

HIBRIDNE GROŽNJE IN RAZVOJ NOVEGA NATOVEGA SPLOŠNEGA KONCEPTA

HYBRID THREATS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW NATO OVERARCHING CONCEPT

Professional article

Povzetek Prispevek obravnava vidike novih varnostnih izzivov, ki jih vojaški teoretiki in avtorji varnostnih in obrambno-strateških dokumentov imenujejo hibridne grožnje. Trenutno so precejšnji izziv za zavezništvo in njegove interese. Hibridne grožnje vključujejo nasprotnike, vključno z državami, »malopridnimi« državam, nedržavnimi akterji ali terorističnimi organizacijami, ki lahko za doseganje svojih ciljev uporabijo različne kombinacije ukrepov v vse manj omejenem operativnem okolju. Hibridne grožnje so lahko kombinacija vseh vidikov vojskovanja ter skupek dejavnosti več nasprotnikov. Izkušnje iz trenutnih operacij so pokazale, da lahko nasprotniki zdaj izvajajo sovražne ukrepe s pomočjo številnih konvencionalnih ali nekonvencionalnih sredstev, metod in postopkov ter so pri tem uspešni, tudi če delujejo proti Natovim silam, ki so tehnološko in vojaško bolj podprte. Zavedanje razsežnosti in kompleksnosti prihodnjih groženj je zahtevalo razvoj splošnega sklepnega koncepta (Capstone Concept) za prispevek Nata k zoperstavljanju hibridnim grožnjam (*Military Contribution to Countering Hybrid Threats* – MCCHT). Ta koncept obravnava posebne izzive, ki jih predstavljajo trenutne in prihodnje grožnje, ter pojasnjuje, zakaj lahko ti izzivi od Nata zahtevajo, da prilagodi svoje strategijo, strukturo in zmogljivosti za naslednjih dvajset let.

Ključne besede *Hibridne grožnje, hibridno vojskovanje, varnostni izzivi, koncept.*

Abstract This article deals with aspects of newly emerging security challenges that military theoreticians and authors of security and defense strategic documents name 'Hybrid Threats'. They currently present a significant challenge for the Alliance and its interests. Hybrid Threats involve adversaries (including states, rogue states, non-state actors or terrorist organizations) that may employ a combination of actions in an increasingly unconstrained operating environment in order to achieve their aims. Hybrid Threats may consist of a combination of every aspect of warfare and

compound the activities of multiple adversaries. Experience from current operations has demonstrated that adversaries can now conduct hostile actions through a broad array of conventional or non-conventional means, methods and procedures, having a favorable outcome against a NATO force that is technologically and militarily superior. Cognition of the scale and complexity of future threats has demanded a development of an overarching Capstone Concept¹ for the NATO *Military Contribution to Countering Hybrid Threats* (MCCHT). This Concept articulates the unique challenges posed by current and future Hybrid Threats and explains why these challenges may require NATO to adapt its strategy, structure and capabilities for the next twenty years.

Key words *Hybrid threats, hybrid warfare, security challenges, concept.*

Introduction *Hybrid Threats are those posed by adversaries, with the ability to simultaneously employ conventional and non-conventional means adaptively in pursuit of their objectives.*²

Perhaps no country in NATO has dedicated so much effort in facing global security challenges as intensively as the United States. Representatives of the security community indicated an increase of various threats, which include traditional, irregular, terrorist or disruptive threats or challenges facing the state. This generates an unusual dilemma for today's military planners, whether to abandon the idea of preparing for war against state actors with conventional capabilities, or re-orienting for more likely scenarios of conflict with a non-state adversary using asymmetric operations and 'irregular tactics'. At the same time they also recognize that both modes of actions can not exist separately.

