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**NATO AND HYBRID CONFLICT: UNRESOLVED ISSUES
FROM THE PAST OR UNRESOLVABLE THREATS OF THE
PRESENT?**

by

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September 2012

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ABSTRACT

NATO's enduring global preeminence owes to its ability to adapt to emerging security threats, but this capacity now may be limited. Today, NATO faces hybrid threats that combine conventional and unconventional means. On the one hand, hybrid threats may not constitute armed attacks under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. On the other hand, NATO nations are both enriched and endangered by cyberspace, mass media, and the growing global interdependency of easily accessible technologies that once were possessed only by nation-states but now can serve as weapons in hands of the rogue state and non-state actors. This thesis examines NATO's ability to defend against hybrid threats. First it analyzes the historical development of internal issues that make NATO vulnerable to outside threats. Then, through two case studies, it examines the external threats projected by hybrid threat actors. Finally, it turns to NATO's strategic capabilities against hybrid threat actors. The thesis concludes that NATO's well-established habits of burden-sharing and burden-shifting exacerbate the lag in developing the policy framework to deal with hybrid threats. Still, NATO can turn to its New Strategic Concept and the Smart Defense initiative to counter and deter hybrid threats, thus managing threats that cannot be fully prevented.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACO	Allied Command Operations
ACT	Allied Command Transformation
DC1	The Strategic Concept for the Defense of the North Atlantic Area
EU	European Union
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
MAP	Membership Action Plan
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
SDI	Strategic Defense Initiative
UN	United Nations

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I. THE DILEMMA OF HYBRID CONFLICT

The proliferation of violence and the rise of forces outside the conventional institutions of state pose a major challenge for soldiers and armies in the Euro-Atlantic realm. NATO's political, military, and collective defense planning authorities now must contend with such new and forming issues as states like China, Russia, or Iran that consider the exercise of violence as an effective method for increasing their political power positions; groups of radical individuals using their religious fundamentalism or sociopolitical suffering as the justification—or imperative—for terror and violence (e.g., Al Qaeda, Hezbollah, Taliban); the increasing impact of modern technologies on state security; and the use of non-state actors to achieve state's political goals as, for example, in the cyber-attacks against Estonia in 2007 or the war against Georgia in 2008. The experience of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in post-conflict security building in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the advent of such new threats as Internet crime, bulk as further problems of security and defense in a way unimagined two decades ago. Makers of NATO policy both within the organization as well as in NATO capitals speak of “hybrid conflicts”—where threats are “posed by adversaries with the ability to simultaneously employ conventional and non-conventional means adaptively in pursuit of their objectives.”¹

The new nomenclature may not, as yet, bespeak a complete or comprehensive strategic response, however. The aim of the thesis is to determine whether NATO, with its existing strategy, forces, and capabilities, is able to defend itself from hybrid threats and engage in the hybrid conflicts that are almost certainly in the offing. This work also assesses the kinds of challenges hybrid threats pose to NATO, as a collective defense organization, and the external and internal factors of armed force, state, society and economy that make the Alliance and its members vulnerable.

¹ Supreme Allied Commander Europe, Supreme Allied Command Transformation, “Bi-SC Input to a New NATO Capstone Concept to Countering Hybrid Threats”, 25 August, 2010, 9.

During the Cold War, NATO's strategy and policy concentrated on questions of how to defend from other state actors that projected military and nuclear threats into the Alliance. Since the 2001 terrorist attacks on U.S. soil, NATO has gained experience in fighting irregular wars with Taliban and Al Qaeda that hardly could be considered as state representatives or classic conventional actors. Now with growing global interdependency and easy access to the most modern communication and information technologies, NATO faces an enemy that is neither a conventional state actor nor an irregular/non-conventional non-state actor using asymmetric warfare methods. Instead, NATO confronts a nebulous adversary that adapts itself to prevailing obstacles and creates modes of threats that are the most dangerous to NATO at an exact time and place:

All future conflicts will have a cyber dimension, whether in stealing secrets and probing vulnerabilities to prepare for a military operation or in disabling crucial information and command and control networks of the adversary during the operation itself. Consequently, NATO's future military effectiveness will be closely linked to its cyber-defense capabilities; in this respect, there is also much that NATO can do to help allies improve their cyber forensics, intrusion detection, firewalls, and procedures for handling an advanced persistent attack, such as that which affected Estonia in 2007.²

The contemporary hybrid threat actor has the advantage of access to modern technologies, arms, weapon systems, and media that used to be under the exclusive control of the most powerful NATO countries, which also possessed significant human, technical, and financial resources to invent state-of-art armament for their military. Nowadays organized crime syndicates have worldwide connections from Somalia to Afghanistan; Al Qaeda operators or even a lone computer-hacker who supports Russian foreign policy initiatives can use cyberspace in order to attack critical infrastructure objects in Germany, the computerized command system of the nuclear power plant in California, or government and bank websites in Estonia. Hybrid threat actors also have all the necessary elements to prepare improvised explosive devices that have not only

² Jamie Shea "Keeping NATO Relevant," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Policy Outlook*, April 2012, 12.

attacked NATO troops in the southern provinces of Afghanistan but also killed civilian subway passengers in London and Madrid or tourists on a bus in Bulgaria.³

The worst case—by no means remote or improbable—is a hybrid threat actor that has full access to mass media and creates its own narrative to influence the hearts and minds of NATO populations. For instance, political saboteurs with unclear financial sources were able to organize a referendum in Latvia, attempting to create socio-ethnic conflict in the NATO member state bordering with Russia.⁴ As such, fears among NATO populations about unpredictable attacks on their daily lives differ from the threats and threat perceptions of and in NATO during the Cold War. These changed circumstances demand an adaptation of policy and strategy as well as the reform of the NATO command structure, smart use of the existing capabilities, and effective strategic, operational and tactical interoperability. Is NATO up to the task?

A. THESIS OVERVIEW

Hybrid threats defy an easy definition, just as the range of responses to them often blurs into fields that once were very distant from the military realm. Thus, the next chapter is devoted to an explanation of the interrelationship among hybrid conflict, hybrid warfare, and hybrid threats, on the one hand, and classic theories of conventional and unconventional types of threats, war, and warfare, on the other. The points of overlap, as well as the points of divergence, are vital basic elements of an understanding of hybrid conflict.

Chapter III analyzes the historic experience of NATO's engagement with external and internal threats since the establishment of the Alliance. This chapter gives a historic evaluation on NATO's defense capabilities against a state-of-the-art enemy possessing

³ The Economist "London Under Attack: After the Joy of Winning the Olympics, Evil Came Swiftly," July 7, 2005 <http://www.economist.com/node/4166694> (accessed 07/27/2012), Paul Hamilos "The Worst Islamic Attack in European History," The Guardian, 31 October, 2007, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/oct/31/spain> (accessed 07/27/2012), Ognyan Minchev "International Terrorism Comes to Bulgaria," German Marshall Fund Blog Expert Commentary, 26 July, 2012, <http://blog.gmfus.org/2012/07/26/international-terrorism-comes-to-bulgaria/> (accessed 07/27/2012).

⁴ The Economist "Latvia's Referendum: What's My Language," February 14, 2012, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2012/02/latvias-referendum> (accessed 07/27/2012).

conventional and nuclear capabilities, as well as against those threats that the world experienced right after the collapse of the Soviet Union. NATO's capabilities to sustain a collective defense shield in the age of hybrid conflict will be understood best by linking the Alliance's past experiences with contemporary challenges. This chapter seeks to answer the question of whether NATO's policies and strategic performance have been more affected by external threats of conventional and nuclear nature or whether the biggest vulnerability to NATO is its internal fracture points.

Chapter IV presents a case study of cyberspace violence, namely the 2007 attack on Estonia and 2008 attack on Georgia as part of conventional conflict. Aside from the political and technological challenges that NATO faces in dealing with cyber threats, special attention is paid to the legal challenges that attend this issue, specifically the lack of an internationally binding legal regime. This case study emphasizes the strategic importance of hybrid threats and the consequences they might have on NATO if that was involved in hybrid conflict where engagement in cyberspace is unavoidable.

Chapter V presents a case study of a state/hybrid threat actor and its *modus operandi* in a real hybrid conflict situation, the Russian-Georgian war of 2008. For this purpose the author will analyze the Russian Federation's policy and strategy, with an eye toward Russia's attempts to spread its influence over the neighboring regions using means other than conventional force that are political and economic sanctions, cyber attacks, media propaganda and sabotage. At the very latest, the Russian-Georgian conflict put NATO on notice that hybrid threats are real and pressing—and demand strategic consideration and response.

To the extent that hybrid threats represent a continuity of “existential” challenges to NATO, which have been present almost since the creation of the Alliance, Chapter VI focuses on the contemporary threat environment and the strategic shift of the Alliance after the terrorist attacks on the U.S. soil in September 11, 2001. This chapter analyzes whether hybrid threats project continuity or discontinuity of challenges that NATO has experienced throughout the history and calls significant attention to the issues about NATO's readiness to face challenges that hybrid threats and hybrid warfare bring with them.

Based on these findings, the present work concludes with recommendations for policy, strategy, and operations, in which assessments of a certain conservatism must operate about the generalized willingness to expand the range of secure threats in a turbulent world. After all, NATO does not have capacity to defend its populations completely from all types of threats. Moreover, NATO as an organization does not possess unlimited political power or financial and military resources to fight against every state, non-state actor, or organization that presents a threat to the Alliance. “Smart Defense,” particularly where hybrid threats are concerned, is smartest where it accounts for the limitations of this reality and sets policy and practical priorities accordingly.

B. DEFINITIONS AND PROBLEMS

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, revolutions in technology, terrorist attacks on major European cities, cyber-attacks against Estonia in 2007, the Russian invasion in Georgia in 2008, the financial crisis and stagnating economies in the Western world, the rise of new world powers in Southeast Asia, the rebirth of worldwide extremism and nationalism in state national policies, stagnating demography, war in Libya, and growing tensions within Syria—which has an 822-kilometer border with NATO member Turkey—all of this serves as an opening stage explaining the strategic environment in which NATO must continue the functioning and sustainment of its performance at the same level of previous decades. Above all for NATO:

At least six other issues illustrate the changing dimensions of collective defense: missile defense, cyber-warfare, space operations, state-sponsored WMD terrorism, political–military dynamics in the Middle East and the Asia–Pacific region, and the risk of a non-Article 5 operation becoming a collective defense contingency.⁵

All of the events that happened in last decade, as well as these dimensions of collective defense, contribute to a better understanding of what hybrid threats are because none of them represent a straight conventional or unconventional nature but instead of create an interrelationship between different threat actors and modes of warfare.

⁵ David S. Yost, “NATO’s Evolving Purposes and the Next Strategic Concept,” *International Affairs* 86:2 (2010): 507

If these episodes do not represent hybrid conflict that NATO is experiencing in different dimensions of the international, regional, and national realms, then what kind of conflict/war/crisis is it really? Moreover, is NATO able to protect its member states and populations from hybrid threats? Does NATO have the potential to fight hybrid conflict? Are hybrid threats strictly of an external nature or do they represent internal weaknesses of NATO? What are the internal issues that characterize NATO's strategic advantages or disadvantages in front of new threats and competing power centers? Has NATO created the right strategic posture to withstand hybrid threats and engage in hybrid conflicts? Do hybrid threats mean necessity for new model of deterrence? Has the New Strategic Concept provided answers to how NATO is going to defend its allies against hybrid threats?

This thesis argues that NATO has not prepared itself for hybrid threats and is not ready to fight a hybrid conflict; moreover, it has limited capabilities to prevail in such a conflict because it faces a continuity of the problems that have been weakening the Alliance since its inception. New challenges have emerged creating hybrid threat constellations where threats from the past have mixed with new types of threats. Politically and strategically new thinking is required which was reflected in the new Strategic Concept and Chicago Summit Communiqué but still must be implemented in the daily practice of Alliance's agenda.

The biggest issue for the Alliance is that every new war it fights brings new rules and conditions while allied armies and defense professionals eagerly want to fight every new war in the same manner they fought the last. This is not to say that NATO must occupy itself with prophecies about future wars. Yet, this habit is an invitation, if not an opportunity, for those state and non-state actors who might be interested in launching hybrid warfare. After surviving the first decade of the twenty first century, experiencing the longest war in the history of the Alliance as well as the most significant enlargement of organization on the other side, the Alliance faces hard a task, which is to 'paint the

face on the faceless enemy' and to develop the hybrid threat concept, as well as examining viable and effective strategies to meet hybrid threats.⁶

This is not the first time, nor is it a unique situation, for the Alliance to have new forms of threats and conflicts that threaten the North-Atlantic community. NATO has been in the security business too long to be surprised by the fact that security is permanently changing and that states, alliances, and their organizations must adapt to new situations. According to Zbigniew Brezinski

[The] Alliance has survived three monumental transformations of the world that are: the end of centuries long war in the West; the U.S. commitment to defend Europe from the Soviet Union after the World War II, and more recently; the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union.⁷

So a hybrid threat and subsequent hybrid conflict might basically be a question of adaptation and transformation.

It is hard, however, to imagine that the politicians, diplomats, and militaries that have experienced the nuclear arms race, the Cuban missile crisis or even World War II and who are still around NATO, could take the concept of hybrid threats and hybrid conflict as being more dangerous than any of their past experiences with crises during the twentieth century. Nevertheless, hybrid threats seem to have something in common with nuclear threats and nuclear war. Until there are no longer nuclear weapons on Earth, there is a permanent threat of nuclear war. Similarly, neither hybrid threats nor hybrid conflict can be solved completely. Just like nuclear threats, hybrid threats can be manageable to

6 Aaronson et al. cited Brigadier General Roy Hunstock, Final Plenary, "Military Contribution to Countering Hybrid Threats [MCCHT] Experiment," Tallinn, Estonia, May 13, 2011 <https://transnet.act.nato.int/WISE/ACTIPT/JOUIPT/20102011CH/Experiment> in Michael Aaronson, Sverre Diessen, Yves De Kermabon, Mary Beth Long, Michael Miklaucic "NATO Countering the Hybrid Threat," *PRISM* 2:4, National Defense University Press (September, 2011): 112.

7 Zbigniew Brezinski "An Agenda for NATO: Toward a Global Security Web," *Foreign Affairs* 88:5, (September/October 2009): 1. Additionally, the NATO Expert Group that prepared analysis and recommendations on a new strategic concept noted that "already Harmel Report mentioned that NATO is an Alliance that is constantly adapting itself to changing conditions with two core functions that are maintaining strength and solidarity to deter aggression and to pursue more stable long-term political environment" in "NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement: Analysis and Recommendations of the Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO," *NATO Public Diplomacy Division* (17 May, 2010): 7.

certain extent, guaranteeing a defined level of security to NATO and its allies. In some aspects, however, when it concerns hybrid threats the situation might be even more complicated because they represent dangers that:

could come in the form of conventional attacks or provocative statements intended to serve as a means of political blackmail. They could arrive in forms with which we are familiar, or in hybrid variations that combine, for example, the stealth of a terrorist group with the power normally associated with a nation-state including purchased or purloined weapons of mass destruction.⁸

This aspect of hybrid threats must be of the highest concern to NATO—the unknown form of hybrid threats and the different modes of how they could be applied. NATO’s civilian and military experts must start here to find out the solution against threats that have been created in response to NATO’s own vulnerability on the one hand and potential adversaries’ strength, which still must be understood, on the other hand.⁹

C. DIMENSIONS AND SOURCES OF HYBRID THREATS

Hybrid threats emerge among other types of threats and forms of warfare and use different sources in order to attain their political goal. This conjunctive dimension is key. There exists no single, namable danger in the world that someone would definitely characterize as a pure hybrid threat. Hybrid threats are rather:

⁸ “NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement: Analysis and Recommendations of the Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO,” *NATO Public Diplomacy Division* (17 May, 2010): 15.

⁹ NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General Jamie Shea cited in Aaronson et al. “NATO Countering the Hybrid Threat,” 117 There are other experts that have addressed NATO’s vulnerability against modern threats of whom hybrid threats must be considered as essential part. NATO Expert Group has come to conclusion that “New types of threats exist and NATO must respond to them. Among them one can find such threat as political intimidation and regional disputes [and] Non-conventional threats are even much higher to NATO than conventional. Their profile creates the situation when it is necessary to provide Alliance’s defense but not at the level of Article 5.” in “NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement: Analysis and Recommendations of the Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO,” 6-9. Moreover, several authors have contributed that there are “new, historically unprecedented risks to global security what NATO has to withstand” in Brezinski “An Agenda for NATO: Toward a Global Security Web,” *Foreign Affairs* 88:5, (September/ October 2009): 5 and that hybrid threats “employ a complex blend of means that includes the orchestration of diplomacy, political interaction, humanitarian aid, social pressures, economic development, savvy use of the media and military force” in Aaronson et al. “NATO Countering the Hybrid Threat,” *PRISM* 2:4, National Defense University Press (September, 2011):116.

an umbrella term encompassing a wide variety of existing adverse circumstances and actions, such as terrorism, migration, piracy, corruption, ethnic conflict, and so forth. What is new, however, is the possibility of NATO facing the adaptive and systematic use of such means singularly and in combination by adversaries in pursuit of long-term political objectives.¹⁰

In part because of the insidious imprecision of hybrid threats, one can speak separately of the social and technological dimensions of which NATO should be aware. In other words, NATO must learn where to look for both the evidence and effects of hybrid threats if it wants to craft a useful strategy to combat them.

1. Sociology of Hybrid Threats

Hybrid threat actors effectively manage to manipulate the advantages that the globalization and information age provides. Hybrid threats might be applied by both state and non-state actors in a manner that would make it difficult for NATO to go after the perpetrator and punish the rogue actor in the old-fashioned way of a conventional or even irregular response.¹¹ Thus, NATO is forced to adapt its traditional definition of collective defense in the twenty-first century, where war may not be an armed attack but a variety of hostile actions designed to weaken a state or the Alliance as a whole facing a 360-degree battle space without a clear frontline or rules of engagement.¹² Here NATO finds itself facing a strategic dilemma of how to respond in situations when state or non-state actors create non-Article 5 situations to separate members of the Alliance, which, however, result in Article 5 conditions. For example, NATO experienced cyber-attacks against its member country Estonia in 2007, which are accepted, though without “smoking-gun” proof, to have come directly from Russia or Russian territory; similarly cutoffs of gas supplies that run through Ukraine left populations in such NATO countries

¹⁰ Aaronson et al., “NATO Countering the Hybrid Threat,” 115.

¹¹ Aaronson et al., “NATO Countering the Hybrid Threat,” 115.

¹² Phillip R. Cuccia, *Implications of a Changing NATO* (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, May 2010), 9; James M. Goldgeier “The Future of NATO,” *Council on Foreign Relations, International Institutions and Global Governance Program, Council Special Report No. 51*, (February, 2010): 4; Samuel Grier *NATO and 21st Century War*, (NATO Defense College, Rome: Occasional Papers Series, October, 2007), 8.

as Romania and Bulgaria freezing in the dark at the coldest time of year.¹³ In these two examples, the NATO intelligence community was able to find some traces that connected their suspicions to a certain state-actor. These traces did not give NATO political authorization to make diplomatic sanctions or organize force projections as a more visible gesture of convincing the Russian Federation to avoid doing something similar in future.

It might be worse if hybrid threats emerge in the ungoverned space created by state and non-state actors that have united their capacities in order to challenge NATO. The cyber-attacks against Estonia demonstrate this possibility of conducting hybrid warfare without specifying and tracing the name of the adversary. Moreover, technological capability allows for the execution of hybrid warfare independently through

multi-modal activities that can be conducted by separate units, or even by the same unit but are generally operationally and tactically directed and coordinated within the main battle space to achieve synergistic effects in the physical and psychological dimensions of conflict whereas the novelty of this combination and the innovative adaptations of existing systems by the hybrid threat is a further complexity.¹⁴

Hybrid threats are a man-made issue that requires NATO defense planners to have a new understanding of the ways and means a potential adversary might apply specific threats against the North Atlantic community. Subsequently, understanding hybrid threats does not mean a request for new resources or trying to squeeze out additional financial donations from the United States or NATO's European side, which is still trying to recover from the crisis in the Eurozone. Instead of buying new hardware, NATO should seek solutions on the basis of existing capabilities but through the reevaluation of the exit strategy and greater use of a comprehensive approach concept in crisis management.¹⁵

13 Goldgeier, "The Future of NATO," 7.

14 Frank Hoffman "The Hybrid Character of Modern Conflict," in Paul Brister, William H. Natter, III, Robert R. Tomes ed. *Hybrid Warfare and Transnational Threats: Perspectives for and Era of Persistent Conflict* (New York: Council for Emerging National Security Affairs, 2011), 40.

