illustrated by Frank Hoffman's thinking on the subject. He asserted that conventional warfare or guerrilla warfare are there to stay with us, possibly most prominently in 2009. (Hoffman, 2009b, p.8) Even more exclusive concept of hybrid warfare was proposed by Bowers. (Bowers, 2012) From later post-Ukraine authors, many also devised the concept of hybrid warfare as rather specific form of warfare. (for example Rácz, 2015)

The second is rather rare but still present. Some aspects of this thinking were present in writings of Nathan Freier back in 2009, when he asserted that majority of challenges that the United States will face will be hybrid in character. (Freier, 2009a) This may have been more general view of the United States Department of Defence and military forces, because Government Accountability Office in 2010 reported, that "[Department of Defence] officials indicated that the term "hybrid" is more relevant to describe the increasing complexity of conflict that will require a highly adaptable and resilient response from U.S. forces rather than a new form of warfare." (United States Government Accountability Office, 2010, p.14)

Later this approach was reintroduced to a degree by those theorists of hybrid warfare who followed the article of Valery Gerasimov, who claimed in the article, that "The very "rules of war" have changed." (Galeotti, 2014) If we accept this reading of



Gerasimov<sup>40</sup>, what he described and what came to be often understood in the west under the label of hybrid warfare was modern war as such, not necessarily a kind or type of modern war. This view was finally clearly stated by Rob De Wijk, who admittedly sees hybrid warfare as general term for conflicts where shifts between conventional and irregular warfare occur. For this reason, he includes Iraq and Afghanistan as hybrid wars, which is a notion, that would not be approved by many authors including the godfather of the concept, Frank Hoffman. Based on such assessment, he claims, that "... as long as weak actors confront stronger ones, hybrid warfare will remain the norm." (De Wijk, 2012, p.266) Finally this view was echoed in already discussed Lindley-French conference report. Claim was clearly made, that "Strategic hybrid warfare is not simply an alternative form of warfare; it is the new way of warfare." (Lindley-French, 2015, p.3)

Indeed, should we look at already discussed criticism of hybrid warfare by Colin Gray, we would find, that his reading of hybrid warfare is very much consistent with above mentioned 'universalists', since he sees hybridity as enduring feature of warfare.

This difference among the hybrid warfare concepts carries important implications in itself, the recommended preparation of military forces for hybrid warfare to name one of them. But more broadly, it points to huge existing disparities in definitions of hybrid warfare, where some are so broad that they can accommodate any future conflict whereas some other are much narrower and try to capture only some cases of future warfare, sometimes only very few of such cases (for example Bower, 2012). It is important to reiterate, that the significance of these differences is magnified by the fact, that they are not recognised, reflected or debated in contemporary literature.

### ***3.2 Overt/covertness dichotomy and ambiguity***

Another important difference existing between concepts of hybrid warfare is the presence or absence of attribute of covertness<sup>41</sup>, which is used to refer to issues with knowing that hybrid warfare is conducted and knowing who is conducting it. In the

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<sup>40</sup> Indeed, many experts do persuasively dispute the interpretation of Gerasimov made by Mark Galeotti, which came to dominate discourse after Crimea crisis. Among others Samuel Charap, Michael Kofman or Charles Bartles (Charap, 2015; Kofman, 2016; Bartles, 2016)

<sup>41</sup> Covert/covertness is also often captured as problems of detection or attribution.

Hoffman's original concept, covertness was almost wholly absent. It definitely did not make it into his proposed definition and it is mentioned only once in his seminal work and only in respect to states supporting the attack. (Hoffman, 2007a, p.28) Covertness is generally absent from what is in this work called 'orthodoxy'. Poster-case of early hybrid warfare theorists, which is the Lebanon war in 2006, also does not include any elements, that could be described as covert. Since one of the main concerns of proponents of 'orthodox' branch of hybrid warfare literature was non-state actors equipped with weaponry enabling them to fight in more conventional way<sup>42</sup>, covertness played role only in possible covert supplies or other support provided to a non-state actor by a state actor. Issues of detection were discussed only in sense of troop detection on the battlefield, which is quite distant from what we are looking for when asking about covertness.

The first mention of covert nature of hybrid warfare can be traced to Bi-SC Input for a new NATO Capstone concept, where it was mentioned at one point, that "A cluttered and complex environment will also require that NATO develops more efficient competencies for the detection and attribution of hostile action." (NATO, 2010, p.13) Following this appearance and subsequent experiment organized by NATO<sup>43</sup>, covert nature or by that time more precisely the problems of attribution started to appear somewhat regularly. This correlates to a degree with the emphasis that was put on non-military aspects and especially cyber threats. In the articles following the experiment and more generally introduction of hybrid warfare in NATO, the issue of covertness or non-attributable nature of hybrid warfare started taking quite prominent role, as can be illustrated by quote from one of the articles published after the experiment: "The principal attraction of hybrid threats from the point of view of a state actor is that they can be largely nonattributable..." (Aaronson et al., 2012, p.115).

After the Crimea crisis and the war in the Eastern Ukraine, the covertness took nothing less than central role in hybrid warfare concepts. Once again, the article of Valery Gerasimov seems to be at least partially responsible for the shift. His work was much focused on both non-military measures not identifiable as hostile acts and

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<sup>42</sup> Indeed, later definition proposed by Hoffman explicitly included conventional weapons as an attribute. (Hoffman, 2009c)

concealed employment of military force. (Galeotti, 2014) Definitions of hybrid warfare reacting to events in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine generally incorporated covert aspects. It is included in one of the recent EU definitions (European Commission, 2016b), NATO definition adopted by Wales Summit (NATO, 2015) to name the official definitions. Covertiness is also commonly present in articles on hybrid warfare. (For example: Rácz, 2015, p.74; Pyung-Kyun, 2015, p.392; Schmidt, 2015; Andersson and Tardy, 2015, p.2)

The covertness is closely connected to central fears of NATO and NATO member countries about hybrid warfare, which is the possibility of “waging war bellow the radar of traditional collective defence” (Reisinger and Golts, 2014, p.1; Popescu, 2015b). It reacts to unmarked soldiers employed by Russia in the Crimea operation and later in the Eastern Ukraine as well as reflects general trend of hybrid warfare literature to focus more on the non-military dimension of hybrid warfare.

Somewhat softer version of arguments about covertness of hybrid warfare are the arguments about ambiguity of hybrid warfare. Claim about ambiguity essentially retreats from position, that perpetrator hopes to be truly covert and instead proclaims, that perpetrator only strives to prevent the opponent (or other audience) from being sure. Ambiguity of hybrid warfare is claimed on number of levels. Perpetrator of hybrid warfare reportedly strives to be ambiguous about who is conducting hybrid warfare, ambiguity about whether what he perpetrates is hybrid warfare and ambiguity about what he attempts to achieve by hybrid warfare. (Andersson and Tardy, 2015, p.2) Only claim that the perpetrator consciously attempts to be ambiguous about what kind of warfare it wages appears in orthodox branch of hybrid warfare concepts (see Hoffman, 2007a, pp.49-50). And some authors of orthodox branch even do not consider that to be intentional act of the opponent and if they speak about it at all, then they see it rather as an incidental effect (see McCulloh and Johnson, 2013, p.52).

But even in this case, the purpose of ambiguity and target whose decisions are to be complicated differs. Where the orthodox concept proponents are concerned about military tactics and strategy, which in their minds needs to adjust to hybrid warfare of their opponents, the later concepts written in reaction to Ukraine crisis are concerned

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<sup>43</sup> For more detailed discussion of the NATO experiment see section 2.3.2 of this work.

with confusion of political and alliance decision making (see European Commission, 2016a, p.2; EEAS, 2015) and public opinion (EEAS, 2015, p.3). For this reason, it was also described as ‘strategic ambiguity’. (Johnson, 2015, p.11; Lindley-French, 2015, p.4) This shifts correlate strongly with the shifts in emphasis on either civilian or military dimensions of hybrid warfare (see below).

