

How is Russian Hybrid Warfare a Challenge to the Intelligence Function at the Operational Level and to What Extent Should it Adapt?

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Abstract

Gathering of around fifty equipped men held onto the Crimean parliament constructing and lifted the Russian banner on the housetop. In the next weeks plain faculty from Russia's sixteenth Special Purpose Brigade, the 76th Airborne Assault Division and the Black Sea Fleet's Marines Brigade cooperated with purported "Crimean professional Russian self-protection powers" just as Crimean units of Ukraine's "Berkut" exceptional police to "bar and hold onto Ukrainian army installations, government structures and key foundation offices". On March 18 the Russian Government held a service in the Kremlin to sign a settlement under which Crimea and the city of Sevastopol ended up authority Russian areas. In the month of march the final maritime ship flying the Ukrainian banner on the promontory, the minesweeper Cherkassy, was raged and caught by "minimal green men". The following day Russian banners were raised over each of the army installations, mixes and dispatches in Sebastopol.

All through the Russian task in Crimea NATO watched the occasions with concern. At that point Secretary General of NATO, Anders Fog Rasmussen, blamed Russia for directing "cross breed fighting" and Poland mentioned counsels inside the structure of Article of the Washington Treaty, which expresses that: "the gatherings will counsel at whatever point, in the supposition of any of them, the regional uprightness, political freedom, or security of any of the gatherings is undermined.

Keywords: Social; Demography; Geography; Peace

Introduction, Background and Problem Indication

At 0425 local time on February 27, 2014, a group of approximately fifty armed men seized the Crimean parliament building and hoisted the Russian flag on the rooftop.¹ In the following weeks unmarked personnel from Russia's 16th Special Purpose Brigade, the 76th Airborne Assault Division and the Black Sea Fleet's 810th Marines Brigade worked together with so called "Crimean pro-Russian self defense forces" as well as Crimean units of Ukraine's "Berkut" special police to "blockade and seize Ukrainian military bases, government buildings and key infrastructure facilities".² On March 18 the Russian Government held a ceremony in the Kremlin to sign a treaty under which Crimea and the city of Sevastopol became official Russian regions.³ On March 25 the last naval ship flying the Ukrainian flag on the peninsula, the minesweeper *Cherkassy*, was stormed and captured by "little green men".⁴ The next day Russian flags were raised over all 193 military bases, compounds and ships in Crimea.⁵

Throughout the Russian operation in Crimea NATO observed the events with concern. Then Secretary General of NATO, Anders

Fog Rasmussen, accused Russia of conducting "hybrid warfare"⁶ and Poland requested consultations within the framework of Article 4 of the Washington Treaty, which states that: "the parties will consult whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence, or security of any of the parties is threatened".⁷

The official communiqué from those consultations on March 4 states that: "We (NATO) undertake to pursue and intensify our rigorous and on-going assessment of the implications of this crisis for Alliance security, in close coordination and consultation".⁸ Although proving the alliance's commitment to *Horizon Scanning*, *Prudent Thinking* and *Prudent Planning* as part of its adaptation and transformation in order to be better prepared for emerging trends and crisis response⁹,

⁶Landler M, Gordon M (2014) NATO Chief warns of Duplicity by Putin on Ukraine, NY Times, July 8, 2014, at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/09/world/europe/nato-chief-warns-of-duplicity-by-putin-on-ukraine.html>? (accessed 22/4/2017)

⁷Situation in Ukraine-timeline at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/events_107755.htm (accessed 22/4/2017)

⁸Statement by the North Atlantic Council following meeting under article 4 of the Washington Treaty, March 4 2014, at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_107716.htm (accessed 22/4/2017)

⁹NATO, Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive (COPD), Interim version 2.0, (Mons: SHAPE, 2013), chapter 2-1 Situational Awareness, part c) Strategic environment

¹Lavrov A (2014) Russian Again: The military operations for Crimea. In: Howard C, Pukhov R (eds.) *Brothers armed – Military aspects of the crisis in Ukraine*, (Moscow: CAST), p: 163.

