

## DOŚWIADCZENIA



### UKRAINIAN CRISIS – EXAMPLE OF A HYBRID WAR (GENERAL LESSONS)

COL Jarosław WIŚNIEWSKI, PhD

#### Abstract

*This article examines the recent aggression of Russia in Ukraine as an example of a hybrid war; also referred to as a crawling conflict. A comparative analysis of Russia's strategic level documents (strategy and doctrine) published in 2000, 2010 and 2014, as well as of the order of battle of the Russian armed forces (land), shows that Russia had been motivated and had achieved readiness to conduct hybrid activities in Ukraine a long time before the intrusion in February 2014. The article also extrapolates from the conflict general lessons on the character and structure of contemporary and future combat operations. Finally, in the framework of conclusions, universal hybrid warfare components and counteractions are discussed.*

**Key words:** hybrid war/crawling conflict, national strategy, military doctrine, shaping and decisive operations, light/heavy forces, phasing of modern-day crisis/conflict, order of battle, counteractions.

#### Introduction

The module *Armies of other Countries* remains under the responsibility of the Intelligence and Electronic Warfare Department<sup>1</sup> in the framework of various studies and courses. It is aimed for, mainly, but not limited to, military students ranging from captains up to lieutenant colonels. As such, the course imposes the need to monitor current events in the international environment, particularly crises and armed conflicts which can have implications for the module. This kind of monitoring meets the needs of students, since their expectations focus on comparing possessed or acquired knowledge to real life military activities.

In fact, this article is not based on operational analysis, since it is not within the competence of the Department to perform it. Thus, its content is unclassified, derived from so-called Open Source Intelligence.

As mentioned in the title of the article, it is going to focus on the Ukraine-Russia crisis but its

intention is not to evoke a timetable of the crisis, but rather to delineate general findings in the context of hybrid war. It is necessary to keep in mind the phrase *general lessons* when reading the article.

Before we move on to discussing lessons from the Ukraine-Russia crisis, it is important to note that, in some experts' opinion (shared by the author of this article), the ground for the conflict had been prepared long before anyone realised the crisis was actually happening. This opinion was formed on the basis of changes which were made to the Russian Federation's (RF) strategic level documents and which revolve around strategic approach, strategic preparation and strategic prescription for the crisis.

The above-mentioned factors led me to define *the aim of this article as to develop general assumptions of hybrid-style war*.

Considering the aim, the main problem boils down to the response to the question: *what kind of configurations allowed Russia to be successful in Ukraine?*

<sup>1</sup> At the Command and Management Faculty/National Defence University.

The solution of the problem required considering specific areas such as: the Russian Federation's main strategic documents, the specifics of the hybrid war activities, the escalation of the conflict, and the structure of units involved.

The following are the main focus areas of the article:

- strategy and doctrine;
- *crawling conflict* - the name suggested by the Intel Department (NDU) upon the outbreak of the conflict (instead of *hybrid war*);
- mixed scenario - from hybrid (crawling) activities to the operational-tactical dimension of the conflict;
- order of battle (ORBAT)<sup>2</sup> - the intention here is to consider a mixed scenario of a possible conflict and try to determine if ORBAT gives the required capabilities (is the organisational structure of military units relevant to the implications of the mixed scenario and can the units be the tool to bring it into effect?)
- at the end, within the framework of conclusions, universal hybrid war components, capabilities and counteractions are defined.

### A hybrid war identification

A plethora of definitions of hybrid war exist. They can be easily found, for example, in press reports, especially from the period of the beginning and middle of 2014, when the eyes of almost all media were turned to the crisis in Ukraine. But it is worth bringing up here an example derived from a non-media source. For this purpose, let us look at a definition put forward by Nicu Popescu (European Union Institute for Security Studies), chosen from his article about *hybrid tactics* employed by Russia in Ukraine.

**Hybrid war encompasses a set of hostile actions whereby, instead of a classical large-scale military invasion, an attacking power seeks to undermine its opponent through a variety of acts including subversive intelligence operations, sabotage, hacking, and the empowering of proxy insurgent groups<sup>3</sup>.**

It should be added that hybrid war also involves such activities as spreading disinformation (in target and third countries), exerting economic pressure and threatening energy supplies.

This kind of warfare seems to be a tangible threat for countries such as Ukraine, for which it poses a bigger danger than for most other European states. Russian hybrid tactics worked very well in parts of eastern Ukraine for the following reasons:

- despite the existence of the Ukrainian state, Ukrainians have a limited sense of national identity;
- the Ukrainian population does not identify with the government in Kiev;
- the media scene in Ukraine is dominated by Russia-based media outlets;
- there is a significant Russian military presence in the Crimean peninsula;
- Russia possesses well-deployed intelligence capabilities in the area of the crisis<sup>4</sup>.

Because of the above reasons, it is hard to imagine a more favourable ground than eastern Ukraine for Russia to employ hybrid tactics<sup>5</sup>.

Amidst these political and military circumstances, it was not just easy for Russia to invade Ukraine, it was almost effortless. All the above factors support the author's opinion that the Ukraine-Russia crisis scenario had been written years before it started.