The place of the ambiguity and confusion in present debate about hybrid warfare can be illustrated by the speech given by spokesperson of the General Staff of the Czech Army when commenting on founding of the new special forces unit: “The contemporary complex security environment [is] characterised by often confusing and even hybrid methods of waging warfare...”<sup>44</sup> (Lidovky.cz, 2015)

### **3.3 Terminology**

As was already noted several times, there is no general agreement on the term to use when it comes to hybrids in conflict. The most often used terms are ‘hybrid warfare’, ‘hybrid threat’ and ‘hybrid war’. Other permutations are also present as ‘hybrid conflict’, ‘hybrid strategy’ and ‘hybrid tactics’. The problem consists in the fact that these terms are often used interchangeably and without any clarification, despite the inherent differences between them. Possibly the only attempt to address this problem was made by Glenn back in 2009, when he sought to differentiate various levels of conflict that theorists of hybrid warfare by that time studied. (Glenn, 2009) According to his article, hybrid conflict (McCuen, 2008) is trying to capture tactical dimension of conflict, hybrid war captures operational level and hybrid threat strategic level. The problem with his analysis is, that it is largely based on the articles and concepts published by that time.

There is almost no discernible pattern in the use of the above mentioned terms. All of them were used fairly early in the debate (as Glenn’s article testifies) and continued to be used, often interchangeably even by the same authors. For example, Hoffman used hybrid as the adjective to ‘war’, ‘warfare’, ‘conflict’ and ‘threat’ just in his seminal 2007 work. (Hoffman, 2007a) Hybrid threats seemed to prevail as the term

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<sup>44</sup> In the original: “Současné komplexní bezpečnostní prostředí vyznačující se často nepřehlednými, až hybridními způsoby vedení boje...” (Lidovky.cz, 2015). Translated by the author.

of choice in short period after 2011 in NATO debate (see NATO, 2011; Aaronson et al. 2012; Bachmann, 2011; and to a degree Gunneriusson, 2012). With Crimea crisis, the terms ‘hybrid warfare’ and ‘hybrid war’ successfully re-established themselves in the debate.

There are rather obvious but not really honoured differences between the terms. At least in theory, ‘hybrid threat’ accentuates the actor who poses the capability to employ ‘hybrid means’ even if this threat does not materialize. Different connotations of ‘hybrid war’ and ‘hybrid warfare’ largely depend on definitions of ‘war’ and ‘warfare’ which are themselves by no means universally accepted. Browning states that ‘war’ is a relationship between parties whereas ‘warfare’ is the act of making war. (Browning, 2002, p.2) From this it could be deduced, that ‘hybrid warfare’ should be used as a description of particular style of combat (strategy or tactics) employed by one side in the conflict. On the other hand, ‘hybrid war’ should be used to describe the nature of a conflict as a relationship between parties. This regrettably remains highly theoretical debate since the nuances are largely ignored in contemporary debate, adding yet another layer of confusion to the discussion.

### ***3.4 Military/civilian and kinetic/non-kinetic***

One of the most debated aspects of the hybrid warfare is a combination of military and civilian dimensions in the conflict or the related debate to so called kinetic and non-kinetic actions and operations. Indeed, the combination of military and civilian dimensions in the conflict is far from original thought and kinetic and non-kinetic actions are the same case. The purpose of this subchapter is to reflect the dramatic changes that the concept underwent or, in other words, to demonstrate the differences that exist among the existing concepts of hybrid warfare in realm of importance of military aspects and importance of civilian aspects. Indeed, there is no clear definition of what actions are inherently civilian and what actions are inherently military. But association of kinetic operations with military and non-kinetic with civilians is strong enough to warrant merger of those two dichotomies in one subchapter.

The early orthodox branch of hybrid warfare concepts followed the experience of the Afghanistan and Iraq expeditionary missions, which highlighted the importance of civilian operations for military success in irregular warfare. Roots of hybrid warfare

in the irregular warfare once again pronounce themselves in reflection of this in the orthodox concepts. But focus of these concepts remained on military aspects and possibly even more importantly, civilian aspects of the conflict were perceived by the authors as a part of military responsibilities (see Hoffman, 2007a, p.46; Freier, 2009a; Hoffman, 2014). Even more importantly, all authors of orthodox branch of research do perceive kinetic operations as inherent part of hybrid warfare. Not only that, Hoffman even repeatedly claimed that hybrid warfare leads to more casualties than classic guerrilla/irregular warfare. (Hoffman, 2007a, p.54) This connection with kinetic operations is unsurprising for a number of reasons. For one, relative focus of the concepts on military aspects or civilian aspects of the conflict often correlates with authors of the concept and orthodox branch of hybrid warfare research is dominated by (former) military personnel. Secondly, the formative empirical cases for orthodox concept of hybrid warfare were the conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon, all of which included great deal of direct physical combat. Thirdly, the orthodox concepts were clearly intended as military concepts, informing force posture and design and military strategy for a conflict (Hoffman, 2009a).

The slight change came with first introduction of hybrid warfare in NATO. Bi-SC Input for a New NATO Capstone Concept indicated this change of perceived role of military in its title: The military contribution to hybrid threats. The Input clearly admits the possibility of purely non-lethal conflict with hybrid threat (NATO, 2011, p.3) and less clearly even the possibility of conflict in non-physical domain (NATO, 2011, p.2). Following earlier comprehensive approach to crisis management that NATO embraced, the great deal of attention is paid to civilian dimension of crisis and civil-military cooperation. The dominant context for the NATO interpretation of hybrid threats were stability operations and cooperation with host nation government and forces<sup>45</sup>. The combat (kinetic) operations still got their attention in the Input, but only as one part of much broader effort, not as a main tenet of the concept. (NATO, 2011, p.8) With this, hybrid threats moved at least partly from the realm of military strategy to broader defence strategy. The articles following the NATO experiment in Tallinn in 2011

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<sup>45</sup> That can be contrasted with McCuen as a representative of orthodox branch, who expected no existing government in hybrid war. On the contrary, he assumes that United States would have to organize such host government themselves. (McCuen, 2008)

followed the suit with even less emphasis on combat operations. The Gunneriusson's quote can well illustrate focus on civil-military cooperation and hybrid threat as defence concept rather than a purely military one: "...there is a need for the concept of a hybrid threat, as we need to get some kind of contact between society in general and the military if we are to face these threats - we must do that." (Gunneriusson, 2012, p.57) Other authors voiced very similar views, for example: "A hybrid threat is more than just the sum total of its constituent parts. Combating such threats does not require new capabilities as much as new partners, new processes, and, above all, new thinking." (Aaronson et al., 2012, p.122) Non-kinetic aspects of possible scenarios of hybrid threats got much more attention than kinetic ones. Gunneriusson writes about social media, cyberattacks, bio-hacking and nanotechnology (Gunneriusson, 2012), Bachmann focuses on a case study of cyber threats alone (Bachmann, 2011) and Aaronson and his co-authors write primarily about private and more broadly non-military institutions role (Aaronson et. al., 2012). This is possibly explainable by the perception, that weaknesses that need to be addressed are rather in non-military issues, but it nonetheless constitutes significant departure from orthodox branch of research.

With Ukraine crisis and rise of IS, the focus changed again, but also was made much harder to capture accurately, due to the sheer amount and diversity of articles published and views presented in them. In certain sense, combat operations made comeback in the hybrid warfare discourse, signalled in a way by return from 'threat' label back to 'war' and 'warfare' labels. The focus nonetheless often remains, similarly to the earlier NATO branch, on non-military aspects. For example, Cederberg and Eronen in their policy paper pay what amounts to lip service to military dimension. Although the military is mentioned in statements such as "A credible defensive posture against hybrid threats cannot be based solely on military forces and other security providers, because the targets can be located anywhere in society depending on each country's individual vulnerabilities ..." (Cederberg and Eronen, 2015, p.6), closer inspection of recommendations proposed by the paper reveals that not even a single point of recommendation is aimed at improving defence against military aspects of hybrid warfare. That is telling, if unsurprising, given the other part of the paper stating "that hybrid warfare is in its essence winning, or achieving the set goals, with little or no fighting." (Cederberg and Eronen, 2015, p.4) Propaganda was elevated to a prominent

place within hybrid warfare concept, sometimes to the point of exclusion of other attributes and aspects. (see *Andersson, 2015*)

Other authors followed similar line of thought, especially if their preferred case of hybrid warfare is Crimea crisis. For example, Kříž and co-authors defined hybrid warfare by preponderance on non-military means in achieving the goals. (Kříž, Shevchuk and Števkov, 2015, p.8) Where this preference for non-military (or non-kinetic) aspects of hybrid warfare is understandable is the European Union, which left the military aspects to each respective member state and NATO and focused on areas in which it can contribute more. (European Commission, 2016) NATO, on the other hand, (also understandably) maintained at least the degree of attention to military aspects comparable to levels of pre-Ukraine debates in NATO if not greater, with prominently 'kinetic' issues such as nuclear posture playing an important role. (for example Lindley-French, 2015; Reisinger and Golts, 2014; Jacobs and Lasconjarias, 2015) But even in NATO, with some military considerations in mind, the hybrid warfare threat is seen more as a political problem than military one. As was already discussed in the subchapter on overtness/covertness of the hybrid warfare concept, crucial concern about hybrid warfare in NATO is, that it supposedly allows to wage conflict without activating collective defence (Popescu, 2015b) and that it exploits seams between NATO member countries. (Charap, 2015, p.57; Reisinger and Golts, 2014) This interpretation once again puts the prime importance on non-military measures, which are expected to be conductible without alerting the target nation or its allies.

