

HYBRID WARFARE AND THE EFFICIENT LINES OF EFFORT IN THIS TYPE OF CONFLICT

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In the context of the security environment and the conflicts approach methods, the early study of these techniques and procedures used by the aggressor in the hybrid conflict appears to be a necessity that cannot be ignored. It looks like, using a not that profound analysis method on those hybrid conflict lines of efforts, we came up with the conclusion that this conflict is a living organism, which continuously affects the victim and, even if at the beginning needs various and consistent types of resources, it become a symbiotic one that feeds on the victim's vital resources. It has limitations, which in general consist of the maturity of the society and the democracy on which the aggressor concentrated his efforts. In the proximity of the Romanian territory the most evident victim of the hybrid conflict is the Republic of Moldova, but the similarities of the analysis results with the actual situation of our own state cannot be ignored.

Key words: *hybrid, Moldova, Transnistria, intimidation, Russia, buffer zone.*

The major relevance of a personal point of view, with high objective characteristics, as compared to an “authorized” one, derives from the plausible presumption that the political analysts or the representatives of certain strategic studies centers may be posing as opinion makers, attached to political circles to which they are “subordinated”, in exchange for consistent funding or the insurance of an “unorthodox” pole of influence.

These categories of specialists have the opportunity, by means of their notoriety and the visibility of their professional activity, to manipulate the masses, to publicly formulate forecasts designed to draw the population towards a particular political actor or organization, and to distract the general attention from “hot” topics which cast an unfavorable light on “the financiers.”

Depending on the magnitude of the impact that is expected to be generated in order to gain the support of the relevant population, the influence of the political analysts may expand from a metropolis, region, country, even to unions/alliances of states.

Our point of view is that Russia, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, leaves the former Soviet republics and maintains some frozen conflicts (Transnistria for the Republic of Moldova, Ossetia and Abkhazia for Georgia) to use them, when the situation

requires it, in its favor, simultaneously launching a comprehensive set of destabilizing measures through which it actually controls the former areas of influence. Even though these measures become obvious only after the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, we cannot ignore the fact that they have been applied immediately after the fall of the Communist bloc.

The use of a buffer zone between the physical territories of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and those of Russia seems to be an unavoidable template for the former great power. In addition to what has been said, we must complete the idea with the issue of the control that Russia is trying to maintain over these buffer zones. As an example, the Transnistrian conflict may have been artificially created, activated and maintained in order to contribute to delaying Romania's accession to NATO and to minimize the possibility of Moldova's accession to this alliance. We cannot exclude the possibility that after Romania's accession to NATO, Moldova, without the present issues, would have been accepted in the same alliance.

The declaration of independence of the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic on September 2, 1990 is not an unfortunate accident, but a calculated implementation of a plan by which the Republic of Moldova,

whose independence is proclaimed on August 27, 1991, is to be considered a risk from the perspective of joining the European Union or NATO.

In addition to the aforementioned, we must not overlook the European ethnic problems with high explosive potential, included here are the autonomist and secessionist aspirations of Catalonia in Spain.

Besides, Hungary - having good political and economic relations with Russia - has a position in this election year which encourages the Hungarian minorities in the Carpathian Basin countries to seek autonomy at all levels (cultural, administrative, territorial), promising full support in this regard. We recall the fact that, by granting Hungarian citizenship to Hungarians who were minority citizens of the neighboring countries of Hungary, the number of electors has significantly expanded. Once again, everything is reduced to obtaining the support of a relevant population in achieving political goals. The relevant population is not necessarily formed by the "conscious electorate," but the lines of effort in the hybrid war are generally directed towards this segment.

The use of frozen conflicts reverts to the attention of the international public opinion after the "incident" in Crimea and the lower basin of the Don in Southeastern Ukraine.

The methods or lines of effort in the hybrid environment seriously extend beyond the common sense, drawing a new meaning of the notion of "normal". Thus, our today's responses to the unfolding of serious security incidents resulting in loss of lives that are not related to natural phenomena are influenced more by the number of victims or the impact on the personal domain, of our daily activity, although more "normal" would be to matter not the number but the ferocity or the motivation of morbid actions.

