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**Opinions Surrounding the
Current Hybrid Confrontation**

Liviu-Mihail Marinescu¹, Viorel-Cătălin Mihalcea², Gabriela-Elena Sirbu³

Abstract: In most states in the world, the ethnic structure of the population also includes minorities, which can be massively supported from outside the country by a dominant regional power, in order to produce desired ends during confrontations with hybrid developments. It is envisaged that radicalised ethnic groups will be massively supported by conventional forces, elite structures and paramilitary forces. These forces can act under the auspices of a strong information campaign, launched by an international actor with massive potential. The hybrid spectrum knows no established forms; subtle and subversive implications can result in multiple dimensions intertwining – political, economic, propaganda, special operations, conventional kinetic operations, non-kinetic implications, social and ethnic disorders, diplomatic or other implications. Romania's requirements, priorities and level of security require a complex analysis of the hybrid risks and challenges manifested globally, regionally and sub-regionally (zonal), which have a relevant level of impact on the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic area. The analytical dimension must include specific elements, deriving from Romania's location in the external eastern border of NATO and the European Union.

Keywords: hybrid warfare; hard power; soft power; smart power; resilience; kinetic; non-kinetic

1. Introduction

The power of international actors is a dynamic and highly complex parameter, imposing interdisciplinary analyses regarding continuity and complexity, materialised in a geopolitical context, in the system of international relations. It is necessary to employ special methodologies and quantifications, the use of forecasting tools and the specialised integrative vision. From the commonly known analytical view, one resorts to established geopolitical and other sorts of landmarks (territory scope and shape, population level and ethnic structure, technological level, population's feelings and behaviour), implications and relevant aspects regarding decisive international attitudes and value actions (economic, energy, military, membership of major alliances, regional and global relevance, natural resources and strategic impact). The instruments of power will include large-scale economic exchanges, the level of economic growth, the share and place occupied in the global economy, implications of soft, smart or hard power manifestations etc. (Traverton & Jones, 2005, pp. 5-6).

¹ Associate Professor, PhD, Danubius University of Galati, Romania, Address: 3 Galati Blvd., 800654 Galati, Romania, Corresponding author: marinesculiviu@univ-danubius.ro.

² PhD, "Carol I" National Defence University, Romania, Address: Panduri Road 68-72, Bucharest 050662, Romania. E-mail: vmihalcea@gmail.com.

³ PhD, "Carol I" National Defence University, Romania, Address: Panduri Road 68-72, Bucharest 050662, Romania. E-mail: gabrielahel@yahoo.fr.

2. NATO's Options

The Washington Treaty (4 April 1949) stipulates, as a provision of utmost interest for NATO's existence and involvement, that "... *an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all...*"¹. The deliberate belligerent act, carried out from outside the Alliance, will immediately require the activation of the collective defence mechanism of all member states. It is the fundamental aspect of NATO's thinking and involvement, well known to today's world. The above-mentioned stipulation prevents acts of open aggression, against the states of the North Atlantic organisation. In the described situation, in order to avoid the certain finding of the aspect of violation of the norms of the international law, implicitly of the direct confrontation with NATO, the aggressor states can resort to actions placed "*under the radar of the traditional collective defence*" (Kříž, Bechná, & Števkov, 2016, p. 18). In essence, actions against NATO member states, in a form or manner that does not incriminate them, the aggressor wanting that their own efforts are not in [obvious – *author's note*] contradiction with the principles and norms of international law.

The current hybrid confrontation, through its specifics and forms of manifestation, requires NATO to rethink its strategy and implications, conceptual aspects, structure and capabilities used to identify the challenges and aggressions of the hybrid spectrum, to be able to generate appropriate action forms of counteraction. Due importance must be given to recent challenges in the international arena, such as: takeover of strategic resources, state-sponsored terrorism, migration, dissemination of certain types of weapons of mass destruction, biological attacks, cyber strikes, non-specific actions by non-state or emerging state actors. Counteracting implications will involve both conventional and unconventional tactics, procedures, and forces in accordance with hybrid mutations (Vacyi, 2016, p. 32).