This shift of hybrid warfare concepts' focus from kinetic to non-kinetic did not go completely unobserved. In 2015, Bērziņš reminded the readers, that hybrid warfare concept presupposes the use of military force to defeat the enemy whereas the Russian concept of warfare as it was applied in Ukraine does not. (Bērziņš; 2015; p.43) Mark Galeotti recently refused labelling of Russian strategy as hybrid warfare. He notes the focus of original hybrid warfare concept on kinetic operations, which makes it inappropriate to capture Russian "doctrine which is ... a more complex and politically led form of contestation." (Galeotti, 2016; p.287)

But shift is far from universal. Indeed, it would be possibly less alarming, if there was a general understanding that hybrid warfare should be treated as a primarily



non-military or non-kinetic warfare. The issue is, that broad and diverse background of hybrid warfare concepts allow anyone to select an approach according to his preference. As a result, two papers on hybrid warfare on web pages of a single institution can differ significantly without any recognition of this difference. To demonstrate, one can contrast the paper written by Andersson (Andersson, 2015) with one written by Gaub (Gaub, 2015), which were both published by the European Union Institute for Security Studies. Whereas Andersson's paper perceives propaganda as a key aspect of hybrid warfare and generally belongs to the more civilian post-Ukraine branch of hybrid warfare concepts<sup>46</sup>, Gaub's article on the IS from the same month applies the concept in accordance with the orthodox branch of concepts, particularly those of Hoffman and US Army (see Hoffman, 2007a; U.S. Army, 2010).

To conclude this subchapter, there historically were and still are important differences among concepts of hybrid warfare, when it comes to question, whether it is military issue needing primarily military solution (as would Freier or Hoffman propose) or whether it is primarily political/civilian issue which needs political/civilian solution (as would Cederberg propose). It is important to once again note, that these differences are not unreasonable in the context of concept development by themselves. What makes them important is lack of any structured debate about those differences, reflexion of those differences and general lack of effort to solve these significant existing gaps between the concepts in this issue.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Andersson's preference for later post-Ukraine branch of hybrid war concepts can be possibly more clearly seen from his other article from the same time (see Andersson & Tardy, 2015)

<sup>47</sup> Indeed, solving the puzzle of whether the hybrid warfare is civilian or military focused strategy would depend on broader recognition of existence of this difference.

## **4. Evaluating concepts of hybrid warfare**

After surveying the whole debate about hybrid warfare in the second chapter and highlighting important differences between the proposed concepts, the last chapter will be dedicated to answering the third question posed in this work, which is evaluation of concepts of hybrid warfare. As is clear from preceding chapters, there is seemingly endless number of different concepts of hybrid warfare, sometimes significantly different, other times different only in some attributes and even only in interpretation of the same attributes. This poses a challenge for evaluation of the concepts of hybrid warfare, since it is for practical reasons necessary to select only some of these concepts for detailed analysis and evaluation. This challenge will be discussed and tackled in the first of subchapters of this chapter. Two following subchapters will each focus on evaluation of particular selected concept. Those subchapters will share same generic structure, based on methodology of evaluation outlined in the first chapter. In the first section of respective subchapter, the evaluated concept will be shortly presented, with clear definition provided. Next section will specify the context of that concept, since as was discussed extensively in the first chapter, the contextual information is crucial for impartial evaluation of any concept. Prominent contextual information about the intended role and utility of the concept will receive major attention in these sections. Following sections of the subchapters will treat separately primary criteria of conceptualisation selected and elaborated in the first chapter (resonance, fecundity and differentiation). Quality concept in secondary criteria of conceptualisation also covered in the first chapter (domain, consistency and operationalization) will be shortly reviewed in single section of a subchapter. Each of these subchapters will be concluded by short summary which will include more holistic judgment about quality and utility of particular evaluated concept. This chapter is concluded by a subchapter drawing short comparison of quality of both concepts and discussing some implication of conclusions reached in the evaluation.

### ***4.1 Selecting the concepts for evaluation***

As was outlined in the introduction of this chapter, selecting the right concepts for evaluation out of the abundance of available concepts is inherently challenging. One possibly sensible approach would be to select the most influential of those concepts and

evaluate them. Such approach would be not only susceptible to a charge of arbitrariness, but it would also mean to do injustice to some authors, which in time modified their views and are not guilty for future authors preferring to cite their earlier works (which would have to be therefore considered more influential). This approach would also risk omitting possibly interesting or well-argued concept, which for various reasons did not attract the attention it may have deserved. There is probably no single way how to objectively select the right concepts for evaluation.

With the above mentioned concerns in mind, the concepts for evaluation in this work are selected according to several criteria. First of these criteria is broad representativeness of selected concept for broader branch of concepts. This is indeed far from perfect and as was amply demonstrated throughout this work so far, there are considerable differences between concepts even within the particular branches. But it is nonetheless necessary to provide some evaluation of the concepts both from orthodox and post-Ukraine periods, as both are still alive in the debate and this work would fail in its central ambition should it completely omit one of those branches of concept in the evaluation. Second and third criteria considered in selection of concepts for evaluation is their comprehensiveness and availability of information about their context. Those are indeed closely intertwined. The second criterion is important to mitigate possible bias of the author, since this author is sceptical of the quality of hybrid warfare concepts. Therefore, the most comprehensively elaborated and argued concepts were selected. This approach may in some ways resemble ‘most likely case’ approach in selecting cases in case studies. The reasoning behind this selection is, that if even the most comprehensively constructed concepts are of dubious quality, it casts longer shadow on the remainder of the hybrid warfare concepts. The third criterion of selection of concepts is connected to importance of context in evaluation of concept<sup>48</sup>. Not all authors presenting their concept of hybrid warfare do provide sufficient context for reasonably unambiguous evaluation of their concept.

Based on those three criteria, two concepts were selected for evaluation. The first one is the concept of hybrid warfare proposed by Frank G. Hoffman. This is

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<sup>48</sup> For more information on importance of context for concept evaluation see subchapter 1.2 and especially section 1.2.8.

probably unproblematic choice. Hoffman truly was the central figure of the orthodox branch of debate about hybrid warfare and it was largely because of his efforts, that hybrid warfare became commonly debated concept (at least in defence circles in the United States). The second and third criteria for selecting concepts for evaluation are also well met, since he published a number of articles and actively participated in the debate about hybrid warfare concept and its utility and merit. That provides us with enough information both on the concept and its context.