In support of the aforementioned, we consider it necessary to analyze the important events of the Transnistrian conflict, which appear to be preventively or reactively generated by the important events preceding Romania's accession to NATO, bearing a strong hybrid scent.

We cannot ignore the fact that the Russian Federation is trying to maintain a buffer zone between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and Russia's national territory, and is desperately trying to maintain a major influence over these buffer zones (Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia) which are located in the neighborhood of the alliance member countries.

This conclusion was highlighted by chronological and comparative analysis of the events in Transnistria and Romania.

The statement of General Alexandr Lebed, the commander of the Russian Operational Group, that he may reach Bucharest in 2 hours - made in 1992, almost concomitantly with the signing of the convention on the principles of the peaceful settlement of the armed conflict in the Transnistria area between the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation,- from our point of view, clearly orients the conflict towards Romania or against the stated intention of the North Atlantic Alliance to accept the Romanian state as potential for a future accession, which was discussed at the inauguration of the Euro-Atlantic Center in Bucharest on February 21, 1992. A year later, Romania ignores the Russian Federation's direct warnings, and on April 1, 1993, begins the Mil-to-Mil Defense Cooperation Program with the United States of America.

Yet, the regional instability in Romania's proximity and the domestic political unrest strongly "subsidized" by the Russian Federation does not remain without echo in NATO, which postpones the decision to accept Romania's joining the alliance in 1997. In spite of what has happened, Romania becomes, a year later, the "air bridge" of the alliance in the Balkan conflict, which forsakes the instability and decisively leads to our country's accession to the alliance in April 2004.

Russia reminds Romania and the alliance about the Transnistrian issue and when our country joined NATO, we witnessed the closure of the six schools offering teaching in Romanian and the Latin alphabet in the summer of 2004. The schools subsequently resumed their activity as non-governmental

institutions. Despite the difficult situation of the Republic of Moldova, one of the thorniest problems has been that of the official languages at regional and national level.

We consider it necessary to present an accepted definition of the hybrid conflict - "the diverse and dynamic combination of regular, irregular forces and/or criminal elements, unified to generate beneficial mutual effects" [1]. Other points of view offer similar definitions for the hybrid threat, which materializes an opponent capable of simultaneously carrying out several types of conflict; others advocate to accept how armed groups from less developed societies tend to incorporate advanced enemy technology and implement specific tactics in a different way than the traditional one. We believe that, using the above mentioned approach, one may become more capable, one may engage effectively in combat, kinetically and non-kinetically on broad fronts, using the full range of capabilities available including cyber resources, the media, encrypted communications, transnational organized crime networks, advanced technology acquired legally (available on the free market) or illegally (weapons and military equipment trafficking), and even robots in the future [2].

The hybrid conflict can reach a level of violence similar to low-intensity conflicts, but in particular it has a non-violent component that has an unparalleled efficiency without escalating violence at maximum levels.

And yet some minimum conditions are needed to ensure that the effectiveness of the aggressor's actions in the hybrid conflict is maximal. These are closely related to the standard of living and the solidity of democracy in the area of operations. For example, we consider that it is extremely difficult for a democracy to be easily penetrated by hybrid methods. The misleading, disguised aspects and the indirect approach are ineffective in a democracy where social responses are normal and immediately oriented to solving the problems that have arisen.

We will further try to exemplify some of the effective lines of effort of a potential aggressor in the hybrid conflict.

We start by mentioning the information campaign, the effects of which are now easy to achieve in an era of high-speed internet. Nevertheless, we do not try to minimize the importance of similar actions in the recent past when the information exchange did not rely on the Internet. In our opinion, the information campaign aims, firstly, to draw the attention of the relevant population to a particular direction, either through a high rating potential event and a well-defined subliminal message, or through a shocking, arrogant and prominent message which causes disputes and polarizes the audience for or against a topic.