One must consider the importance of the NATO *Summit* in Warsaw (08-09 July 2016) that prioritised the phenomenon of resilience, which is shaping up to be a critical component of collective defence. The cohesion of NATO member states is the centre of gravity (CoG) of the North Atlantic Alliance. Complementarily, resilience is added and enhances the existence and strength of CoG, being in fact the ability to adapt, the deliberate process of continuous effort aimed at overcoming difficult stages. Resilience will include confidence in NATO forces and in the possibilities of collectively counteracting the action of hybrid destabilising factors in the international security environment. In fact, it addresses and supports the stability of governance, the security of energy routes, the access to water and food resources, the possibilities of the transport system, the control of mass migration etc.).

The new NATO strategy will need to carefully analyse the fierceness of international impact factors, the quantification and assessment of NATO vulnerabilities and implications, the implementation of the warning indicator and warning system conduct, the optimisation of the Intelligence effort and of strategic communications (Uziębło, 2017, p. 22). The document "*Bi-SC Input to a New NATO Capstone Concept for a Military Contribution to Countering Hybrid Threats*" of 25 August 2010 is maintained as an opening document, its provisions having to be elaborated on in future operational plans and firm positions of the states (Kříž, Bechná, & Števkov, 2016, p. 19).

NATO and the member states have sufficient resilience to prevent and foil hybrid threats to allied states societies. Under these circumstances, the effort to increase resilience will be maintained as a priority, being enhanced also in the partner states, as well as the need to maintain and restore the integrity of the member states and the protection of target populations (Kramer, Binnendijk & Hamilton, 2015, p. 7).

¹ Article 5 of the Washington Treaty on 4 April 1949.

The general report of the NATO General Parliamentary Assembly in 2015 produced the pertinent analysis on the definition and implications of the hybrid warfare, the need to build effective counteraction military and non-military strategies, (political, information, economic, manipulation). It is required that the effort is placed under the auspices of the English terms *adopt*, *adapt* and *adept* (Calha, 2015, pp. 2-10).

It is fitting to add the accuracy of the analysis and the speed of making and implementing the decision, having as support the thorough analysis of the operational situation, the understanding of the priorities and the identification of the possibilities to meet the challenges. The implementation route will include as the starting point the production and dissemination of relevant information towards institutions with major civilian and military responsibilities (Vacyi, 2016, p. 32).

At the NATO Summit in Newport (UK), held on 04-05 September 2014, the the *Readiness Action Plan* represented the important enhancement of the North Atlantic Alliance's post-Cold War defensive capability. The document aimed at transparently strengthening NATO's capabilities, maintaining strategic balance in the face of the challenges posed by Russia. The two main pillars of establishment (*assurance* and *deterrence*) present bivalent possibilities, both to the attention of the Russian Government and to support the states targeted and worried by Russia's hegemonic intentions (Drent, Hendriks & Zandee, 2015, pp. 24-26, 56). Undoubtedly, the Russian efforts will aim at destabilising the United States, the permanent opponent and main military-economic power of the North Atlantic Alliance (Mason, 2020, p. 8).

Conceptually, three major directions of future effort of the North Atlantic Alliance will be considered: *deterrence* (regarding actors with real intentions to use hybrid confusion), *defence* from hybrid conflict (aiming actors who do not respect the terms of deterrence) and *de-escalation* (using political-diplomatic mechanisms, after reaching a favourable NATO balance). In terms of deterrence, credibility will be maintained, provided by detailed knowledge of the political-military context of interest, the availability of forces, capabilities and measures, as well as the adequate state of training in the field of hybrid concerns (Renz & Smith, 2016, p. 6). The capabilities will be specific to conducting major joint operations, supporting expeditionary contingents, expanding the possibilities of the *Intel* field and paying major attention to the Special Operations Forces (Drent, Hendriks & Zandee, 2015, pp. 30-37).