Selection of the concept broadly representative for post-Ukraine period is considerably tougher challenge for the reason of both diversity of concepts from this branch and comparative lack of deeply developed concepts from this period. Official definitions provided by NATO (NATO, 2015) or EU<sup>49</sup> (European Commission, 2016a) are indeed representative and their context can be reasonably deduced from the nature of organizations which produced them, but they are sorely lacking comprehensiveness and clarification. Too much in these concepts is left to interpretation. Many other concepts were presented in policy papers and other shorter formats, which also lack comprehensiveness and no author so far managed to compensate for this by publishing significant number of such papers on the concept of hybrid warfare, which would compensate for insufficient information from any single one of them. This further confirms notable lack of clear conceptualization of hybrid warfare noted by Jacobs and Lasconjarias (Jacobs and Lasconjarias, 2015, p.2). András Rácz's concept of Russian hybrid warfare would be sufficiently comprehensive and elaborated, but Rácz nowhere in his report on Russian Hybrid War in Ukraine provides any definition of hybrid warfare to which he subscribes, even noting in the conclusion, that he would actually prefer the 'full spectrum warfare' label. (Rácz, 2015, p.87) The lack of definitions and conceptualization of hybrid warfare in post-Ukraine era effectively leaves possible concept-evaluator with almost nothing to evaluate, without him extracting and (re)constructing the concept from a particular work as a whole, which is a process which can hardly provide strong findings about quality of the concept, because it is

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<sup>49</sup> More precisely speaking, EU even failed to provide any definition of hybrid threats in its material on countering them, resorting instead to describing what (according to EU) hybrid warfare concept 'aims to capture'.

inherently vulnerable to charge of biased or otherwise flawed ‘extraction’ of the concept by the evaluator.

More because of lack of better alternative, general characterisation of hybrid threats that the European Commission adopted with Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats is selected for detailed evaluation. (European Commission, 2016a) The concept as presented in the framework was selected for its broad representativeness of the trends in hybrid warfare concepts after Ukraine Crisis and for its inherent relevancy, provided by the fact that it was agreed upon by the important actors of European security. As much as the Commission avoided calling it ‘definition’, stating what the concept ‘aims to capture’ is functionally almost equivalent to defining the threat. Evaluation of this concept will be inevitably relatively brief when compared with Hoffman’s definition, since lack of elaboration is an important factor constraining the evaluation.

## ***4.2 Hoffman’s ‘orthodox’ concept of hybrid warfare***

### **4.2.1 Definition**

Hoffman altered his definition of hybrid threat slightly in time, with the latest one being: “Any adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs a fused mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism and criminal behavior in the battle space to obtain their political objectives.” (Hoffman, 2009c; Hoffman, 2014) The important thing is, that the changes that Hoffman’s concept underwent were clarifying and expanding, rather than fundamentally transforming his earlier thoughts. Therefore, the whole body of his work on hybrid warfare can be used to pinpoint his thinking about the concept.

Since Hoffman repeatedly stressed alleged aspects of hybrid warfare which are not included in his definition, it was considered by the author, whether to include these into evaluation. The decision was taken, that only definition will be evaluated, with the rest of his work used for proper interpretation of the definition. This decision is based on assumption, that the attributes not included in the definition were not considered to be inherent to the concept.

### 4.2.2 Context

Frank G. Hoffman is a former United States Marine Corps officer and he spent a number of years of civilian service in Marine Corps. His concept of hybrid warfare<sup>50</sup> is firmly rooted in the United States defence and military debates. Indeed, most of the articles written by Hoffman on hybrid warfare were to a large degree devoted to the United States military and defence community and the changes they should make to prepare themselves for fighting in the coming ‘hybrid wars’. Hoffman himself listed in one of his article four intended roles of the hybrid warfare concept. Description of evolution in the character of conflict, challenge to binary thinking between ‘crusaders’ and ‘traditionalists’, highlighting granularity of spectrum of human conflict and informing ongoing threat/force posture in Quadrennial Defence Review.<sup>51</sup> (Hoffman, 2009a) Notably, only two of these four aims can be perceived as universal, other two are closely intertwined with the defence debates in the United States. This context provides us with several important clues for evaluation of the concept. The first clue is, that intended audience clearly is military and defence related community in the United States. The second clue is, that his understanding of some terms in his definitions when otherwise undefined may be likely similar understanding prevalent in military and defence community in the United States. Finally, the last important clue is, that the concept was intended as independent variable in implied relationship between (hybrid) threat and responding force posture.<sup>52</sup>

### 4.2.3 Resonance

Resonance quality of hybrid warfare concept may well be one of the key reasons of its success. As Bērziņš put it in 2015: “Naturally, the word hybrid is catchy, since it

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<sup>50</sup> Hoffman’s concept of hybrid warfare and its development and interactions with other concepts is covered in depth in subchapters 2.1 and 2.2 of this work.

<sup>51</sup> Full quote of Hoffman about his intentions with hybrid warfare concept can be found in section 2.2.3 of this work.

<sup>52</sup> There is possible caveat in this, since in other parts of his work, Hoffman reiterates, that hybrid threats are specifically designed to target vulnerabilities of the United States military. (see Hoffman, 2007a) This could put hybrid warfare concept in the role of dependent variable, should we see recommendation of Hoffman for force posture as an attempt to remove vulnerabilities (which would in this relationship play the role of independent variable) which would result in disappearance of hybrid threats (at least in the form described by him). This interpretation was refused by this author as implausible. Among the reasons for this refusal is relative attention payed by Hoffman in his articles to the emergence of hybrid threats as

may represent a mix of anything.” (Bērziņš; 2015; p.43) Indeed, we need to be primarily concerned with how well the concept (or rather the term chosen for this concept) resonated with the intended the audience.<sup>53</sup> As we know from the discussion of the context of Hoffman’s concept in the previous section, the main intended audience clearly was military and defence community in the United States. Luckily, Government Accountability Office in the United States was tasked with the survey about hybrid warfare concept, which provides us with valuable information on how was the concept seen several years after the emergence.

The report stated, that “[Department of Defence] officials use the term “hybrid” to describe the increasing complexity of conflict that will require a highly adaptable and resilient response from U.S. forces, and not to articulate a new form of warfare.” (United States Government Accountability Office, 2010, p.11) This points to the issue of connection between the term and the concept, which was (based on the above quoted report) problematic in case of hybrid warfare. It is unclear when people are using hybrid as a mere adjective to describe some particular case of warfare or warfare in general and when people are using the concept of hybrid warfare. Nonetheless, the term chosen for the concept by Hoffman seemed to evoke the correct image of blurring and combining, which arguably is at the hearth of Hoffman’s concept of hybrid warfare, even as he repeatedly pointed out, that it cannot be reduced just to mixing of regular and irregular warfare. (Hoffman, 2015, p.11) There are also no significant issues with the term being misleading because of significant change in its meaning, since it was not used to any considerable degree before Hoffman used it for his concept.<sup>54</sup> It can be concluded, that Hoffman’s concept was (at least among its intended audience) resonating very well.

#### **4.2.4 Fecundity**

The fecundity of the Hoffman’s concept of hybrid warfare is rather more problematic than its resonance. As was elaborated above<sup>55</sup>, the fecundity of the concept

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a reaction to the vulnerabilities of the United States. This decision is nonetheless somewhat arbitrary which compelled this author to include this caveat in the footnotes.

<sup>53</sup> The importance of intended audience for evaluation of resonance of the concept is laid out in section 1.2.1 of this work.

<sup>54</sup> Several previous uses of the term ‘hybrid warfare’ are discussed in the subchapter 2.1 of this work.

<sup>55</sup> For the detailed discussion see subchapter 1.2 and especially section 1.2.4 of this work.

stems from a number of attributes its referents share and logical relations among those attributes. The hybrid warfare concept as formulated by Hoffman has eight attributes. Three refer to the way how the party uses their means: simultaneousness, adaptiveness and fusion. Four refer to the means used in this way: conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism and criminal behaviour. The last attribute refers to the ends pursued by the use of these means: political objectives.

This provides respectable number of shared attributes, at least at the first sight. But the devil is in the detail. There is very little of internal coherence and logical relationship among those attributes. And that is especially true about attributes referring to the means used by the actor. Regrettably, there is also no significant elaboration in Hoffman's work on the logical relationship among those attributes, so the evaluation of it has to rest on imagination of the author. Rather than by elaborating on plausibility of various possible logical relationships between these attributes, it is feasible to demonstrate how these attributes were probably identified in the process of formulation of the concept, which is major reason for internal incoherence of the concept. Since great deal of attention was paid to this in the first chapter of this work<sup>56</sup>, the roots of internal incoherence of attributes will be treated only briefly in this section.