A number of military theoreticians and strategists seek to discover and justify the existence of new forms of warfare, merging combined features of various types of military and non-military, combat and non-combat activities. They assume that future warfare will be hidden in the synergies, combining all the ways, methods and styles, which have been used to date. Their thoughts are turning to the „hybrid threats, „hybrid wars“ and „hybrid warfare“ and show that the combination will be used specifically against the weaknesses of their opponents. The particular challenges that were presented by separate philosophies of conventional enemies, terrorists or insurgents, converge in expectations of a collision with opponents that use all possible forms of violent actions. A part of the problem may even be criminal activities that destabilize local governments and/or encourage insurgents and foreign mercenaries, providing them with resources and assets, or undermining the authority of the host country and the legitimacy of its representatives.

¹ MC 0583: *A Capstone Concept is an overarching concept with the purpose of leading force development and employment primarily by providing a broad description of how to operate across significant portions of the complete spectrum of operations and describing what is required to meet strategic objectives.*

² NATO agreed (31 May 10) see ref.: *Internet sources [1]*

Hybrid Threats that sooner or later will be visible in hybrid warfare include, according to these theoreticians,³ a whole spectrum of different aspects, including the capabilities of conventional, asymmetric, insurgent and terrorist acts and criminal activities. Hybrid wars can be waged between states and various non-state actors. They can be kept by separate units or even a single unit, operationally integrated and tactically incorporated and coordinated within the same operational area.

1 UNDERSTANDING OF MODERN THREATS

The origin of the term “hybrid wars” is often attributed to various authors. According to the one of the architects of the counterinsurgency doctrine, Dave Kilcullen, the first author who used the term “hybrid wars” was Erin Simpson who, during the conference for the Midwest Political Science Association (Chicago, April 2005) presented a paper “*Thinking about modern conflict: Hybrid wars, strategy, and war aims*”. According to Kilcullen, Simpson is the originator of this “extraordinarily valuable conceptual framework” (Kilcullen, 2008).⁴

Others offer Frank Hoffman, for his memoir “*Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars.*” He states, however, that the credit for the first use of the term ‘hybrid’ belongs to R. Walker who, in his unpublished doctoral thesis at the Naval Post Graduate School in Monterey, defined the Marine Expeditionary Unit as a “hybrid force for Hybrid Wars” back in 1998 (Hoffman, 2005).

Notwithstanding these and similar conjectures, one of the first provoking and certainly most inspirational thoughts inflaming the debate on the issue of hybrid wars, were those of General James N. Mattis and F. Hoffman, published in the U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings with title: “*Future Warfare: The Rise of Hybrid Wars.*”. Mattis in his speech pointed out to the experience from Afghanistan and Iraq, highlighting the unexpected combination of technologies and methods of unorthodox tactical activities, that an unconventional enemy could use in the future. According to Mattis, so-called irregular challenges and methods of terrorism, fighting insurgents, unrestricted warfare, guerrilla wars or coercion by narco-criminals, will mostly likely represent the threats of the future (Mattis, Hoffman, 2005).

³ Beside authors cited in references see e.g. BIDDLE, Stephen., FRIEDMAN, Jeffrey A., 2008. *The 2006 Lebanon Campaign and the Future of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defense Policy*. Strategic Studies Institute, U. S. Army War College, Carlisle, ISBN 1-58487-362-0. EVANS, Michael., 2003. *From Kadesh to Kandahar: Military Theory and the Future of War*. Naval War College Review. SIMPSON, Erin., 2005. *Thinking about Modern Conflict: Hybrid Wars, Strategy, and War Aims*. The Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, Illinois. KILCULLEN, David., 2009. *Accidental Guerrilla*. New York: Oxford University Press. HOFFMAN, G. Frank., 2009. *Hybrid Threats: Reconceptualizing the Evolving Character of Modern Conflict*. Washington, DC: Institute for National Strategic Studies, Strategic Forum 240.

⁴ Based on D. Kilcullen’s blogging with Simpson in February 2008, regarding to paper, *Thinking about modern conflict: Hybrid wars, strategy, and war aims*.