The United States will be involved in thorough doctrinal reconsiderations of how to conduct the future hybrid conflict. It is very important that the first step to be taken is aimed at the detailed knowledge of the Kremlin's intentions, possibilities and course of action, as a way of building a viable response strategy. The response must be given to the lines of effort as a whole, as well as to counter Russian hegemonic intentions around the globe, while protecting the interests of the European space. In the belligerent effort, the possibilities of bivalent strategic command will be taken into account, for both information and kinetic operations. Since the effort in the East can target the internal framework, society and state institutions, the respective objectives will undergo a consolidation process, practically thus being protected the Euro-Atlantic Centre of gravity. Within NATO, the American countering effort must be extended to the entire Alliance, being established measures, responsibilities, rules, efforts, implications and elements of the adversary, restriction of freedom of action and taking the initiative. Future strategic concerns will need to be reflected in the realistic planning of the belligerent effort in a hybrid context, with global implications and ensuring world peace. The major effort in the hybrid spectrum will be dependent on non-kinetic modes of action (Mason, 2020, pp. 8-10). Obviously, as the Russian information campaign is a permanent one, the success of the actions is not possible if no similar efforts are made to outperform the opponent.

Certainly, American military thinking must be realistic. Without underestimating the role of conventional military forces, in order not to fail, the deterrence effort must be accompanied by concrete operational planning measures and a successful technological strategy, extensive multinational cooperation and internal interagency security involvements (Mason, 2020, p. 10).

3. The EU's Options

The generation and expansion of outbreaks of hybrid confrontation in the vicinity of the eastern borders of the European Union, fuelled by intentions and concerns to attract and strike European states through this type of aggression, have produced natural reactions at European decision-making levels. At that time, the approaches regarding the Common Foreign and Security Policy, occurred under the impact of the events of 2014 and 2015 in Ukraine, had a significant impact. In this context, the changes in the security environment led to a strong response, new tools and response capabilities. The developments in areas of Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa required appropriate approaches. The European Union was concerned with crisis management through own possibilities, knowing that crisis phenomena can immediately lead to conflict. It was taken into consideration that participation in the crisis spectrum will be focused on ensuring increased protection, high firepower, adequate amounts of multivalent troops and major equipment (Kříž, Bechná, & Števkov, 2016, pp. 15-16).

Taking into account the hybrid threats as being included in the military field, for the future, the European Union will have to take responsibility for security in its own geopolitical space, ensuring effective responses (Zdzislaw, 2017, p. 15). The duality of membership of the states, both of NATO, and of the European Union, requires that the reaction/counter-reaction from the spectrum of each security organisation's own capabilities is constructively structured in accordance with the responsibilities held and missions assumed (Drent, Hendriks & Zandee, 2015, pp. 38-41). It is required that the strategic efforts of the two organisations are coordinated.

The current Western perception stipulates that Russia is an international actor with intentions and possibilities to wage an information war in pursuit of political goals (Uziębło, 2017, p. 9). In the Russian understanding, the hybrid implications will massively mobilise conventional forces comprising mobile platforms and elite structures, SPETSNAZ forces, soldiers with uniforms without state affiliation (the so-called "*little green men*"), the disciplined operational structures being subordinated to the intense information campaign. Strategic leadership (civilian, military, media and economic) bodies will be integrated. The possible hybrid presences in Belarus, Ukraine, Syria, Venezuela, Libya (Mason, 2020, pp. 8-9) may be used to improve the operational experience gained in such confrontations by Russian forces in Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014-2015) (Mihalcea, 2021, pp. 184-201).