However, before we move on to operational-tactical aspects of the conflict, there is a need to look into some Russian documents at strategic level. It is worth considering two of them:

<sup>2</sup> ORBAT – Order of Battle - the order of battle of an armed force participating in a military operation (*High Intensity Warfighting – HIW or Crisis Response Operations – CRO otherwise North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Article 5 or Non Article 5 Operations*); usually shows the hierarchical organization, command structure, strength, disposition of personnel, and equipment of units and formations of the armed force. Other abbreviations in use include OOB, O/B, or OB.

<sup>3</sup> N. Popescu, *Hybrid tactics: neither new nor only Russian*, European Union Institute for Security Studies, Alert 4, January 2015

<sup>4</sup> See also: Parameswaran P., *Are We Prepared for 'Hybrid Warfare'?* The Diplomat/13.02.2015, internet: <http://thediplomat.com/2015/02/are-we-prepared-for-hybrid-warfare/> (dostęp 05.10.2015 r.).

<sup>5</sup> For other hybrid war dimensions see: M. Wrzosek, *Trzy wymiary wojny hybrydowej na Ukrainie*, kwartalnik Bellona nr 3, Warszawa 2015, p. 33–45.

- *Russian Federation Strategy of National Security*, and
- *Russian Federation Defense (Military) Doctrine*.

## Russian Federation Strategy of National Security

The *Russian Federation Strategy of National Security* was introduced by RF President Decree in 2009. Its perspective was defined as up to 2020. As far as the content of the document is concerned, next to the points on national interests, development trends of the state, economic growth, quality of life, ecology, science and education, we find *National Defence* and *National and Social Security* as the most interesting from the perspective of armed forces employment.

*RF Strategy of National Security* indicates clearly that Russia considers itself to be a *power* and, as a consequence, its level of ambition is to be a player within the global political arena. Moreover, the document:

- strongly underlines challenges for *Internal Security*;
- defines the policy of NATO as *negative* towards Russia;
- specifies that Russia announces its accession to the worldwide *struggle for resources*;
- indicates that armed forces are to guarantee Russia's external and internal security.

It is also important to underline two seemingly critical points, namely that Russia:

- accepts the use of its armed forces in regions of Russian interests; and
- might counter an aggression of a third party on territory of other countries<sup>6</sup>.

For summary see Figure 1.

When reading the document, it becomes clear that Russia considers three types of conflicts:

- possible opponent no 1: the possibility of a military confrontation in which the opponent is a modern armed force, employing innovative forms and methods of warfare conducted by using high-technology weapons systems for contactless impact on the combat power of adversary troops;

- possible opponent no 2: the possibility of a military confrontation in which the opponent is a multimillion armed force of a massive capacity; the war activities are carried out according to traditional principles of linear combat formation with the concentration of manpower and weapons systems along relevant Avenues of Approach;

- possible opponent no 3: the possibility of an escalation of threats and asymmetric conflict involving irregular formations and groups engaged in sabotage and reconnaissance focusing on methods of fight such as guerrilla war.



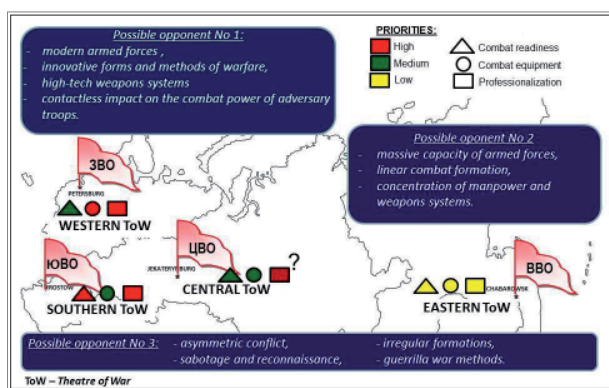
Source: own development based on: *Стратегия национальной безопасности Российской Федерации до 2020 года*, internet: <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/99.html> (dostep: 10.10.2015 r.).

**Fig. 1. Russian Federation Strategy of national security - general assumptions**

Clearly, a long-term (it seems to be several years-long) armed conflict on a global scale involving multimillion armed formations has to be considered as a relic of the “Cold War”. Nowadays, the most likely type of modern threat is short and dynamic in the course of local conflicts involving armed forces and irregular formations in border regions of the Russian Federation and post-Soviet space.

Regions with increased risk of conflict are defined as the southern flank of the RF and the region of Central Asia. That being said, the document allows for the assumption that the conventional part of the RF Armed Forces is to maintain the ability to participate in armed conflicts of a limited size, while the Russian nuclear forces, acting as a deterrent, are to ensure the security of the Russian Federation globally.

<sup>6</sup> Countries/states should be understood as to some extent related to, or rather subordinated to, the politics of the Kremlin.



Source: own development based on M. Depczyński, *Rosyjskie siły zbrojne - od Milutina do Putina*, Belona, Warszawa 2015, p. 162–163.