²Nikolsky A (2014) Little, Green and Polite – The creation of Russian Special Operations Forces. In: Howard C, Pukhov R (eds.) *Brothers armed – Military aspects of the crisis in Ukraine*, (Moscow:CAST), p: 124.

³Podpisan Dogovor o Prinyatii Respubliki Krym v Rossiiskuyu Federatsiyu. Official website of the Russian president. April 18, 2014 <http://www.kremlin.ru/news/20604> (accessed 22/4/2017)

⁴Rossiskiy okkupanty 2 chasa shturmovali Cherkassy. Flag ostayetsya do utra, Ukrainskaya Pravda, March 25, 2014, at <http://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/search/?search=%D7%E5%F0%EA%E0%F1%F1%EA%E8> (accessed 22/4/2017)

⁵Flagi rossii podnyaty vo sekh voinskih podrazdeleniyakh Kryma, RIA Novosti, march 26, 2016, http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20140326/1001072912.html, (accessed 22/4/2017)

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General Breedlove (SACEUR), admitted that: "Today we are faced with a situation where the actions of Russia and its leadership are extremely difficult to predict".¹⁰

These difficult-to-predict actions have since been labeled as elements of "Russian hybrid warfare", as a physical manifestation of the Russian "Gerasimov Doctrine"¹¹, as "Political War", and as "Putins New Warfare".¹² The subsequent debate within academic and military circles has mostly focused on the usefulness, precision and meaning (or lack thereof) of these different concepts [1-3]. Given that the main purpose of intelligence is to provide decision support to commanders and policymakers through the production of intelligence estimates and threat assessments¹³, the apparent unexpectedness and unpreparedness displayed by NATO suggests an underlying problem with the intelligence function *vis á vis* hybrid threats.

This raises a number of questions. Are the process, methods and organization of the intelligence function not sufficient to understand and predict so-called "hybrid warfare"? Are there certain traits that are particularly difficult to detect or understand? And, finally, can NATO enable operational level change to its intelligence functions in order to confront the complexity of an evolving Russian hybrid threat? If so, how?

Structure, Purpose and Argument

The purpose of this essay is to rigorously explore and assess to what extent the joint intelligence function should adapt to the emergence of Russian hybrid threats [4,5]. It will argue that the concept of "hybrid warfare" is neither novel nor particularly new, but that certain traits pose significant challenges. In particular, the application of high levels of deception, disinformation and ambiguity will be analyzed.

The essay is centered round a three-fold structure; firstly it will frame the discussion by examining certain basic characteristics of intelligence at the operational level, such as a method, product and process to provide context for the subsequent discussion. Likewise, it will explore certain key traits of Russian "hybrid warfare". Secondly, it will discuss core challenges posed by these hybrid threats to the intelligence function in the context of method, product and process. Finally, it will assess to what extent these core challenges can be overcome or mitigated with improved processes and organizational reforms.

Limitations

The essay will limit itself to the operational level, with a particular focus on NATO's doctrinal intelligence functions. Similarly, it will use Crimea and to a certain extent the events in Georgia 2008 and Eastern Ukraine 2014 as case examples. Although conflicts such as Lebanon 2006 and Chechnya 2000 are also examples of hybrid warfare they will not be discussed in any detail in this essay [6,7]. Similarly, the intelligence contribution to targeting, counter-proliferation and operational assessment are, albeit important operational level

¹⁰Аналитики НАТО не знают, как быть с поверившей в свою силу Россией, RIA Novosti, 10 May 2014 https://ria.ru/defense_safety/20140510/1007274097.html (accessed 22/4/2017)

¹¹Gerasimov V (2017) Ценность науки в предвидении, Военное Promushleniy Kyrier, at: <http://www.vpk-news.ru/articles/14632> (accessed 22/4/2017)

¹²Hoffman FG (2014) On not-so-new warfare: Political warfare vs. Hybrid threats, War on the Rocks, July 2014 at: <https://warontherocks.com/2014/07/on-not-so-new-warfare-political-warfare-vs-hybrid-threats/>, (accessed 22/4/2017).