The attributes of Hoffman's concept of the hybrid warfare were probably most significantly influenced by the National Defence Strategy in 2005, which formulated famous quad-chart, with four possible challenges to the United States. Those were conventional, irregular, catastrophic and disruptive. Indeed, the central argument of hybrid warfare, especially before influential Hoffman's monograph in 2007, was merging of those challenges. As Hoffman and Mattis wrote in 2005: "We expect future enemies to look *at the four approaches* as a sort of menu and select a combination of techniques or tactics appealing to them." [emphasis added] (Mattis and Hoffman, 2005) Indeed, Hoffman in time transformed the individual challenges presented in NDS 2005 considerably, but they remained broadly representative of four separate challenges outlined in NDS back in 2005. Indeed, these four types of challenges were probably seen by Hoffman, at least in the beginning as a whole spectrum of possibilities. This betrays the origins of the four attributes, which did not emerge as a coherent set of

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<sup>56</sup> More precisely the subchapter 2.1 of this work.



means naturally belonging to each other and therefore as a whole identifying ‘natural kind’. This seems to confirm Colin Gray’s charge of encyclopaedism, that he raised against the hybrid warfare concept<sup>57</sup> (Gray, 2012). And as was already documented in this work and as was admitted by Hoffman, there are other concepts and theories, from which the attributes of hybrid warfare come. Internal coherence of attributes became the victim to synthezizing approach taken by Hoffman in its creation, trying to account for different (and quite plausibly unrelated) trends of warfare in single concept<sup>58</sup>.

Logical relationship among means was not made much better by Hoffman’s changes, which he made to these attributes, especially in his 2007 seminal work (Hoffman, 2007a), since the changes appear to be motivated more by effort to formulate concept better reflecting empirical cases, especially the war between Israel and Lebanon in 2006. What is possibly even more troubling is, that changes made by Hoffman made the listed attributes incomplete from perspective of challenges formulated in NDS 2005. The case of this is limiting ‘conventional’ quarter of quad chart to conventional capabilities/weapons<sup>59</sup>. Why Hoffman expected future opponents of the United States to select from the whole ‘menu’ of possible options the conventional weapons and not conventional tactics? On basis of works he wrote on hybrid warfare, we can sadly only guess.

Proponent of hybrid warfare concept could object to this judgment by criticising the interpretation of attributes elaborated in this work as too exclusive and narrow and he could maintain, that if more broadly understood, the Hoffman’s attributes still cover all four corners of quad-chart and therefore are exhaustive of possibilities, which would provide some logical coherence to the four selected attributes, making them an enumeration of all possibilities. This defence does not withstand more detailed scrutiny. Hoffman for example deliberately excluded threat of technological breakthrough, which was meant by disruptive threat in NDS 2005 (Rumsfeld, 2005; Freier, 2007) and replaced it by criminality (see Hoffman, 2007a). This Hoffman’s addition on its own

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<sup>57</sup> Gray’s critique of the hybrid warfare concept is covered in detail in subchapter 2.4 of this work.

<sup>58</sup> Roots of hybrid warfare are discussed in detail in subchapters 2.1 and 2.2 of this work. Hoffman himself listed them in 2007 (see Hoffman, 2007a).

<sup>59</sup> It is irony, that by this change Hoffman probably made his concept rather less then more accurate description of Lebanon campaign, if we compare this decision with conclusions of Biddle and Friedman

also calls into question ‘completeness’ of quad-chart itself and therefore value of staying true to it to achieve some level of internal coherence of attributes. And finally, should we accept this viewpoint, it would have significant negative impact on differentiation quality of the concept, which is covered in the next section.

#### 4.2.5 Differentiation

Quality of differentiation of Hoffman’s concept of hybrid warfare is questionable at best, as was pointed out by several of its critics<sup>60</sup>. Should we return to eight attributes of his definition listed in the preceding section, we find that most of them do have issues making the concept as a whole rather poorly differentiated. The first attribute of Hoffman’s definition is simultaneity of employment. This attribute is relatively unproblematic since it clearly demands application of all four means at the same point in time. There are essentially just two possible values of this attribute. Means either are or are not used simultaneously. Possible interpretation of that ‘point’ in time as being of various length up to the extent of years should definitely be considered conceptual stretching. Therefore, existence of such interpretations should not be counted as indicators of the poor differentiation of the original concept.

The attribute of adaptation is also relatively unproblematic, even if possibly hard to measure, especially without the benefit of hindsight. Of course, there are questions whether the warfare starts to be hybrid only after the actor conducting it starts to adapt and what warfare is he waging until he starts to adapt, but this criticism would aim rather at fecundity of the concept than its differentiation.

The third attribute is fusion, which is described by Hoffman as high level of tactical coordination of the means. An important role of this attribute is to differentiate the hybrid warfare concept from earlier compound war concept on the basis of differentiation between tactical coordination (in hybrid warfare) and strategic coordination (in compound warfare). (Hoffman, 2009c) There is more problem with ‘fusion’ than with simultaneity, since there is no way of telling just how much coordination is needed to qualify as a hybrid threat. Hoffman nowhere operationalized

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about ultimately rather conventional tactics used by Hezbollah in 2006, not only conventional weapons. (Biddle and Friedman, 2008)

this attribute in a way allowing to judge more rigorously whether there is enough fusion between use of different means to warrant use of hybrid warfare concept for the case. This problem is rather clear once one sees Hoffman's opinion on several cases when it comes to judgment whether they are cases of compound warfare or hybrid warfare. It is admittedly short piece not allowing Hoffman to expand on his ideas, but one would expect more detailed discussion of the key attribute differentiating the two concepts than mere statement, that "Hybrid threats ... appear to have a greater degree of operational and tactical coordination or fusion. It does not appear that any separate force exists or that conventional combat power is decisive in the traditional sense." (Hoffman, 2009c). This is hardly an operationalization allowing for clear and reasonably objective differentiation between the concepts of hybrid warfare and compound warfare.

The following four attributes referring to means that have to be used in the above analysed manner all share the same problem of lack of definition. The first of these attributes may well illustrate these problems. Based on Hoffman narrative, it can be with reasonable certainty judged, that by conventional weapon, Hoffman means the weapons commonly associated with conventional<sup>61</sup> warfare, such as anti-tank guided missiles, anti-ship guided missiles etc. (see Hoffman, 2009d, p.37) The problem indeed is, that clarification on what qualifies in Hoffman eyes as a conventional weapon (or conventional capability, should we return to the older version of his definition) is absent from his writing. This absence of some definition of conventional weapon is all the more surprising, since his definition, based on his writing, differs significantly from otherwise accepted definition of conventional weapon as any weapon other than weapons of mass destruction. (see for example NATO Standardization Office, 2015, p.2-C-14)

Irregular tactics are the least ambiguous from all four means but definition would still be preferable. Terrorism is the third listed means in the definition. If there is any concept which is notoriously contested, it is the concept terrorism. (Weinberg, Pedahzur and Hirsch-Hoefler, 2004) Once again there is no definition of terrorism provided by Hoffman, which leaves the audience of potential users of the concept with

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<sup>60</sup> The critics are reviewed in subchapter 2.4 of this work.

<sup>61</sup> Otherwise also 'traditional' or 'inter-state' warfare.

plethora of definitions of terrorism to choose from when implementing the concept or merely trying to comprehend it.<sup>62</sup> This has obviously grave consequences for differentiation of the concept, since it makes borders between presence and absence of single attribute in particular case extremely blurry.

The last, fourth means listed in Hoffman's definition is criminal behaviour, which as an attribute is not much better than terrorism, since once again is its definition absent from the work of Frank Hoffman, so it is not sufficiently clear what Hoffman had in mind when he included criminality as one of the means of actor conducting hybrid warfare. Some definition of what constitutes criminal behaviour in the definition of hybrid warfare is necessary especially because norms about what is criminal and what is not are often significantly different depending on time and space. This once again causes problems in differentiation of the concept.

The last attribute of political goals is rather unproblematic, but one last note on differentiation in relation to listed means of an actor conducting hybrid warfare has to be made. There is not even remotely hinted threshold of how much of any of these means has to be used for it to be considered present and consequently for the case to be possibly described as a case of a hybrid warfare. This once again adds to flexibility of the concept while at the same time making it near impossible to differentiate it reliably from other concepts. For example, differentiating the 'typical' guerrilla or irregular warfare and hybrid warfare depends not so much on whether the four means listed in the definition are present, but rather to what degree they are present (and also how 'fused' they are and whether they are used simultaneously). When seeing the importance of these questions for differentiation, the absence of significantly better differentiation of hybrid warfare in any of numerous Hoffman's articles is all more striking. By poor differentiation Hoffman regrettably invited the conceptual stretching by later authors.