Under this option, the European Union will strive to achieve the necessary strategic priorities: superiority of information support (counteracting cyber threats, satellite communications capabilities, multi-channel communications and information services in the area of interest), increase in the level of operational protection (counteracting explosives, protection in the field of weapons of mass destruction, air and missile protection), major expeditionary capabilities (aerial capabilities for projecting the Force in theatres, aerial combat capabilities, logistic and medical support, operational aspects), security of communications, multiple other essential capabilities. The generation of military command acts will add to the development of capacities and capabilities (Drent, Hendriks & Zandee, 2015, pp. 41-43).

Hybrid threats need to be carefully analysed for determining their dangerous potential and intent to harm, efforts being needed to synchronise available policies, tools and means (Kříž, Bechná & Števkov, 2016, p. 16). The priority is to increase the resilience of member and partner states to successfully counter hybrid implications. Countermeasures will be directed to mitigating the challenges of the eastern as well as the southern border (Drent, Hendriks & Zandee, 2015, pp. 43-48). The European Union's cooperation with NATO must be stepped up in the future, requiring changes in the conceptual and action field. The new relationships will be connected on sending the same strategic message, using the unitary set of criteria for evaluating hybrid challenges, designing a common catalogue of response to future attacks, unitarily using critical information etc. (Drent, Hendriks & Zandee, 2015, pp. 50-54).

4. Romanian Undertakings

In order to address and provide an institutional solution to national security issues, the starting point must be located in the context of the fundamental law, which states that *Romania is a national, sovereign and independent, unitary and indivisible state*¹. Throughout history, multiple ethnic groups have settled on this territory, the current demographic structure of the country having a share of approximately 88.6% Romanians. The total population of 19,603,314 inhabitants, according to records from 01.01.2016, is likely to follow the same decreasing trend². United Nations estimates point to a population of 14.8 million around 2100³. The major demographic decline is due to the massive migration of the working population to different parts of the world, in order to obtain honourable jobs and ensure a decent standard of living. Certainly, an important part of the natives who left the Romanian space will remain permanently in different states. The reverse of the medal is a compensatory phenomenon, provided by the arrival from the East and South of other poor populations, which occupy the sectors in labour deficit in Romania and receive lower paid jobs (construction, services or household). The decrease of the share of the local population will be reduced in the future, facilitating the development of hybrid scenarios.

Priority is given to efforts to strengthen national identity, increase internal social cohesion, as defining elements of internal security (Bucur, 2015, pp. 80-82). Political-strategic decision-makers and planners must be able to analyse fluid international contexts and design viable scenarios for preventing and/or responding to hybrid actions, involving internal ethnic groups that produce actions conducive to the alleged aggressor, possible modus operandi. We consider that the crisis intervention plans and the countermeasures specific to the hybrid confrontation must be outlined, agreed and disseminated to the national effectors before the crisis, otherwise the delayed effort being fatal to the state institutions (Kříž, Bechná & Števkov, 2016, p. 17).

The constant effort supported by the national *intelligence and counter-intelligence* structures must emphasise the concerns for preventing strategic surprise. The ways to do this will include political-military analysis activities, signalling of possible hostile preoccupations of activating the hybrid, subversive implications, of other elements that trigger the hybrid belligerent conflict process (Uziębło, 2017, p. 17).

¹ Article 1, para (1) *Constituția României/The Constitution of Romania*, published in *Monitorul Oficial/Official Gazette* no. 767 on 31 October 2003.

² *Romania in figures. Statistical Abstract*. Institutul Național de Statistică, București, 2017, p. 9.

³ *World Population to 2300*, United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, New York, 2004, p. 49.

Romania's membership in NATO and the European Union will have to include the increase in the involvement of international collective defence organizations, in order to reveal intentions, eliminate masked tendencies of aggression and counteract multiple convergent approaches.

The lessons of the 21st century, the evolutionary tendencies of the security phenomenon noticed at the beginning of the third millennium must support the development of bilateral political relations with states that are possible targets for hybrid aggressions, by making maximum use of the benefits provided by the two security organizations, NATO and the European Union. The course of action requires the increase in the visibility of the Romanian diplomacy towards the substantiation of the feature of relevant NATO and EU state, with equal among equals status in the highlighted organisations. It is necessary to adopt unitary and cohesive internal attitudes and measures on security issues, as national security is much more important than internal political battles.