15 Aaronson et al., "NATO Countering the Hybrid Threat," 117.

2. Technology of Hybrid Threats

There is a popular perception among defense professionals and political authorities that hybrid warfare basically means the use of modern technologies, especially those related to cyber space. The influence of cyber space or the role of computer technologies in the contemporary world is clear; it is, however, crucial to understand that technology itself is only a tool in hands of an individual who uses specific technical appliances in order to penetrate its adversary and reach possible strategic effect. In a word, the advances of technology work at least as much in favor of hybrid threat actors—making hybrid warfare more effective and deadly—than they benefit the leading powers of NATO. Technology contributes to hybrid threats by “preparing and mobilizing forces of hybrid threat actor without visible assurances that subsequently might led to devastating attack against NATO allies and requiring to think about the ways and means how to deal with such kind of sudden crisis.”¹⁶

In this regard, NATO must be aware that socio-political changes in the world, together with technological developments and their continued victorious march in the information age, have “unleashed a geo-technological explosion of communication between civilizations and continuing the acceleration of already increasing velocity of communications whose sheer volume further stimulates the political awakening and aspirations of formerly closed societies.”¹⁷ On the one hand, one can observe a positive effect of this phenomenon—for instance, the “Arab Spring” would not been possible

¹⁶ Yost, “NATO’s Evolving Purposes and the Next Strategic Concept,” 489, see also David S. Yost “NATO and the Anticipatory Use of Force,” *International Affairs* 83:1, (2007): 44.

¹⁷ Grier *NATO and 21st Century War*, 8,61.

without Internet communications and social networks where enthusiasts were able to start a mass mobilization of youth who had access and were user-friendly with these tools of the information age.¹⁸

On the other hand, there are more negative examples indicating that technologies might have been used by hybrid threat actors that are not at all interested in democratic upheaval but instead threaten other states and their populations. The war between the terrorist organization Hezbollah and Israel in 2006 (officially the war between Israel and Lebanon) proved that even a non-state actor conventionally weaker than Israel could, through use of sophisticated weapon technologies and privately owned visual and electronic media, influence international society successfully by recreating the story of David's battle against Goliath where Israel was put in the position of the aggressor on the basis of visual evidence, some of which turned out to be fake.¹⁹

The other danger that the technological dimension of hybrid threats portends begins with the fact that NATO forces and crisis management institutions are absolutely dependent on modern technologies. Even a non-military attack against the NATO command and control infrastructure, or a similar act of aggression against allied forces

18 There is not complete agreement that Arab Spring or at least revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia reached their extent because of the social media. There is, however, consensus that social media provided enough assistance enabling mass mobilization as well as providing information to international society. See Lisa Anderson "Demystifying the Arab Spring: Parsing the Differences Between Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya," *Foreign Affairs* 90:3, (May/June 2011): 2 accessed on 07/11/2012 <http://www.ssrresourcecentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Anderson-Demystifying-the-Arab-Spring.pdf>, Mohamed Ben Moussa "The Use of Internet by Islamic Social Movements in Collective Action: The Case of Justice and Charity," *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture, Volume 8, Issue 2*, (October, 2011): 65-83 accessed on 07/11/2012 http://www.westminster.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/116616/001eWPCC_Vol8issue2.pdf#page=163

19 Stephen Biddle, Jeffrey A. Friedman "The 2006 Lebanon Campaign and the Future of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defense Policy," *Strategic Studies Institute*, (September, 2008): 4; Matt Matthews *We Were Caught Unprepared: the 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, Combat Studies Institute Press, 2008), 16–22, Augustus R. Norton *Hezbollah: A Short History*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007), 137.

that provide a significant contribution to the collective defense posture, may lead to situation in which the Alliance is paralyzed, unable to provide an adequate response or protect populations in a quick and decisive manner.²⁰

Technology's contribution to the hybrid threat footprint has been effective enough to create a political concern for Allied defense authorities. These authorities should find an answer to the question of what might be the best means of response and what kind of policies should be defined and implemented in the case that NATO experiences a cyber-attack that might be considered an act of war or possibly serving only as the prelude to later adverse activities of conventional, irregular and/or criminal nature and thus creating the perfect execution of hybrid war.²¹ Finally, one should also agree that NATO is not a laboratory of information technology experts practicing in Silicon Valley and the capabilities of the Alliance to protect itself are very limited even though the Alliance has created the NATO Computer Incident Response Capability and there is the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence.²²

D. HYBRID THREAT ACTORS: CHALLENGERS OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND NORTH ATLANTIC COMMUNITY

Hybrid threat actors can be both state and non-state actors or organizations they represent. Both entities have proven that they can successfully use international crime, illegal commerce, terrorism, and insurgency to achieve their political goals and combine these dimensions of violence together in different modes in order to bring about the greatest possible harm to the opponent.²³ Both state and non-state actors may expose danger to NATO, even without having significant resources one can see or touch. For

20 David Yost argues that "The challenge is grave because, as the US Department of Defense noted in February 2010, 'In the 21st century, modern armed forces simply cannot conduct high-tempo, effective operations without resilient, reliable information and communication networks and assured access to cyberspace ... Moreover, the speed of cyber attacks and the anonymity of cyberspace greatly favor the offense. This advantage is growing as hacker tools become cheaper and easier to employ by adversaries whose skills are growing in sophistication.'" One should agree that if that is an issue for the United States military then this must be similar concern of every other NATO member country and NATO all together, see Yost, "NATO's Evolving Purposes and the Next Strategic Concept," 510.

21 Robert Gates, Former US Secretary of Defense cited by David S. Yost in "NATO's Evolving Purposes and the Next Strategic Concept," 509.

22 Goldgeier, "The Future of NATO," 14.

23 Aaronson et al., "NATO Countering the Hybrid Threat," 116.

instance, the use of cyberspace for attacking and spreading violence against the Alliance's critical infrastructure, military facilities or civilian entities can be realized from "remote locations, leaving no trail to determine their origin."²⁴

1. State Actors: Friendly Users of Hybrid Threats

State actors are friendly users of hybrid warfare. Creating hybrid threats for such states such as the Russian Federation, Iran or China helps to challenge their opponents, whether these are separate states like the United States or they are members of a collective defense organization like NATO that the hybrid threat actor does not represent. There is, however, a certain division between state/-hybrid actors within their own community, which depends on their political, economic, and military power as well as their political ambitions especially those of an international scope.

a. Failed States

Failed states might be hybrid threat actors such as Afghanistan or Somalia thanks to the effects of globalization and the development of technologies and communications that anymore allow a distant place on the earth to no longer be disconnected from other states and geographic regions:

Since the 19th century the world again has *terra nullius* zones of chaos that in previous ages were isolated from the world but not in nowadays because even without having law and order these places can have international airports (Somalia, Afghanistan, Liberia).²⁵

Since 2000, and in even earlier some places (e.g., Somalia), NATO have had to address special attention to failed states and the dangers they employ against the North-Atlantic community and international society all together. Failed states can provide a safe haven for terrorists, produce drugs, contribute to international crime, practice piracy, be involved in irregular warfare (sometimes by invitation from other state actors), deal in arms smuggling and many other activities that qualify as the hybrid threat concept

²⁴ Aaronson et al., "NATO Countering the Hybrid Threat," 115.

²⁵ Robert Cooper "The Post-modern State and the World Order," *Demos*, (2000): 15-16 accessed on 07/12/2012 <http://www.demos.co.uk/files/postmodernstate.pdf?1240939425>

when mixed together and applied in the manner that allows the executioner to get the biggest political or economic profit possible.²⁶ What concerns NATO then, as one can see clearly, is dealing with the threats created by failed states over the last decade.

War in Afghanistan, fighting piracy at the costs of Somalia, permanent involvement in crisis management related to frozen conflicts between states in Central and Eastern Europe are all on NATO's daily agenda. The last NATO 2012 Chicago Summit is the best proof of this. The most important question on Summit's agenda was related to war in Afghanistan and how to leave this country without opening Pandora's box but instead provide the state with minimal capability of government and political authority that will not collapse within days after last NATO soldier leaves the country.²⁷ One might, of course, argue that these issues have nothing to do with hybrid threats or hybrid warfare and that similar threats and wars, such as NATO's current dealings in Afghanistan or Somalia, have existed for ages. At the same time, one should not doubt that if not solved properly, each of these crises that are now on NATO's political and strategic agenda might turn into a catastrophic disaster similar to that of September 11, 2001. And despite all the security measures countries have taken during the last decade, no doubt the opportunity of failed state representative to fly another renegade aircraft or attack critical infrastructure object is more possible now than it was in last decades of twentieth century.

b. Raising Powers as Hybrid Threat Actors

Another group that represents both hybrid threat and state actors are states whose political, economic, and partially military power has increased during the last decade to the extent that these states have declared ambitions for greater domination in international relations. Rising global powers such as China or India already have sent

²⁶ Martin van Creveld "Afghanistan and Iraq: An Interim Assessment," in Paul Brister et al. eds. *Hybrid Warfare and Transnational Threats: Perspectives for an Era of Persistent Conflict*, 190–197 see also Troy Thomas "Plucking the Bird: Three Rounds of Coercive Diplomacy in Somalia, 1992–1995," 285–294, Kristen Casey "Diasporas and Hybrid Warfare: The Case of the Somali Diaspora," 295–312 in Paul Brister et al. eds. *Hybrid Warfare and Transnational Threats: Perspectives for an Era of Persistent Conflict*.

²⁷ NATO Chicago Summit Declaration on Afghanistan Issued by the Heads of State and Government of Afghanistan and Nations contributing to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force accessed at 08/23/2012 http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-F5F8ED16-968D8E58/natolive/official_texts_87595.htm?

signals that they would like to see changes in the global order and that they are not going to be the part of NATO, which must be ready to deal with these powers for better or worse.²⁸ Of course, rising global powers from one side and NATO's global footprint and willingness to cooperate with these powers on the other does not mean threats coming from all sides but also means global partnership and cooperation.²⁹ However, the means some of these powers are using and the ways they have chosen to reach their global influence threaten certain regions and nation states. Here one can find a variety of evidences that speak to the presence of hybrid threats and hybrid warfare. For example:

[t]he Iranians used what conventional naval forces they had, including relatively modern conventional frigates, anti-ship cruise missiles, and swarming boats, mines, and rockets. Iranian naval developments over the last decade appear to make a strong case that the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps is extending and formalizing hybrid concepts as their central doctrine. This doctrine applies a hybrid combination of conventional and irregular tactics and weapons to posit a significant anti-access threat to both military and commercial shipping.³⁰

Similarly one may find Chinese activities characteristic of hybrid warfare considering the massive capability China's military is building in order to fight in cyber space, their increased activity in outer space as well as their building up of conventional capabilities that violate the safe use of global commons such as waters of high seas (anti-ship missiles and modern maritime surveillance and targeting systems).³¹

One might ask whether these are issues that NATO should address or are these problems for the United States, which may feel challenged by rising powers in the geostrategic area that used to be under the unique control of the U.S. Navy and Air Force for decades? In this regard it is worth remembering that even a minor negative change in one of the dimensions of the global commons, whether sea or air space, could create a butterfly effect on the whole international society and on NATO as an organic part of this

28 Brezinski "An Agenda for NATO: Toward a Global Security Web," 6.

29 Goldgeier, "The Future of NATO," 8.

30 Frank Hoffman "The Hybrid Character of Modern Conflict," in Paul Brister et al. *Hybrid Warfare and Transnational Threats*, 44.

31 Jeffrey Becker "Strategic Trends and Drivers," 30-33, Thomas Bowditch "Sea Control," 152-153 in Scott Jasper ed. *Securing Freedom in the Global Commons*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2010).

society. Moreover, for more than a decade already, NATO has been moving its international security and global posture together rather than remaining strictly a regional collective defense organization defending the Euro-Atlantic area from conventional and nuclear threats. Therefore, if not today then tomorrow, China's force projection in the South China Sea against Vietnam and Philippines, or Iran's threats to ensure a naval blockade of oil cargo ships in the Strait of Hormuz, might become an issue for the Alliance, which already has several years of experience in conducting out-of-area crisis management operations. Rising world powers have proved to be successful in projecting hybrid threats and exercising different modes of warfare except in a classical conventional manner because they realize that they are years behind Western military superiority. Nevertheless, this success has not stopped these powers from seeking other ways to undermine Western status in the global arena and hybrid warfare is among such ways.

c. State Actors that Use Hybrid Threats in Order to Regain Their Power Status

The third category of state actors that use hybrid threats to realize policies are states whose power positions on the international or regional level have been weakened. Understanding their status in international relations as well as having certain authority and responsibility for sustaining international order and stability, these states cannot afford to rebuild their power positions in the old-fashioned way through blood and iron. For that purpose these states are forced to find other ways to regain their power positions. The most visible example in speaking about such states using hybrid warfare methods is Russia, which by no means is one of NATO's strategic concerns. Russia has successfully penetrated its neighboring countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Special attention has been paid to new NATO member and partner countries that have experienced disruptions of gas supplies, trade embargoes, cyber-attacks and political rhetoric.³²

³² Ronald Asmus, Stefan Czumur, Chris Donnelly, Aivis Ronis, Tomas Valasek, Klaus Witman "NATO, New Allies and Reassurance," *Centre for European Reform*, (May, 2010): 2.

These examples show that even NATO membership does not deter Russia from continuing the use of intimidation toward NATO newcomers. NATO must be ready to provide visible assurances to its Central and Eastern European members and get involved in non-Article 5 crisis management operations thus giving a response to hybrid threats and avoiding possible conflict escalation up to the scale of Article 5 operations. One should not doubt that Russia, and those who are sympathetic to its methods of exposing hybrid threat, will continue examining the weaknesses in NATO's "armor" because it considers Central and Eastern Europe as a zone of influence and a security buffer zone.³³ Yet, states such as Russia, China, Iran or Afghanistan are not the only actors that expose hybrid threats, as hybrid conflicts are a way for non-state actors to fight against more powerful state actors and organizations in order to reach their political and strategic aims.

2. Non-state Actors: Creators of Hybrid Warfare

A number of non-state actors and organizations are permanently at war with NATO or its separate member states. These include terrorist groups, religious fundamentalists, organized crime organizations as well as paramilitary organizations that support certain political power and have taken opposition to NATO and the Western world's values in general. These groups operate individually or in cooperation with state actors with whom they share political, religious, social or purely economic motives that are strong enough to motivate action through the use of violence.

Usually non-state actors are conventionally weaker than state actors or collective defense organizations like NATO. Hybrid warfare is their method and rules of engagement allowing them to challenge more superior state actors. For non-state actors hybrid conflict opens a window of opportunity of doing the greatest possible harm to opponents and their societies while at the same time leaving a probability to remain anonymous thus receiving less punishment or escaping punishment all together.³⁴

³³Ronald Asmus et al. "NATO, New Allies and Reassurance," 2; See also Maria Mälksoo "NATO's New Strategic Concept: What is at Stake for Estonia?" *International Centre for Defense Studies*, (November, 2008): 4

³⁴ Aaronson et al., "NATO Countering the Hybrid Threat," 115.

E. HYPOTHESES AND PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED

Despite having sound existing strategic objectives, NATO has not yet fully adapted its policy and strategic planning to prevent hybrid threats and engage in hybrid conflict for three reasons. First, *internally*, the Alliance has developed a complex decision-making process that may not always translate policy into military or any other kind of enforcement action before the threats have affected the Alliance. Second, *externally*, potential hybrid-threat actors tend to come from the same quarters that formally have been identified as Alliance's partners. Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has established partnerships with such major powers as Russia, China, Pakistan, and others but this relationship not always has been resulted in common action and understanding about strategic goals and policies NATO has declared to follow.³⁵ Their *modus operandi* lies within strategies that violate international laws, undermine the safety of global commons, and favor the application of all kinds of lethal and non-lethal means including use of the cyberspace, outer space, critical civilian infrastructure, economic sanctions, political propaganda, military means, and terrorism to affect the security and the policies of the Allied populations and their governments. Third, *theoretically*, the hybrid threat and hybrid conflict concept requires more aggressive and direct application of policy, which is hard to realize within the consensus decision-making process and divergent state security cultures in NATO.

Hybrid threats might be created both by non-state and state actors who are politically motivated to undermine NATO and its members in order to strengthen their own power positions. Existing evidence, however, shows that every tactical threat of the

³⁵ NATO has partnership with Russia; there is even NATO-Russia Council. NATO has relationship with China; successfully cooperating in such areas as anti-piracy operations at costs of Somalia. NATO has also partnership with Pakistan; this country participates in NATO Summits and is NATO's partner in fighting against Taliban and Al Qaeda. Yet, all of these 'partners' have their black side. Russians stand behind cyber attacks against NATO countries, generate artificial economic sanctions and create disruptions of energy supplies in the time of year where major consumers are freezing to death. China has built its secret cyber army and violates global commons making headache for the U.S. (which automatically means headache for NATO, too). Pakistan is friend and partner while NATO is using supply route through this country and pays enormous money for that. When it comes about real involvement in setting peace in Afghanistan then Pakistani ISI and army generals turned out to be helping Taliban not NATO (the hunt of Bin Laden is the most screaming example). These are perfect hybrid threat actors who are actually neither foes, nor friends, neither partners nor enemies.

hybrid nature that has been directed to the areas of NATO interest has been an outcome of the political and strategic level interactions between the Alliance and the contestant.³⁶

Hybrid threats also represent the situation to NATO once terrorism represented before attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. There were speculations about possible large-scale deadly terrorist attacks on the North-Atlantic territory but no clear vision against which NATO member state or states would be the target and how exactly the attack would be executed. Similarly, the question is about the hybrid threats. There is no clear information within NATO how and when it will experience attack of hybrid threat actor using hybrid modes of threats although NATO's New Strategic Concept and member state national security strategies recognize existence of unconventional threats, threats to civilian populations, critical infrastructure, and state political and economic stability that provide high added value to creation of hybrid threats and emergence of hybrid conflict.

Facing a wide range of threats that might be exercised by an unknown adversary through sophisticated offensive strategies results in the hard task for NATO. Therefore, the Alliance is being challenged to establish visible policy, robust strategy, and adapted military and civilian capabilities in order to give answer to such kinds of threats utilized in the new form of conflict/war.

Within the hybrid conflict, potential adversaries utilize global commons, which means greater NATO involvement in such dimensions as space, cyberspace, as well as maritime and air space dimensions. Basically, the defense of these dimensions has been addressed primarily by separate NATO nations (notably the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Germany). Yet the growing competition and emergence of new threats that derive from these dimensions leave direct impact on whole NATO and

³⁶ The best example one may find in Russia's actions against Estonia in 2007 when politically motivated riots and cyber attacks were executed after Estonia's decision to remove relict statue of the Soviet occupation from the city center; other example is Russia's war with Georgia in 2008 as a response to political recognition of Kosovo as well as NATO's decision about not providing Georgia with Membership Action Plan in NATO Bucharest Summit, 2008 see Ronald Asmus *A Little War that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West*, (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 54-89; James M. Goldgeier "The Future of NATO," *Council on Foreign Relations, International Institutions and Global Governance Program, Council Special Report No. 51*, (February, 2010): 7; Maria Mäliksoo "NATO's New Strategic Concept: What is at Stake for Estonia?" *International Centre for Defense Studies*, (November 2008): 4.

questions its capability of involving and proving itself as valuable guarantor while a potential opponent has already launched hybrid war against the Alliance.

F. PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

NATO still has the potential to fight hybrid conflicts if the Alliance is able to create a political process that can be transformed into political and military action. According to NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, this process should be based on so-called “Smart Defense” capabilities.³⁷ Altogether, NATO nations possess significant political power, strategic maturity, and enough human and technical resources to fight hybrid threats and hybrid conflicts effectively at all levels. The problem, however, is in realizing sound policy and implementing strategic objectives in a reasonable and timely manner. The permanent internal discussion among members concerning burden-sharing and burden-shifting policies as well as different national and international political agendas of NATO members create the greatest danger to the Alliance in case it has to engage in hybrid conflict where cyber war and terrorist attacks on civilian populations mixed with conventional and irregular warfare against military forces would be launched rapidly in timely manner with short preparation phase.

Despite the emerging hybrid threats and the growing demand for civilian capabilities, NATO must sustain its existing capabilities to fight conventional conflicts and defend allied nations against nuclear attacks. Potential adversaries would achieve their political goal if NATO overemphasized its investment in fighting against irregular and unconventional threats at the same time weakening the ability and decreasing resources necessary to fight conventional conflicts. NATO has to improve its defense capabilities through transforming hybrid threats into advantages thus increasing the Alliance’s defense capabilities.