“We do not face a range of four separate challengers as much as the amendments to the combination of approaches - and manager of a different modes and means of war. This unprecedented synthesis is what we call Hybrid Warfare” (Mattis, Hoffman, 2005, p. 1).

Mattis continues that the war, which we will face in the future, is no longer just the General Krulak's *‘Three Block War’*. All aspects that must be taken into the account, Mattis characterized as follows:

“In hybrid wars we may face remnants of the fielded army of a rogue state in future wars, and they may employ conventional weapons in very novel or non-traditional ways. We can also expect to face unorthodox attacks or random acts of violence by sympathetic groups of non-state actors against our critical infrastructure or our transportation networks. We may also see other forms of economic war or crippling forms of computer network attacks against military or financial targets” (Mattis, Hoffman, 2005, p. 2).

The issues of hybrid wars are not only the mere deliberations of several military theoreticians. The United States National Defence Strategy (NDS) significantly expanded the understanding of modern threats. The previous mainstream of American thinking *“To fight and win the nation's wars”* which featured warfare against a conventional enemy, is heading toward a wide range of enemies that exist outside of the “traditional”. The Strategy includes three other threats: irregular, terroristic and disruptive, that in the complex may usurp American power and hegemony through advanced technologies.

The Strategy assumed that the most complex challenges of the future might arise from the synergy of simultaneous applications of multiple methods of warfare (NDS, 2005). The Strategy even mentioned that the Department of Defence has invested too much into the traditional forms of warfare and there exists a need to shift resources and attention to other challenges. As Hoffman noted, National Defense Strategy and the “Quadrennial Defence Review (2006) well accepted that future challenges will avoid the U.S.'s unmatched power and seek alternative paths. *“We can no longer focus just on battles against preferred enemies”* (Hoffman, 2007, p. 9).

According to Hoffman, future scenarios will likely present a unique combination of synergies directed against Western society in general, and especially against the vulnerabilities of the United States. The future indicates that adversaries will be smarter than they are now and rarely restrict themselves in using only one tool available from the whole range of ways and methods that can be used simultaneously. Conventional, irregular and catastrophic-terrorist challenges will not be different and independent ways of warfare. All of them will be present in some form simultaneously. Mixing modes of warfare with a wide, diverse and complex range of technologies is *‘hybrid warfare’* (Hoffman, 2007).

2 THE SOURCES OF THE NEW NATO'S CONCEPT

Before Hoffman published his ideas there were several military thinkers dealing with emerging threats. It is worth mentioning General Krulak's famous prediction about the character of future conflicts, published by Robert Holzer in the Defence News article: "*Krulak Warns of Over-Reliance on Technology*". According to Krulak:

"... future conflicts would be unlike the large-scale mechanized sweeps of Operation Desert Storm, but more like the "Stepchild of Somalia and Chechnya". The Chechens employed swarming tactics inside their own cities to thwart Russian domination. In Somalia, despite overwhelming superiority in firepower and technology, a group of lightly-armed 'rebels' effectively forced the US military out of the country by inflicting casualties on an elite unit" (Holzer, 1996, p. 4).

William Lind, one of the authors of the *Theory of Fourth Generation Warfare* in the article "*The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation*", predicted in 1989 the nature of future threats. Lind says:

"... warfare seems likely to be widely dispersed and largely undefined; the distinction between war and peace will be blurred to the vanishing point. It will be non-linear, possibly to the point of having no definable battlefields or fronts. The distinction between 'civilian' and 'military' may disappear. Actions will occur concurrently throughout all participants' depth, including their society as a cultural, not just a physical, entity" (Lind, 1989, p. 2).

The 'Fourth Generation' concept has its opponents, such as the above mentioned General Mattis. For his own defence Lind, in another article "*Understanding Fourth Generation War*", tries repeatedly to explain the essence of the concept, citing Mattis, who, according to him, lacks the point of such warfare:

"Ultimately, a real understanding of history means that we face nothing new under the sun. For all the '4th Generation of War' intellectuals running around today saying that the nature of war has fundamentally changed, the tactics are wholly new, etc., I must respectfully say... 'Not really...' (Lind, 2004).

