

THE PERSPECTIVE OF WAR AND MODERN ARMED FIGHT

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This article addresses the current forms of modern warfare and armed fight based on Toffler's statement, "The world is constantly changing".

This change of the armed conflict is violent, explosive and very rapid, being like a reaction of the new to the old. The 21st century began in the spirit of this spontaneous reaction by producing structural changes in the concept of the armed fight, by adopting other forms of armed conflict than conventional ones, namely by asymmetric, irregular and hybrid conflicts in the last 10 years.

Military conflicts are like a chameleon, they change their colours to adapt to the new transformations of the security environment.

Keywords: modern armed fight; conventional; asymmetric conflict; irregular conflict; hybrid conflict;

INTRODUCTION

“The world is constantly changing” said Alvin Toffler in his book of the same name. Many of these changes are violent, explosive, being a reaction of the new to the old, of the old paradigms to the new, shaping real revolutions. Revolution in the military context refers to change, to progress, but it is not one-dimensional, like other revolutions. It is made on several levels, and if one of them is missing, it is no longer a revolution, but only an innovation, some progress.

The 21st century began precisely in the spirit of this new revolution in the military context, namely with asymmetric, irregular and hybrid conflicts, conflicts that give special importance to other means of fighting than the conventional ones, specific to armed fight.

The whole society has undergone changes in recent decades and the military institution has not been left out. The transformations it undergoes, in particular, the professionalisation of the military system and the ensuring of interoperability with the allied armed forces, in order to fulfil the objectives and missions entrusted, both at national level and in theatres of international operations, require special flexibility to adapt to the political-military global framework.

Against the background of the military transformations generated in the last part of the twentieth century and in the first part of the twenty-first century, some actors of the international environment have refined and, at the same time, diversified the methods and ways of waging war; thus, they have chosen to use different classical techniques of traditional warfare, combining them with irregular techniques belonging to the hybrid warfare.

This evolution of hybrid warfare has led some specialists to categorise it, through a very illustrative phrase, as a *“new, yet familiar”* threat.

Based on the above considerations, this paper can be a support in knowing the importance of the need for continuous adaptation to new technologies, new methods, techniques and tactics of combat, and understanding the current modern context of theatres of operations.

CONCEPTUAL DELIMITATIONS REGARDING THE EVOLUTION OF THE ARMED CONFLICT

In order to understand war and its evolution, it is essential to understand what the concept of “war” represents. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines war as “military operations between enemies; an action lead by a political force (as nation) to weaken or destroy another”. However, in military theory, the definition of war is often used as being the one given by Prussian strategist Carl von Clausewitz: “war is a simple continuation of politics by other means”.

Modern war, or rather war in general, is nothing but an expression of a reality beyond the conflicting limits of human society, namely an attempt to resolve a tense situation that could not be resolved diplomatically. War can be considered as a phenomenon, a given situation, which evolves at the same time with the human being, with society. The thresholds that the war has passed in its evolution are usually technological and doctrinal and these aspects refer to the term modern war.

Armed fight has always been the basic “instrument” of war. Even though military analysts believe that engaging in a traditional war is unlikely today, when NATO, the protective umbrella of the Alliance’s member states, has in itself become a factor of stability and discouragement in the face of a possible trend of aggression against a member state, the study of armed conflict comes, however, from the possibilities of transforming risks and threats to state security into direct armed confrontation.

The diversity of armed confrontations and implicitly of armed fight appears as a result of direct or indirect interactions, of a complex of economic, social, political, technical-scientific, demographic, geospatial factors etc. As one of the main manifestations of war, the armed fight occupies a central place in it and materialises the concept of the use of the armed forces and their mode of action.

The armed fight can be considered “as the mode of action of one of the instruments of politics – the armed force – in order to achieve the goals that politics could not achieve using its peaceful means” (Ostropel, 2006, p. 4). It includes “all actions carried out at the strategic, operational and tactical level by all categories of armed forces” (Ibid). In a broader form, armed fight is the violent military confrontation between two militarily organised opposing forces with fighting power (intelligence, leadership, protection, manoeuvring, firing power), each aimed at the fulfilment of the proposed objectives. As a result of the impetuous development of the material means of the conflict, of the participation in the fight of some more

and more diversified and complex forces, in its historical evolution the armed conflict resized its spheres of scope, changed its physiognomy and gradually acquired new underlying features “*modern warfare*” (Ibid).

The 21st century has brought major changes in the conduct of conventional military actions through factors with a special influence, specific to asymmetric, irregular and hybrid conflicts. One of the special changes in the evolution of the military phenomenon on the physiognomy of military actions is found as a reaction of the new to the old, a necessary reaction in the current conditions. The armed conflicts that have taken place in recent decades have shown that innovative thinking and technology are decisive factors in the design and modelling of confrontations.

Recent developments in the global security environment have rekindled debate in specialised media in the field of international relations and security studies on reconfiguring the international system and the emergence of revolutionary changes in the practice of modern warfare.

ARMED CONFLICT IN THE HYBRID WAR IN UKRAINE – CASE STUDY

The most recent modern confrontation is encountered in the conflict in Ukraine and is the most complex and complete form of hybrid warfare.

Hybrid warfare is characterised by military theorists as a social, complex, ambiguous and chaotic phenomenon, because it combines conventional and unconventional means to cause changes from the inside, by making the institutions and ideologies of the attacked state to lose their legitimacy and last but not least by winning the support of the local population in the conflict area to fulfil the objectives (Rațiu, 2016, p. 72).