**Fig. 2. Theatres of War and character of possible military conflicts**

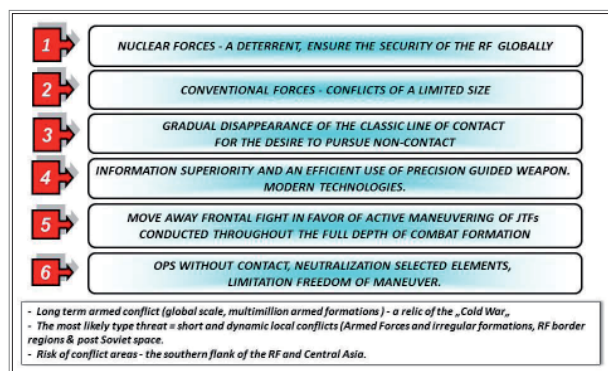
When characterising contemporary and future combat operations, Russians emphasise the gradual disappearance of the classic line of contact in favour of pursuing non-contact fight, in which tanks gradually lose their dominant position despite their advantages. Technological progress eliminates obsolete fighting means and brings into effect an elimination of useless military formations/branches.

The success of future operations will be determined by: achieving and maintaining information superiority and an efficient use of precision guided weapons, based on modern technologies.

In the coming years, it is expected that military formations will completely move away from the pursuit of frontal clashes in favour of active maneuvering of joint task forces, conducted throughout the full depth of the enemy combat formation.

Adversaries within the framework of operations, carried out without contact, will seek to neutralise the most important elements of the enemy combat formation and control or eliminate objects crucial to maintaining the opposite party's freedom of maneuver in the area of operations.

Earlier, doctrines and theories of fighting assumed involvement of multimillion battle formations, which were the backbone of front lines. The experiences of the last few years have confirmed the thesis that large-scale conflict is possible, but the probability thereof is negligible (for summary of the above see Figure 3).



Source: own development.

**Fig. 3. Indicators of contemporary and future combat operations**

Summing up the *RF Strategy of National Security*, it can be stated that Russians:

- consider a global conflict as highly unlikely;
- indicate an increased risk of local and regional outbreak of limited armed conflicts;
- underline challenges of further NATO enlargement;
- consider as risk, activities related to the development and deployment of the USA missile defense system and the potential militarisation of space<sup>7</sup>.

### Russian Federation Defence (Military) Doctrine

The above assumptions of the *RF Strategy of National Security* (described above) and the *Foreign Policy Concept* (dated 12.07.2008) confirmed the necessity to verify *Defence (Military) Doctrine* records. This document came to light one year after the aforementioned *Strategy*, i.e. in 2010, and the prospect of its implementation coincides with the master document and encompasses 10 years.

In fact, in 2014, the Russian President signed a new document - the military doctrine, which replaced the 2010 one and was subjected to immediate analysis by the Polish National Security Bureau and commented on accordingly by its Head, Professor Stanislaw Koziej.

<sup>7</sup> M. Depczyński, *Rosyjskie siły zbrojne - od Milutina do Putina*, Belona, Warszawa 2015 p158-159, compare: Стратегия национальной безопасности Российской Федерации до 2020 года, internet: <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/99.html> (dostęp: 10.10.2015 r.).

According to Koziej, despite the relatively long period of development, about 80 per cent of the document replicates the assumptions of the original, published four years before. For this reason, the following section of this article concentrates on the original document from 2010 and on the comparison of the doctrines of 2000 and 2010. This period of ten years is of interest because it generated the most significant changes in contents. Appropriate comments on the revisions made in 2014 are articulated at the end of this section.

RF Defence (Military) Doctrines (2000, 2010, 2014) cannot be considered as a source of information about the conditions for use of the Russian Armed Forces, as, in this respect, these documents articulate only very general guidelines. However, it is worth paying attention to the divergent trends between 2000 and 2010. The most important are:

– in the context of probability of an outbreak of a global conflict:

- the document from 2000 pays particular attention to the threat to the state, territorial integrity and internal destabilisation from ethnic and extremist groups and organisations;

- the doctrine of 2010 maintains this position and, as an additional threat/problem for Russia, it points to the challenges of growing hazards of civilisation as well as NATO enlargement and the development of strategic anti-missile systems;

– in the context of effectiveness of international security system:

- the document from 2000 does not make a reference in this regard;

- the doctrine of 2010 identifies Belarus as a major ally and emphasises the right of use of Russian armed forces outside the country in order to protect Russian interests and citizens, as well as the achievement of peace;

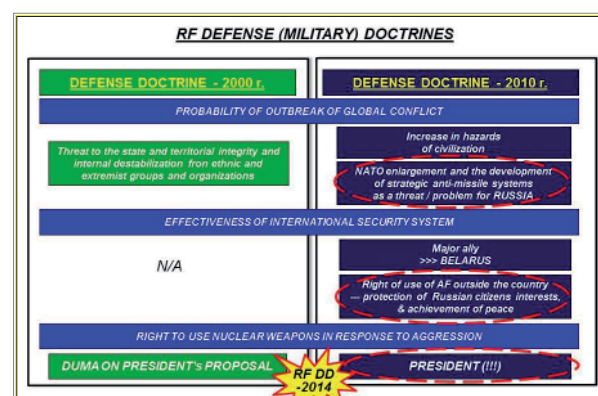
– in the context of the right to use nuclear weapons in response to aggression:

- the document of 2000 gives the right to use the nuclear weapons to the Parliament (DUMA) at the request of the President of RF;

- the 2010 doctrine moves the right to use the nuclear weapons on to the Russian President<sup>8</sup> and the current document (2014) sustains it.