¹³Forsvarsstaben, Forsvarets fellesoperative doktrine (FFOD), (Oslo: Forsvarsstaben, 2014), pt. 05090, chapter 5.7, p. 126

intelligence products, out of scope of this essay. Operational intelligence process, methods and products: Framing the intelligence contribution to operational planning NATO doctrine states that: "An effective contribution to operations is based on the production of focused intelligence that supports decision-making related to operational-level planning, preparation and execution".¹⁴ However, operational level intelligence cannot be fully discussed unless one has full grasp of the main process, methods and products that lies behind.

General Scowcroft frames these three elements within three main dimensions. First, it is about the collection of information through various methods. Second, it is about the processing of that information which, third, produces intelligence estimates [8,9]. The point is that these products aim to give the intelligence consumer information about three key areas: "the forces at work in the world, what the trends are, and what kind of possibilities the consumer should consider".¹⁵

Firstly, the overarching process and method that drives the intelligence process from information requirements to finished intelligence products is the intelligence cycle. In theory, this is a four-step sequential process consisting of guidance, collection, analyzing, and dissemination.¹⁶ In practice, however, the relationship between intelligence and policy is reciprocal as well as sequential¹⁷, which means that collected, but un-analyzed intelligence may be disseminated to the commander, which then provides guidance for new intelligence requirements. Moreover, it should be appreciated that collection and analysis are really parallel processes.¹⁸

The first step in the process is guidance, where the consumer states his intelligence requirements. A major problem is that consumers of intelligence, including military commanders, do not always know what they want. As a former US Secretary of State said "I do not know what intelligence I need, but I know it when I get it".¹⁹ At the operational level establishing the Commanders Critical Information Requirements (CCIR) does this.²⁰ The second step is collection, a process in which all sources of information such as human intelligence (HUMINT), signals intelligence (SIGINT), imagery intelligence (IMINT) and open-source intelligence (OSINT) are utilized to gather as much data as possible. The third step is analysis, which is "the process of transforming the bits and pieces of information that are collected in whatever fashion into something that is useable by policy makers and military commanders".²¹ Its core purpose is to create meaning out of the collected information

¹⁴NATO (2016), AJP-2 Allied Joint Intelligence, Counter Intelligence and Security Doctrine, (Brussel: NATO), point 1-1

¹⁵General Brent Scowcroft, remarks given at the conference on 'US Intelligence and the End of the Cold War', Panel V, 'The Use of Intelligence by Policymakers', November 1999, (A&M University:Texas). Quoted in Hatlebrekke KA, Smith MLR (eds.) Towards a New Theory of Intelligence Failure? The Impact of Cognitive Closure and Discourse Failure. *Intelligence and National Security*, 25:2, (2010) 147-182, DOI: 10.1080/02684527.2010.489274.

¹⁶Department of the Army Headquarters, FM 2-0 Intelligence, (Washington DC: 2004), point 4-1.

¹⁷Richard Betts, *Enemies of Intelligence*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 15.

¹⁸Hulnick A (2006) What's Wrong with the Intelligence Cycle. *Intelligence and National Security*, 21(6): 967.

¹⁹Laqueur W (1995), *World of secrets: The uses and limits of intelligence*, (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers), p. 21.

²⁰NATO (2013), *Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive (COPD), Interim version 2.0*, (Mons: SHAPE), p. 4-11, chapter 4-8, point 2a) Identify Information, Intelligence and Knowledge Requirements.

²¹Schulsky AN, Schmitt (2002) *Silent Warfare: Understanding the World of Intelligence*, (Washington DC: Potomac Press) 3rd Edition, p. 41.

[10,11]. Finally, dissemination, probably the most crucial step of the intelligence cycle, is where the finished intelligence product is given to the consumer. Here, the quality and accuracy of the intelligence product is crucial because “intelligence has to persuade its users”.²² Moreover, even the most accurate products of intelligence “analyses are useless if those with authority to act on it do not use it”.²³

Secondly, the main product from this cyclical process is the intelligence estimate, as mentioned above. At the operational level the purpose of the intelligence estimate is to describe the critical aspects of the operational environment and eventually provide a prioritized set of anticipated adversary courses of action for the commander’s decision-making process.²⁴ It rests on a premise that the intelligence staff can “estimate an adversary’s future action through the decomposition, re-composition, and synthesis of the components and systems within the operational environment”.²⁵

The key take away is, however, that this estimate forms the fundamental understanding of the environment for joint operational planning and that it is crucial for the planning of own operations and campaigns.