American theorists say that hybrid warfare is “*a combination of symmetric and asymmetric war in which intervening forces conduct traditional military operations against enemy military forces and targets while they must simultaneously – and more decisively – attempt to achieve control of the combat zone’s indigenous populations by securing and stabilizing them (stability operations)*” (Mc Cuen, 2008, pp. 107-108).

After the rapid annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of what initially appeared to be a similar conflict in eastern Ukraine, many perceived the Russian hybrid war as a new threat, a weapon that Russia could deploy anywhere and at any time.

In order to identify the premises for an irregular and hybrid conflict, it must be borne in mind that its initial, non-violent phases take place in full legality or somewhere at the limit of the law. The preparatory phase of the hybrid war does not differ so much from the conventional tools of Russian diplomacy, such as gathering information, establishing contacts with decision-makers, establishing media, supporting cultural projects and attracting non-governmental organisations. In fact, the preparations of a hybrid war are mostly build on these instruments that are long studied and experienced by the Moscow authorities, and which could be used in almost any circumstances (Bătinaș, 2017, p. 78).

The analysis of the whole spectrum of hybrid warfare is very complex. In the case of Ukraine, the hybrid war went on two fronts, namely the Crimea, where success was complete, and another, with partial success, in Eastern Ukraine, where the initial hybrid war was transformed into a conventional armed conflict, but limited (Ibid).

One of the peculiarities of the hybrid conflict in Ukraine, which is different from other conflicts studied, is that the subject of the hybrid threat, in this case Russia, is militarily stronger than the object of the threat.

The entire state has been “*infected*” with an extremely high level of corruption, including at the highest levels of state administration. Low government legitimacy was an additional factor that weakened Ukraine’s resilience. This was noted during the Crimean crisis, when the new leadership in Kiev faced serious problems of legitimacy as well as functionality. Although the election of Poroshenko as president on 25 May 2014 contributed to the partial settlement of the issues of legitimacy, the difficulties related to functionality persisted. Russia and its local supporters have succeeded in taking advantage of the weak legitimacy of the new Kiev government in Crimea through the use of propaganda and the promotion of false news, significantly reducing the morale of Ukrainian forces stationed on the peninsula.

An important feature of the hybrid conflict in Ukraine is the massive presence of the Russian minority or Russian-speaking speakers. From a political perspective, the presence of ethnic Russians or Russian speakers in Ukraine could be a pretext for Russia that its actions were legitimate, because the purpose of the intervention was to protect the rights of ethnic Russians. From an operational perspective, it is much easier to find people dissatisfied with the central power among the Russian-speaking minority and to be recruited to be used against Ukraine.

The infiltration of special forces among the locals limited Ukraine's ability to use force against those who took part in illegal actions (Ibid).

In both Crimea and eastern Ukraine, the Russian press and the Ukrainian press under Russian influence succeeded in building an alternative reality in which they presented the fact that most ethnic Russians or Russian-speakers were in favour of secession from Ukraine, while in fact this did not correspond to reality (Ibid). The strong presence of Russian influence in the Ukrainian media allowed the attackers to generate and strengthen distrust in the central government, isolate the regions from any information coming from the capital, as well as mislead and misinform Ukrainians and the international community. The importance of a strong media and, in general, of the means specific to the information warfare, leads to the conclusion that these modern and cheap means are very effective in a modern war. Therefore, the impact that the media and the Internet have is directly proportional to the level of technological development of the actors involved in the hybrid war (Ibid, p. 80).

The implementation of the whole spectrum of hybrid warfare is not possible without providing adequate logistical support. Therefore, the military presence, even if undeclared, in the two areas of Ukraine was indispensable. This was facilitated by the common border between the two states, the presence of Russian military bases in the vicinity of the Russian-Ukrainian border and the non-existent or weak Ukrainian border authorities.

Russia's hybrid war in Ukraine aimed to annihilate Ukraine's ability to resist without using a large-scale military attack. This war was based on the combination of conventional and unconventional methods, with the engagement of the full spectrum of actions that include diplomatic, economic, political, social, informational and military means, all well synchronised so that the objectives are achieved.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, while many countries have invested heavily in modernising conventional forces in recent years, the possibility of triggering a conventional warfare conflict has dropped significantly.

The latest military conflicts show the following: the future war will be multidimensional and will take place in all environments – on earth, at sea, in the cosmos, in the electromagnetic spectrum and in the intelligence sphere.

Intelligence warfare will be an increasingly important component of future wars and military conflicts, defying conventional methods of conducting military action and even many unconventional ones.

A concept that emerged and developed in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the hybrid warfare has changed the way traditional warfare is viewed.

One of the characteristics of modern armed conflict is that the barriers between the two stages of the war, the preparation and conduct of the war itself, have disappeared. At the same time, the preparation and conduct of war unite, complement each other, to form a continuous war, a much more dynamic war, waged more vertically than horizontally, a war of intelligence, and of hybrid actions.

The nature of complex missions in theatres of operations and conflict spaces is increasingly forcing military actors to be aware of the need for change, both technologically and professionally, as this must be done strategically so that reduce redundancy, improve efficiency and reduce potential damage.

On a different note, the modern, hybrid war is a surprise factor, an element that can shape the fate of a nation, can open new loopholes that develop military capabilities, help the evolution of military strategy, produce an increase in military professionalism due to the evolution of technology and its introduction to facilitate and digitise the battlefield.

In this sense, this paper presents the importance of finding a course of action that looks at both the conceptual and the conventional side, combining the elements to create a modern factor. At the same time, the importance of these evolutions and revolutions of modern conflicts will be highlighted, emphasising that the success of a mission is directly proportional to the symbiosis between conventional and unconventional military strategy, managing to balance and tip the balance towards success.

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