In general, there is a premise that the states bordering Romania will refrain from deliberately triggering hybrid conflicts against our country. However, one must be realistic. The peculiarities, dynamics and finalities of the events of December 1989 provide enough reasons for a cautious and extensive analysis of political intentions and declarations, economic plans and actions, efforts made by neighbouring states on various plans to reach certain goals. The major interests of the dominant states in geopolitical spaces or of some transnational entities can produce the systematic infiltration of the political leadership in the target state by agents of influence, support and operations. The missions synergistically lead to obtaining significant managerial-organisational advantages that can be points of departure in the targeted hybrid effort. To this end, we agree with experts who recommend minimising relations with potential entities, state or transnational ones, suspected of actions associated with a hybrid attack, given that it is plausible that the future belligerent confrontation will be operated in a *franchise* by more states simultaneously, in foreign situations disadvantageous to our country (Kříž, Bechná & Števkov, 2016, pp. 17-18).

For future requirements, we consider necessary the broadening of some internal security measures with the support of the population, the increase of harmony and social responsibility, the development of authentic civic values on the whole territory, through continuous education at all levels. For internal mutual support, we believe that differentiated actions need to be planned and carried out, with the involvement of local authorities, the armed forces and the police. The police must be able to act to eliminate attempts meant to paralyse the activity of state authorities and local government. Major emphasis needs to be placed on Intel capabilities, especially cyber ones and those intended for countering INFO OPs. Also, given the importance of the economic level, being well known the intentions and possibilities of hybrid destabilisation, strong measures are required to strengthen the economic levers of the state.

In the future, Romania must emphasise the implications arising from the status of NATO and European Union member state, the position of a resilient state, and assert itself as a regional stability factor. It must place the national security interests and objectives among the features and attributions of the Romanian state, the national, independent and sovereign, unitary and indivisible character. National security interests must lead to the strengthening of the country's profile, the strengthening of transatlantic relations, increased cooperation with the United States and the European Union. The National Recovery and Resilience Plan must be seen as a relevant instrument of Romania's future efforts.

5. Conclusions

Hybrid warfare promotes different ways of military and non-military actions, designed and carried out in specific forms, with surprising and contradictory implications in a separate operational picture. Discreet political and economic events will be obvious, deriving from hidden implications, in which it will be difficult to identify the cause and establish the effector. The successive approach of destabilising the societal plan will be followed by placing the security structures in a situation in which it is impossible for them to act, actually destroying the legal governance framework. The result of the hybrid actions will impose the dissolution of the statehood of the aggressed international actor.

The hybrid approach prioritises the intention to defeat a state sovereignty by destructuring from within the complex political systems. The hegemonic power considers the implementation of a range of multiple actions, by mixing peaceful social ones with the violent ones, from crisis outbreaks, possible to be followed by the management of events in a special way and the reinstatement of the social order through military actions. Thus, the role of military structures has changed substantially, declining from the position of basic force intended to destroy the opponent to the role of force specialised in managing post-conflict social conditions. The paradigm shift will involve rethinking the concept of organisation and training.

In order to successfully counter such aggression, we believe that, in addition to adopting a dynamic, balanced and multidirectional diplomacy, it is necessary to activate in a synchronised manner all security instruments, capable of opposing such actions, as a countering media manipulation being a matter of priority.

In order to eliminate the slippages of the concept of national identity, we consider that organisational-financial measures must be taken to optimise the capacity of the state's institutional effort to fulfil its responsibilities in the field of internal security, to increase internal social cohesion. At the same time, effective, continuous measures are needed to de-stress and harmonise interethnic, interfaith, inter-category and other relations, reducing the irregularities occurred throughout time.

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