<sup>8</sup> Военная доктрина Российской Федерации, 5 февраля 2010 года, internet: <http://kremlin.ru/supplement/461> (dostęp: 08.10.2015 r.).

For comparison of RF Defence (Military) Doctrines 2000 and 2010 see Figure 4.



Source: own development.

Fig. 4. Russian Federation Defence (Military) Doctrines 2000 and 2010 - comparison

It is important to remember that Russia treats the post-Soviet area as its zone of influence and identifies Western influence as its main (shortly after the North Atlantic Alliance) external military threat, which might destabilise the situation in individual post-Soviet countries and regions. The cornerstone of this provision is the conviction that the West inspired the colour revolutions in the Community of Independent States. Also, further expansion of NATO, especially one including more countries of the former Eastern Bloc, is seen in Russia not as a direct threat, but for sure as a significant problem, despite sometimes significant efforts by the country in question to maintain partner relations with Russia.

With respect to the post-Soviet region and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, the above factors can be concluded as follows:

– the content of the RF's Defence Doctrine 2010, in conjunction with RF political rhetoric of recent years, rather expansive (not to say offensive), raised the concerns of Russia's neighbours and NATO countries;

– NATO's enlargement as a risk for Russia covers:

- NATO's tendency to exploit the military capability in a global aspect;
- development of NATO military infrastructure near the borders of the Russian Federation;
- potential destabilisation of global balance in the sphere of nuclear missile systems and the militarisation of space;

- development of strategic conventional precision weapons.

At the same time, it is worth noting that the RF expects to maintain its partnership with the Alliance's major European countries, indicating a need to continue joint actions in the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the fight against international terrorism and drug trafficking.

Nevertheless, bearing in mind Russia's desire to dominate/control the Arctic region, we can easily read its politics as focused on turning our attention away from the actual objectives of its government. This kind of policy has been applied by Russia in the past, several times (an example can be found in the *Conclusions* of this article).

Given the most important changes in the currently applicable *FR's Defecse (Military) Doctrine* (2014), when comparing the document to its equivalent from 2010, some implications for the Ukraine - Russia crisis can be found. In this respect, it seems that two new categories of threats for Russia are shown:

- firstly, the instability in the countries bordering Russia;
- secondly, it is recognised that a threat to Russia may come from the establishment in the neighbouring countries of authorities whose policies might threaten Russian interests<sup>9</sup> (in the region).

The new Doctrine also indicates a distinct feature of contemporary conflicts and wars, namely, complexity. It means using, besides military means, economic, information and political pressure too. The Doctrine also indicates, more strongly than before, the elements associated with information operations and information security, including cybersecurity<sup>10</sup>.

The last two doctrines (2010 and 2014) clearly indicate the need and trend for the transformation of the Russian Armed Forces, including, in particular, changing the command structure, administrative division, order of battle and military equipment. Some aspects of these will be described later in the article.

<sup>9</sup> It seems that with this statement Russia gives itself a right to intervene in the internal affairs of its neighbouring countries.

<sup>10</sup> *Koziej o doktrynie Rosji: nowe podejście do konfliktów lokalnych*, PAP 26.12.2014, internet: [http://wyborcza.pl/1,91446,17184637,Koziej\\_o\\_doktrynie\\_Rosji\\_\\_nowe\\_podejscie\\_do\\_konfliktow.html?disableRedirects=true](http://wyborcza.pl/1,91446,17184637,Koziej_o_doktrynie_Rosji__nowe_podejscie_do_konfliktow.html?disableRedirects=true) (dostęp: 09.10.2015 r.).

## A Crawling Conflict

Taking into account the division of the world into six civilisations (Western, Eastern, Latin-American, Islamic, African and Asian) and modern risks connected with:

- organised international terrorism;
- threats in the field of telecommunication;
- energy, raw materials/resources, fuels;
- hazards caused by natural disasters;
- disparities between the levels of development;
- mass migrations;
- national and ethnic conflicts

it can be seen that frictions mainly occur in various forms at the borders of civilisations.

Differences between civilisations shaped by centuries and deeply rooted in societies concern, among others, customs, beliefs and faith, interpretation of the rules of coexistence between individuals and peoples. As such, for thousands of years, they have been the reasons (causes) for crises and wars, and probably will remain so for a long time.

Therefore, the question arises *how will a future military conflict/war look?* Is it true that its image will be apocalyptic? Ruins and ashes on a global scale? Surely YES, if it comes to uncontrolled escalation.

However, we should also notice some other aspects of today's and future conflicts.

In the Department of INTEL & EW (NDU Warsaw), we tend to call this kind of conflict a *CRAWLING CONFLICT*. It is characterised by low (limited) intensity, and brings, as indicated by the current events in Ukraine, some highly tangible benefits:

- at a relatively lower cost, a *Crawling Conflict* achieves the same results as the perceived traditional (intensive) one;
- such a solution can "put to sleep" public opinion at all levels (local, regional and global);
- its local character minimises losses and destruction and thus allows the use of infrastructure, as well as gaining the favour of the local people.