Later on, Lind accents on his own defence that the concept of 'Fourth Generation War' is not new, but represents a return to a method of warfare, that was waged before the establishment of the legal state as an institution.

"Now, as then, many different entities, not just governments of states, will wage war. They will wage war for many different reasons, not just "the extension of politics by other means." And they will use many different tools to fight war, not restricting themselves to what we recognize as military forces" (Lind, 2004).

Antulio J. Echevarria II is another determined opponent. He points out, in his article, *“Fourth-Generation War and Other Myths”*, that what is being called ‘Fourth Generation Warfare’ is just insurgency. He also claims that the concept was ‘discovered’ by Lind. Echevarria writes: *“The generational model is an ineffective way to depict changes in warfare. Simple displacement rarely takes place, significant developments typically occur in parallel”* (Echevarria, 2005, p. 10).

Although the theory of ‘Fourth Generation War’ has its opponents, it is obvious that it has provided a number of clues as to the development of hybrid threats and hybrid war concepts. The new concepts have also begun to address a broader community of experts. Many of them have brought more mature thoughts to the NATO overarching operating concept.

David. E. Johnson’s study paper, *“Military Capabilities for Hybrid War - Insights from the Israeli Defence Forces in Lebanon and Gaza”* is a part of an ongoing project – *“An Army for Full Spectrum Operations: Lessons from Irregular Wars”*. It represents one of the major contributions to the development of the *Hybrid Wars Theory*. Its objective is to evaluate current irregular and hybrid conflicts and their consequences for the U.S. Army, their capabilities and other forces supporting or operating with the Army. As current operations demonstrate, the Army is particularly important when fighting an enemy that applies irregular forms of warfare and where the claim *“to have boots on the ground”* (Johnson, 2010, p. 13) exists. The intention of the project is to *gain experience from the hybrid fighting of Israel’s Defence Forces in Lebanon and Gaza*.⁵ According to the project, insights into the operational context of warfare could bring information on the structure and capabilities of the forces that are exposed to hybrid threats.

3 HYBRID THREATS - FROM THEORIES TO THE CONCEPT

*“The publication of this concept, based upon the leverage of on-going national thoughts and collaborative work with NATO and national Subject Matter Experts, focuses on outlining the challenges posed by hybrid threats and provides an initial framework for countering them.”*⁶

Alex Smethurst, ACT lead analyst on the concept

One of the primary sources that justify the existence, scope and complexity of both conventional and unconventional future threats, was the final review of Allied Command Transformation (ACT) from the project *“Multiple Futures Project”* (MFP). The International Military Staff (IMS) ordered in consequences, that both strategic commands will initiate the development of the new overarching concept

⁵ For a similar study from the conflict between IDF and Hezbollah see: BIDDLE, Stephen., FRIEDMAN, Jeffrey A., 2008. *The 2006 Lebanon Campaign and the Future of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defense Policy*. Strategic Studies Institute, U. S. Army War College, Carlisle, ISBN 1-58487-362-0.

⁶ <http://www.act.nato.int/multimedia/archive/41-top-headlines/464-act-sees-progress-on-countering-hybrid-threats-concept>

for the resolution of hybrid threats. The analysis of major strategic documents (directives, doctrine, research reports, etc.) was conducted by strategic headquarters, national representatives, NATO Centres of Excellence (COE) and the other partners.

The crucial role in developing the new concept pertains to the *Counter Threat Hybrid Integrated Project Team* which, since the beginning of 2009, has dealt with issues of hybrid threats assessment. The team created a detailed plan for the evaluation of hybrid threats and broader challenges. Since then it has made a number of international workshops conducted by ACT, where numbers of representatives from both member and non-NATO nations are present, helping to develop the concept.