³⁷ Anders Fogh Rasmussen, “NATO After Libya”, 29 June, 2011, 3 explored on http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_75836.htm accessed on 01/30/2012

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II. THE HISTORY OF WAR THEORY AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO HYBRID CONFLICT/WAR CONCEPT

NATO symbolizes a durable security and collective defense organization that has fulfilled its varying role for more than sixty years. This success results from NATO's ability to transform and create defense forces and institutions that have protected allied nations from nearly all the kinds of threats that the contemporary world has experienced. Article 5 of the Washington Treaty provides unique security guarantees:

The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them shall be considered an attack against them all and if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence will assist the Party or Parties individually and in concert with the other Parties, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.³⁸

However, hybrid threats do not necessarily take the form of an armed attack—which, in turn, may delay or even preclude NATO's resort to the mechanism of collective defense described in the Article 5. While the emergence of hybrid threats does not undermine the political necessity and the institutional genius of the trans-Atlantic security and collective defense system itself, it does call into serious question the Alliance's effectiveness in dealing with contemporary threats that simultaneously display conventional and unconventional aspects.

Understanding what kind of the political and strategic measures NATO must apply—in the complex geopolitical environment where this alliance of major Western world powers must seek a balance among the rising powers in Asia, the Middle East, and the Russian Federation—will help to define the most appropriate NATO response to modern threats including those of hybrid nature. At the same time, NATO's response to hybrid threats must account for the age-old requirement of organizing political consensus and providing defense for twenty-eight nation states. Thus, one must look at NATO's past experience and attempts to resolve political instability both within its territory and

³⁸ The North Atlantic Treaty, Washington D.C., 4 April, 1949 accessed on 07/27/2012 at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm

beyond its borders. Finally, understanding the gaps in NATO capabilities will give allied nations a reasonable basis for more precise allocations for defense expenditure, a critical issue for all NATO member states being more or less affected by the financial crisis.

A. A LOOK TO THE LITERATURE

The literature that has contributed to the understanding of the topic of hybrid threats and hybrid wars is organized into three categories.

The first category shows that hybrid threats and hybrid war itself are not creation of the twenty-first century but have historic background. This category contributes to the universal understanding of the concept of war, its different dimensions, and its interaction with policy and strategy by explaining similarities that hybrid war has with other types of war. The second category proves that there is already separate field dedicated to study of the hybrid war. This category focuses on the direct explanations of the hybrid threat and hybrid conflict [war] concepts, explaining their specifics and differences from the classic forms of war. The third category shows that NATO itself has paid attention to the issue and done research by itself. It represents NATO by explaining NATO policy, its strategic objectives, and its effort in formulating the Alliance's ability to defend from hybrid threats.

B. WAR—PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE, AND HYBRID

There are elements of war theory that has been defined by such war philosophers as Carl von Clausewitz and Sun Tzu that do not change whether one speaks about the wars of Napoleonic times or thirty-two day war between Hezbollah and Israeli Defense Forces in 2006. There is always a will of warring sides to find the weakest spot in enemy's armor to penetrate it right in that spot to achieve the quick victory.³⁹ There is always a personality that can impact the outcome of the war depending upon its knowledge, character, genius and courage.⁴⁰ And there is also the unpredictability,

³⁹ Sun Tzu *The Art of War* (New York: Barnes and Noble Publishing, 1994), 167–169.

⁴⁰ Carl von Clausewitz *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 100–115.

friction, and uncertainty that makes war so savage and non-controllable.⁴¹ One can find any war, armed conflict, or minor warfare in the history of the humanity where these elements have not been present. Wars that are ongoing in the Twenty-first century and that will follow are not exclusion nor hybrid wars/conflicts are different. That makes their patterns recognizable when analyzed by the war theorists.

The central element in Carl von Clausewitz's war philosophy is the argument that "war is merely the continuation of policy by another means."⁴² Clausewitz contributes to the universal understanding of any kind of war explaining that all wars are acts of policy and their only difference is in the level of the politicization, production of friction, the gamble element and uncertainty.⁴³ He has also defined that elements of strategy come from different domains including: moral, physical, mathematical, geographical and statistical that cover both the conventional and non-conventional environments that are so characteristic when one thinks of hybrid war.⁴⁴ Clausewitz discovers the unpredictable nature of war where this phenomenon has proven to have the ability to mutate and bring numerous surprises to the perpetrator. Better than any other war philosopher, Clausewitz has described the nature of war as "a paradoxical trinity—composed of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity or passion, chance and opportunity."⁴⁵ Clausewitz's contribution to the understanding of the universal nature of war is the fundamental concept that characterizes hybrid war and, with high probability, will do so with other future concepts of war as well.

Another war philosopher, Baron Antoine Henri de Jomini, defines the art of war and its linkage to politics as being one of the most important components of war.⁴⁶ Jomini emphasizes the role of politics as the act of statesmanship, diplomacy, and strategy that is the critical part of war defining objectives and the overall reason why

41 Carl von Clausewitz *On War*, 119–122.

42 *Ibid.*, 87.

43 *Ibid.*, 88, 101, 119.

44 *Ibid.*, 183.

45 *Ibid.*, 89; See also Collin S. Gray *War, Peace and International Relations: An Introduction to Strategic History*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2007), 24.

46 Baron Antoine Henri de Jomini *The Art of War*, (London: Greenhill Books, 1996), 13.

wars start and why they end favoring one party or another with the victory.⁴⁷ Jomini's contribution to the explanations of the contemporary concept of hybrid wars is sound. He has also paid attention to explaining the importance of mixed operations in a pure military and conventional battle environment, where the combination of military formations that differ in tasks, mission, size and appropriateness project the biggest danger to the enemy than only one static and predictable detachment.⁴⁸ With this explanation, Jomini has come close to the basic element of the hybrid war concept in which a variety of means projects the biggest threat, uncertainty and a fog of war to those whom have been addressed.

Eastern war philosopher Sun Tzu has stated “warfare is the way of deception” and the main task of every strategy is to figure out enemy's weaknesses and attack them with the best means available.⁴⁹ He describes the very nature of war as one that is permanently seeking for solutions about the best applications to realize the goal of the warring party. By no means the concept of hybrid war fits in this description.

Colin Gray in his book *Modern Strategy* stated “modern strategy is about the theory and practice of the use, and threat of use, of organized force for political purposes.”⁵⁰ Gray concludes wars are multidimensional establishments that are not built on strategies based only on the amount of soldiers and weapons. Instead, wars include such dimensions as culture, people, politics, society, ethics, information, intelligence and many more segments that are significant to the projection of hybrid threats and subsequent hybrid conflicts.⁵¹ Important to NATO capabilities, in order to withstand hybrid threats, are Gray's thoughts about the character of strategy where:

47 Baron Antoine Henri de Jomini *The Art of War*, 14-15.

48 *Ibid.*, 217.

49 Sun Tzu *The Art of War* (New York: Barnes and Noble Publishing, 1994), 167–169.

50 Colin S. Gray *Modern Strategy*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), 17.

51 *Ibid.*, 26–35.

One can dissect the character and working of strategy with regard to weapons or technologies (the strategic consequences of armored forces, or nuclear weapons, or computers), or with a focus upon different levels of violence or character of wars (general war, limited war, irregular conflict and terrorism).⁵²

Gray also contributes to Clausewitzian thought stating that in a contemporary world the most prudent and rational defense planner lives in an environment of uncertainty, where frictions may impact the best war machine that have political and defense planning arrangements (such as NATO).⁵³ Furthermore, closer to the explanations related to hybrid wars, Gray also pays attention to small wars, terrorism, irregular conflicts and guerilla warfare considering these forms of warfare as savage violence that “challenges the strategic theorist with a seductive diversity.”⁵⁴ In this regard, one may find that these forms of war have a very challenging nature and thus make every strategy uncertain and vulnerable regarding its success or failure.

Finally, Gray concludes that despite the fact that irregular warfare, guerillas and terrorists are “as old as the strategic history” they will continue to grow in numbers and develop in different forms because there are growing numbers of belligerents where one party is significantly weaker in terms of strategic military superiority. Thus, the weakest are being forced to find other ways to attain political goals. Exploration of terrorism, guerilla warfare and asymmetric solutions (hybrid threats) is the only way to survive and; the increase of wars in different dimensions is inescapable because of the “alleged decline in the authority of the state under the pressures of globalization.”⁵⁵

Gordon Craig speaks of strategy and war-making by initiating a discussion about the relationship between civilian policy makers and military strategists, asking who are more responsible for threat emergence, threat prevention as well as how to withstand threats. Craig’s argument that “the nature of the political system, the efficiency and

52 Ibid., 23.

53 Ibid., 41.

54 Ibid., 277.

55 Collin S. Gray *War, Peace and International Relations: An Introduction to Strategic History*, 261; Collin S. Gray *Modern Strategy*, 273.

prestige of the military establishment, and the character and personality of the political leader” may be considered as the explanation and simultaneously the solution not only considering the outcome of two world wars in twentieth century but also many diverse conflicts on a smaller scale that have occurred in the first decade of the twenty-first century.⁵⁶

One may conclude that the very nature of war, and its different forms, is prone to hybridize if this is necessary for achieving political goals. Therefore, all wars are equal in the framework of producing uncertainty, exposure to hatred and unmarked windows of opportunity that may be used or missed. Subsequently, strategists and political authorities face the same challenges in proposing the right solutions and approaches to achieve political objectives by using instruments of force, whether through regular conventional forms executed between two armies like those of the Napoleonic era or the Israeli and Hezbollah war in 2006. Nevertheless, the classic approach only partly can help contemporary NATO defense planner to understand the hybrid war. All above-mentioned authors grant certain order when speaking about the nature of war, the conduct of war, and the modes of warfare whether that was conventional or unconventional. The dilemma of the hybrid war lies in the issue that this type of war has not yet been defined by its specific order but hybrid threat actor chooses the way, how the war should be launched adapting and interpreting means and ways as dictated by the necessity. One should agree that the character of the hybrid war is the same as other forms of war but the ways and methods differ what requires to look at those experts that have been analyzed the concepts of the hybrid war, hybrid threats, and hybrid conflict through the edge of pro and contra.

C. THEORY OF HYBRID WAR: A HARD TIME FOR THE BLUR CONCEPT?

Those who consider hybrid war and hybrid threats as a valid self-sustaining theoretical concept with the real ambitions to impact the way state and non-state actors fight wars in the Twenty-first century have been left under the fire of wide criticism that

⁵⁶ Gordon A. Craig “The Political Leader as Strategist,” 481-482 in Peter Paret ed. *Makers of Modern Strategy: from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986).

this concept is blur representation of the tactical level issues, and does not differ from any other previously existing theories describing asymmetric and irregular warfare. Yet, none of those critiques predicted war that would be fought using plane attacks against NATO city skyscrapers, improvised explosive devices, decade long wars out of NATO territories, and permanent violence in the cyberspace. Criticizers of hybrid war concept also have not predicted that rogue state and non-state actors continue to expose danger against NATO populations deep inside in North-Atlantic territory by spreading fear both in virtual and real space blowing up subway trains, hacking public and private websites, and permanently keeping alive the narrative that people in NATO states cannot feel safe and sooner or later they will be again penetrated similarly like that happened in the New York, London, and Madrid. Therefore, one should take into account that beyond the “straw-man” argument it is important to look at expert thoughts about the hybrid war because not critique but better theoretical understanding of these concepts is the key of NATO to protect against hybrid threats and fight hybrid wars successfully.

Considering specific theories on hybrid war, hybrid conflict and hybrid threats, Frank Hoffman is the most well-known author to directly address questions about the concept of hybrid wars as well as the foundation of hybrid threats. Hoffman describes concepts of hybrid conflict and hybrid threats in well understandable manner showing the connections of this concept with the previously known forms of war. On the basis of the universal concepts that have described the characteristics of wars known for centuries, Hoffman connects these classic definitions together with the explanation of the contemporary political and strategic environment where “hybrid wars blend the lethality of state conflict with the fanatical and protracted fervor of irregular warfare.”⁵⁷ According to Hoffman, hybrid wars are lessons learned from the best experiences of warfare in previous centuries with the enhancement of contemporary advantages in political processes, global interdependence, and the victorious march of technologies that may be easily transformed into weapons helping to achieve political goals both by state and non-state actors:

⁵⁷ Frank G. Hoffman *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars* (Arlington: The Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007), 28.

Hybrid wars can be conducted both by states and a variety of non-state actors. Hybrid wars incorporate a range of different modes of warfare including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal disorder.⁵⁸

Apart from a dedication to achieving political goals on the strategic level, by combining different means and battle space domains, Hoffman argues that in the hybrid war concept one may find similarity with the “compound war” concept presented by Thomas Huber.⁵⁹ In compound wars, regular and irregular forces are under a unified command and are being used for one strategic purpose—to exhaust the conventional adversary in order to support the main mission of the regular force.⁶⁰ This concept seems similar to hybrid wars but with an additional component of different types of threats that are of a non-conventional nature. Therefore, Hoffman has come to conclusion that:

compound war is more frequent type, and that hybrid threats are simply a subcomponent of compound war in which the degree of coordination and fusion occurs at lower levels. It also appears that the greater degree, the hybrid version is increasing in frequency.⁶¹

This argument is true when one strictly speaks about hybrid warfare as an action in the real battlefield. However, hybrid threats obtain strategic importance when there is not really existing compound war but permanent civilized life that has been interrupted with projection of threats against civilian targets and civilian population more than against military and their facilities.

In another article Hoffman argues, “instead of separate challengers with fundamentally different approaches (conventional, irregular, or terrorist), one can expect to face competitors who will employ all forms of war and tactics perhaps, simultaneously.”⁶² Hoffman warns that this might be of the highest importance for

⁵⁸ Ibid., 29; See also Frank G. Hoffman “Hybrid Threats’: Neither Omnipotent nor Unbeatable,” *Orbis*, (Summer 2010): 444.

⁵⁹ Frank G. Hoffman “Hybrid vs. Compound War: The Janus Choice of Modern War: Defining Today’s Multifaceted Conflict,” *Armed Forces Journal*, (October, 2009): 16–17.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 16–17.

⁶¹ Ibid., 18.

⁶² Frank G. Hoffman “Hybrid Warfare and Challenges,” *Joint Forces Quarterly* 52:1, (2009): 35.

organizations like NATO—that the biggest challenge regarding the prevention of hybrid threats will come not from “a state that selects one approach, but from states and groups that select from the whole menu of tactics, technologies and blend them in innovative ways to meet their own strategic culture, geography, and aims.”⁶³ This notification reflects the concerns addressed in the NATO New Strategic Concept what proves the reality of the battlefield where NATO might be forced to engage. NATO already experiences a bulk of threats both in cyberspace, against critical infrastructure within NATO states, against its troops stationed in Afghanistan, and against global commons in space or international waters close to the costs of Somalia. All of these dangers happens at the same time and also are tended to interact between each other.

Nevertheless, despite predictions about hybrid threat interconnectivity with different combinations of warfare, Hoffman reminds the proponents of military capability transformation that hybrid threats and the concept of hybrid warfare has neither made conventional warfare doctrine nor the military as an institution itself an obsolete formation but instead, has changed the points of gravity in the doctrine of modern war-fighting.⁶⁴ In this regard, one must consider as a warning to NATO political authorities, defense strategists, and planners that executioners of the hybrid war may turn the vector of war towards a classic military conflict if they see the opportunity to defeat the contestant and achieve the political objective of war in this most known and classic way. NATO’s strength is in its military capability that cannot be transformed radically but adapted to the new condition still keeping its core functions—collective defense against armed attack.

Dr. Russell Glenn, in his article “Thoughts on ‘Hybrid’ Conflict” pays attention to the terms describing hybrid conflict and their applicability to the contemporary security challenges and the broader question asking whether “the hybrid concept is sufficiently original to merit addition to military intellectual discourse and—ultimately—armed

63 Frank G. Hoffman “Hybrid Threats: Reconceptualizing the Evolving Character of Modern Conflict,” *Strategic Forum*, No. 240, *Institute for National Strategy Studies, National Defense University*, (April 2009): 5.

64 Hoffman “Hybrid Threats’: Neither Omnipotent nor Unbeatable,” 455.

forces doctrine as a separate form of warfare.”⁶⁵ In the first question Glenn discusses the use of “hybrid” as an adjective for “war,” “conflict,” “warfare,” and “threat” where he finds that some of the terms are applicable to all levels of war but others are directed towards separate tactical, operational and strategic levels.⁶⁶ Glenn considers that the confusion in the terminology brings defense planners and other officials to mistaken conclusions in thinking about tactical level concepts as something of strategic importance. He concludes that hybrid concept is not something unique at strategic and operational levels but finds its difference at tactical level.⁶⁷

This argument is partly correct in the context of real examples of hybrid conflicts and what impact they left on one or another conflicting party. Cyber-attacks against Estonia in 2007 left long-term strategic and political impact in Estonian and Russian relationship. War in Georgia in 2008 literary decapitated Georgian attempts to join NATO as full-fledged member in nearest timely perspective. Finally, the 2012 language referendum in Latvia, another NATO member country, almost concluded in losing one of Latvian nation’s sovereign rights—speaking in Latvian as the only official language which is the question of the live and death for the two millions big population. Glenn might argue that there is nothing to do with the hybrid conflict at all. Yet, it is hard to argue against these examples by saying that they all have not been part of greater strategic rivalry where outcome could be different in the case of successful outcome.

By analyzing Hezbollah’s performance in the war with Israel in 2006, Glenn has come to the conclusion that the concept of hybrid war is applicable to the definition of “comprehensive approach,” which is popular in the defense and international establishments of the Western world.⁶⁸ Considering many similarities between the hybrid war concept and other forms of war on strategic and operational levels, Glenn concludes that only hybrid war tactics are at a level which is different from previously known forms

65 Dr. Russell W. Glenn “Thoughts on Hybrid Conflict,” *Small Wars Journal* (March 2, 2009): 3. <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/thoughts-on-hybrid-conflict>, accessed on 02/28/2012

66 Ibid., 3.

67 Ibid., 6.

68 Ibid., 5.

of fighting and therefore the whole concept is not applicable to the separate doctrine of war but merely plays a subordinate role.⁶⁹ It is hard to see Hezbollah's action as comprehensive approach in terms of the Western and NATO understanding. Hezbollah's approach was built for the necessity to leave greater negative impact on Israeli Defense Forces and civilian society by using combination of military, technologies and media narrative. All of that was used to spread more fear and violence in Israel and create wrong persuasion in the international society. NATO's understanding of comprehensive approach states that for effective crisis management and security building there is necessary to adopt comprehensive approach that includes use of political, military, and civilian instruments that are interconnected between each other.⁷⁰ There is great difference between comprehensive approach that is used to spread violence and one that is used for peace and security building. Indeed, both of them have the same strategic aim—to implement policy and achieve political goals. Therefore, both Hezbollah's comprehensive approach/hybrid war against Israel and NATO's comprehensive approaches are strategic level dimensions not ones of tactical meaning.

David Sadowski and Jeff Becker argue that the problem in understanding hybrid threats is that significant attention has been paid to means by which a potential adversary would fight without understanding the ways in which an adversary will transform strategy and warfare into expected political objectives.⁷¹ Similarly to Glenn, Sadowski and Becker consider hybrid threat and hybrid war as not a unique concept but as the necessity of warfare to apply a mix of cognitive and material elements in order to win the

⁶⁹ Ibid., 6–8.

⁷⁰ “Active Engagement, Modern Defense: Strategic Concept for the Defense and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Adopted by Heads of State and Government in Lisbon,” http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68580.htm accessed on 08/03/2012 see also “A Comprehensive Approach to Crisis Management” in http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_51633.htm accessed on 08/03/2012.

⁷¹ David Sadowski and Jeff Becker, “Beyond the Hybrid Threat: Asserting the Essential Unity of Warfare,” *Small Wars Journal*, (2010): 1.

war.⁷² They conclude that the ability to balance material and cognitive elements defines future just as the adaptability of individuals and organizations will define their success or vulnerability in facing hybrid threats.⁷³

By no means is hybrid war a unique concept, as the previous section proved. Hybrid threats and hybrid war, however, are phenomena that pay attention to the uses and advantages of the twenty-first century so effectively that every single piece of technology, infrastructure object, and Internet website now has dual-use capability. One may use them as an instrument for peaceful and simply economic reasons or they might be used to spread the violence. Such hybrid threat actors as a Hezbollah fighter or hacker from China taught the world about that.