Key Traits of Russian “Hybrid Warfare”: Nothing New, but Very Ambiguous

Contemporary academic research and literature on “hybrid warfare” is, as mentioned earlier, plentiful, confusing and not always useful. Military scholar Høiback claims the concept “does not capture new contexts, but was rather established as a mental safe-haven for confused souls”.²⁶ Similarly, Kofman and Rojansky argue that “hybrid war” has become “the catchall phrase for the elements of national power Russia is employing directly in Ukraine” and that “it is a poor descriptor, and has ... led Western analysts and policymakers down an unhelpful path”.²⁷

Analyst and author Frank Hoffman has, however, written extensively on the concept since the early 2000s²⁸ and he defined it as a “blend of the lethality of state conflict with the fanatical and protracted fervor of irregular war”.²⁹ Hoffman’s initial construct was deduced from looking at non-state actors in Chechnya in 2000 and Lebanon in 2006³⁰, but has since been revised and expanded upon. His most recent definition of “hybrid threats” is: “Any adversary that simultaneously

employs a tailored mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism, and criminal behavior in the same time and battle space to obtain their political objectives”.³¹ This definition sits well with the observed actions on Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, where one could argue that all four models have been employed by Russia [12-15].

For example, Russian “hybrid warfare” ostensibly involves the full integration of the military and non-military means of state power to achieve its political goal. Moreover, the use of force or the threat of force plays a central role.³² In large parts due to the military reforms started after the conflict with Georgia in 2008, the Russian army routinely conducts so-called “snap drills”. These exercises involve the rapid deployment of combat ready units over long distances with short time frames. Apart from yielding numerous performance indicators, this instrument was used repeatedly to put pressure on Ukraine in 2014.³³ Even today, Russia is overtly positioning and repositioning conventional military formations and capabilities along Ukraine’s border [16,17]. Once in position, these armored and mechanized forces are executing feints, demonstrations, and training exercises that divert attention from other operations.³⁴

Another crucial observation is the lack of moral or ethical restraint displayed by Russia in the execution of adversary operations. International Rule of law and Geneva Conventions have not limited their operations [18-20]. On the contrary, Russia fails to acknowledge and abide by both the legal and military concepts which includes covert arms supplies to rebels under the guise of humanitarian aid convoys³⁵, indiscriminate artillery strikes from Russian territory into Ukrainian territory³⁶, and the (albeit accidental) downing of a civilian passenger jet.³⁷

Likewise, Russia has used information warfare to achieve “a marked advantage during critical times in a conflict to sway indigenous and international support in their favor”.³⁸ These information operations span activities ranging from trolling on Internet forums to fake news stories transmitted on international television networks such as RT (Russia Today) [21,22]. The tactics used seem to follow a five-step checklist: Deny, counter-attack, confuse, equate and repeat.³⁹ Even

²²Herman M (2006) *Intelligence Power in Peace and War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2007 reprint)), p. 109.

²³Betts R (2007), *Enemies of Intelligence*, (New York: Columbia University Press), p. 67.

²⁴NATO (2016), AJP-2 Allied Joint Intelligence, *Counter Intelligence and Security Doctrine*, (Brussel: NATO), point 1-1.

²⁵Smith FA (2016) The importance of why: An intelligence approach for a multi-polar world, master thesis from Joint Forces Staff College, Norfolk, VA (USA), p. 34

²⁶Høiback H (2016) Hva er krig?. In: Andersen M, Ødegaard G (eds.) *Militære fellesoperasjoner – en innføring*, (Oslo: Abstrakt Forlag AS), p. 64

²⁷Kofman M, Rojansky M (2015) A closer look at Russia’s Hybrid War. Kennan Cable, Wilson Centre, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/190090/5-KENNAN%20CABLE-ROJANSKY%20KOFMAN.pdf> (accessed 22/4/2017)

²⁸One of the earliest scholars in this area is LtCol William. J. Nemeth, USMC, *Future War and Chechnya: A Case for Hybrid Warfare*. (Naval Postgraduate School: Monterey, CA), June 2002