An example of this may be the Kozak memorandum, named after Dmitri Kozak [3], a member of the Russian President Vladimir Putin's team, who suggested to the Republic of Moldova in November 2003, prior to Romania's accession to NATO, the constitution of an asymmetric federal Moldovan state, stating that the Russian military troops should maintain deployment for another 20 years. The document was not passed or taken into consideration, but it sparked disputes and gained partisans, or rather, followers of the idea that Russia should not be neglected, but rather considered as the follower of the USSR traditions. Our viewpoint is that Russia at that moment was very different from what it represents today, but it is a validation of Russia's aggressive information campaign, which proved its worth in a similar context in Crimea. The partisans on whom the messages have a strong effect seem to focus in the southern part of the former Soviet Union, which is predominantly communist, an area often referred to as "the red belt" [4], being indirectly encouraged in this respect by the former Soviet states in their difficult way to democracy, and somehow established as such by the large-scale military exercises conducted by the Russian militaries on the periphery [5].

Such campaigns promote the idea that Russia is strong and it is not advisable to mess with it, or that Russia is stronger than NATO

and, of course, the Russian armed forces can successfully invade Europe at anytime. No pertinent analysis results from the latter two conclusions. The former, subsequently after the successful annexation of Crimea, acquires a new light and is often used by pro-Russian analysts for intimidation. In support of what has been said, the intimidation campaign is permanent and remains strong, as evidenced by the statement given by the Russian Foreign Minister who considers the law on the reintegration of South-East Ukraine (the Lower Don Basin) to be a preparation for a new war [6].

The media has become a second equally important line of effort with the development and spread of the Internet and cable television. Although it had initially been losing ground due to the minimization of the written press, it has a hallucinating development by sharing information through social networks.

This is how, from a restricted press, during the Communist regime, the young democratic societies, emerging from the communist umbrella, are faced with an extremely free and very difficult to control press. Thus, messages are easily distributed through a press that is subordinated to local, national, or regional circles of influence.

Another line of effort used in the hybrid environment is to maintain a high level of corruption at central and local level. Corruption is, and will remain, a scourge that is hard to counteract once it enters the political area, which through the legislative instrument can “effectively” control the development of countering the phenomenon. In the beginning, corruption seems to have been encouraged and rewarded by both the eastern and the western sides, in the early days of democracy. Recently, it has reached unpredictable levels by the attempt to alter the laws of justice in the sense of enhancing the rights of the aggressor and diminishing those of the victim. The representatives of the current political class, framed by a consistent aura of corruption, brought to the attention of the public opinion the idea that if we have a corrupt political class, we most probably only have to change

the law to redefine the notion of corruption, and thus they will become “clean” [7].

Through corruption, a number of secondary lines of effort emerge which are effective in the hybrid conflict and result not only in weakening the state’s capabilities but in changing the individual mentality in the sense that the opportunity of a change for the better is null. Thus, for example, blocking the industry by buying off all the traditional production units and closing them out due to permissive contracts leads to the weakening of the national capabilities and the creation of a false dependence on the production of raw materials from abroad (heavy industry, metallurgy, etc.). Another line of effort is to capture the primary energy resources that provide independence to the industry, such as fossil fuel, mining industry, etc.

The Dark-web is another mean by which the aggressor facilitates cross-border organized crime and logistically supports other related actions in the hybrid war, under the cover of permissive legislation or the implementation of which lamentably fails to enforce the law.

In the same direction, maintaining or creating several political parties of the same orientation or doctrine leads to the waste of effort and the loss of focus on the essential issues. In addition, small parties become decisive in shaping the politics, they contribute to creating the majority which results in a generally short-term politics without a far-reaching horizon beneficial to the society as a whole.

Thus, it becomes extremely easy to influence the political doctrines by mixing political platforms (the liberals take social measures or socialists with liberal views) or apparently impossible alliances (liberals-socialists) which create confusion and induce the following message: no matter who one votes for, the changes will be minimal and this leads to an increase of the electoral absenteeism phenomenon.