Erin Simpson represents experts who do not consider hybrid war as a new and unknown concept, stating that hybrid wars are “neither new nor identical to ideal types of conflict preferred by states like the U.S.”⁷⁴ However, she emphasizes the concern that these wars are “increasing in frequency and understanding them will continue to be a key national security concern.”⁷⁵ The main problem Simpson considers is the concentration on actors and their tactics while executing hybrid wars instead of analyzing war aims and strategy, which would be far more important in understanding hybrid war and the best ways to fight it.⁷⁶

Brian Fleming writes:

The contemporary hybrid threat actor is a practitioner of unrestricted operational art that aptly combines regular and irregular capabilities simultaneously into a unified operational force to achieve strategic effects. Historically, threat actors that combine types of warfare to achieve their end-states have always existed in some form or fashion. Nation-state actors have habitually used irregular capabilities to set conditions for

⁷² Ibid., 2, 10.

⁷³ Ibid., 10.

⁷⁴ Erin Simpson, "Thinking about Modern Conflict: Hybrid Wars, Strategy, and War Aims," *Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of The Midwest Political Science Association*, Palmer House Hilton, Chicago, Illinois, (April 7, 2005): 22.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 22.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 22–23.

conventional forces. However, the hybrid threat organization can also integrate its capabilities to an even greater extent where conventional and irregular forces form a composite operational force to set conditions and achieve strategic effects.⁷⁷

Fleming's description of hybrid threat actors is NATO's future battlefield. It is hard to believe that upcoming decades NATO will experience classical military threats from large conventional forces. Instead, NATO's strategic documents show that allied defense planners are concerned about the actors that are professionally and morally capable and self-legitimized to use any means and any variations to weaken the strongest military alliance in the world.

Fleming concludes that "hybrid threat is a valid threat concept for operational and strategic planning that establishes the macrocosm of future threat organization representing the continuity from the past, yet a contextual response to contemporary overmatch."⁷⁸ This observation provides the argument that hybrid threats and hybrid war is the next level of war fighting whose user has successfully adopted necessary knowledge of the previous wars and theories.

D. NATO GOES HYBRID

All these experts have considered hybrid threat and hybrid war as a phenomenon that has transformed because of the necessity to adapt to weaker state or non-state actors and their ability to engage with such militarily superior states as the U.S., or collective defense organizations such as NATO, in order to achieve strategic objectives through the application of tactical means that have proven to be usable for reaching strategic goals. In this regard, some authors criticize defense officials for their concentration on tactical level issues and for interpreting them as a question of the strategic meaning instead of trying to understand policy and the strategic culture of potential belligerents. They invite responsible authorities to concentrate on reasons why political and strategic levels lack

⁷⁷ Brian P. Fleming *The Hybrid Threat Concept: Contemporary War, Military Planning and the Advent of Unrestricted Operational Art*, (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: School of Advanced Military Studies, US Army and General Staff College, 2011), 1-2.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 68-69.

the ability to engage successfully with hybrid threat actors as well as take appropriate lessons learned from past state and non-state actors were successful in dealing with hybrid threats and hybrid wars.

The most important document of political and strategic importance that defines the Alliance's position on hybrid threats is the new NATO Strategic Concept, adopted by NATO heads of state and governments at the NATO Lisbon Summit in 2010. This is the first strategic level document that has officially recognized that the security environment of the contemporary world contains more than conventional threats.⁷⁹ Furthermore, the Strategic Concept encounters a variety of threats that, in combination with regular forms of warfare, have been considered by experts as the core of hybrid threat exposition and the main focus of the hybrid war. Besides recognizing terrorism threats, the Strategic Concept also emphasizes threats of a criminal nature, the political and social instability in regions outside of the Alliance's borders, the vulnerability of cyberspace and civilian critical infrastructure, threats to energy security and its lack of resources, environmental threats, as well as the development of new high technology weapons and the use of space and global commons to impact NATO or its separate members.⁸⁰ The Strategic Concept has also approved its commitment to sustain, implement and create new capabilities in order to defend Allies from any threats exposed to a single nation or all member states.⁸¹

Another document that was prepared to contribute to the analysis of issues covered in the NATO Strategic Concept is the "Multiple Futures Project: Navigating Towards 2030," prepared by the NATO Allied Command Transformation in 2009. This document emphasizes the necessity for NATO to adapt its capabilities, command and control structures, and resources to the demands of hybrid threats through various ways. These include increased cooperation with partners outside the Alliance, a need to strengthen the Alliance's positions in the battle of narrative as well as in such domains as

⁷⁹ "Active Engagement, Modern Defense: Strategic Concept for the Defense and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Adopted by Heads of State and Government in Lisbon," http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68580.htm accessed on 02/29/2012

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

cyberspace, space, maritime and information domains.⁸² Despite referencing numerous international experts that have provided specific area analysis and contributed to the preparation of the Multiple Future Project, the document reflects its nature of recommendations, which may leave an impact on their appropriate implementation.

Following the Multiple Futures Project, the most visible product that is unclassified, and attempts to address further findings on NATO's ability to counter hybrid threats, is the bilateral NATO Supreme Allied Commander, Europe and Supreme Allied Commander Transformation "Input to a New NATO Capstone Concept for the Military Contribution to Countering Hybrid Threats." The aim of this document is to "articulate the parameters of hybrid threats facing NATO and identify areas that might drive the development of future capabilities."⁸³

The document also focuses on two issues that have been analyzed by theorists. First, the document acknowledges the fact that hybrid threats to NATO are not new and "the existing NATO policy, strategy and doctrinal framework provide valid structure for dealing with some of the key challenges identified as hybrid threats" by this considering readiness of the strategic level to prevent hybrid threats in case of the necessity.⁸⁴ Second, that NATO may experience operational and tactical challenges within its planning and execution process by increasing the pressure on strategic decision makers and their ability to provide adequate strategic communication.⁸⁵

E. CONCLUSIONS

An appropriate and objective evaluation of the hybrid threat concept, as well as concepts of hybrid war and hybrid conflict has engendered robust academic debate. The analysis of classic war theories and separate field of theory devoted to the specifics of

⁸² "Multiple Futures Project: Navigating Towards 2030," NATO Allied Command Transformation, April, 2009, 57-68.

⁸³ NATO Supreme Allied Commander, Europe and Supreme Allied Commander Transformation "Bi-SC Input to a New NATO Capstone Concept for the Military Contribution to Countering Hybrid Threats," 1500/CPPCAM/FCR/10-270038, 5000 FXX 0100/TT -6051/ Ser: NU0040, August 25, 2010, 1.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

hybrid threats, hybrid war, hybrid conflicts, and hybrid warfare shows that earlier conventional and unconventional forms of war have their continuity in hybrid forms without losing the nature and purpose of war. One may say that in hybrid war, the use of different types of threats and modes of warfare have reached another level of the effectiveness, using advantages of technologies and not ignoring any mean that can be good to win the adversary. Also, similarly to conventional and irregular wars, hybrid wars are not only tactical interactions in the battlefield. Hybrid war is another method to achieve strategic goal as that was using large military formations or nuclear deterrence.

This question has not been ignored in NATO and has been reflected in the new NATO Strategic Concept, the most important and supreme document representing the Alliance's policy and strategy. Yet a question remains regarding NATO's real-time policy and strategic approach when dealing with threats of a hybrid nature and its ability to realize visible policies that may be transformed into force if necessary.

III. NATO AND HISTORY OF THREATS: ISSUE OF EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL CHALLENGES

Despite NATO's varied experience over six-plus decades of nearly constant transformation and change, the threats that have confronted the Alliance continue to fall into two broad categories, according to Phillip Cuccia from the U.S. Army War College:

- 1) External threats—nations or collection of nations that threaten war or at least ill will towards NATO nations. Additionally, that can be instability of non-member state that threatens NATO directly (Afghanistan) or indirectly (Kosovo).
- 2) Internal threats—come from an event, political decision, or series of these, which threatens the integrity of Alliance.⁸⁶

Today, Cuccia argues, the biggest threat to NATO is the internal threat of the absence of consensus over what the perceived external threat to NATO is.⁸⁷

Despite common values and the convergent fundamental elements of strategic culture and policies, NATO members have their own political agendas that are dictated by domestic political requirements. Therefore, the several Allies have always had different threat perceptions based on their historic experiences, political considerations, military might, and economic stability. These specifics, in turn, influence their interactions on the political and strategic level and encourage burden-sharing and -shifting policies. NATO's success hinges on the interaction of external circumstances, internal decision-making, and personalities standing behind the decisions that have to be taken in order to ensure NATO's adaptation to the permanent changes in threat universe.

⁸⁶ Phillip R. Cuccia *Implications of a Changing NATO*, (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, May 2010), 12–13.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 12–13.

While this approach might seem to invite gridlock, if not stasis, in the event, NATO has developed political climate that seeks consensus for careful political decisions on a daily basis. According to Jamie Shea, Deputy Assistant to NATO Secretary General for Emerging Security Challenges:

In each decade of NATO's existence, an external or internal crisis (ultimately, they tend to be one and the same) has placed it at a turning point—and after a period of drift and uncertainty, and of looking for cheap, quick-fix solutions to its problems, its leaders have had to decide whether to renew or re-resource it or allow it to drift into obsolescence.⁸⁸

This cyclical dynamic applies to NATO's response to hybrid threats, as well.

This chapter examines NATO's experience of change and challenges to elucidate the Alliance-internal dynamic of appropriating and responding to new threats and new circumstances. The present chapter first looks at the issues of burden-sharing and burden-shifting as both the expression of and answer to internal divisions within the Alliance. The second section will analyze the origins and evolution of the North Atlantic Treaty, its strategy documents, and the institutions that have been created through the discontent between allies. The third section will analyze challenges NATO faced during the Cold War. Finally, the fourth section is devoted to the post-Cold War period that ended with the 9/11 terrorists attacks. In the end, this analysis shows that NATO has the basic elements in place to adapt to the world of hybrid threats—a rugged but flexible framework of founding documents and concepts and a fair bit of experience managing change—assuming that its leaders recognize this in-built capacity.

A. BURDEN-SHARING AND BURDEN-SHIFTING: NATO'S MODUS OPERANDI OR THE PERMANENCE OF INTERNAL THREATS?

Burden-sharing and burden-shifting are the way state alliances and international organizations function. Therefore, amid the pressures of the budget and domestic policies

⁸⁸ Jamie Shea, "NATO at Sixty and Beyond," 18 in Gulnur Aybet and Rebecca R. Moore, ed. *NATO in Search of a Vision*, (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2010).

of democratic regimes—where commitment to trade “guns for butter” has always been of highest importance—NATO, a true institution of collective defense, must maintain a careful internal balance:

Collective defense is not a problem that can be solved through “fair” and “rational” burden-sharing or an “optimal” division of labor. It is a political problem that must be resolved by highly motivated parties intent on finding a way to get their allies to do more—and not just once but again and again—but without pushing their disagreements to the point of wrecking the alliance that all members value highly.⁸⁹

The greatest danger of unbalanced burden-sharing/-shifting is that this permanent process might embolden a potential adversary if the internal competition of the allies is considered as a window of opportunity to exploit their weaknesses. Several arguments speak to this scenario.

First of all, there never have been unlimited resources for providing defense against one threat or another. In this regard, since the beginning, NATO members have engaged in a bargaining process, trying to persuade one another that each member has separately contributed the maximum while at the same time emphasizing reasons why the others must do more.⁹⁰ On the one hand, the bargaining and political rhetoric created the organizational structure of NATO—routinized procedures of planning like force goals and coordinated production.⁹¹ On the other hand, this situation also created a strategy of burden shifting, supported by a bureaucratic system and a complicated process of communication. This system was necessary if the allies wanted to achieve agreement on collective defense questions within the intensive argumentation process, explaining why one state or another is unable to fulfill one mission or another.⁹²

Consequently, the real outcomes in the creation of the NATO infrastructure, military headquarters or AWACS fleet took months and sometimes years of negotiations

⁸⁹ Wallace J. Thies *Friendly Rivals: Bargaining and Burden-Shifting in NATO* (New York: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 2003), 262–263.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 277.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 78–122.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 165–175.

until final approval was reached.⁹³ To be sure, a long process of decision-making is normal practice within large international organizations, especially because political questions of high importance—involving several countries, millions of people, and billions of dollars—cannot be solved in one day. Yet, the question remains whether NATO is significantly losing its effectiveness and reaction capabilities through internal bargaining processes in the face of emerging and existing threats to the security of Allied populations, territories, infrastructure, and economies.⁹⁴

Second, burden-shifting is motivated by the domestic contests of NATO member states' political elites trying to drum up support for the next elections. In other words, the political elites are more concerned with the short-term interests of their respective nations, which require more spending for social welfare, than they are about sending more money to NATO, particularly if other states seem to be skating by with lesser contributions.⁹⁵ Of course, these politicians must preserve the balance between their criticism of NATO and the perceptions of their competence in collective defense and international policy issues; they do not want to be caught out “openly sacrificing guns to buy butter (or vice versa).”⁹⁶ As a result, NATO and its policy are necessarily subordinated to member states' interests and policies, which further complicates the political decision-making process within the Alliance, especially in crises.

B. BURDEN-SHIFTING AND EXTERNAL THREATS

During the Cold War none of the NATO member states changed their agendas or general understanding of what the real external threats were. As a consequence, the Alliance remained focused on a fairly static set of threats. The Soviet Union, with its nuclear and conventional force, remained the major threat and enemy for decades.

⁹³ Ibid., 277.

⁹⁴ The war in former Yugoslavia is the most well known example of when NATO had issues in identifying a quick resolution; and, for a conflict that was not even a NATO member state, although it did happen in the Alliance's backyard. In Lawrence S. Kaplan *NATO Divided, NATO United: the Evolution of an Alliance* (London: Praeger, 2004), 116–123.

⁹⁵ Thies, *Friendly Rivals: Bargaining and Burden-Shifting in NATO*, 277.

⁹⁶ Thies, *Friendly Rivals: Bargaining and Burden-Shifting in NATO*, 14; Ian Q. R. Thomas *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1997), 19–25.

Whether democrat or republican, conservative, Gaullist, socialist or laborite, the Soviet military as well as the communist party remained the No. 1 adversary to them all.

After the Cold War and especially after the terrorist attacks on the U.S. World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, however, state perceptions of the contemporary threat environment could be hardly defined as a unified allied action. While all members recognized the general need to change, the specifics of this transformation were less clear. For instance, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the Russian invasion in Georgia, did not result in a definite reaction but instead split the Alliance into several camps representing different political agendas. Because of divergent views on external threats, and possible NATO missions in preventing them, burden-sharing has turned into burden-shifting. For instance, one group of NATO members did not consider getting involved in Iraq and earlier in Afghanistan because those were treated as the U.S. wars not the European wars. Where the United States has been expected to take on the biggest share of the burden, European NATO allies present more and more caveats that have resulted in the inability to handle both conventional-type conflicts, such as the war in former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and such actions as the air operations in Libya, where NATO failed to perform until the U.S. decided against greater involvement.⁹⁷

The outcome is embarrassing and obvious—the U.S. covers the biggest share of NATO military resources, and without U.S. participation, the Alliance is not capable of conducting a military or crisis-management mission. Most NATO member states, due to their lacking resources and inability to increase their share, continue declaring caveats as the continuation of the burden-sharing strategy.

C. THE ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY AND STRATEGY DOCUMENTS

The issue of diverse threat perceptions and burden sharing/shifting has been a point of friction within the Alliance since its creation and continues to be one of the

⁹⁷ Lawrence S. Kaplan *NATO and the United States: The Enduring Alliance*, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994), 178-180; Benoit Gomis “Lessons from Libya,” THEWORLD TODAY.ORG, (May, 2011): 8.

biggest challenges, even as it presents options for new opportunities.⁹⁸ Similarly, the threats that NATO faces today are not really new; rather they must be considered as a transformation of past challenges, which makes it important to analyze the experience of the Alliance since its very start.

1. Treaties before “The Treaty”

Right after World War II, both sides of the Atlantic recognized that without U.S. assistance, there was no chance Western Europe could withstand Soviet conventional superiority in continental Europe.⁹⁹ Great Britain and France had the prime policy purpose of securing greater U.S. involvement in European affairs in order to defend themselves from Soviet threats as well as to prevent German rearmament. In order to strengthen the relationship between the UK and France, the Treaty of Dunkirk was signed in March 1947 expressing the Western European commitment to provide mutual assistance in the case of renewed German aggression.¹⁰⁰

Later in the same year, another treaty to address the concerns of the Western hemisphere about the Soviet threat was signed in Rio and known as the Rio Pact.¹⁰¹ The central element of this treaty that had eighteen signatories including the United States and a number of states of Americas defined the collective defense principle where:

an armed attack by any State against an American State shall be considered as an attack against all the American States and, consequently, each one of the said Contracting Parties undertakes to assist in meeting the attack in the exercise of the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Thies, *Friendly Rivals: Bargaining and Burden-Shifting in NATO*, 20–23.

⁹⁹ Gregory W. Pedlow ed. *NATO Strategy Documents: 1949-1969*, (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, NATO International Staff Central Archives, 1997), XI.

¹⁰⁰ Stanley R. Sloan *Permanent Alliance?: NATO and the Transatlantic Bargain from Truman to Obama*, (New York: Continuum, 2010), 16–17.

¹⁰¹ Kaplan, *NATO and the United States: The Enduring Alliance*, 16.

¹⁰² Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (Rio Treaty), Article 3, Section 1, September 2, 1947, U.S. Department of State accessed on 08/07/2012 <http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rls/70681.htm>

Both treaties, however, represented more states' national interests than a general initiative in creating a common international defense institution. The Dunkirk Treaty was mainly a projection of European concerns about the reemergence of German aggression. The Rio Pact was more a representation of American isolationism and an attempt to prevent Soviet threats at its close borders. Neither of them, however, was considered as a signal for creating a common Alliance and in fact no one expected to create an organization such as NATO at that time.¹⁰³ Despite this, further invitation for increased cooperation coming from Western European leaders found support in the U.S. government and resulted in the approval of the Marshall Plan of funding and assistance for Europeans in order to recover their economies. One might argue that Marshall Plan was a compromise decision of the discussion in the U.S. whether Western Europe had to receive "a short-term economic shot in the arm or a long-term military pact."¹⁰⁴

Answering to American expectations, signaling a determination for shared responsibility and the ability to cooperate in defense against external threats, and upon the invitation of British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, the United Kingdom, France, and the Benelux countries created the Western Union, which was approved by signing the Brussels Treaty of Economic, Social, and Cultural Collaboration in March 1948.¹⁰⁵ Still, after signing this treaty, the states had different perceptions about the ways and means to avoid Soviet threat on the one hand and realize their own political interests on the other. For the United Kingdom, this was the first major attempt to pull the United States out of isolationism represented by its political elite and involve the Americans not only in economic support but also in military assistance; for France there was an expectation to receive U.S. assistance in order to regain their former grandeur and solve the issues of domestic politics related to the growing influence of communist movements.¹⁰⁶ For the United States, this was an attempt to persuade itself that Europe could carry on alone, relying more on its own capabilities rather than the U.S. atomic bomb and troops on the

103 Prof. Donald Abenheim, "NATO in Crisis", Spring Quarter Class, Naval Postgraduate School, 9 April, 2012.

104 Shea, "NATO at Sixty – and Beyond," 12.

105 Sloan, *Permanent Alliance?: NATO and the Transatlantic Bargain from Truman to Obama*, 17.

106 Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 11.

ground. However, the Soviets responded to the Brussels Treaty by generating a coup in Prague as well as enacting the blockade of Berlin, which was the breaking point for changing the U.S. Congress from supporters of isolationism to greater internationalism and thus preventing a repetition of historical mistakes made by the League of Nations to establish new international regime.¹⁰⁷

This development resulted in Vandenberg's resolution and the U.S. commitment to provide Europe with assistance not only of an economic nature but also involvement in "the progressive development of regional and other collective self-defense in accordance with the purposes, principles and provisions of the United Nations charter."¹⁰⁸ Both the Brussels Treaty and Vandenberg resolution created the foundation of the development of the North Atlantic Treaty. Yet even this step did not end the future allies' divergent views over issues related to the creation of collective defense but rather brought them into another level of internal disagreements.

2. North Atlantic Treaty, "Organization" and the Next Level of International Bargain

The signing of the North Atlantic Treaty on April 4, 1949, must be considered as a significant first step that proved the Western world's determination to resist a potential adversary as unified force.¹⁰⁹ The ratifying of the North Atlantic Treaty was a result of long awaited attempts to find a way to unite Western European powers and the United States, which was an impossible mission of political elites for centuries.¹¹⁰ The creation of a military Alliance was considered as a "precondition for economic recovery and peace reflecting a deeper faith that in order to secure peace, the West had to prepare for war."¹¹¹ In fact, many experts of different disciplines have recognized that:

107 Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 12; Sloan, *Permanent Alliance?: NATO and the Transatlantic Bargain from Truman to Obama*, 17.