²⁹Hoffman FG (2007) *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*. (Arlington, VA: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies), p: 38

³⁰Hoffman FG (2009) Further Thoughts on Hybrid Threats, *Small Wars Journal*, available at: <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2009/03/further-thoughts-on-hybrid-threat/> (accessed at 22/4/2017)

³¹Hoffman FG (2014) On not-so-new warfare: Political warfare vs Hybrid warfare. *War on the Rocks*, at: <https://warontherocks.com/2014/07/on-not-so-new-warfare-political-warfare-vs-hybrid-threats/>, (accessed 22/4/2017)

³²Reichborn-Kjennerud E, Cullen P (2016) What is Hybrid Warfare? NUI Policy Brief at: https://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/bitstream/id/411369/NUI_Policy_Brief_1_Reichborn_Kjennerud_Cullen.pdf (accessed 22/4/2017)

³³Barabanov M (2014) Changing the Force and Moving Forward after Georgia. In: Howard C, Pukhov R (eds.) *Brothers armed – Military aspects of the crisis in Ukraine*, (Moscow:CAST), p: 118.

³⁴Davies JR (2015) Continued evolution of hybrid threats. *The Three Swords Magazine*, p. 22, at: http://www.jwc.nato.int/images/stories/threeswords/CONTINUED_EVOLUTION_OF_HYBRID_THREATS.pdf (accessed 22/4/2017).

³⁵Russia sends NBC recon vehicle with 60th “humanitarian” convoy to Donbas. UNIAN, Feb 2017, <https://www.unian.info/society/1788202-russia-sends-nbc-recon-vehicle-with-60th-humanitarian-convoy-to-donbas.html> (accessed 22/4/2017).

³⁶Case S (2016) Putin’s undeclared war: Summer 2014. Russian Artillery strikes against Ukraine. *Bellingcat report*, December 2016, at: https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B0YB7vVr_sJUnZPR1NqB95MzA (accessed 22/4/2017)

³⁷New Google Earth Satellite Update Confirms Presence of Buk in Eastern Ukraine. *Bellingcat report*, June 2016, at: <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/uk-and-europe/2016/06/22/new-google-earth-satellite-update-confirms-presence-of-buk-in-eastern-ukraine/> (accessed 22/4/2017)

³⁸Davies JR (2013) *Defeating Future Hybrid Threats*. *Military Review*, p: 27

³⁹Galeotti M (2016) An expert’s guide to Putin’s propaganda playbook. *CNN.com*, at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/09/28/opinions/an-experts-guide-to-putins-com/>

SACEUR, General Breedlove, admits Russia is now waging “the most amazing information warfare blitzkrieg we have ever seen in the history of information warfare”.⁴⁰

Finally, by combining and synchronizing both military and non-military actions with the traits identified above, it can be argued that Russia breaks down the distinction between what is and what is not part of the battlefield by linking tactical level actions with information operations in order to achieve an operational level deception.⁴¹ In sum, this emphasis on novel, disguised, less understood means, ways and ends⁴² sows a high level of ambiguity for the intelligence function to tackle on all levels, not just the operational level [23-25].

Core Challenges to Intelligence Process, Methods and Products

Having established that the core trait of Russian “hybrid war” is the forceful and willed creation of high levels of ambiguity on the strategic, operational and tactical level, how does this pose a challenge to the identified process, methods and products of operational level intelligence? It can be argued that the challenges posed are three-fold:

Firstly, a high level of ambiguity means that it is difficult to know when there exists a normal condition, a crisis, an emergency, and a war or when to prevent attacks. The process can, therefore, be subject to a significant delay as the intelligence function waits for guidance [26]. Moreover, the methods might also experience a delay since the collection assets may be allocated to other theatres of war. This was the case in Georgia 2008 where the US had withdrawn more or less all of its intelligence assets monitoring the Caucasus in order to focus on the fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁴³ As a result “the eyes and ears of the American intelligence community were initially unable to provide a comprehensive picture or confirm specific details on exactly what was happening on the ground”⁴⁴. The end result was: “competing narratives or explanations were circulated...over what to do and who to blame”⁴⁵, which is not an ideal starting point for dealing with Russian mischief.