The hybrid conflict has many non-kinetic valences, which show and lead to diminish the public confidence in the ability of the state to meet the basic needs. We understand by the decrease of the basic services' quality [8], for

example, the disruption of the electricity supply to certain areas of the Republic of Moldova during the sanctions applied to the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (Transnistria) was supported in this approach by Ukraine which, at that time, in the summer of 2004, was led by a pro-Russian president, Leonid Kuchma), as well as a budget decrease for the institutions that are responsible for providing them, which inevitably results in poor quality for the beneficiary.

Also, the issue of a complicated and ineffective legislative framework encourages cancelling the investments and projects with medium- and long-term effects and directs the existing funds to projects with immediate effects but no horizons on the long term.

It is not possible to discuss the hybrid conflict without considering the aggressor's intention to weaken the capabilities of the military and paramilitary entities by maintaining outdated and obsolete assets and even by deprive the operational elements of the basic requirements, without at least allowing them to maintain the skills needed to accomplish the missions (lack of ammunition, fuel, etc.).

Going forward, by minimizing the cooperation between the state institutions we are faced with the impossibility of the effective co-operation in crisis situations, in particular by encouraging the struggle for resources, and limiting the cooperation to make their use more efficient. Although it is hard to believe, in support of what has been said, we mention the situation of procuring identical equipment and supplies for which there are no unified framework agreements but they are purchased separately by the state institutions. It is obvious that the purchase price would be much lower and the quality much higher. In addition, the single command is an unreachable goal for structures with common missions, the existing headquarters being totally separated and heavily partitioned, without any chance of being quickly interconnected in the sense of a coherent response and a unique objective. Redundancy is the most appropriate word for special operations forces, which have become the

personal toys of the leaders in office. Thus, the transfer of tasks from one institution to another, without providing in some way the use of the experience of the existing structures that had been performing those tasks until that moment, seems unbelievable (see the transfer between RIS and MIA of the lawful interception tasks, following a surprise political decision, which declares its fulfillment by the former institution as unconstitutional).

Moreover, by keeping the wages at a minimum, the leaders may be kept under an adequate control when attempting to make beneficial decisions.

Intimidation remains one of the tools excellently handled by the aggressor. To exemplify, we recall the reaction of the surprising general Alexandr Lebed, commander of the Russian Operational Group, a structure that emerged from the 14th Army, a military structure of the former Soviet Union, which states that he can reach Bucharest in two hours at anytime. In support of what has been said it is worth mentioning his subsequent running for the office of president of Russia in 1996, where he received a surprising 14.5% of the votes, following Boris Yeltsin, and having a devastating echo at the time in the two states involved, Moldova and Romania.

A new course of effective action in the hybrid conflict is developed in the cyberspace, where the aggressions directed against the state institutions have become more and more frequent, overshadowing those directed against the individuals which have also increased in number. Thus, the small-scale electromagnetic spectrum jamming for temporarily blocking the institutions that must act effectively in various crisis situations seems to become part of normality.

Moving on to the kinetic field, we discover in the hybrid conflict the use of less conventional methods, such as the use of commercial drones to transport explosive devices, improvised to disable the military component by triggering explosions or fires at munitions factories or stores. In addition, the civilian population and, moreover, minors,

have been increasingly used as a shield in order to intensify the impact of the information campaigns triggered by legitimate military actions.

Another effective line of effort in the hybrid environment remains the development and the funding of insurgency in the areas of interest, in order to maintain instability facilitating the achievement of hidden political goals.

A relatively new aspect is the use of the military personnel as a non-state force, as a militia for keeping the areas of interest under control (in Crimea the military units were blocked by personnel dressed in an incomplete military uniform, which showed neither the name nor the affiliation, the so-called “little green men” [9], who tried to disable the local and central authorities in their attempt to react to the measures implemented by Russia for annexing the province). Subsequently, the model is taken up in the lower basin of the Don, in Southeastern Ukraine, with limited success, without realizing, so far, the intention to create the “bridge” to Crimea.