108 Sloan, *Permanent Alliance?: NATO and the Transatlantic Bargain from Truman to Obama*, 18.

109 Pedlow, *NATO Strategy Documents: 1949-1969*, XI.

110 Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 34.

111 Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 31.

the single shared purpose during the East–West confrontation had the effect of forcing allies to make common strategy even in the face of sometimes diverging views. Even France stayed within the political framework after leaving the integrated military structure in the 1960s. In the face of the Soviet threat NATO was fundamental to western order.¹¹²

Despite this statement, during the talks between the U.S. and its European partners about the content of the North Atlantic Treaty, several opposing views showed different perceptions about its content and scope. On the one hand there was George Kennan’s “dumbbell concept” that did not support common security entities with Europeans but favored separate structures, making both Europeans on the one side and the U.S. and Canada on the other as equally responsible parties in providing the collective defense of the North Atlantic area.¹¹³ Despite Kennan’s arguments, the U.S. political elite saw this opportunity for closer integration in Europe as step toward strengthening of American global power ambitions but no longer at such a large expense.¹¹⁴

On the other hand, there were European countries with their own expectations of the North Atlantic Treaty. Great Britain wanted U.S. presence in Europe because British political elite clearly recognized the post-war economic and military weakness of the former empire.¹¹⁵ France, in addition, had bigger expectations that were related to its hopes for a renewal of the French empire’s might through the assistance of Americans and other European allies.¹¹⁶ This, of course, did not restrain a growing criticism in French domestic politics about the U.S. attempts to establish global dominance and NATO as a growing threat to French independence and status of grandeur.¹¹⁷ Both European superpowers were also concerned about the rebirth of German military power as well as dangerous leftist political movements within their countries.¹¹⁸ Subsequently,

112 Timo Noetzel and Benjamin Schreer, “Does a Multi-Tier NATO Matter? The Atlantic Alliance and the Process of Strategic Change,” *International Affairs* 85:2 (March, 2009): 219.

113 Ibid., 14.

114 Thies, *Friendly Rivals: Bargaining and Burden-Shifting in NATO*, 55–57.

115 Sloan, *Permanent Alliance?: NATO and the Transatlantic Bargain from Truman to Obama*, 16.

116 Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 11.

117 Anand Menon France, *NATO and the Limits of Independence 1981-97: The Politics of Ambivalence*, (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 2000), 7–9.

118 Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 11.

the involvement of the United States was considered as the key element to solve these issues, at least to the extent of which post-war Western Europe was not getting worse and the Soviet Union was not getting strategic initiative.

D. NATO AND COLD WAR REALITIES

The Korean War of 1950 proved to the Western world that Soviet Union was not deterred by U.S. nuclear capability and had not dropped the idea of global Communist domination.¹¹⁹ In this regard, the Korean War did more for Western unity and the strengthening of NATO than other similar events. War in Korea stopped discussions within the U.S. political elite about the increase of U.S. conventional forces in Europe as well as decreased French concerns about Germany's rearmament and NATO membership.¹²⁰ The most important benefit for NATO, from the Korean war, was that it "helped put the 'O' in NATO" by the general recognition of the Allies that the North Atlantic Alliance had to have an organizational structure that would improve collective decision making capability as well as common military planning and subsequent defense of Allied territory.¹²¹ The political costs of the Korean War, which almost destroyed the United Nations, helped NATO transform from paper guarantees into real entity. In this regard allies agreed about the establishment of Secretary General's position, North Atlantic Council (NAC) serving as a forum of Allied representatives who made decisions about the establishment of senior military authorities including the Supreme Allied Commander Europe and an International staff "with the duty of integrating the forces

from Western Europe and North America that had been assigned to NATO."¹²² NATO

119 Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 29; Sloan, *Permanent Alliance?: NATO and the Transatlantic Bargain from Truman to Obama*, 22.

120 Sloan, *Permanent Alliance?: NATO and the Transatlantic Bargain from Truman to Obama*, 22.

121 Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 29.

122 Francis A. Beer "Intregation and Disintegration in NATO: Processes of Alliance Cohesion and Prospects for Atlantic Community" (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 47-58 cited by Thomas in *The Promise of Alliance*, 29.

finally had its own command structure, headquarters and civilian and military bureaucracy serving for needs of the Alliance.¹²³

Finally, the Korean War created new reality for the Allies, especially in Western Europe, that at this time their individual interests had change to collective interests in order to survive. Nevertheless, this did not stop former empires from struggling in the periphery, thus proving the issue of collective defense as only *primus inter pares*. One may mention here attempts to create European Defense Community in order to satisfy American expectations about the German positions in NATO or failure of creating a “Directoire” in order to meet French expectations about their power positions within NATO.¹²⁴

1. Threats, Strategy, and National Policy

The period of the Cold War for NATO might be described by three realities that created permanent threats to Alliance. First, there were external threats from the Soviet Union and its growing military capabilities resulting in the possession of nuclear weapons and overwhelming nuclear threats. Second, there were national policies of NATO members and sometimes-conflicting relationships among each other in conflicts on the periphery such as the Suez Crisis or the French withdrawal from the integrated military structure of NATO. Third, the combination of all these realities impacted both international politics as well as NATO’s strategic and conceptual posture, both generating different consequences in international relations (deterrence and détente) as well as different NATO concepts and strategies.

2. External Threats

Nuclear proliferation and the technical development of the Soviet Union during the Cold War, within the framework of the Soviet and U.S. arms race, was the primary and most challenging external threat NATO had to deal with. By careful analysis and recognition of the ups and downs in the technological development that was so

¹²³ Shea, “NATO at Sixty – and Beyond,” 12.

¹²⁴ Shea, “NATO at Sixty – and Beyond,” 13.

characteristic of the nuclear arms race, the Soviet Union had well prepared its propaganda machine and its deterrence policy in order to persuade Western adversaries of the fatality a possible nuclear war would assure to them.¹²⁵ The recognition of both superpowers that a direct confrontation would have led to mutually assured destruction was theoretically helping NATO escape kinetic war fighting at a nuclear level. Still, the pressure on NATO political and military planners did not diminish; the situation rather produced several other unavoidable threats.

First, there were indirect conflicts and the collision of U.S. and Soviet interests in the periphery. Wars, such as Vietnam, approved the allied interdependence of unilateral state decisions for involvement in armed conflicts even if NATO European allies did not want to associate themselves with the Vietnam War.¹²⁶ Not only did this rift create doubts about the credibility of NATO as a political forum but it also created member state concerns over whether NATO could defend them if “too much or too little U.S. involvement would lead to war with the Soviets.”¹²⁷ The escalating U.S. relationship with the Soviet Union only increased Western European fears about peace on European soil and gave reasons to consider solutions other than NATO for defense as well as developed sharp criticism and anti-Americanism, especially in France.¹²⁸

Second, from time-to-time indirect conflicts led to the escalation of crises and temporary overloads creating such confrontations as Checkpoint Charlie in Berlin and the Cuban missile crisis, making all attempts to solve conflicts without the use of arms

125 In 1987 Western analysts recognized what one should consider as normal practice throughout all Cold War Period that “Soviets have sought through their public diplomacy to fan Western fears over the uncontrollability of nuclear war. Soviet spokesmen with good access to Western media have become adroit at tailoring their statements to confirm the fears of Western decision makers, elites, and the public in general that any use of nuclear weapons, however limited, would be met by a massive Soviet response resulting in unrestrained nuclear conflict. Such campaign undoubtedly serves a number of Soviet policy goals, but one clear purpose has been to deter Western consideration of any use of nuclear weapons in the event of conflict.” Notra Trulock III “Soviet Perspectives on Limited Nuclear Warfare” in Fred S. Hoffman, Albert Wohlstetter, David S. Yost ed., *Swords and Shields: NATO, the USSR, and New Choices for Long-Range Offense and Defense* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1987), 54.

126 Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 63–64.

127 Ibid., 63.

128 Helmut Schmidt *Defense or Retaliation: A German View*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), 122; See also Anand Menon *France, NATO and the Limits of Independence 1981–97*, 10.

inappropriate.¹²⁹ These episodes among others provided evidence that the biggest issue was not only external threats themselves but the impact they left on allied decision-making ability and the interrelationship, which did not help improve the commitment to take appropriate collective defense measures but rather to rely on national capacities and bilateral arrangements.

3. National Considerations

The Suez Crisis of 1956 evidenced that NATO was not merely a military entity with the aim to withstand threats from the Soviet Union and its allies but also a consultative body where “members of NATO were encouraged to make consultation in NATO an integral part of the making of national policy.”¹³⁰ The Suez Crisis proved that unilateralism was possibly huge internal issue in NATO and, if not stopped at the right time by common political action, it might have threatened all NATO members or threatened NATO’s existence in general. Allies had to respect each other’s interests and, more importantly, make political consultations before an action was taken. Otherwise no convergence in collective defense matters would have ever been possible. Nevertheless, not all nations applied lessons learned, as one would expect, because their domestic policies and antipathy to the collective action of NATO were stronger than their fear to undermine NATO’s credibility again. In this regard one should have a closer look at the French relationship with NATO.

French withdrawal from the integrated military command structure of NATO left a striking effect on the unity of the Alliance because it turned on all the concerns of the allies regarding NATO’s reliability, U.S. intents to protect Europe as well as unity for a common military action if such a necessity would have emerged.¹³¹ France had always been suspicious of U.S. dominance in Europe but ‘demarche’ of allies in Indochina, Algeria and partly in the Suez fortified French persuasion that only strong unilateral

¹²⁹ Lawrence S. Kaplan *The Long Entanglement: NATO’s First Fifty Years*, (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1999), 90–91, 106.

¹³⁰ Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 57.

¹³¹ Sloan, *Permanent Alliance?: NATO and the Transatlantic Bargain from Truman to Obama*, 44.

capacity to project force would defend France as well as sustain its empire status.¹³² For this reason France saw its own nuclear capability as an existential question.

The creation of *force de frappe* was politically and conceptually an essential task for de Gaullist politics in order to “keep the face,” secure the nations and control U.S. dominance in Europe at least to some extent.¹³³ Nevertheless, while weakening NATO’s military capabilities, France did not withdraw from NATO’s political structures thus recognizing the value of political consultations and a common decision-making process.¹³⁴ Moreover, French withdrawal favored positions of Harmel report, which “for the first time gave NATO a political role in seeking security with the East through negotiation, confidence building, and arms control as much as through deterrence, military exercises, and the occasional nuclear modernization program.”¹³⁵ In this regard, one may ask whether this happened because France considered it as a beneficial position with more freedom to execute foreign policy it considered the best for the state or because France was flirting with the allies due to a lack of support in developing alternative structures within NATO institutions and outside the Alliance.¹³⁶

In the case of France, domestic political issues more than in any other NATO country dictated policy acts towards NATO. Among them were such drivers as the permanent continuity of De Gaulle’s political ambitions to “wash” French embarrassment of two world wars and return the country among the world’s superpowers. For this reason, the creation of its own *force de frappe* was considered as a simple necessity in order to withstand Anglo-Saxon domination, the possible rebirth of German military ambitions, and Soviet aggression.¹³⁷ Another long-term reason for withdrawing from NATO was to dictate the military industrial complex, especially, nuclear weapons and

132 Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 80; Anand Menon *France, NATO and the Limits of Independence*, 9.

133 Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 81; Sloan, *Permanent Alliance?: NATO and the Transatlantic Bargain from Truman to Obama*, 45.

134 Sloan, *Permanent Alliance?: NATO and the Transatlantic Bargain from Truman to Obama*, 47-48.

135 Shea, “NATO at Sixty – and Beyond,” 13.

136 Menon, *France, NATO and the Limits of Independence 1981–97*, 11, 87.

137 *Ibid.*, 13–33.

armament producers who took the opportunity to increase defense expenditure on the basis of political determination in order to have independent and self-sufficient military capabilities.¹³⁸ This policy also allowed France to emphasize political rhetoric about its world power status and military might at the expense of NATO defense whereas the country itself would have never been involved in a war alone with the Soviet Union depending merely on its own capabilities.¹³⁹ Yet, the cost of autonomy was later a failure in proving conventional capabilities in peacekeeping operations displaying that reality was not exactly everything French policy reflected.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, despite this, the allies always welcomed even minor signals from French political elite of a return to the integrated military command structure but this did not help France get approval for commanding officer positions within that structure.¹⁴¹

The French experience in some ways helped NATO to sustain its credibility in front of other member nations by proving that none of the NATO countries (probably with the exception of the United States) would have been able to provide such high defense guarantees independently without the assistance of other allies. Therefore, for better or worse, French policy managed to make the allies more convergent and thus decreased internal threats of fragmentation.

4. The Outcome: Concepts and Strategies

The official documents of NATO are not those that contribute to the topic of whether external or internal threats create a great danger for NATO. However, strategic documents reflect the successes and failures of the Alliance in dealing with those threats and the subsequent capacity to organize collective defense.

138 Through the whole Cold War period France spent inadequate financial resources just to sustain its imagination of nuclear power and military might. Political elite did not have enough power to restrain ambitions of military bureaucracy and military industry that was closely cooperating in order to get state acquisitions for armament that in fact was too expensive and less effective than imported equivalent (e.g. Hades, Rafale, NH-90 helicopters), Menon, *France, NATO and the Limits of Independence 198–97*, 158–170.

139 Ibid., 118.

140 Ibid., 118.

141 Ibid., 146.

The first NATO strategic document, “The Strategic Concept for the Defense of the North Atlantic Area” or DC1, called all member nations to use any available means to defend themselves from Soviet threats with a strong emphasis on nuclear weapon superiority.¹⁴² This plan emphasized “the division of labor among the Allies and the formulation of an integrated defense plan, as demanded by the Mutual Defense Assistance Act passed by the U.S. Congress in October 1949.”¹⁴³

The second Strategic Concept was attempt to solve issues of lacking conventional forces capability in Europe that in the case of war would have to withstand the Soviet conventional superiority as well as dealing with the consequences of growing Soviet nuclear capabilities.¹⁴⁴ For this purpose the NATO Lisbon Summit in 1952 declared ambitious Force Goals to deploy by 1954 altogether 96 divisions after 90 days of mobilization.¹⁴⁵ The concept, however, did not work because of the Allied inability to fulfill those force goals due to financial restrictions and restrained defense budgets.¹⁴⁶ As a result, NATO was not able to increase conventional force capabilities that left its main reliance on nuclear capabilities.¹⁴⁷

Considering the failure to fulfill the Lisbon Force Goals the third Strategic Concept was an outcome of the U.S. “New Look” defense policy favoring the idea of massive retaliation through the use of nuclear weapons, as they were conventional instruments.¹⁴⁸ The reliance on the pre-emptive use of nuclear weapons went into NATO history as a “trip-wire” concept that exploited the idea of shield and sword using all assets of conventional forces, tactical nuclear weapons as well as strategic nuclear

142 Pedlow, *NATO Strategy Documents: 1949–1969*, XII.

143 Gulnur Aybet cited International Studies Group, Brookings Institution, Major Problems of United States Foreign Policy, 1950-1951 (Menasha, WI: George Banta, 1950) in Gylnur Aybet’s “The NATO Strategic Concept Revisited: Grand Strategy and Emerging Issues,” in Gulnur Aybet and Rebecca R. Moore, ed. *NATO in Search of a Vision*, (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2010), 38. In the years following 1949, this was subsequently reflected in such concepts known as “shield, flexible response, and the multilateral force” see in Thomas *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 71.

144 Aybet “The NATO Strategic Concept Revisited,” 39.

145 Pedlow, *NATO Strategy Documents: 1949–1969*, XVII.

146 *Ibid.*, XVII.

147 Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 73.

148 Aybet “The NATO Strategic Concept Revisited,” 39; Pedlow, *NATO Strategy Documents: 1949–1969*, XVII.

weapons as a final means to stop Soviet aggression.¹⁴⁹ The concept went wrong because of American unwillingness to share nuclear weapons control systems with their European allies making Europeans, in the eyes of the Soviets, minor players for political bargaining, and; Soviet technologic progress, with the launch of the Sputnik and the build-up of strategic nuclear weapons, persuaded NATO members that a massive retaliation is anymore in the use of NATO allies but could be targeted at cities in the United States and Western Europe.¹⁵⁰

The 1967 Strategic Concept of flexible response provided NATO with a wider range of options against a Soviet attack, which included the use of conventional force as the primary instrument, following with the use of tactical nuclear weapons and finally the use of strategic theater-wide nuclear weapons in cases of necessity.¹⁵¹ This concept, however, did not remove NATO's European members' concerns from the table regarding the effectiveness of the use of nuclear weapons and U.S. readiness to "change Los Angeles for London or Berlin" in the case of nuclear confrontation.¹⁵² These concerns, together with the raising of internal pressures, led to the Multilateral Force Concept that would have to appease Europeans through providing them with additional nuclear capabilities, deter the Soviet Union, and increase the value of Allied conventional forces dislocated on European soil.¹⁵³ The concept of flexible response differed from concept of massive retaliation because the interaction of conventional and nuclear forces was planned as "mutually reinforced layers of escalation."¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the Multilateral Force Concept was a professional solution to military issues not to the political challenges that NATO experienced internally. This provides another reason for the

149 Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 72.

150 Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 73; Sloan, *Permanent Alliance?: NATO and the Transatlantic Bargain from Truman to Obama*, 55; Kaplan, *The Long Entanglement: NATO's First Fifty Years*, 72.

151 Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 73; Aybet, "The NATO Strategic Concept Revisited," 40; Pedlow, *NATO Strategy Documents: 1949–1969*, XXIV.

152 Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 73; Sloan, *Permanent Alliance?: NATO and the Transatlantic Bargain from Truman to Obama*, 59.

153 Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 78–79.

154 Aybet, "The NATO Strategic Concept Revisited," 40.

above-mentioned argument that internal issues among the allies proved to be the most dangerous and leaving a long-term impact during any time period, whether the Cold War or post-9/11.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, future decades—from 1966 to the end of the Cold War when NATO experienced the rise and fall of the détente age as well as the renewal of the Cold War and the “Dual-track Strategy”—proved that the reasons for Allied ability or inability to withstand threats such as a strike of strategic nuclear weapons should be sought inside NATO and within a political processes of strategic meaning.

5. NATO’s Bargaining Strategy: the Policy of Détente

The unclassified part of the concept of flexible response was *Harmel Report on the Future Tasks of the Alliance* that defined NATO’s policy with the Soviet bloc until the end of the Cold War.¹⁵⁶ The post-Cuban missile crisis, the French demarche and the development of *force de frappe*, as well as the recognition of two poles within international relations where both leading superpowers possessed enough capacity to ensure mutually assured destruction, pushed the Alliance to the search of new strategy and favored creation of the period of détente using NATO as a form of managerial mechanism.¹⁵⁷ The general perception of the détente period was that this was an “era of negotiations” where the main emphasis was externally on bilateral and multilateral consultations among adversaries and internally within the Alliance among key member nations.¹⁵⁸ Because of the transformations in international relations, Alliance members expected a subsequent NATO transformation in order to meet the requirements of new international realities. As a result, and given the response to allied expectations, the Harmel Report emphasized the value of increased bilateral consultations among the

155 Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 80.

156 Aybet cited “NATO, The Future Tasks of the Alliance (“The Harmel Report”)” (Brussels: NATO, 1967) in “The NATO Strategic Concept Revisited,” 40.

157 Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 87; Sloan, *Permanent Alliance?: NATO and the Transatlantic Bargain from Truman to Obama*, 48–49.

158 Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 90.

superpowers, the use of NATO as a political consultative body for détente issues as well as the future guarantor of allied solidarity on collective defense issues.¹⁵⁹

Despite this special role for NATO in the period of détente, the allies had divergent views on the realization of détente in real life, which—in combination with external events such as the Soviet invasion in Czechoslovakia, the Vietnam War, the Yom Kippur war and other incidents on an international scale—clearly showed that superpower interests would clash whenever there was an open window of opportunity to spread the zone of influence.¹⁶⁰ Moreover, for the Western European NATO members, détente signaled inconvenient transformations emphasizing the re-emergence of a strengthened *realpolitik* in the U.S. and Soviet relations resulting in European NATO members being subordinated as secondary role states regarding collective defense ideas and common values that were in the foundations of NATO.¹⁶¹

6. Challenge of Strategic Defense Initiative and Soviet Decline

The remaining years of the Cold War symbolized an increased arms race between the superpowers, which was merely paused in part by the détente period.¹⁶² The “peace through strength” with NATO as center piece, along with the monolith U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) on the one side and the Soviet technologic development on the other, and the deployment of intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe caused NATO to make decisions about strengthening Europe with other missile forces.¹⁶³ Obviously, this situation helped keep NATO together and proved the validity of the Alliance in the eyes of Western leaders. Nevertheless, NATO was not able to stop the arms race. Among other reasons related to continued proliferation in the Soviet Union, one of the most important reasons within the Alliance was related to different threat perceptions on both sides of Atlantic with regard to possible nuclear war and its

159 Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 90–91; Sloan, *Permanent Alliance?: NATO and the Transatlantic Bargain from Truman to Obama*, 51.