The *Crawling Conflict* should be considered in the context of a local conflict. While traditionally seen armed conflicts are characterised by different rules (e.g. arising from the art of war - the desirability of action, economics, surprise etc., or international humanitarian law of armed conflicts), the guiding principle in this case is NO

RULES apply. It is characterised by “a policy of *fait accompli*” used to the aggressor’s advantage, and by deceit. The latter manifests itself through breaking previously concluded contracts and agreements, false declarations and intensive information activities. All these steps are aimed at obtaining freedom of action for friendly forces while causing isolation, instability and systems’ disruption and/or destruction, primarily defensive – to the opposing party (Figure 5).



Source: own development.

Fig. 5. *Crawling Conflict* characteristics

The above characteristics of *Crawling Conflict* prepare the ground for the commencement of operations of special forces and sabotage and reconnaissance units, followed by light and airmobile forces used for direct/close actions.

Further escalation of the conflict is possible. When so-called Heavy Forces achieve readiness, the conflict may transit into a High Intensity Warfighting (HIW) – operational-tactical dimension. The decision about employment of Heavy Forces shall be taken when results achieved by the hybrid (crawling) phase are not in line with expectations and the concept of operations (CONOPS) of the aggressor.

Considering the above, a future conflict will consist of two main phases: a *Crawling Conflict* phase and a regular conflict phase (operational-tactical dimension). They will be characterised by the following:

– *Crawling Conflict* phase: many years of preparation - the creation of economic and political ties, addicting “strategic players” - many declarations and minimum actions:

- creation of sources of tension, and then a violent escalation of the crisis;

- obtaining and maintaining information superiority and its integration with the operating camouflage;

- hacking into opponent cyberspace (disinformation – cyber attack examples from Estonia – 2007, Georgia – 2008, Ukraine – 2014 r.);

- intrusion into the adversary’s territory of relatively large forces (recce, special operations, sabotage groups) without declaration of war;

- wide application of unmanned systems and precision-guided weapons (silent clearing of threats);

- activation of minimum but necessary force (means) to conduct direct activities (decisive operations) – Light Forces;

- deployment of strike (heavy) forces at the border, intimidation by employment of Heavy Forces (indication of determination to execute open, High Intensity Warfighting – HIW activities)<sup>11</sup>;

- intense phase of war (HIW)/operational-tactical dimension - which might but does not have to occur (if worse comes to worst) - could include actions as follows:

- simultaneous targeting of many key points combined with blocking opponent’s maneuver, over the entire depth of its operational/combat formation;

- limited military operations and avoiding decisive clashes on a large scale;

- secured penetration along the Avenues of Approach by Ground Task Forces (GTFs), Airmobile Task Forces (AMobTFs) and Special Operations Task Forces (SOTFs);

- direct actions (decisive operations) carried out only in Combat Spots (selected objectives) by GTFs and AMobTFs - after achieving counter-mobility operations effects (focused on limiting the room for maneuver of defending forces to threatened areas).

### From hybrid (crawling) activities to operational-tactical dimension

In detail, a course of military operations (crisis/conflict scenario and its phasing) may look as follows:

<sup>11</sup> More details on asymmetric threats can be find at: J. Lasota, *Asymetria w walce zbrojnej*, AON, Warszawa 2014.

– Phase I – a Crawling Conflict (system deployment):

- the development of the troops and support systems with particular emphasis on elements of Electronic Warfare (EW) and Information Operations (INFOPS) with a view to start the main action on D-Day, takes place well in advance, usually much earlier than three months (90 days) before decisive operations; Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) units and Special Operations Forces (SOF) achieve readiness first;

- about the same time, in the area of future activities, with a particular focus on selected objectives, surveillance and reconnaissance (positioning) operations are executed with the focus on targets’/objects’ databases development; training of battle groups and guides/couriers/agitators recruited from minorities (favouring the aggressor), not to say separatist;

- one to three months (90-30 days) before the beginning of decisive operations (D-day), the penetration/deployment of an intended area of operations by reconnaissance elements, sabotage groups and special forces tactical teams starts; they deploy to designated areas of responsibility and intensify Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) activity;

– Phase II - a Crawling Conflict (light and special forces activities) – about 30 days before D-day, the activities boil down to:

- further intensification of ISR activities;
- positioning and tracking of selected targets/objects, development of databases for future targeting purposes and preparation of the deployment of the main forces;
- containing/controlling of selected objects and preparation for guiding the main forces;
- developing a system for counter-mobility operations (limitation of maneuver/blocking defending forces)<sup>12</sup>.

For phase I and II, see Figure 6.

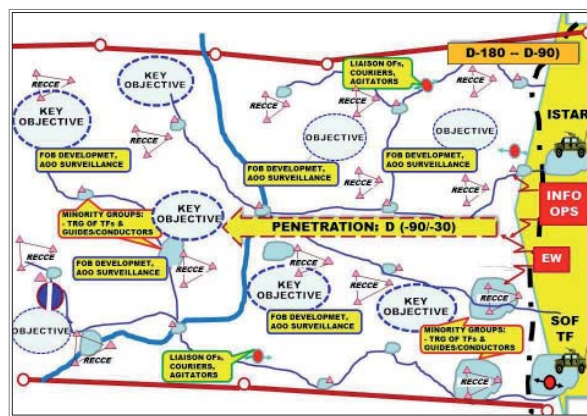
Once Phase II is over, the area of operations is divided into two zones: zone of impact/destruction; and zone of direct/close actions (operations).