#### **4.2.6 Secondary Criteria**

Three criteria are considered secondary in this research: domain, consistency and operationalization (operationalizability). Two of them are interesting and worth of brief

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<sup>62</sup> The issue of inclusion of terrorism among the attributes was already tackled in this work in sections 2.1.2 and 2.2.7. Indeed Hoffman himself used some dubious interpretation of events as terrorist attacks

discussion when it comes to the concept of hybrid warfare according to Frank Hoffman. The first one is possibility of operationalization of his concept.

As was debated in the chapter on methodology<sup>63</sup>, operationalization is very much dependent on quality of differentiation of the concept. But additionally to that, one may also take into account intended use of the concept. There are interesting differences between operationalization as an academic task conducted during the research and the kind of operationalization that some practitioner does (probably unconsciously) whenever he employs the concept. Where the first (generally understood) academic operationalization benefits from sufficient time and possibly even hindsight, the second may not have this advantage, especially in the conditions of waging warfare and fog of war. The concept of hybrid warfare as was repeatedly stated in this work aimed primarily at defence community and tried to change defence posture and preparation of forces based on prediction of the kind of warfare which may appear with increasing frequency (see Hoffman, 2007a; Hoffman, 2009a). In this setting, the operationalization is almost unnecessary, since cases which should be described by the concept lie in the future and if it is undertaken, then in ‘academic’ condition. But we should imagine a situation of a commander in war, whose decision about employment of his forces should be different based on whether the opponent wages hybrid warfare or (for example) guerrilla warfare. Judging the situation correctly based on Hoffman’s concept would be daunting task to say at least, given probable lack of credible and accurate information together with poor differentiation of the concept. But this observation goes admittedly one step beyond what Hoffman stated as his intention and therefore is rather a note<sup>64</sup> than a part of evaluation of his concept.

The second possibly interesting criterion is the domain of Hoffman’s concept of hybrid warfare, since it is not very clearly stated in his work, but it is implicitly limited in his work. His concept of hybrid warfare is very intimately and inherently connected to the United States military and the United States defence. After all, at the beginning in his seminal work in 2007, he specifically stated that future scenarios will include threats

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(see Hoffman, 2014), which is discussed in detail in section 2.2.7.

<sup>63</sup> See section 1.2.7 of this work.

<sup>64</sup> Despite this note lies outside the scope of this work, it is important note informing about the limits of practical applicability of the concept.

specifically designed to target *Western* societies in general and *American* vulnerabilities in particular (Hoffman, 2007, p.14). Elsewhere in the same text Hoffman refers to hybrid warfare deconstructing and targeting vulnerabilities of *western* style militaries. When we leave aside the question of whether some opponent ever tried not to target other side's vulnerabilities, we are still left with very western-centric concept, limiting its domain rather significantly to those fighting either against west, or against western style militaries (whatever that means). Apart from this being a weakness of the concept's possible academic value, it also bears significant risks of furthering negative normative connotations of the concept, which are already strong by frequent references to alleged savagery of hybrid opponents and by inclusion of notoriously negatively normatively charged terrorism.

#### **4.2.7 Final verdict**

The concept of hybrid warfare proposed and advocated by Frank Hoffman does not fare well when it comes to evaluation of its conceptualization. It has serious problems in two of three primary criteria identified in the methodological chapter. The resonance of the concept was very good, but fecundity of the concept is dubious at best and differentiation of the concept is outright insufficient. Given these above discussed shortcomings, relative success of the hybrid warfare concept is surprising but these shortcomings of particular Hoffman's concept may help to explain, why hybrid warfare was often redefined by those organisations which were willing to embrace the term and some of the original Hoffman's ideas.<sup>65</sup>

### **4.3 *European Commission's concept of 'hybrid warfare'***

#### **4.3.1 Definition**

In the introduction to the Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats it is stated, what hybrid threat concept aims to capture<sup>66</sup>. It is asserted, that: "the concept

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<sup>65</sup> United States Army to name one example. For the review of its approach to hybrid warfare see section 2.2.4 of this work.

<sup>66</sup> Since the statement functionally works as a definition despite not being called so in the Framework, it will be referred to as 'definition' throughout this subchapter to avoid unnecessary confusion.

aims to capture the mixture of coercive and subversive activity, conventional and unconventional methods (i.e. diplomatic, military, economic, technological), which can be used in a coordinated manner by state or non-state actors to achieve specific objectives while remaining below the threshold of formally declared warfare.” (European Commission, 2016a, p.2) Further, it is added, that “There is usually an emphasis on exploiting the vulnerabilities of the target and on generating ambiguity to hinder decision-making processes. Massive disinformation campaigns, using social media to control the political narrative or to radicalise, recruit and direct proxy actors can be vehicles for hybrid threats.” (European Commission, 2016a, p.2) Since the second added description is qualified by the words ‘usually’ and ‘can be’, this part will not be considered as an inherent part of the definition.

It is regrettably (and worryingly) unclear, whether and which attributes are considered as necessary and which are considered as sufficient. To clarify the definition, it will be deconstructed in the following paragraph and interpreted by this author to his best ability. The first part of the definition asserts necessary mixture of coercive and subversive activity. The second part specifies the necessary mixture of conventional and unconventional methods used to conduct those activities. The third part specifies, that mixture of presumably both activities and methods has to be conducted in coordinated manner. The fourth part of the definition is largely meaningless, since it essentially asserts, that hybrid threat can be posed by any subject<sup>67</sup>. The only actors who cannot constitute hybrid threat are according the fourth attribute individuals. The fifth part of the definition is also largely superfluous, since it is hardly imaginable, that some actor would fulfil other requirements of the definition while not pursuing some specific objective<sup>68</sup>. The last, sixth part of the definition limits events to those below the threshold of formally declared warfare.

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<sup>67</sup> Granted, it has rhetorical value of clarification and reiteration of the fact, but it otherwise does not play any logical role in the definition.

<sup>68</sup> It is superfluous at least at the point, when no definition of what is considered to be ‘specific objective’ is available.

### 4.3.2 Context

The concept of hybrid threats agreed upon by the European Commission<sup>69</sup> clearly reflects two major threats appearing in years prior to the framework: Rise of Islamic State and Ukraine Crisis (or more broadly more aggressive Russian politics toward Europe). According to accompanying press release (European Commission, 2016c), the aim of the framework is to “to help EU Member States and their partners counter hybrid threats and improve their resilience when facing them, by combining European and national instruments in a more effective way than in the past. Moreover, many EU Member States face common threats, which can target cross-border networks or infrastructures.” (European Commission, 2016c) The role of the concept in the framework is to identify the threat, the defence against which should be improved by the adoption of the framework. The main audience of the concept are arguably the governments of member states.

It is unclear how seriously the definition was taken, even by its authors. The doubts arise because three different definitions were listed in three interrelated materials in the same day, one in the framework itself, one in accompanying press release and one in frequently asked questions linked in the press release (compare European Commission 2016a, European Commission 2016b, European Commission 2016c). Another clue casting the doubts on the definition is, that the only examples of relevant defence capabilities given in the framework are the surveillance and reconnaissance, which would point to covert nature of hybrid threats, which is not listed in the definition in framework but is listed in the definition in the Frequently asked questions (European Commission 2016b). Nonetheless, the definition provided in the framework should get preference and should be taken seriously, since it is official document and it defines specific kind of threat, which is significant enough for the European Commission to create framework for countering it.

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<sup>69</sup> For simplicity, the concept will be referred to as “EU’s” concept in this chapter.



### **4.3.2 Resonance**

The resonance of the concept of hybrid threats as presented in Joint Framework is quite problematic. Should the concept be evaluated on its own, the selection of the word ‘hybrid’ would indeed capture well the combinations of various elements listed in the definition, just as the resonance of this label was positively evaluated in case of Hoffman’s concept. But when we take into consideration rich previous debates about hybrid warfare and threats in past decade, the consistency of the content of EU’s concept with previous concepts using the same label is problematic at best. A number of important changes and differences were already discussed in the third chapter of this work and it is very clear from that discussion, that using the same label for both Hoffman’s concept and EU’s concept is far from optimal. This consistency with previous concepts is an important aspect of resonance and is the important reason for criticism of the resonance of EU’s concept.