160 Thomas, 92–102, Kaplan *The Long Entanglement: NATO's First Fifty Years*, 115–116.

161 Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 108.

162 Ibid., 112.

163 Ibid., 117.

outcomes. For Americans, the deterrence of nuclear weapons symbolized a war that was thousands of miles away from U.S. soil, therefore it was psychologically more acceptable to consider nuclear war as a potential outcome of a confrontation between the two superpowers; for Europeans this war meant that their “homeland was the potential battlefield, whether or not nuclear weapons were used by either side.”¹⁶⁴ These different threat perceptions explained allied divergent views on the ways and means NATO had to assure collective defense guarantees. For Europe, there was greater emphasis on political communication where fear of finding itself in the center of a nuclear confrontation did not allow drawing red lines in relation to Soviet foreign policy ambitions, partly because of the strong social democrat movements at the domestic level.¹⁶⁵ For the U.S., there was a more realist political approach from the world’s superpower, which was achieved through the Strategic Defense Initiative and other strategies aimed to defeat the Soviets by any means.¹⁶⁶

The political ambitions of the United States and the several European allies then reached another level that went under the term “out-of-area” operations and defined the Alliance’s responsibility to defend itself in territories that were far from the North Atlantic region, for example, in Africa or Southwest Asia.¹⁶⁷ These concerns of collective defense were characteristic of Allied nations’ national political interests in the regions of former colonial interests. In this regard, NATO was a suitable organization to ensure that separate nations did not exceed the limits of common interests and thus cause danger to the NATO and Soviet relationship or create another world war. At the same time, the change of political leadership in the Soviet Union provided NATO with a new geopolitical change that the Alliance managed to survive despite being created for the situations such as the Cold War.

164 Sloan, *Permanent Alliance?: NATO and the Transatlantic Bargain from Truman to Obama*, 77.

165 Ibid., 80–82.

166 Ibid., 79–81.

167 Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 128–129.

E. THE POST-COLD WAR SHIFT TO NEW THREATS AND CHALLENGES

The unexpected outcome of the Cold War brought new challenges and new threats that the North Atlantic community had to deal with. NATO, as an organization built to fight a large-scale nuclear and conventional war against the Soviet Union, lost its main contestant and had to deal with new challenges:

While conventional dangers were declining, there was a corresponding increase in the probability of a different, multifaceted, and hard to contain type of risk. In the European context, security was becoming indivisible. The spotlight was now turning to existent or potential domestic problems, particularly those associated with the former communist countries.¹⁶⁸

The years following the fall of the Berlin Wall confirmed that a nuclear threat was no longer the greatest danger to NATO, there were echoes of collapses in the Soviet Union but not every case resulted in the peaceful re-creation of independent states but instead resulted in bloody wars in the former Yugoslavia, Caucasus, and Moldova.¹⁶⁹ On the one hand, the Alliance was the victor because the “combination of allied détente, deterrence, and defense policies contributed to the events that culminated with the dissolution of Warsaw Pact, and disintegration of the Soviet Union.”¹⁷⁰ On the other hand, changes in international relations and tensions in post-Cold War Europe generated new threats that left significant internal influence within the NATO and allied members’ interrelationship.

There were primarily state concerns about the future of NATO as an organization. There were sound considerations kept alive by Soviet leaders as well as separate political elite representatives among the allies, that NATO had no added value without its enemy and the Alliance, like the Soviet Union, had to dissolve.¹⁷¹ There was also another side

¹⁶⁸Alexandra Gheciu *NATO in the “New Europe”: The Politics of International Socialization After the Cold War* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005), 60.

¹⁶⁹Sloan, *Permanent Alliance?: NATO and the Transatlantic Bargain from Truman to Obama*, 95; Kaplan, *The Long Entanglement: NATO’s First Fifty Years*, 189–194.

¹⁷⁰Sloan, *Permanent Alliance?: NATO and the Transatlantic Bargain from Truman to Obama*, 96.

¹⁷¹David S. Yost *NATO Transformed: The Alliance’s New Roles in International Security*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), 47.

that supported the continuity of the Alliance for different reasons. For Germany, for example, the existence of NATO meant further U.S. involvement in European defense that subsequently assured German reunification and a multilateral agreement over a unified Germany's place in NATO among the United States, Germany, and Russia.¹⁷²

For France it was an opportunity to diminish U.S. influence in Europe and regain its political authority in Europe and in the world while at the same time continuing to flirt with NATO in case there was a necessity for help.¹⁷³ The German aspirations also renewed French and British concerns over Germany regaining its might and thus trying to resurge.¹⁷⁴ Despite these concerns, growing pressures that resulted in a war in the Balkans, proved that NATO still had credibility in dealing with collective defense issues because no one was able to predict that at the end of twentieth century, Europe would again face a conventional conflict where policy, religious differences, and socio-ethnic issues might be solved in the old-fashioned style of blood and iron.

Finally, there were former Warsaw Pact and Soviet Republics that associated themselves with the democratic values of the Western world and clearly declared their willingness to join NATO in the spirit and letter of the North Atlantic Treaty and its Article 10, expressing determination to transform their political systems in *habitus* common with the political and institutional values and systems in Western Europe and the United States:

Western decision makers were facing an unprecedented situation: instead of just having to strengthen and stabilize already existing liberal democratic values and institutions, the challenge in the new period was to help construct those institutions in states emerging from a long period of

¹⁷² Sloan, *Permanent Alliance?: NATO and the Transatlantic Bargain from Truman to Obama*, 94; Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 149; Yost, *NATO Transformed: The Alliance's New Roles in International Security*, 53.

¹⁷³ Menon, *France, NATO and the Limits of Independence 1981–97*, 122–123.

¹⁷⁴ Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, 149.

Communist rule. The challenge, now, was no longer to secure and stabilize Western state identities, but to help build them from scratch.¹⁷⁵

Internal concerns, transformation attempts, and the motivation of former adversaries as well as instability in Eastern/Central Europe reflected a necessity to decide the future of NATO and the transformation of the Alliance. These changes would need to be able to deal with new challenges and prevent insecurity and instability of the post-Cold War era, in which there were all the preconditions necessary to spread across Europe and develop another large-scale war.

1. New Strategic Concepts and Enlargement Policy

The London Declaration, authorizing the preparation of a new strategic concept and its subsequent approval at the Rome Summit in 1991, proved the uniqueness of NATO's capacity to adapt again in 1990.¹⁷⁶ Certain criticism, however, has been represented arguing that NATO's victory and status as the only and strongest military alliance after the collapse of the Soviet Union did not motivate rethinking and improvement of NATO's grand strategy.¹⁷⁷ As a result, the Strategic Concept of 1991 that was first such document of NATO being unclassified and released after 1967 Strategic Concept was "rather a dull document, reiterating the changes that had already taken place in Europe, reaffirming its core functions, and suggesting preparedness for anything in a world that saw emerging threats as 'multidirectional.'"¹⁷⁸ The Alliance's New Strategic Concept agreed upon the necessity to improve NATO's capabilities in

crisis management, the transformation of conventional forces with a more rapid reaction

¹⁷⁵ Gheciu, *NATO in the "New Europe": The Politics of International Socialization After the Cold War*, 76–85.

¹⁷⁶ Sloan, *Permanent Alliance?: NATO and the Transatlantic Bargain from Truman to Obama*, 147.

¹⁷⁷ Aybet "The NATO Strategic Concept Revisited," 36–37.

¹⁷⁸ Aybet cited "The Alliance's Strategic Concept Agreed by the Heads of State and Government," 1991, 8 in Aybet "The NATO Strategic Concept Revisited," 37.

and force projection capability, and the prevention of possible conflicts not only within NATO territory but also outside of it, specifically in Europe.¹⁷⁹

This concept also officially declared NATO's commitment to cooperate with those Central and Eastern European states that proved their determination to contribute to collective security as well as declared their aspirations to join Western European institutions.¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, it was not enough for the allies to pass the test of a successful transformation from a Cold War military organization to an effective institution dealing with the new challenges executed in the conventional manner, as the war in the Balkans proved.

The next step came with the 1999 Strategic Concept approved in the NATO Washington Summit of the same year.¹⁸¹ This concept was an improvement of the 1991 Strategic Concept outlining "five core security tasks: security, consultation, deterrence and defense, crisis management, and partnership."¹⁸² Yet, the Concept alone was not a solution to internal dispute among allies about further NATO enlargement, cooperation with former adversaries, and role in the new international order.

2. Enlargement and Burden-Shifting

The Allies did not share common views over the cooperation models with the Eastern and Central European aspirants or over their applicability to become full-fledged NATO members.¹⁸³ Of course, in the early years after the end of the Cold War none of the NATO members seriously considered NATO enlargement in the Eastern direction and instead tried to carefully adapt the Alliance to a new international order and to the

179 The Alliance's New Strategic Concept, agreed by the Heads of State and Government participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council, 7–8 November, 1991, accessed on 05/23/2012 http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_23847.htm

180 Ibid.

181 Aybet, "The NATO Strategic Concept Revisited," 41.

182 Ibid., 41.

183 Sloan, *Permanent Alliance?: NATO and the Transatlantic Bargain from Truman to Obama*, 149.

changes in Eastern and Central Europe.¹⁸⁴ In trying to find the best solutions for NATO's further existence, the allies faced open internal disputes on a variety of issues.

First, there was the old debate about the inadequate burden sharing between the U.S. and European allies, which became acute and visible when NATO European allies failed to prove that the war in former Yugoslavia was "the hour of Europe" to stop the conflict without U.S. assistance.¹⁸⁵ The European response was toothless and reluctant to recognize that serious diplomatic measures were not working to stop the war in the Balkans. One should also agree that in response to the European commitment to solve problems on their soil by themselves, the United States' subsequent reaction was that of non-involvement in the Balkan conflict.¹⁸⁶ This, however, resulted in criticism within the United States itself and the new political course of the Clinton administration, which was determined to have greater involvement in the Balkans as well as to later support greater NATO expansion in the post-Soviet domain.¹⁸⁷ America's partial isolationism from European affairs did not help to solve the conflicts in the Balkans at their start but later served as reasonable basis to increase political support for those states that were willing to join Western European institutions.

Second, the allies had different views on the topic of NATO transformation, especially regarding NATO's enlargement and the future role of Europe and the U.S. in NATO. While European allies, especially France, saw an opportunity to strengthen European defense capabilities through the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Western European Union, the United States never recognized European attempts to undermine NATO, and subsequently the American role within the organization, nor did they recognize separate European states' plans for the Alliance's replacement.¹⁸⁸ Paradoxically, as much as the United States was considered the guarantor of European defense, it was not willing to allow an increase of European positions as the

184 Yost, *NATO Transformed: The Alliance's New Roles in International Security*, 100.

185 Sloan, *Permanent Alliance?: NATO and the Transatlantic Bargain from Truman to Obama*, 152.

186 *Ibid.*, 152.

187 Sloan, *Permanent Alliance?: NATO and the Transatlantic Bargain from Truman to Obama*, 153.

188 *Ibid.*, 213–215.

unified world power.¹⁸⁹ After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States was the only remaining world's superpower and it did not want to lose this position to anyone.

Third, regarding further NATO activities in a post-Soviet space through enlargement, the allies were reluctant to consider such an option because of possible Russian reactions to it.¹⁹⁰ Even knowing that the former Soviet military might was gone, the allies still recognized Russia's nuclear superpower status and did not want to be involved in growing tensions because of euphoric NATO's policies, which would draw new red lines in NATO-Russia relations.¹⁹¹ Nevertheless, through strong U.S. support and trilateral communication between the Clinton, Kohl, and Yeltsin administrations as well as through established organizational and political instruments such as the North Atlantic Cooperation Council and Partnership for Peace program and later the instrument of the Membership Action Plan, the enlargement process started in the most peaceful and diplomatic way possible.¹⁹² This show of good form, of course, did not stop allies from further bargaining over their candidate preferences and the possible goods separate allies could receive for supporting the accession of one candidate or another (e.g. Turkey's request for membership in the European Union (EU) in exchange for supporting the accession of new member states or France's support to Hungary and Romania).¹⁹³

Finally, attempts to find the best formula for NATO's transformation, in combination with external threats influencing Western European security as well as aspirations of former Soviet bloc countries, required an updated strategic concept in order to not derail the Alliance from its post-Cold War survival policy. This came together with the celebration of NATO's fiftieth anniversary at the Washington Summit of 1999. Divergent views of NATO included NATO as a global organization with increased involvement in crisis management and collective security, which was supported by the

189 Ibid., 216.

190 Yost, *NATO Transformed: The Alliance's New Roles in International Security*, 112.

191 Ibid., 112.

192 Sloan, *Permanent Alliance?: NATO and the Transatlantic Bargain from Truman to Obama*, 104–115.

193 Yost, *NATO Transformed: The Alliance's New Roles in International Security*, 113–115.

U.S. and Great Britain, or NATO as a regional collective defense organization with lower level ambitions and unwilling allies contributing more for out-of-area operations executed without a United Nations (UN) mandate.¹⁹⁴

At the end of the twentieth century, NATO better than other international organizations was prepared to defend allies from the threats characteristic to the last decade of this century. Yet, similarly to other state and non-state actors, NATO failed to predict and prepare to defend its allies for challenges that pushed Alliance to another strategic shift in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

F. CONCLUSIONS

Different types of threats will be on the daily agenda of NATO as long as it continues to exist as a collective defense or collective security organization depending on the necessity of the allies. Since 1947, when Western European states together with the United States started to build the new security architecture of international relations, there were divergent perceptions about the most suitable solutions based on different state experiences and political ambitions. The creation of NATO was made as a compromise between national expectations, political ambitions and external threats projected by the Soviet Union. It is sometimes hard to predict whether one action by the Alliance or another, in the form of political declaration, strategic concept or real deployment of nuclear missiles and troops, was dictated because of the imminence of Soviet threats or because of the internal considerations and divergent political agendas dictated by domestic policies and their political elite members with more or less charismatic personality and political charm. Similarly, one may question whether deterrence and détente as well as the outcome of the Cold War were a result of a reluctance and lack of cooperative action or because the Alliance was effective in achieving its political goals.

One thing is clear: Despite the fact that it has never been able to fulfill its force goals, NATO has been the most powerful military organization since its inception and still keeps that title. NATO has proven that collective defense primary is political and strategic interaction with the use of military capability as one of available instruments not

¹⁹⁴ Sloan, *Permanent Alliance?: NATO and the Transatlantic Bargain from Truman to Obama*, 165.

vice versa. This proves that unless there is a stalemate within NATO over what the external threats are and how to deal with them, even with the permanent presence of burden shifting which happens more than burden sharing, NATO has been able to withstand, prevent, or at least manage all kinds of threats or violence that have been projected against its member states for more than the last sixty years.

Nevertheless, despite the success of the first NATO enlargement and a rather successful long-term involvement in the Balkans, specifically in Kosovo, the allies were far from a convergent understanding about NATO's role and mission on the eve of the new millennium. Unfortunately, the internal dispute was not the projector of the external threats that Alliance had to foresee in order to predict the future influence of allied defense after the terrorist attacks on U.S. soil on September 11, 2001. Moreover, it is possible to speculate that unresolved internal discussions or even conflicts among the allies within NATO did not allow members to concentrate on or recognize the growth of brand new external threats, which swept away a number of permanent values of the international order, creating dangers to the collective defense that were previously considered minor and unimportant.

IV. CASE STUDY: NATO AND CYBER THREATS/ATTACKS: LEGAL ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS

In April of 2007, the Estonian government took the decision to remove from its capital, Tallinn, the “bronze soldier” monument that was built there to honor the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany. There followed riots in the streets, mainly by ethnic Russian youth protesting the decision, as well as other troubling shows of destructive dissent: Estonia experienced large-scale computer network attacks against government and banking websites.¹⁹⁵ While suspicions and emotions have run high, Estonia never has received clear evidence that government of the Russian Federation sanctioned or sponsored those attacks.¹⁹⁶

These denial-of-service attacks seemed coordinated by their nature and damaged both the economy and the prestige of the Estonian government, as well as a people that used to be considered as the most “wired society” in the world.¹⁹⁷ Those cyber-attacks, however, did not cause human casualties or destruction of Estonian critical infrastructure objects.

In August 2008 the war between Georgia and Russia broke out. Along with the conventional conflict, Georgia experienced massive cyber-attacks against its government, banking services and, what was most important, media websites, which denied Georgian citizens and the international media objective official information about the war and the situation in the country.¹⁹⁸ Similarly to Estonia, cyber-attacks against Georgia had unknown origins (despite suspicions that they were coming from Russia); they did not

195 Sean Watts “Low-Intensity Computer Network Attack and Self-Defense,” in Raul A. “Pete” Pedrozo and Daria P. Wollschlaeger ed. *International Law and the Changing Character of War*, (Newport, Rhode Island: Naval War College, 2011), 69–70.

196 Sean Watts “Low-Intensity Computer Network Attack and Self-Defense,” 18–19. Needless to say, neither Article 5 nor Article 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty was invoked to launch collective defense measures. Cyber attacks are not of kinetic nature and, in terms of Article 5, there was no armed attack in the sense of conventional conflict.

197 Eneken Tikk, Kadri Kaska, Liis Vihul “International Cyber Incidents: Legal Considerations,” *NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence*, Tallinn, Estonia, (2010): 17–18.

198 Michael N. Schmitt “Cyber Operations and the Jus in Bello: Key Issues,” in Raul A. “Pete” Pedrozo and Daria P. Wollschlaeger ed. *International Law and the Changing Character of War*, (Newport, Rhode Island: Naval War College, 2011), 89.

cause human casualties but mainly were used as part of information warfare, as a propaganda instrument to discredit the Georgian president and government, as well as to violate information space.¹⁹⁹

One may only wonder what would have happened if Georgia had not received assistance from Estonia, the United States, and other countries that supported Georgian official government and media websites from servers located in these states.²⁰⁰ Could Russia have used the effective blackout to push all the way to the Georgian capital, Tblisi? This war was strongly based on provocation, propaganda, deception, concealment, and information warfare. Therefore, whoever could claim decisive victory in the information space would have gone a long way toward decisive victory in the conflict itself.

One may also speculate about the limits of the “next cyber-attacks²⁰¹” against the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s member states. What would NATO do if the “next cyber-attack” broke down air traffic control center communication systems of London Heathrow Airport causing crash of the aircrafts? What would be the reaction of NATO if cyber-attacks interrupted the transportation system of Deutsche Bahn in Germany, or cooling systems of nuclear power plants in South Texas, causing mass casualties? Is there a legal basis of the Alliance to take countermeasures and declare Article 5 or at least Article 4?

What would be NATO’s reaction if cyber-attacks were part of complex hybrid threat constellation? May one consider low-level computer network attacks on civilian targets of NATO member states as *jus ad bellum*? Where does international law support

199 Schmitt “Cyber Operations and the Jus in Bello: Key Issues,” 90.

200 Eneken Tikk et al., “International Cyber Incidents: Legal Considerations,” 67–77.

201 There are various definitions that describe actions in cyberspace. The general issue is that there is no consensus about one common definition of “cyber attack”, “cyber crime”, “cyber terrorism”, “cyber warfare”, etc. For the purpose not to make confusion of these terms, this paper will exploit the meaning of “cyber threats” as an element that has a potential to leave strategic and political impact on NATO; meaning of “cyber attacks” as an element that leaves real impact on tactical and operational levels, and; the meaning of “violence in cyberspace” that includes warfare, terrorism and crime.

NATO attempts to defend from cyber-attacks and where it does not? This chapter asks all of these questions with an eye toward the international-legal framework, which poses its own challenges to NATO's response to hybrid threats.

A. INTERNATIONAL LAW AND THE DILEMMA OF REGULATING CYBERSPACE VIOLENCE

The expert group that tailored the New NATO Strategic Concept recognized the growing presence of cyber threats in the daily agenda of the Alliance, as do those who must deal on a daily basis with the menacing effects of cyber-attacks.²⁰² In a worst-case scenario, the impact of cyber threats on state security may equal weapons of mass destruction in terms of lethal potential. Certainly, events in Estonia were only the opening scene of the future cyber warfare.