– Phase III - operational-tactical activities (quick operations along Avenues of Approach):

- direct/close actions are executed along Avenues of Approach and, when required, along corridors of maneuver<sup>13</sup>, as armed forces move from one object to another object; zones of impact/destruction neighbour flanks (left, right) of the main Avenue of Approach of operations;

- direct/close actions are executed by detached units (Ground Task Forces – GTFs); using the results of activities of sabotage and subversion groups as well as reconnaissance units and elements (possibly separatist militias), GTFs execute high dynamic operations along Avenues of Approach in several Combat Spots (objects) subsequently;

- fire impacts (engagements) are executed on right and left flanks of the Avenues of Approach in the framework of isolation, blocking and disruption/destruction (mostly by air force, army aviation and long range artillery).



Source: own development.

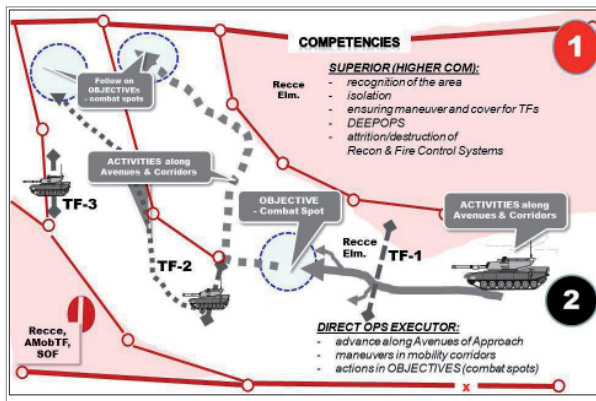
**Fig. 6. Crawling Conflict - system deployment & Light Forces operations**

As a consequence of the above course of military operations, a division of competences emerges. Superior (higher/supporting commander) ones on the flanks (right, left) are responsible for creating conditions for decisive operation, i.e.: the reconnaissance and isolation of the area, ensuring maneuver and cover for Ground Task Forces (GTFs) deep operations, disruption and/or destruction of intelligence and fire control system. The supported commander performs direct operations: advances along Avenues of Approach, maneuvers in mobility corridors and executes actions in Combat Spots. - Figure 7.

<sup>12</sup> For more aspects of hybrid war see: Wrzosek M., *Trzy wymiary wojny hybrydowej na Ukrainie*, kwartalnik Bellona nr 3, Warszawa 2015, p. 37-46.

<sup>13</sup> When maneuver of ground forces is required from one Avenue of Approach to another.





Source: own development.

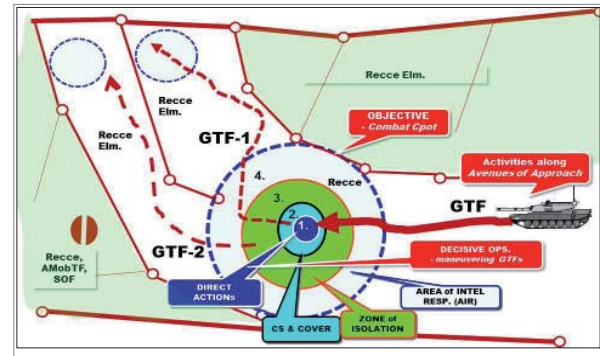
**Fig. 7. Operations along Avenues of Approach - delineation of competences - operational-tactical dimension of a conflict**

– Stage IV – operational-tactical activities (direct/close actions in Combat Spots):

The principle of activity along the Avenues of Approach is executing operations from objective to objective (*Combat Spot*). Any Combat Spot may therefore have the following structure:

- (1.) direct action in the Combat Spot is carried out by combat units, i.e. elements of the army's organisational structure characterised by impact capabilities;
- (2.) zone two (light blue in Figure 8.), is the area surrounding the Combat Spot in which combat units execute decisive operations; it is from zone two that cover and combat support units guard against countering;
- (3.) zone three (green in Figure 8.), belongs to units responsible for the area isolation (i.e. control of the flow of forces);
- (4.) zone four (marked with a dashed blue line in Figure 8.) is the biggest outer zone, which includes all previous ones where intelligence activities are carried out.

Such a structure and respective force deployment fully protects freedom of action in the framework of Combat Spot, as well as the force's independence and autonomy. This translates directly into the capability of other troops to bypass each of the Combat Spots and exploit advance along an Avenue of Approach (corridor of maneuver) as quickly as possible and as required to accomplish decisive operations. The essence of the activities in the Combat Spots is depicted on Figure 8.



Source: own development.

**Fig. 8. Direct actions in Combat Spots - structure**

## Order of battle

When looking for an answer to the question whether Russian military forces are capable of executing the above scenario, it is useful to examine their Order of Battle (ORBAT). For this purpose, three examples will be considered: Mechanised Brigade, Mountain Brigade, and Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) Brigade.

In the Mechanised Brigade, five components can be identified:

- intelligence;
- maneuver;
- combat support (CS);
- combat service support (CSS);
- command and control (C2);

The maneuver component can consist of four battalions: one to two tank battalions and two to three mechanised battalions.

The combat support component can consist of six battalions: two battalions of field (gun) artillery, one battalion of rocket artillery, two air defence (AD) battalions (one gun and one rocket) and one anti-tank battalion.