There is possible partial caveat in this evaluation. The evaluation works with the assumption, that audience does have some prior knowledge of the hybrid warfare/hybrid threats literature. The member states and EU establishments were identified in previous sections as likely intended audience for this framework (and therefore this concept). It is reasonable to expect some prior knowledge of the concepts with the same label in this audience, but should this assumption be false, the above stated argument against the resonance of the concept would be weaker. But it is likely, that even the reader of the framework with no prior knowledge of the term would look up information and therefore gained the knowledge which would once again result in the same confusion as if he had the knowledge from the onset.

### **4.3.3 Fecundity**

The fecundity of the EU’s concept of hybrid threats very much depends on the interpretation of the attributes of the concept. As was clarified in the section of EU’s hybrid threat concept definition, this author interprets the attributes as necessary, but it has to be iterated, that should they be intended by the authors as sufficient attributes, exploration of fecundity of the concept would lead to very different conclusions.

Based on the above stated assumption of the author, the concept is doing reasonably well in fecundity. It lists four<sup>70</sup> attributes that are to be common to the referents. Referents have to mix two activities, two methods, have to do so in a coordinated manner and they cannot cross the threshold of formally declared war. How much do the referents have in common depends, of course, on reasonably defined attributes, since should they be very broadly defined, it would call the similarity of referents into question. Regrettably, there is no available clarification on more precise meaning behind the attributes, so it is not possible to provide more detailed evaluation in this respect.

When we look at logical coherence of the attributes, the first three of those four attributes can be easily seen as logically connected. It does not take excessive interpretation to see, that adversary conducting in coordinated manner a mix of activities will at the same time mix methods in coordinated manner.

#### **4.3.4 Differentiation**

Same as with the Hoffman's concept of hybrid warfare, the EU's concept of hybrid threats does suffer from insufficient differentiation. The first attribute, which refers to the mix of coercive and subversive activity is reasonably clear, but it does not help much in terms of differentiation from other threats which are rarely purely coercive or purely subversive. Any terrorist or insurgency group for example combines both activities and both activities can be one and the same, when a group tries to coerce the state into accepting the demands by threatening further subversion. Without further clarification of both terms, they do not contribute much to differentiation of the concept. Second attribute demands a mixture of conventional and unconventional methods. Examples of those are provided: diplomatic, military, economic, technological. Where the terms 'coercive' and 'subversive' are reasonably clear (but not sufficiently as was argued above), the terms 'conventional' and 'unconventional' are not nearly as consensually understood<sup>71</sup>. It is indeed unclear, which of the methods provided as

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<sup>70</sup> This excludes the attributes which are considered by this author as superfluous, see section 4.3.1 of this work.

<sup>71</sup> Ironically, the problem with the unclear meaning of the term 'conventional' was already discussed when evaluating the Hoffman's concept of hybrid warfare and insufficient clarity of 'conventional

examples were considered by the authors as unconventional and which were considered as conventional. So without at least some rudimentary clarification, this attribute also does not help to differentiate the EU's concept of hybrid treats.

The third attribute, specifying that hybrid threat will use methods and actions in coordinated manner is clear and useful in differentiating the hybrid threats from for example uncoordinated insurgent and terrorist groups, within which more subgroups may each use different methods or activities without coordination. The only issue with the attribute of coordination is its problematic operationalizability, which will be further covered in the next section.

The fourth and fifth attribute does not play any apparent role in defining and differentiating the hybrid threats. The fourth attribute excludes possibly only individuals. The fifth attribute expecting some aim may possibly exclude some actions of wanton destruction by an individual, but it is hard to imagine, that such action would fulfil other criteria, especially coordinated manner.

The sixth attribute is possibly the most puzzling, since it is hard to imagine some continuum of 'declaredness' of warfare, with threshold being declaration of war by one party. It seems that the authors attempted to combine some measure of intensity of conflict while combining it with legal status of parties. But the result provides clear differentiation in neither of those. In the legal perspective, it is unclear, whether the attribute presumes formal declaration of war (which are being extremely rare, see Fazal, 2012) or whether the word 'declared' is meant as a synonym for 'overt' or 'formally admitted/announced'<sup>72</sup>. As a measure of intensity of warfare, the attribute appears to suggest lower intensity than interstate conflict. But definition being as it is without any clarification in this respect, it is impossible to use the sixth attribute for any meaningful differentiation of the concept.

The lack of differentiation can be partially observable in the actions proposed to counter the hybrid threats in the framework. Most actions listed (possibly except the

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weapon', which was clearly understood differently by different authors and actors. See section 4.2.5 of this work.

<sup>72</sup> Use of the term 'warfare' rather than 'war' may point to the second listed interpretation.

establishing institution further studying hybrid threats) are in no manner specific to hybrid threats. Building more resilient transport and supply chains, energy networks and space infrastructure is by no means specific countermeasure just against hybrid threats. Listed targets would be just as likely targets in ‘purely’ conventional war for example. And the framework itself lists those as ‘possible’ targets. Part of the framework covering the cybersecurity also does not make any link between hybrid threats and cyber threats.

The differentiation of the EU’s concept of hybrid warfare is seriously lacking in many respects. That is all more frightening, when important political decisions apparently are to be taken based on this concept.

#### **4.3.5 Secondary criteria**

Since there is general lack of elaboration of the concept in the Framework, it is extremely hard to make qualified judgment about the domain of the concept. It is only certain, that domain of the concept is not specified in the Framework. The only possible explicit specification could be the fourth attribute of the definition stating, that hybrid threats can be posed by state or non-state actors, which could be interpreted as specification of the domain of the concept.

Operationalization (operationalizability) of the EU’s concept on the other hand is quite clearly problematic at best, because of extremely poor differentiation of the concept and inclusion of the attributes which would probably prove to be extremely hard to observe or measure (i.e. coordinated employment of methods and actions). It is yet to be seen, what will the institutions called for by the framework (‘EU Hybrid Fusion Cell’ and ‘Centres of Excellence addressing hybrid threats’) provide in terms of more specific guidelines, hopefully including better definition of hybrid threat. But based on the concept outline provided by the Framework itself, this author is very sceptical about ability of those institutions to provide more differentiated and better operationalized concept of hybrid threats without significantly reworking the definition evaluated in this subchapter.

#### **4.3.6 Final verdict**

The EU's concept of hybrid warfare as outlined in the Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats is not very useful one, given its terrible differentiation, problematic resonance and somewhat dubious fecundity. It has to be conceded, that it was not the primary role of the Framework to elaborate on the concept, but at the same time, it is nonsensical to prepare Framework on countering threat that we are not even able to identify with any reasonable level of accuracy. It seems that authors themselves faced problems with identifying the hybridity in the threats, since most of the Framework is rather a list of possibly threatened targets, weaknesses and areas of possible improvement, which are by no means specific to hybrid threats, such as protection of critical infrastructure, cybersecurity or strategic communication.

#### ***4.4 Evaluation implications***

Evaluation of both concepts casts shadow of doubt on the whole idea of hybrid warfare and its utility for both purposes intended by their authors and other purposes. Both evaluated concepts were formulated in order to allow states to better protect themselves against specific threat. But flaws of their conceptualization, and especially in their differentiation, makes it extremely hard to even identify unambiguously whether there is such threat and therefore whether changes to present defence measures are warranted to counter it. These issues concerning identification of hybrid warfare resulting from poor differentiation pronounce themselves in two levels. Firstly, from academic standpoint, it is hard to verify whether the described specific threat exists anywhere on the earth and whether cases designated by proponents are really fitting the blurry definition. Secondly, working on the assumption, that there are some 'hybrid' threats out there, there is little to no chance, that state would be able to identify, whether some threat to its security is actually hybrid or not. Impossibility of realization of causal role of the hybrid warfare concept naturally follows in such case. If states cannot assess the value of independent variable (whether threat/warfare is or is not hybrid), they cannot modify their behaviour to increase their chances of success in such scenario.