The problem, speaking in very simplified terms, is that there is no legal consensus on how to deal with cyber threats when there is no visible threat actor thus the question of how to defend from cyber-attacks is far from solved. The mixed ability of states to deal with cyber threats on a national level will not provide a viable solution for the Alliance, especially if there is need for a collective action that might include retaliation both in cyber space or one of a kinetic nature. In this connection, NATO's issue, along with nation states, is that at the international level one may find diplomatic, political, and technologic interaction among state and non-state actors that want an effective response to cyber threats but there is no legal cooperation that would define the basic rules and

²⁰² In the "Analysis and Recommendations of the Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO," experts have talked about cyber threats and danger they expose to Alliance through whole analysis, especially in Chapter 5 "Alliance Forces and Capabilities," see in "NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement: Analysis and Recommendations of the Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO," NATO Public Diplomacy Division, Brussels, Belgium, 17 May, 2010, 45–46. Similarly, the issue about cyber threats has been addressed in NATO's New Strategic Concept, considering cyber attacks both as dangerous to military as well as to civilian infrastructures and populations, see in "Active Engagement Modern Defense," Strategic Concept for the Defense and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Adopted by the Heads of State and Government at the NATO Summit in Lisbon, 19-20 November, 2010, 11.

create norms for an international regime against cyber threats.²⁰³ As a result, NATO should consider the creation of a normative environment within itself in order to stand against cyber threats or continue relying on existing Law of Armed Conflict.

1. Where does “Cyber Issue” Belong—the National or International Level?

There exists no efficient internationally binding regime that would be effective in persuading the majority of states that a common action against cyber threats is in everyone’s interests just as the same as with the nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction.²⁰⁴ Subsequently, the inability of international law to deal with cyber threats opens a window of opportunity for rogue state and non-state actors to execute cyber-attacks against NATO members and other states, therefore making them a very effective instrument of strategic action.²⁰⁵ Cyber threats do not fall under rules clearly explained in binding international laws that prohibit the use of force in general terms and explain that acts such as military invasions, bombardments, blockades, and other kinetic actions must be considered as primary methods of political solutions.²⁰⁶ For example, despite their status and binding nature, UN Charter’s Article 2(4) and Article 51 are not made to employ legal constraints in cyber space. These norms were created to restrain conventional type aggression and might not be applicable for cyber-attacks.²⁰⁷ In fact, the

203 Maeve Dion “Different Legal Constraints For State Responsibility,” *NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence*, Tallinn, Estonia, (2010): 67.

204 Ryan T. Kaminski “Escaping the Cyber State of Nature: Cyber Deterrence and International Institutions,” *NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence Conference on Cyber Conflict*, Tallinn, Estonia, (2010): 88–91.

205 Building offensive capabilities in the cyber space is the most grateful area for those state and non-state actors that want to undermine existing international regime and achieve their political and economic goals by humiliating other state and non-state actors in nonconventional way. According to James Lewis (2009), Director of the CSIS Technology and Public Policy Program, “We should not forget that many of the countries that are havens for cybercrime have invested billions in domestic communications monitoring to supplement an already extensive set of police tools for political control. The notion that a cybercriminal in one of these countries operates without the knowledge and thus tacit consent of the government is difficult to accept,” cited by Ryan T. Kaminski “Escaping the Cyber State of Nature: Cyber Deterrence and International Institutions,” *NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence Conference on Cyber Conflict*, Tallinn, Estonia, (2010): 86.

206 Sean D. Murphy, *Principles of International Law* (Concise Hornbooks, 2006), 439–441.

207 Matthew C. Waxman “Cyber Attacks as “Force” under UN Charter Article 2 (4),” in Raul A. “Pete” Pedrozo and Daria P. Wollschlaeger ed. *International Law and the Changing Character of War*, (Newport, Rhode Island: Naval War College, 2011), 44.

UN Charter was created during a time when cyber threats were science fiction and no one could imagine warfare within a virtual dimension.²⁰⁸ On the other hand, it has been admitted that Article 2(4) does not speak directly about the instrument that has been used for force projection but about the outcome of what exact instrument of coercion has been used:

Article 2(4) looks not at the instrument used but its purpose and general effect: that it prohibits coercion. Kinetic military force is but one instrument of coercion, and often the easiest to observe. At various times some States—usually those of the developing world or, during the Cold War, the “Third World”—have pushed the notion that “force” includes other forms of pressure, such as political and economic coercion that threatens State autonomy. In this regard Offensive cyber-attack capabilities such as taking down government or private computer systems share some similarities with kinetic military force, economic coercion and subversion, yet also have unique characteristics and are evolving rapidly.²⁰⁹

From this perspective, cyber threats do not expose kinetic character by themselves but they are still similar to other types of threats and cyber-attacks have been created with the aim to make states or individuals suffer. Cyber threats being similar to other threats are among reasons that generate the creation of the law of war and rules of engagement.²¹⁰

Such an interpretation of Article 2(4) would be enough for NATO to legitimize specific defense measures against cyber threats. The threshold issue, however, remains on the level of the individual responsibility of states and how they interpret cyber threats. Moreover, the interpretation of cyber threats in the framework of the UN Charter, and its

208 Ibid., 44.

209 Waxmann, “Cyber Attacks as “Force” under UN Charter Article 2 (4),” 44.

210 According to Hedley Bull, “war is organized violence carried on by political units against each other” and generally war—and the threat of war—are such fundamental variables that as a result the international system describes itself, e.g. defining great powers, small powers, spheres of influence, balance of powers and other terms characteristic to international relations. On the one hand, threats from cyber attacks, cybercrime, cyber terrorism and other acts of cyber violence have been explained and defined by the existing international legal norms. On the other hand, crucial elements like non-virtual warring parties are lacking that makes challenging to legitimate both jus ad bellum and jus in bello when one speaks about the cyber-attacks and other types of cyber threats. In fact, cyber threats do not fall under the rules and laws that regulate jus ad bellum and jus in bello, see in Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, 3d ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 178–181.

Article 2(4), is expected to be highly different because states have different capabilities to protect themselves as well as different capabilities to project cyber tools as a strategic advantage.²¹¹ The normative and resource disparity, of course, makes NATO's attempts to find common legitimate foundations for cyber defense even more complicated because each of the twenty-eight member states can legally have a different understanding of what are really cyber threats and what countermeasures might be considered as appropriate. The case of cyber-attacks in Estonia in 2007 is an approval of different views showing that the UN Charter and the North Atlantic Treaty were not helpful instruments, along with other issues that *incognito* attacks in cyberspace can always bring.

The issue of legal divergence is politically recognized and taken into consideration not only by NATO but also by a large portion of the United Nations members as well as international organizations such as the European Union, Organization of American States, the United Nations, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and many others.²¹² Cyber-attacks, cyber-terrorism, cyber-crime and other types of violence in cyberspace are not merely a concern of one single nation or organization what proves that unitary international legal regime is required. In this regard, cyberspace domain must be treated as a global common that is constructed by humans, embedding other existing domains of land, sea, air, and space representing permanent changes and developments unknown even for subject matter experts of the field.²¹³

2. International Humanitarian Law on Cyberspace

Despite the contemporary nature of cyberspace, its virtual decentralization and ability “to be everywhere,” it is hard to believe that current construction of the international law is obsolete against cyber attacks or other types of violence in

²¹¹ Ibid., 44.

²¹² Fred Schreier, Barbara Weekes, Theodor H. Winkler, “Cyber Security: The Road Ahead,” *The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)*, *DCAF Horizon 2015 Working Paper* No. 4, 39.

²¹³ Gen. Larry D. Welch USAF (Ret.), “Cyberspace – The Fifth Operational Domain,” in “Challenges in Cyberspace,” Institute for Defense Analyses, Research Notes, Alexandria, VA, Summer, 2011, 2–3.

cyberspace. International society has already experienced other areas that under certain conditions have been similarly decentralized and of very contemporary nature like cyberspace. Here one may mention customs and treaties that regulate international commerce and business relations. Furthermore, international humanitarian law must be considered as an invention of recent past but its universal meaning has no expiration date as well as it is hard to undermine the universality of norms that are included in this law.²¹⁴ Experts have focused their attention on international humanitarian law (IHL) in order to define a common legal basis acceptable to all international actors.

Even though IHL was generally developed in order to deal with kinetic conflicts, its tenets are helpful for defining cyber-attacks and thus cyber threats in general as armed conflicts. In the framework of IHL, cyber-attacks might be recognized as an instrument within an armed conflict that is comparable with other means of warfare capable of making individuals suffer and states unable to function.²¹⁵ Legal experts, like Schmitt, have also addressed the issue of targets in cyber-attacks that make cyber threats even more dangerous and requiring greater necessity for strict legal regulations. Examples of such targets include critical infrastructure objects, state or privately owned, that are operating under computerized and automated systems, e.g., nuclear power plants, pipe lines, airport controls, dams, dykes, and other mechanisms that, in the case of an attack, might cause a number of casualties among populations.²¹⁶ Thus cyber threats as part of cyber operations used for cyber-attacks separately or as part of bigger military or non-military operation represent a form of attack that is similar to kinetic attacks and causes of death or injury among civilians.²¹⁷

The issue, however, is that cyber threats may not result in viable consequences of civilian casualties and destroyed infrastructure, as is the case in conventional or irregular warfare. In this regard, it is hard to apply IHL even in a case when the intent of the

214 Sean D. Murphy, *Principles of International Law*, 65–86.

215 Michael N. Schmitt “Wired Warfare: Computer Network Attack and jus in bello,” *IRRC* 84:846, (June 2002): 375.

216 Schmitt “Wired Warfare: Computer Network Attack and jus in bello,” 374; See also Michael N. Schmitt “Cyber Operations and the Jus in Bello: Key Issues,” 94.

217 Schmitt “Cyber Operations and the Jus in Bello: Key Issues,” 94.

warring parties was not tracked to use cyber space in order to harm the opposite side. Consequently, it is not possible to apply IHL in speaking about recognizable evidence that one or another type of warfare has injuries and damage to civilians, especially if the cyber-attack was directed at military or dual-use targets, not civilian.²¹⁸ Yet, despite these existing caveats, IHL gives a “helping hand” to NATO, which needs a legal basis for taking a much stronger position against cyber-attacks and implementing more effective measures. Several arguments speak to this issue.

First, IHL is internationally recognized and has a prestigious codex of binding norms. Second, on the basis of IHL, in the future NATO along with other organizations has an opportunity to create new international circle of norms that would restrain anarchy in the cyber domain. Third, cyber-attacks represent a slippery slope because it is hard to define where military vs. civilian spaces start and end. These previously separated worlds are so interdependent and technically so connected that cyber-attacks, which at the start were directed toward military targets, could easily transform into an attack on civilian targets. The latter fall under IHL, giving a state or an organization such as NATO the *jus in bello* and subsequently *jus ad bellum* if considered an appropriate response to stop the violence.

Nevertheless, IHL does not solve the legal regime issue for cyber defense because it does not speak to cyber-attacks nor is it covered in the UN Charter. As a result, states that actively use cyber space for their rogue actions cannot be taken to trial or put under any kind of sanctions because of the high degree of normative interpretation. This does not only include the issue of the usually unknown sources of cyber threats, technological weaknesses, or political impotence. It directly refers to the issue that there still does not exist an international legal regime such as those that prohibit nuclear armament, the production of chemical and biological weapons, or other types of weapons of mass destruction, which is universally agreed on by not only NATO members but also

218 Ibid., 97–102.

worldwide among all UN members and non-state actors. Still, there is a political task on the one hand and a permanent tendency of growing cyber threats on the other, requiring quick and effective solutions from the Alliance now.

In sum, there are so many rules and norms that regulate cyber-crime on the national/state level attempting to regulate and prevent cyber threats that makes it for international level even more challenging to create one common and universally binding regime:

There are divergent legal systems and laws relating to cyber-crime and cyber-security; some countries have no laws relating to cyber-crime or cyber-security legislation while others have relatively advanced cyber-security frameworks. There will always be the challenge of dual criminality issues between legal systems but without, at a minimum, an international framework to “track and trace,” there is little hope of catching the criminals.²¹⁹

The common problem for both international and national levels is that they all deal with some specific part or detail related to violence in the cyberspace not whole domain all together or; international laws are too blurry to be applied. In most cases these are national criminal laws that deal with the cyber-crimes that are international by their nature.²²⁰ This unclarity challenges any real consensus on fundamental questions: what are cyber threats, what must be considered as cyber attacks and who must be considered as cyber threat actors as well as what kind of response state and/or non-state actors are allowed to take.

B. SCENARIOS AND SOLUTIONS

Several scenarios have been modeled in order to seek a legitimate NATO consensus and approval for launching Article 4 consultations and Article 5 operations.

²¹⁹ Fred Schreier, Barbara Weekes, Theodor H. Winkler, “Cyber Security: The Road Ahead,” *The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)*, *DCAF Horizon 2015 Working Paper No. 4*, 13.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

1. Scenarios

The first scenario is based on the technological capabilities that are used to paralyze computer network systems of specific NATO nations and balance on cyber espionage and a level of intrusion that does not leave the Alliance any choice than to start a consultation procedure under Article 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty or make a decision for counteraction considering the imminent threat of the cyber-attack and the right for self-defense.²²¹ This scenario for a legitimate NATO *jus ad bellum* may work only under circumstances when the potential adversary is fully recognizable and there is strong approval that taken countermeasures will be launched against the perpetrator, not an innocent party. The case of cyber-attacks against Estonia in 2007 proved that this is not an easy task. Even if there are suspicions, actions under Article 5 or under law enforcement cannot be executed.²²²

The second scenario is that cyber threats are part of a bigger threat constellation, or hybrid threats, thus playing the role of a bigger scenario that has been applied to weaken NATO defense capabilities and decapitate both civilian and military entities in order to achieve different ends.²²³ Although one may find this scenario theoretical, the case of Georgia in 2008, when cyber-attacks were part of the bigger armed conflict significantly helping one involved party in turning off Georgian official information channels, is recognized as an example that cyber threats have future within hybrid conflicts.²²⁴ Cyberspace was used in order to decapitate Georgian electronic media,

221 Ulf Häußler “Cyber Security and Defence from the Perspective of Articles 4 and 5 of the NATO Treaty,” *NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence*, Tallinn, Estonia, 2010, 116–117.

222 Eneken Tikk, Kadri Kaska, Liis Vihul “International Cyber Incidents: Legal Considerations,” *NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence*, Tallinn, Estonia, 2010, 15–33; See also David Willson “A Global Problem: Cyberspace Threats Demand An International Approach,” *Armed Forces Journal*, July, 2009 accessed on 05/09/2012 <http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/2009/07/4062667/>

223 Ulf Häußler “Cyber Security and Defence from the Perspective of Articles 4 and 5 of the NATO Treaty,” *NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence*, Tallinn, Estonia, 2010, 117

224 Ronald Asmus *A Little War that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West*, (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 167.

governmental communication channels, critical infrastructure objects, and the private sector including banking services. Cyber-attacks started before the military phase and stopped with ceasefire declared on August 12.²²⁵

The third scenario is the “use of cyber capabilities to degrade or deny decision-making and associated command and control capability, and/or achieve information superiority in the field of strategic communications, both of which may make a significant contribution to campaign success.”²²⁶ This scenario one might consider as a continuation of previous hybrid threat scenarios where cyber threats in the form of specific actions supplement information operations, deception, concealment, and propaganda. For instance, the main point of gravity in the 2008 Russia-Georgia war was the information war that was executed by both sides. The information war started long before the military confrontation turned out and it is still ongoing after the end of the military conflict.²²⁷ Moscow successfully managed to use all its available sources created by the official government in the years of Putin’s governance. These included a variety of state run media services—everything from news agencies, televisions, radios and Internet sources to formally independent representatives of social media.²²⁸ NATO has to take lessons learned and seek appropriate solutions in the case of such a scenario, starting with the low-level computer network attacks launched against separate NATO members or Alliance all together.

The fourth scenario that has been considered is the projection of cyber threats by individuals that are not representing governmental or military structures.²²⁹ Again, the case study of cyber-attacks against Estonia in 2007 proved the real-time applicability of such a scenario in which a “country’s [Estonia’s] electronic infrastructure was hit by

225 Ibid., 167.

226 Häußler, “Cyber Security and Defence from the Perspective of Articles 4 and 5 of the NATO Treaty,” 118.

227 Paul A. Goble “Defining Victory and Defeat: The Information War Between Russia and Georgia,” 181-182 in Svante E. Cornell’s and S. Frederick Starr’s (ed.) *The Guns of August 2008: Russia’s War in Georgia* (New York, M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2009).

228 Timothy L. Thomas *Recasting the Red Star: Russia Forges Tradition and Technology Through Toughness*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, 2011), 240.

229 Häußler, “Cyber Security and Defence from the Perspective of Articles 4 and 5 of the NATO Treaty,” 120.

almost one million computers simultaneously, most of them hijacked from the United States by unknown elements inside Russia.”²³⁰ One might argue that this exact scenario might be the most challenging for NATO in order to make a legitimate interpretation of the North Atlantic Treaty and take subsequent action against individuals executing cyber-attacks against NATO members. On other hand, it might be the simplest solution for NATO because dealing with rogue individuals that violate cyber space is considered as a criminal act that falls under states’ criminal legislations as well as being a subject of law enforcement institutions including international representations such as Interpol or the International Criminal Court. Yet, these and other scenarios seem to be based on more powerful rather than on legal instruments that law-abiding organizations have in their arsenal. Several solutions, however, based on historic experience might be applied.

2. Solutions

Cyber threats have occupied a new dimension of warfare and information spaces, which had not been exploited before last couple decades. However, the nature and character of those threats are similar to other threats the world has experienced before. When nuclear weapons were created and their force shown in practice during World War II, the international regime was not ready to deal with the spread of nuclear proliferation. Nevertheless, later there was the non-proliferation treaty and permanent members of the UN Security Council possessed nuclear weapons. Similarly, there are the Chemical Weapons Convention and Biological Weapons Convention that have been ratified by a majority of UN member states.²³¹ There are even older international norms like the law of the sea, norms that regulate air traffic control, outer space, Antarctica and other global commons where states have agreed upon certain rules that bind every international actor.²³² In each of these examples, the international society had to deal

²³⁰ Haly Laasme cited Joshua Davis, “Hackers Take Down the Most Wired Country in Europe,” *Wired Magazine* 15:9 (August 2007) available at <www.wired.com/politics/security/magazine/15-09/ff_estonia?currentPage=1> in Haly Laasme “Estonia: Cyber Window Into the Future of NATO,” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 63:4, (2011): 59.

²³¹ Ryan T. Kaminski “Escaping the Cyber State of Nature: Cyber Deterrence and International Institutions,” *NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence Conference on Cyber Conflict*, Tallinn, Estonia, 2010, 89–90.

²³² Julie J. C. H. Ryan, Daniel J. Ryan, Eneken Tikk, “Cybersecurity Regulation: Using Analogies to Develop Frameworks For Regulation,” *NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence*, Tallinn, Estonia, 2010, 79–91.

with certain unique situations that also included threats if solutions were not found. The problem, however, is that states are not willing to achieve consensus on the common rules of an international regime that would restrict the wilderness of cyber space due in part to states' national political agendas and national cyber policies.²³³

On the one hand, states are interested in tracking down and punishing non-state actors that are projecting cyber threats on state territory. On the other hand, states want to leave this duty to the national, not international, level because it allows them the freedom to maneuver in legal terms but it does not prohibit them from building capabilities that might be considered as dangerous in the case of the existing international legal cyber regime.²³⁴ Of course, an international legal regime regulating rules in cyber space cannot be the only instrument of order but, instead, an effective tool of combined effort. That, however, is not going to become a reality while there is not a commitment among the majority of UN member states. This solution would be the most appropriate for NATO but, until it is transformed into the sound form of an international treaty, NATO must seek other ways to protect its allies from cyber threats.

Another solution that might be less effective than the development of a new international regime is to continue the work that has already started within NATO related to finding solutions for cyber defense that are binding for NATO member and partner states. In this regard, political consensus has to be achieved between 28 member states, especially considering those situations when cyber threats have given reason for the activation of Article 4 or Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. This task is because here allies must agree upon kinetic actions that might be taken against state and non-state actors out of NATO if necessary in specific situation.

This consensus process would also be a significant step forward in finding solutions for countering hybrid threats considering the strong connection between hybrid and cyber threats. A positive aspect is that after the 2007 cyber-attacks against Estonia the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense Centre of Excellence was created and one of its

²³³ Kaminski, "Escaping the Cyber State of Nature: Cyber Deterrence and International Institutions," 85–86.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 92.

tasks is to analyze and seek legal solutions related to NATO cyber defense.²³⁵ The products made by NATO of course will be subject to criticism and interpretation or the open ignorance of non-NATO countries, especially those that consider the Alliance as threat to their security. Yet participation in norm creation that might be binding for the entire international society will give NATO significant political credit when dealing with the cyber threat issue on a strategic level both internally within the Alliance and externally with other international actors.