Secondly, one can argue that ambiguity has the potential to create havoc with own plans if the analysts producing the intelligence estimate have misread the situation and been fooled by planned deceptions. Although correctly identified in NATO doctrine as “those measures designed to mislead the enemy by manipulation, distortion, or falsification of evidence to induce him to react in a manner prejudicial to his interests”⁴⁶, the importance and priority placed on the analysis and understanding of deceptions seems to be lacking. Although a failure of analysis can have many reasons, for example “by overlooking

propaganda-playbook-galeotti-opinion/ (accessed 22/4/2017)

⁴⁰Vandiver J (2014) SACEUR: Allies Must Prepare for Hybrid War, Stars and Stripes, <http://www.stripes.com/news/saceuralliesmust-prepare-for-russia-hybridwar-1.301464> (accessed 22/4/2017)

⁴¹Davies JR (2015) Continued evolution of hybrid threats. The Three Swords Magazine, p. 22, at: http://www.jwc.nato.int/images/stories/threeswords/CONTINUED_EVOLUTION_OF_HYBRID_THREATS.pdf (accessed 22/4/2017).

⁴²Reichborn-Kjennerud K, Cullen P (2016) What is Hybrid Warfare? NUPI Policy Brief at: https://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/bitstream/id/411369/NUPI_Policy_Brief_1_Reichborn_Kjennerud_Cullen.pdf (accessed 22/4/2017)

⁴³Asmus RD (2010) A little war that shook the world, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), p. 176.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶NATO, AJP-2 Allied Joint Intelligence, Counter Intelligence and Security Doctrine, (Brussel: NATO, 2016)2-9, section 1, part d, point (4)

or misinterpreting data, by making the wrong prediction, by making no prediction at all, or by concentrating on excursions of no relevance to policy”⁴⁷, the problem is compounded by an adversary that intends to deliberately deceive [27].

Nevertheless, this complexity is indeed recognized in NATO doctrine, which states that: “modern intelligence is a particularly complex activity that has to consider a myriad of hybrid adversaries and threats”⁴⁸. Despite recognizing the complexity, however, a significant problem remains because there are few guidelines available for measuring intelligence, which: “makes it difficult to determine what constitutes quality or how to achieve it”⁴⁹.

Thirdly, the Russian Chief of the General staff, Valery Gerasimov, argues that: “the role of non-military means of achieving political and strategic goals has grown, and, in many cases, they have exceeded the power of force of weapons in their effectiveness”⁵⁰. The underlying argument for this is related to the premium placed on perception of these non-military means. Kjennerud and Cullen argue that Russia “operates outside of Western perceptions of war as a violent clash of kinetic forces”⁵¹. One could therefore argue that his curtain of ambiguity obscures reality and hinders the production of an objective intelligence estimate [28].

Fourthly, one could argue that since the boundaries between strategic, operational and tactical levels of intelligence are increasingly transparent⁵², the problem of perception is further compounded. This so-called compression of levels is caused by: “enhanced collection capabilities and better communications resulting in tactical commanders often having instant access to strategic intelligence, while tactical intelligence often carries strategic ramifications”⁵³. The practical upshot of this is that deceptions are easily and instantly transmitted to all levels further hampering efforts to understand the operational environment.

To summarize, Russian “hybrid warfare” poses some serious, but not overwhelmingly many, challenges to the intelligence function. The final section will discuss what can be done to mitigate and adapt to these challenges.

A Case for Mitigation and Adaptation

Conflict in the modern age continues to transition more and more into thinking men’s wars. Davies argues that: “in a race to out-think and out-learn an adaptive adversary, NATO will have to adapt as well.”⁵⁴

⁴⁷Betts R (2007) Enemies of Intelligence, (New York: Columbia University Press), p. 6.

⁴⁸NATO, AJP-2 Allied Joint Intelligence, Counter Intelligence and Security Doctrine, (Brussel: NATO, 2016), 1-1.

⁴⁹Lowenthal M (2006) Intelligence: From secrets to policy. (CQ Press, Washington), p.275.