Even if we look away from the differentiation issues, other problems also call into question practical utility of the concepts. Problems with fecundity that are encountered by Hoffman's concept (that is lack of coherence) are more consequential

for typological and academic value of his concept. In descriptive dimension, his concept still at least in theory informs its user about the threat in significant way. European Union's concept on the other hand is more internally coherent, but vagueness of its attributes risks telling the user very little about particular case of hybrid warfare. Resonance issues of the European Union's concept just cause additional confusion and limit descriptive value of the concept in its use. If a recipient of information, that particular threat is hybrid, does not subscribe to the same understanding as the European Commission, he is bound to be rather misinformed about the threat.

This evaluation should not be understood as a resolute refusal of any possible concept of hybrid warfare. Concepts can be reformulated and redefined and this author is open to consider new concept of hybrid warfare or hybrid threats. This evaluation will in fact hopefully help future proponents of hybrid warfare to mitigate or eliminate identified problems in future iterations of the concept. But at the same time, it has to be iterated, that burden of proof of utility of the concept ultimately lies with its proponents. So far they seem to have failed to produce a concept of hybrid warfare, which would constitute significant improvement of our knowledge of conflicts and our ability to win them.

## Conclusion

This work answers three questions about hybrid warfare concepts. What concepts were formulated so far, how different they are and how useful some of them are. In answering the first question, the second chapter documented the development of the concept and the way it spread in its various forms. It can be said, based on the findings of this work, that great number of hybrid warfare concepts were formulated over years, often without much regard for maintaining clarity of both concept and terminology used. The chapter also brought into light patterns among proposed concepts of hybrid warfare, emerging from particular institutional and empirical setting in which they were born. Concepts of hybrid warfare articulated in the United States were often reflecting experience of the United States with the combat operations in Afghanistan and especially in Iraq. They were closely connected to the expected expeditionary nature of the operations, emphasised role of military and calculated with opponents countering the United States overwhelming military superiority.

On the other hand, in the European context, the concept was first reinvented on the basis of experience from Afghanistan. Less emphasis (and enthusiasm) for combat operations was reflected by more emphasis on civil-military cooperation, cooperation with host nations and reconstruction efforts. With rebirth of hybrid warfare concept after Crimea and Eastern Ukraine crisis, this expeditionary character of hybrid warfare concept largely disappeared and content of the concept was much more informed by the experience from recent and not so recent history of Russian operations. Even later, the rise of Islamic State attracted attention of hybrid warfare proponents, which led to renewed interest in the original decade old approach to the concept. Hybrid warfare proved to be prone to be formulated anew with each new proponent and (alleged) case which resulted in plethora of definitions, none of which is widely accepted.

This brings us to the third chapter, which answered the question about differences between the concepts. It detailed particular differences which emerged over the decade of existence of concept(s) of hybrid warfare. The main differences covered in this chapter were different approaches to study of hybrid warfare as a category and as a feature, alleged covertness/overtness of hybrid warfare, differences in terminology used for concepts and emphasis on military and civilian aspects. Both the second and

the third chapter provide ample evidence, that the view of overwhelming majority of the authors, that the concepts of hybrid warfare are all trying to capture the same phenomena, is wrong. While there are some overlaps between the definitions of hybrid warfare, there is far less of them than would one expect in different definitions of the same thing. Indeed, even cases of hybrid warfare differ significantly from author to author, which also points to the fact, that authors actually use the same label for different phenomena while claiming them to be the same phenomena.

On this basis, the fourth chapter did not evaluate the concept of hybrid warfare as such, but it instead evaluated two particular selected concepts of hybrid warfare. The first one of these was the concept of hybrid warfare as proposed by Frank G. Hoffman. Evaluation of his concept confirmed and highlighted the problems with the concept, which were hinted by critics, especially poor differentiation and dubious fecundity. The second evaluated concept was one recently proposed by the European Commission. It is facing similar problems with differentiation, it is more fecund than Hoffman's concept but when compared with Hoffman's concept, it fails in its resonance quality. Based on this evaluation, it is clear that neither of the evaluated concepts of hybrid warfare is very useful for the purpose for which it was introduced. Value of conceptual evaluation conducted in this work lies in showing the real roots of a number of problems of the concept(s), which were often observed and noted by its critics but rarely linked to their causes in poor conceptualization.

By answering these three questions, this work offers novel insight into the debate about hybrid warfare. First, it illuminates diversity of concepts of hybrid warfare, which is often downplayed or ignored. In this respect, it also proposes possible reasons for this rather unsound diversity. Second, it points to dangers of rapid popularization of the concept, which was the case with hybrid warfare after NATO used the term to describe Russian actions in Crimea. That led to an outburst of literature of dubious quality, which drowned many thoughtful and dedicated attempts to study the concept carefully. Popularity of the concept should not be used as measurement of quality and usefulness of the concept.<sup>73</sup> Third important lesson from this work should be, that the

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<sup>73</sup> For example, of such thinking, one can look into Hoffman's defence of his concept on the basis of institutions and persons who use it. (see Hoffman 2009a).



concepts formulated for the purpose of guiding policy have to be held to the same standards as those formulated for the sake of scientific inquiry, because impact of poor conceptualization may be just as problematic. Some authors see struggle for precise and accepted concept of hybrid warfare as a hindrance to practical use (Freier, 2009b), when it should be viewed as necessary precondition to practical use.

In this respect this work also shows the need for more involvement of academia in the debate about policy-oriented concepts. Up until recently academic inquiry into the concept was extremely rare. It may have proven extremely beneficial to the development of the concept and its quality, if the greater part of the debate about the concept of hybrid warfare was led in the field of academic inquiry and peer-reviewed journals, which are more disciplined and thorough compared to policy memos and professional magazines.

This work also shed light on some root causes of problems of hybrid warfare concepts. Criticism against hybrid warfare is often based on empirical evidence and whether it fits the concept in particular case. But the reason why this debate is even led is poor definition and differentiation of the concept, which allows authors to interpret it in very different ways and therefore to engage in fierce debates about empirical merits of using the concept in particular case. Similar problems are encountered by those who do support the general idea of hybrid warfare, but clearly struggle to resolve differences between the older and newer concepts. This work helps to explain problems they are encountering by pinpointing specific areas which changed over the years or were different depending on research branch of hybrid warfare that the particular author followed.

Lastly and most importantly, this work demonstrated, that proponents of hybrid warfare were so far unable to prove their concepts to be significant improvement over the existing concepts. Poor differentiation of both evaluated concepts is testament to the insufficient attention paid by the proponents to neighbouring concepts and differentiation of hybrid warfare from them. Indeed, so far the proponents of hybrid warfare were unable to differentiate the concepts of hybrid warfare from each other, much less from any other concept.

There are, of course, many remaining interesting questions about the concept of hybrid warfare, which lay outside the scope of this work. One certainly under-researched question is normative dimension of hybrid warfare concepts. As was touched in a number of places throughout this work, it is unclear, whether hybrid warfare is objective concept trying to capture emerging phenomenon or whether it is normative statement which describes the activity and denounces perpetrator at the same time. Other promising venue of research consists in institutional and political reasons for embracing and adopting some concepts, including the concept of hybrid warfare. There is general assumption, that organizations adopt a concept if it is helpful in performing its task, but there can be other reasons for adopting or modifying a concept, as was briefly covered in this work in relation to interpretation of hybrid warfare by NATO<sup>74</sup>. Lastly, the question of broader implications and possible unintended consequences<sup>75</sup> of embracing the concept of hybrid warfare by governments and militaries are yet to be seen and studied. The concept is still new and has become popular only recently and both intended and unintended impacts of its adoption have to be studied and critically evaluated once they are observable.

This work can be concluded with Hoffman's quote: "At the end of the day we drop the 'hybrid' term and simply gain a better understanding of the large grey space between our idealized bins and pristine Western categorizations, we will have made progress" (Hoffman, 2009c) What happened is the exact opposite of the Hoffman's quote. We arguably did not gain better understanding of the large grey space between existing categories of warfare but we kept the 'hybrid' term, despite changing the concept it represents. Recent concepts of 'hybrid' category are definitely not pristine, but are just as idealized and they at least so far rather confuse than contribute to better understanding. The sooner we realise this and either remove deficiencies of the concept or get rid of it altogether, the better.

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<sup>74</sup> See section 2.3.2 of this work.

<sup>75</sup> Such possible consequence of embrace of hybrid warfare may be decreased capability of states and militaries to wage other kinds of wars or counter other threats.

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