The Republic of Moldova can be considered one of Russia’s priority targets. Moldova constantly struggles between the East and the West, a point also highlighted by the political division of the country. Moreover, the presence of a large pro-Russian community (taking into account the Autonomous Region of Gagauzia [10] and Transnistria) is a factor that can at anytime offer Russia a motivation to intervene in order to protect its own citizens. In November 2014, a movie posted on youtube.com shows a former member of the ANTIFA group (sometimes radical militant group that takes a stand especially against the radical right) [11] describing the actions of an illegal group in the Republic of Moldova [12]:

- The group is organized on independent cells with specific tasks and goals to be able to act on the order of a higher echelon;
- The group is divided and decentralized (the cells are unaware of each other), an aspect specific for the information structures;

- The group’s personnel is specifically trained by experts (Russians) in remote areas in eastern Moldova;
- The training includes survival, sabotage, firing various types of weapons (pistol, assault and precision rifles);
- The members have been instructed to act especially during the acts of public disorder, to commit acts of violence, especially when the authorities move in to limit the effects of the aforementioned actions;
- When accusations are made, after the events, ANTIFA will cast the blame on the new extremist side of the organization while continuing to carry out acts of violence in order to keep the authorities busy and to determine the population to express their dissatisfaction with the state’s ability to solve the emerged situations;
- The members were encouraged to infiltrate the state institutions and to recruit new followers from workers or even government officials.

There are strong similarities between the explanations of the questioned individuals and the actions observed in Crimea and Southeast Ukraine. Such a result leads us to the conclusion that Russia more than likely has begun preparations for a possible future unconventional warfare campaign to secure and take control over the Republic of Moldova, maintaining its plausible denial concerning the implication in the operation (using ANTIFA).

We consider it necessary to mention that the unconventional war is the likely course of effective action in the hybrid conflict. Such an approach complements the list discussed in the present paper, and, moreover, it seems to be one of the most complex and effective available methods, whereby the aggressor can not only achieve its objectives but also maintain the option of denying involvement in the conflict created in the assaulted territory. In addition, we note that this line of effort is time-consuming, which cannot be rapidly

implemented but requires long-term implementation.

The hybrid also applies to the limit of war, where the laws of war cannot clearly and simply apply, in a “gray” area of the law. It is precisely for this reason that the use of the abovementioned methods and lines of effort has a maximum efficiency. Our conclusion is that the effective lines of effort in the hybrid environment cannot be applied immediately but require a long-term approach that gives the aggressor the opportunity to “feed” his actions even from the financial sources of the assailed state. This is the last and most effective line of effort of the hybrid conflict, which, through a series of convergent and long-term measures, obtains all the necessary resources, not just for the continuation of these actions but also for the achievement of the initially set goals, whether they require or not a certain level of violence, which involves armed combat. Thus, the hybrid conflict is identified as a living, symbiotic organism, which, although born out of the resources of the aggressor, is gradually nourished by the resources of the aggressed party.

The relevance of this paper is also highlighted by the fact that it draws attention on focusing on the lines of effort with long-term effects. Most papers bring to the forefront the immediate or medium-term effects lines of effort, those that are obvious and cannot be contested. If we objectively analyze the facts, we notice that the major objectives are achieved by specific actions taken a long time ago. Focusing the attention and the efforts of all those bearing responsibilities in countering the short and medium-term hybrid threats is an effective way to mislead the decision makers who control all the tools needed to limit the effects of these actions.

Finally, by taking into account the effective lines of effort in the hybrid warfare, we conclude that in particular those having long-term effects and require a consequent implementation, are a preventive, proactive attitude at a time when it has never been more obvious that, due to the lack of resources, we are more reactive than ever. At the alliance's

border we are exposed to actions that are not filtered by any other coalition partners [13].

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