The intelligence component can consist of two elements: reconnaissance battalion and electronic warfare (EW) company. In addition, the brigade can be reinforced by a special operation forces company level unit.

All the described elements constitute capabilities required to execute hybrid-like operations as described above. For more details about the mechanised brigade, see Annex A.

As far as the Mountain Brigade is concerned, it must be much lighter than the mechanised one and consist of the same components as the

Mechanised Brigade. Nevertheless, there can only be twelve battalions and company level units (whereas, there can be twenty-two in the Mechanised Brigade). But, from the perspective of the intelligence component, we find here the same level of capability: reconnaissance battalion and special operations forces company are a permanent element of the Order of Battle. Therefore, this kind of unit possesses the capability to take part in hybrid-type operations. For more details about the Mountain Brigade, see Annex B.

Finally, considering the ISTAR Brigade, we can conclude that having an air-mobile battalion, reconnaissance battalion, special operations forces battalion, electronic warfare battalion, unmanned air vehicles battalion and a battalion and company level combat support and combat service support units, this kind of unit can be designated even as the most suitable for what we describe in the article as hybrid style operations. For more details about the ISTAR Brigade, see Annex C.

## Conclusions

### Hybrid warfare components

The Order of Battle of Russian Armed Forces units described above, and especially their strong capability for conducting operations in the sphere of information, shows a clear trend in achieving readiness for hybrid (crawling) activities. Besides these capabilities, heavy forces components prove that considered units do not need any reinforcement to execute operations which can be initiated by subliminal activities (below the war level) and, when required, transform into decisive High Intensity Warfighting operations. In the light of the above, three components of hybrid war can be delineated.

Component 1. Forces and means designated for impact on motivational sphere - geared to achieving an ideological demoralisation of government and society - use word and image in the spectacle of subliminal war. Component 1 seems to be a leading player in modern conflicts, employing information operations, cyber space activity, electronic warfare etc. It is responsible for creating conditions for military actions (shaping operations).

Component 2 involves Light Forces (high mobile) and Special Forces prepared to conduct operations in subliminal wartime. Their lightness,

i.e. lesser resistance (armour), does not mean that they only use light weapons. One example of their main battle equipment (armament) is БМД-3 or 4, СПРУТ-СД, ХРИЗАНТЕМА-С and NONA. Being equipped, among others, with 25-30 mm cannons, anti-tank missile launchers, anti-aircraft armament, self-defence systems (e.g. smoke grenades launchers), they are capable of fighting against heavy adversary forces. Units equipped with these kinds of armaments seem to be strong enough to execute decisive operations.

Component 3 is constituted by Heavy Forces – they are considered as a “tool” for High Intensity Warfighting (heavy armed personnel carriers/vehicles, tanks, artillery, attack helicopters etc.). The tool can be used for intimidation (show of willingness to achieve objectives at all costs) and as a final solution when the defender “did their homework” in the scope of preparation for hybrid-like war by providing effective response.

Illustration of the components can be found in Figure 9.



Source: own development.

Fig. 9. Hybrid warfare components

### Basic module of hybrid actions

A platoon size unit, as a maximum, must be considered a basic module of military action in a hybrid-style war. Each well-trained platoon has to be able to locate and track a selected objective at a brigade level, e.g. a battalion size unit, and point out its elements for army aviation, air force and artillery fire. It is worth mentioning that the basic module (a platoon) does not need to be prepared for or execute defensive operations (e.g. to develop fortifications) or offensive operations (e.g. to attack).

In the light of the above implications, the most desired capabilities of a basic module are:

- perform surveillance and reconnaissance, and report the results;

- call for and cooperate with helicopter units (this requires respective communication means, procedures mainly in the scope of Call for Fire - CFF, transportation and medical evacuation - MEDEVAC);

- cooperate with air forces in the scope of Close Air Support (CAS) and Joint Tactical Air Controlling (JTAC);

- call and coordinate artillery fire (CFF); key points here are the following:

- the procedure of D<sup>3</sup>A (decide, detect, deliver and assess)<sup>14</sup>, where at least detecting (tracking) and assessing are expected to be executed by the module/platoon;

- minimising targets' location errors;

- battle damage assessment (BDA) – which means answering the questions:

- ◆ was a target hit? - YES or NO;

- ◆ what are the physical results? E.g. how many elements were eliminated (destroyed, damaged)?

- ◆ were operational or tactical results achieved?

– YES or NO, what kind?

- guide Ground Task Forces (GTFs) along Avenues of Approach (maneuvering corridors) to selected objectives for direct/close actions<sup>15</sup>.

For summary see Figure 10.



Source: own development.

Fig. 10. Hybrid actions module

<sup>14</sup> Targeting process.

<sup>15</sup> For more capabilities see: W. Więcek, *O działaniach przeciwwrebelianckich inaczej*, kwartalnik Bellona nr 2, Warszawa 2014.

## Counteractions

Based on the above considerations and the experience gained from exercises and crises, especially the one unfolding in Ukraine, one can define the following kinds of counteractions to hybrid warfare and the sequence thereof:

1. *Sealing the border*. This activity is not only about electronic surveillance that can state a fact of border crossing, but also about forces and means with specific *containing capabilities* to strengthen the peacetime functioning of Border Guard posts.

2. *Employing forces for the maintenance of public order in the border zone*, including the capability of *blocking, screening and isolation* of respective crisis areas.