⁵⁰Gerasimov V (2017) Ценность науки в предвидении <http://www.vpk-news.ru/articles/14632> (accessed 22/4/2017).

⁵¹Reichborn-Kjennerud K, Cullen P (2016) What is Hybrid Warfare? NUPI Policy Brief at: https://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/bitstream/id/411369/NUPI_Policy_Brief_1_Reichborn_Kjennerud_Cullen.pdf (accessed 22/4/2017).

⁵²NATO, AJP-2 Allied Joint Intelligence, Counter Intelligence and Security Doctrine, (Brussel: NATO, 2016), point 2-12, sec. 2.10 b.

⁵³NATO, AJP-2 Allied Joint Intelligence, Counter Intelligence and Security Doctrine, (Brussel: NATO, 2016), point 2-3. sec. 1.C.

⁵⁴Davies JR (2015) Continued evolution of hybrid threats. The Three Swords Magazine, p. 19, at: http://www.jwc.nato.int/images/stories/threeswords/CONTINUED_EVOLUTION_OF_HYBRID_THREATS.pdf (accessed 22/4/2017)

The potentials for mitigating the effects of Russian “hybrid warfare” can broadly be grouped into two different categories: institutional and intellectual. In other words, organising in a smarter way and thinking smarter.⁵⁵

Firstly, major intelligence failures are seldom rooted in lack of information. They are generally failures of analysis and sometimes also of dissemination.⁵⁶ Moreover, according to the logic of estimative redundancy, more analysis is better than less⁵⁷ yet Dupont argues that “the discrete functionality implied in the separation of the intelligence process into collection, collation, analysis and dissemination reflects the concepts, practice and organizational dynamics of an earlier era”⁵⁸ and that this method of organizing intelligence is, therefore, obsolete in the face of hybrid threats [29].

A possible mitigation could be organizing the intelligence process differently by focusing on all-source fusion. A major advantage of this type of organising principle is a more seamless and, above all, rapid fusion of all-source intelligence data.⁵⁹ Not only can the resulting intelligence product be more comprehensive because of more sources and more analysis, but the increase in speed from collection to dissemination may increase the chances of providing correct tactical warning [30]. Since the operational level in NATO has to wait for approval from the strategic level⁶⁰, one could argue that both increasing the accuracy of intelligence and speeding up the process will aid in mitigating the ambiguities posed by Russian “hybrid warfare”.

Secondly, the intelligence function should attempt a cognitive approach that leverages an updated understanding of competition in complexity. As discussed earlier, existing NATO doctrine acknowledges the interconnectedness and complexities of the hybrid threat on the operational environment, but, as Frank Smith argues, its foundational principles still adhere to: “a reductionist scientific method of a bygone era to solve puzzles”⁶¹ and not mysteries and ambiguities. In other words, treating “hybrid warfare” as a solvable puzzle will fail since its basic component is willful acts of deception [31,32].

The mitigation of cognitive challenges is, however, not easy given that the operational level does not truly address certain vital 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”⁶². This challenge is compounded by the relatively small size of NATO’s operational intelligence function, combined

with the fact that the availability of intelligence data and products is limited by what the member nations decide to share with the rest of the alliance.⁶³ Resolving these issues requires substantial effort, but given the importance of establishing correct attribution it should be pursued. As General Breedlove reminds us: “If you attribute this little green men issue to an aggressor nation, it was an article 5 action, and it would mean all assets would come to bear”.⁶⁴

Conclusion

In conclusion, one can argue that the Russian “hybrid warfare” construct appears to be “an over-correction by the West for inadequate attention previously paid to Russia, resulting in a misguided attempt to group everything Moscow does under one rubric”.⁶⁵

The main challenge remains one of ambiguity, making it difficult to attribute agency and drafting a response. There will always be secrets that are potentially knowable, just as there will be mysteries with no clear-cut answers.⁶⁶ Intelligence is about knowledge of secrets, and as Michael Herman says, “those who know more and can manipulate what others know, have more power”.⁶⁷

Currently it seems as if Russia is able to manipulate what others know better than others. The operational level in NATO can also increase intelligence power if it absorbs the cognitive challenges and through minor adaptation of organization and process.

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