The reality of the possible advent of hybrid threats has become an important issue for political and military leaders of NATO. Half of the year 2010 brought a number of activities that have contributed to the draft development of the new NATO operating concept “*Military Contribution to Countering Hybrid Threats*” (MCCHT). ACT conducted a detailed analysis of the security environment, created and published (August 2010) the first draft of the concept dealing with many problems and challenges that may affect the existence of NATO over the next two decades. Many of the key issues were then raised during the NATO summit in Lisbon (November 2010) and in the concluding declaration of the participating Heads of States and Governments.

The proposed draft highlights three important issues. Firstly, while the contemporary NATO policy, strategy and doctrinal framework remain valid, there are new areas of threats, which may expand beyond the current horizon. Secondly, the division between military and civilian responsibilities in the changing security environment is becoming more difficult to define and thirdly, the Alliance will require much more collaboration and partnerships beyond its existing scope.

The draft of the new concept identifies the emerging challenges and addresses them with the term ‘hybrid threat’. It describes how these threats manifest themselves and provides an estimate of how NATO could contribute to manage them. There are serious considerations about cyber attack, energy security, terrorism, international crime, lack of strategic resources and the increasing commercial availability of lethal technologies and materials. With regard to emerging security challenges, the draft of the concept provides the key implications for NATO and offers some possible solutions in facing them.

The document stresses the Alliance’s obligation in strengthening its own capability and to act against hybrid threats comprehensively. Their complexity requires a holistic approach and the ability to respond in conjunction with the broad international community. In some aspects the individual countries could count on taking over the leading role in the fight against the threat with the support of the NATO military component. Hybrid threats will have a tendency to exploit the gaps in the security environment across the spectrum of conflict. NATO should hence enhance cooperation with other organizations to respond to any threat effectively.

4 COUNTER HYBRID THREATS EXPERIMENT – A WAY AHEAD

The USJFCOM Joint Irregular Warfare Centre (JIWC) provided significant help to execute the ACT experiment “*Counter Threats Hybrid Experiment*”⁷ in May 2011. Rather than being based on formal policy, it was taken more as an intellectual forum in which individual participants analyzed, discussed and better understood the complex set of issues facing NATO and the wider community to address the new security challenges. The main purpose of the experiment was to find and discuss the critical implications of proposals for the new concept and to elaborate possible approaches to solving the critical issues. The experiment has attracted the attention and participation of not only NATO member states, but also representatives from academia, business and international partners. One of the key outcomes of the experiment was to provide a clear recommendation to the political and military leadership of NATO, about what this organization must do to support the broad international community in coping with a set of hybrid challenges. The results of the experiment were directly taken into account in subsequent development and refinement of the concept. It is assumed that the final product – *Military Contribution to Countering Hybrid Threats* – will be finished at the end of 2011.

Conclusion Even though a draft, this concept offers a careful analysis of the evolving security environment in which NATO will have to react. It is obvious that the complexity of future challenges will require adjustment of NATO’s structures, processes and capabilities in several key areas to be effective. Any response of NATO will likely depend on aspects outside the existing scope of NATO’s military community and may be particularly problematic especially with regard to the issue of cooperation with non-military agencies and a thorough understanding of the civil-military interface needed to achieve unity. It will therefore be necessary to consult the issues with representatives of the political sphere. Political consensus among NATO member states in the region (beyond purely military involvement), has remained an important issue, as well as dealing with the consequences of rapid technological development.

Authors of this concept are aware that further development is based on the current restrictions. It is also a matter of sensitive intellectual debate about the future security challenges beyond a rigid paradigm. They assume both further follow-up discussions on new hybrid threats and sophisticated decision-making, in which the Alliance will need to transform.

⁷ For all the agenda concerning the experiment, relevant documents and activities, see: <https://transnet.act.nato.int/WISE/ACTIPT/JOUIPT/20102011CH/Experiment>

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