3. *Overwhelming response to the slightest incident* (action) in the border zone allows a strong determination to contain escalation to be demonstrated.

4. *Employing light, maneuvering military reserve* (Quick Reaction Force - QRF) to support security forces in the border zone and adjacent areas. They are required to possess a decisive operations capability that is to be used after blocking, containing and searching areas of potential aggressor forces.

5. *Achieving the Main Force readiness*. This, in a hybrid (crawling) conflict, transits into the operational-tactical phase (open military clashes - HIW)<sup>16</sup>.

## Historical implications

It is worth considering the existence of a “cover” for all kinds of actions by military forces that would fit smoothly into the points made so far. In this respect, we find some analogies between recent events in Ukraine and political and military actions in the past.

In 1979, the crisis at the US Embassy in Tehran was provoked to cover USSR intervention in Afghanistan. To realise the importance of the problem, it is sufficient to say that the events related to the provocation lasted about 400 days. During this time, some US efforts, including employment of the military force, were engaged to free hostages (without success).

<sup>16</sup> See also: M. Wrzosek, *Koncepcja działań militarnych przeciwko separatystom na Ukrainie*, kwartalnik Bellona nr 1, Warszawa 2015.

The whole world turned with bated breath in that direction while, to everyone's surprise, the intervention of the USSR in Afghanistan began. These military operations required deployments of several tens of thousands of troops from the Baltic Republics. Surprisingly, the deployment went unnoticed by the satellite surveillance of the ground, which at that time was able to spot a biker on a countryside road.

And today? While the whole world watched on and condemned the first convoy of 200 Russian white trucks heading for the eastern border of Ukraine (2014), a Russian separatist leader in the Donbass region stated that he had just received support from Russia: 40 tanks, 80 armoured vehicles, small arms, and food/POL/ammunition supplies etc<sup>17</sup>.

This is not the only example of this kind of cover by the Soviet Union after World War II. There even exists an appropriate expression to define this type of activity in Russian - "маскировка" (camouflage). Clearly, the expression does not only concern concealment of physical troops (people and equipment) in the field.

\* \* \*

Lessons from the Ukraine-Russia crisis of 2014/2015 gave military planners much to consider. The combinations of conventional and unconventional means of warfare employed by Russia are considered by analysts as a form of "hybrid warfare" or, as described in the article, as a "crawling conflict" which encompasses sequencing or mixture of non-lethal and lethal civil and military operations. There is no doubt that the events in Ukraine have demonstrated that policymakers of the EU, NATO and even beyond have to take this kind of scenario into account when reviewing existing strategies or developing new concepts<sup>18</sup>.

Probably for the first time, a stronger (in conventional meaning) conflict party initiated the operations (invasion) using what we call irregular

activity against the defending adversary. What is more, others, i.e. those who do not intend to engage in face to face fight but to hit treacherously, can learn quickly from the Ukraine-Russia crisis.

What, then, should be the effective defence posture against such kind of activity of a potential invader? - ... A multi-dimensional and multi-phase ... first non-military, then a military or mixed ... strong, compact and ready ... and, as such, unfortunately, extremely expensive. Only those who are determined to be highly-responsive and sacrifice everything (including political and social conformism) deserve success.

#### Abbreviations used in the article:

AA	- Avenue of Approach
AD	- Air Defence
AIR	- Area of Intelligence Responsibility
AMobTF	- Air Mobile Task Force
AOO	- Area of Operations
ARTY	- Artillery
BDA	- Battle Damage Assessment
C2	- Command and Control
CAS	- Close Air Support
CFF	- Call for Fire
CRO	- Crisis Response Operations
CS	- Combat Support
CSS	- Combat Service Support
D3A	- Decide, Detect, Delivery and Assess
EW	- Electronic Warfare
FOB	- Forward Operation Base
FR	- Russian Federation
GTF	- Ground Task Force
HELI	- Helicopter
HIW	- High Intensity Warfighting
IED	- Improvised Explosive Device
INFO-OPS	- Information Operations
ISTAR	- Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance
ISR	- Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance
JTAC	- Joint Tactical Air Controller
MEDEVAC	- Medical Evacuation
NDU	- National Defence University
OFs	- Officers
OP	- Observation Post
ORBAT, OOB, O/B	- Order of Battle
POL	- Petroleum, Oil & Lubrication
QRF	- Quick Reaction Force
RECCE	- Reconnaissance unit

<sup>17</sup> Compare: T. Szulc, *Koniec południowego kotła*, Raport. Wojsko-Technika-Obronność nr 9, Warszawa 2014, p. 28-36.

<sup>18</sup> *Hybrid warfare: challenge and response*, International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), The Military BALANCE 2015, 12 February 2015, internet: <http://www.iiss.org/en/publications/military%20balance/issues/the-military-balance-2015-5ea6/mb2015-01-essay-hybrid-warfare-9ec7> (dostęp: 30.09.2015 r.).

Recce Elm. - *Reconnaissance element*  
 RF DD - *Russian Federation Defense Doctrine*  
 SOF - *Special Operations Forces*  
 SOTF - *Special Operations Task Force*  
 TF - *Task Force*  
 ToW - *Theatre of War*  
 TRG - *Training*

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