Finally, there is a solution based on the worst-case scenario or *casus* that is the creation of a normative regime as an outcome of a real life situation, usually of catastrophic consequences. Despite the fact that terrorism as a mode of irregular warfare has existed for long time, the attacks on United States' soil on 11 September 2001 created a new and much more effective international legal regime in dealing with the fight against terrorist organizations in spheres that included the control of money laundering and other financial activities aimed to support terrorism, arms smuggling and illegal routes of arms export, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and finally, the cooperation to trace and put on trial separate individuals and terrorist organizations.²³⁶ Although effective in creating new norms that are helping the international society in fighting against terrorism, it would still be the worst solution for NATO to evolve a form of a legitimate regime against cyber threats based on the catastrophic consequences and sufferings of allied members' populations and the destruction of critical infrastructure objects under cyber-attacks.

C. CONCLUSIONS

The North Atlantic Treaty is a universal legal document that may serve as an appropriate instrument in the case that NATO faces an imminent cyber threat and

235 For example in the website of the Center there has been published information that in the second half of 2012 the group of experts working under the auspices of the center will finish work on "Manual on International Law Applicable to Armed Conflicts in Cyberspace." The group's work is intended to lead to a restatement and manual on the international law applicable to cyber warfare, similar to the manuals on the law applicable to armed conflicts at sea (1994) and air and missile warfare (2010). Accessed on 05/10/2012 <http://www.ccdcoe.org/204.html>

236 Nico Krisch "The Rise and Fall of Collective Security: Terrorism, US Hegemony, and the Plight of the Security Council," *Springer*, (2004): 885–890.

subsequent cyber-attack that may cause a catastrophic chain of reactions in combination with other types of threats, united in a hybrid threat constellation or separately used to decapitate technologies or influence information space. For this reason, however, the Alliance must show itself as a robust organization that is able to provide political consensus when cyber threats are projected against one or more NATO members. One does not need to doubt the outcomes when cyber threats emerge again with similar situations when compared to Estonia in 2007 or in NATO's partner state Georgia in 2008.

Nevertheless, the Alliance would feel much more comfortable if cyber threats are regulated under a collective security shield and an established international regime that is founded upon the basis of a treaty ratified by the majority. The current international norms that regulate questions about collective security, rights for self-defense, *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* are obsolete because they have been created in order to regulate kinetic conflicts not cyber space, which was just science fiction at the time when documents such as the Geneva Conventions or the UN Charter were created. Therefore, there is space to maneuver for those state and non-state actors that are developing cyber warfare capabilities—not only for defense purpose but also for offensive objectives—because existing international law allows a wide interpretation regarding what might be considered a cyber-attack and what kind of defense states are authorized to realize. This leaves NATO, as an organization created on the basis of international law, with challenging conditions in which it has to seek its own solutions and legitimation for taking a justified response against those that project cyber threats against the Alliance.

In this regard, NATO is forced to take action and create a cyber-defense doctrine that includes all possible kinds of responses. The New Strategic Concept gave political authorization for allied cooperation, strategic commands together with member nations are institutions that provide control and resources, and the center of excellence is a think tank that is seeking applicable solutions for both the Alliance's needs and those of NATO's partners. This combination makes NATO a crucial actor, not only at national and regional levels but also at an international level when dealing with the cyber threats

issue. NATO's interest in finding solutions for cooperative cyber defense gives added value to the whole international system and does not exclude the possibility that NATO will be the founding organization to create new norms acceptable to everyone.

It is still hard to predict exactly what kind of cyber threats might be considered as NATO's *jus ad bellum* because each case is unique and scenarios in which cyber threats might emerge are complicated, not only from a legal aspect but also from political, diplomatic, and technological aspects as well. Nevertheless, NATO must continue its work in seeking the best methods to defend against cyber threats. Otherwise the Alliance might experience a repetition of a cyber 9/11 and subsequent improvements in cyber threats at all levels, which will undermine the spirit and letter of the North Atlantic Treaty as well as question the legitimacy of the Alliance itself.

V. CASE STUDY: RUSSIA—HYBRID THREAT ACTOR

The Russian Federation's official documents defining security policy and military strategy do not address the question of hybrid warfare—or rather, the Russians do not use this exact concept or terminology. However, this omission does not mean that Russia has not paid attention to contemporary security threats that other states characterize as hybrid. Indeed, Russia seriously addresses issues related to its capabilities in developing policies, strategy, and military performance that would be able to engage effectively in such dimensions as information warfare, cyber warfare, political sabotage, propaganda, high precision weapons, and the use of space. All these elements are part of the hybrid threat actor's nature and *modus operandi*.

The question this chapter asks is whether hybrid threats challenge Russia's security and defense capabilities similarly as they do to NATO—or whether Russia is more interested in hybrid threats as means to achieve Russia's political goals on the regional and international level? In addition, is the effective application of hybrid threats the answer to Russia's ongoing attempts to undermine the global superpower status of the United States and restore itself to a position of global power? Finally, does Russia have enough capabilities to defend itself from hybrid threats?

The truth, as this chapter demonstrates, lies somewhere in between. On the one hand, Russia has already proven its effectiveness in applying hybrid threats. Cases of war with Georgia in 2008, cyber-attacks in Estonia in 2007, and regime change in Kirgizstan in 2009 show the preparedness of Russian political, military and intelligence communities to fight an information war, organize and exercise cyber-attacks, penetrate other state actors with acts of the political sabotage, propaganda, and other instruments that prove themselves appropriate in specific situations. On the other hand, a reliance only on nuclear deterrence, its weakened military and decline of technologic capabilities, in comparison with the Western world and such countries as China, show that Russia itself is also very vulnerable and may be affected negatively when facing hybrid threats that are directed toward its own security.

A. THE PERILS AND PROMISE OF HYBRID WAR: THE RUSSIAN VIEW

The end of the Cold War, and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union, has traumatized some of the post-Soviet political and military elite, which still nurtures strong sentiments about Russia as a global superpower with the reach of the former Soviet empire. In 2005, for one obvious example, Vladimir Putin, as the president of Russian Federation, declared that the Soviet Union's collapse was the “biggest geopolitical catastrophe of the century.”²³⁷ The “catastrophe” bespeaks an abiding fear of Western military superiority and the fragility of the Russian political regime before conventional and non-conventional applications. In this regard, hybrid threats in the Russian perception emerge on a political level that affects almost every other dimension related to the function of the state and society.

As one result, the Russian military together with the political elite have declared that Russia faces threats in all spheres that are crucial to its survival.²³⁸ These threats are high especially due to the expansion of the U.S. political sphere of influence close to Russian borders; information warfare and the use of modern technologies—together with the social movement phenomenon—create a complex package of non-conventional threats that endanger Russia’s existence.²³⁹ Putin continues to claim that through different approaches utilizing non-conventional means there are forces that are trying constantly to provoke and destabilize the security situation at the Russian borders, thus spreading their influence and destabilizing security within Russia.²⁴⁰ Along with strengthening political and economic power in the region, Putin has stated the task of modernizing the armed forces by increasing their budget and investing in training, defense planning and command as well as modern weapon systems and precision guided

237 Claire Bigg, “World: Was Soviet Collapse Last Century’s Worst Geopolitical Catastrophe?”, *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, (April 29, 2005), <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1058688.html> accessed on February, 20, 2012

238 Stephen Blank “Threats to and from Russia: An Assessment,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College*, (August, 29, 2008): 499-505; See also Lt Gen General V.A. Gusachenko, “Ob Aktualnom Kontekste Ponyatiya Natsionalniy Bezopastnosti,” *Voyennaya Mysl (Military Thought)*, No. 7, 2007, 2–5.

239 Gusachenko, “Ob Aktualnom Kontekste Ponyatiya Natsionalniy Bezopastnosti,” 2–5.

240 Gusachenko, “Ob Aktualnom Kontekste Ponyatiya Natsionalniy Bezopastnosti,” 2–5; See also Stephen Blank “Threats to and from Russia: An Assessment,” 495–497.

ammunition.²⁴¹ Putin's political narrative regarding Russia's defense has been widely supported whereas those who did not agree with him were forced to step out of active policy roles (e.g. former Minister of Finance, Alexei Kudrin).

1. Strategy Documents on Hybrid War

Beyond the political declarations of contemporary threats, several documents—such as the Russian National Security Strategy until 2020 and the Military Doctrine of 2010—describe serious intents to create adequate defense capabilities against any kind of threat, especially those related to non-conventional means.

The National Security Strategy considers the growing threat environment because of misbalance and political unilateralism in international relations that is mainly represented as a result of the United States' policies and subsequent NATO expansion.²⁴² Among the variety of previously declared threats and challenges, the National Security Strategy addresses threats that are exercised in “sophisticated forms of illegal activity in the cybernetic and biological spheres and in high technology spheres.”²⁴³ The doctrine has clearly declared the task for Russia to modernize and improve its defense capabilities against any new form of threat through a comprehensive approach and use of diplomatic, economic, and military and other non-conventional means.

Russia's 2010 Military Doctrine also has recognized that the next military conflict will differ from previous conflicts in which Russia has been involved. In these wars, the main emphasis will be on the use of information warfare that will allow for achieving the political goals of the perpetrator without using military means.²⁴⁴ The doctrine has declared that the military capabilities of the Russian armed forces will depend on its

241 Vladimir Putin “Being Strong: National Security Guarantees for Russia”
<http://premier.gov.ru/eng/events/news/18185/>

242 Timothy L. Thomas *Recasting the Red Star: Russia Forges Tradition and Technology Through Toughness*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, 2011), 86; See also Katarzyna Zysk “Russian National Security Strategy to 2020,” *GeoPolitics in the High North*, June 15, 2009, http://www.geopoliticsnorth.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=152:russian-national-security-strategy-to-2020&catid=35:russia&Itemid=103, accessed on 02/20/2012; Ludmila A. Kox “Of Global Interests Conflict and National Security of Russia”, *Voennaia Mysl (Military Thought)*, No 6, (June, 2011):17–18.

243 Timothy L. Thomas *Recasting the Red Star*, 88.

244 *Ibid.*, 90.

ability to combine high-speed information processing capabilities with the application of modern weapon systems being able to destruct military and civilian objects of high importance thus accessing the strategic initiative.²⁴⁵

Until now, the only visible improvements that could support building the necessary capabilities are related to the armed forces structural reforms in order to establish an effective command structure of the military. Changes have already been implemented in the new command and control structure system, which has established a new division in Russia's regional military commands as well as applying a brigade level system in the armed forces.²⁴⁶ Still, there is no guarantee that the new command structure of the Russian military will be able to absorb and process information at a required level and thus allowing the military to act quickly and effectively in responding to any kind of threat, whether they are of a conventional or hybrid nature.

Another attempt at finding solutions for exercising policies that would be able to deal with the contemporary threats of a hybrid nature is changing the Russian approach in organizing a geostrategic-level policy through new geopolitically focused principles or vectors.²⁴⁷ These vectors have basically been created according to the new division of Russia's military commands (The Western Military District, The Central Military District, The East Military District, and The South Military District). Vector principles, however, have not created new paradigms in Russian policies on how to deal with hybrid threats. The vector policy has the same aim as the previous strategy within Russian geopolitics, which is to deter and weaken the U.S. and NATO influence in the world and in regions bordering the Russian Federation.

Vectors, rather, must be considered as a smart application in attempting to explain the continuation of Russia's formal cooperation policy with the United States and NATO while at the same time trying to weaken and decrease their military, political, and

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 90.

²⁴⁶ Ibid, 92; See also Roger McDermott, "The Restructuring of the Modern Russian Army," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 22:4 (30 Nov, 2009): 486; Jim Nichol, "Russian Military Reform and Defense Policy", *Congressional Research Service*, 7-5700, R42006, (August, 24, 2011).

²⁴⁷ Thomas, *Recasting the Red Star*, 95.

economic capabilities by all available means.²⁴⁸ Such an approach shows visible attempts to create a system of political instruments that would allow Russia to project hybrid threats to the Western world. In this regard, military theorists and academic professionals are trying to provide their contributions in order to make existing political and strategic principles sound.

2. Academia and Hybrid War

Russian military theorists and representatives from civilian academic disciplines have tried to assist the military in improving their performance for decades. Reality reflects the critical conditions of the armed forces and that they are not able to achieve combat readiness in order to fight classic, conventional third generation-style maneuver warfare. However, the military and civilian academia have produced significant amounts of analyses and research papers on how to improve Russia's security, defense capabilities, and military performance in facing different kinds of challenges, including those that might be considered as hybrid. This debate may be divided in two parts.

First, is the academic input or ideas that have been realized and proven to be successful as user friendly to the Russian military. Among them, one may mention Russian military's deception capabilities. Since the start of the twentieth century, Russia has always recognized the importance of such politico military disciplines as deception, concealment, disinformation, and mislead.²⁴⁹ The combination of these concepts or *voennaya khitrsotj* has helped Russia in number of wars and crisis situations, including World War II battles with the Wehrmacht and German intelligence, during the Cold War, and with the Chechen militant commander *Shamil Basayev*.²⁵⁰ Therefore, understanding of the importance of *voennaya khitrsotj* is of highest importance for those who want to engage in hybrid conflicts and project threats of a hybrid nature. Timothy Thomas has observed that Russian military, together with academic experts, have come to the conclusion that the winning party in twenty-first-century warfare will be the one able to

248 Thomas, *Recasting the Red Star*, 95; See also R. P. Hatilev, D. P. Pirikov "Central Asian Vector of Russian Federation's Military Policy," *Voennaia Mysl (Military Thought)*, No. 3, (March, 2009): 15.

249 Thomas, *Recasting the Red Star*, 107.

250 Thomas, *Recasting the Red Star*, 113 and 133.

adapt its *voennaya khitrsoj* capabilities to the new threat environment with the added elements of cyberspace, social media, space, and other dimensions within global interdependence and new technologies.²⁵¹

The Russian military and academic experts have also invested in developing a variety of tactics, techniques, and procedures in order to establish a decisive superiority in the information war against the United States, NATO, and China. One example, the reflexive control theory, was created in order to impact an adversary's decision-making process, turning its assessment in a necessary direction and being persuaded that it has understood its opponent's intentions.²⁵² The method of reflexive control, which includes all possible elements of information warfare, propaganda, deception, deterrence, and concealment, fits the concept of hybrid warfare. Moreover, Russia had experience in exercising reflexive control during the Cold-War era and its wars in Afghanistan and Chechnya. Russian military experts have also noticed that the United States has practiced similar methods, which have been used to blame the U.S. for the collapse of the Soviet Union when it was trying to achieve the same level in the sphere of the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative.²⁵³ Yet there are examples of military and academic interactions that have not helped establish visible or robust defensive and offensive capabilities in preventing or projecting hybrid threats. This angle of military and academic interaction also is more likely to cause harm rather than help develop robust capabilities for fighting hybrid wars.

The improvement of military capabilities in fighting information warfare and understanding the principles of information and network-centric warfare, whose role in fighting modern wars, has significantly increased.²⁵⁴ And in-depth analysis represented in *Military Thought* leaves no doubt that Russian military theorists have well understood the importance of information warfare. They have also established conceptual grounds

251 Thomas, *Recasting the Red Star*, 112–118.

252 Timothy L. Thomas *Cyber Silhouettes: Shadows Over Information Operations*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, 2005), 244–245; See also Thomas, *Recasting the Red Star*, 119–120.

253 Thomas, *Recasting the Red Star*, 120.

254 Anatolij A. Streltsov “Main Tasks of State Policy in the Field of Information Confrontation,” *Voennaia Mysl* (Military Thought), No. 5, (May, 2011): 18–20.

through defining the scope, levels, impact, terminology, and other crucial aspects of information warfare. In comparison with many Western thinkers on that topic, Russian experts consider information warfare not only as a technologic dimension but primarily as a political struggle and political process of warfare where technology is merely one part of the bigger concept.²⁵⁵ They understand information warfare as an element that leaves strategic consequences on the whole process of war. As one of the most prominent Russian experts of information warfare, *Rastorguyev*, has stated:

The final objective of an information weapon's effect is the knowledge of a specific information system and the purposeful use of that knowledge to distort the model of the victim's world. ...there is no important difference between the terms IW, information struggle, and information battle.²⁵⁶

Questions about information threats as well as the necessity to improve information warfare capabilities have been addressed in the National Security Concept, Military Doctrine, and Information Security Doctrine of the Russian Federation.²⁵⁷ One may find it deviant but by addressing questions of improving military capabilities in this area, Russian experts generally continue criticizing the United States and its NATO allies instead of offering visible solutions for improving their own military capabilities.²⁵⁸

One may find similar tendencies in Russian analysis on the application of network-centric warfare as well as on the utilization of asymmetric means (nanotechnologies, information technologies weapons) in asymmetric environments (non-conventional battle space).²⁵⁹ Leading Russian military theorists have reviewed both

255 Streltsov "Main Tasks of State Policy in the Field of Information Confrontation," 20-22; See also Timothy L. Thomas *Recasting the Red Star: Russia Forges Tradition and Technology Through Toughness*, 146-147; Viktor D. Riabchuk "Issues of Military Science and Prognosis in the Obstacles of Intellectual-Informational Confrontation," *Voennaia Mysl* (Military Thought), No. 5, (May 2008): 69.

256 Timothy L. Thomas *Cyber Silhouettes: Shadows Over Information Operations*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, 2005), 78.

257 Thomas, *Recasting the Red Star*, 141.

258 Ludmila Kokh "Conflict of Global Interest and National Security of Russia," *Voennaia Mysl* (Military Thought), No. 6, (2011): 18; Aleksandr V. Serzhantov, Aleksandr P. Martofliak "Characteristics of the main features of modern military conflicts," *Voennaia Mysl* (Military Thought), No. 5, (2011): 38-40; Evgenij O. Savchenko "Military Instruments and Realization Methods of the US Political Goals," *Voennaia Mysl* (Military Thought), No. 4, (2010): 8-9.

259 Thomas, *Recasting the Red Star*, 186-187.

Western and Soviet experiences and have created a theoretical basis for the further development of military capabilities related to engagement in hybrid wars with a prevailing non-conventional dimension.²⁶⁰ They have supporters in the Russian military elite, including the chief of the Russian General Staff, General Nikolay Makarov. He has recognized the necessity to improve armed forces capabilities in fighting asymmetric warfare in future wars where:

(f)orms and methods will include the use of non-standard asymmetric (indirect) actions which can accomplish objectives more economically than direct clashes. They also include the use of combining different uniformed services that are able to operate autonomously in isolated areas with no close fire support and the use of raids and maneuvers deep in the adversary's territory to seize and destroy critical facilities.²⁶¹

In addition, there are Russian scientists who are working in the field of information technologies. They are trying to provide the military with modern equipment of asymmetric armament, which would allow them to penetrate Western information systems as well as steal and develop new assets for Russia itself.²⁶² Strategically there is also a certain determination to create and apply asymmetric instruments that would destabilize situations in third world countries, states, and regions that do not want to fall under U.S. global governance and political discourse.²⁶³

Still, in attempts to create such capabilities equal to Western states, the biggest effort is dedicated to making criticisms and accusations against the United States and NATO. In this regard, Russian military theorists and academics have done more harm

260 Sergey G. Chekinov, Sergey A. Bogdanov "Providing Asymmetric Actions for Russia's Military Security," *Voennaia Mysl* (Military Thought), No. 3, (March, 2010): 15-17; See also Ivan N. Vorobev "One More Time About Military Futurology" *Voennaia Mysl* (Military Thought), No. 5, (May, 2008): 63-65.

261 N. E. Makarov "Kharakter Vooruzhennoy Borby Budushchego, Aktualnye Problemy Stroitelstva i Boevogo Primeneniya Vooruzhennykh Sil RF v Sovremennykh Usloviyakh (The Character of Future Armed Conflict, Actual Problems of the Development and Deployment of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation Today)," *Vestnik Akademii Voennykh Nauk* (Bulletin of the Academy of Military Science), No. 2, (2010): 19 quoted by Timothy Thomas in *Recasting the Red Star*, 195.

262 Thomas, *Recasting the Red Star*, 203.

263 Sergey Chekinov, Sergey Bogdanov "Impact of Indirect Actions on the Nature of the Contemporary War" *Voennaia Mysl* (Military Thought), No. 6, (June, 2011): 3-4; Aleksandr V. Serzhantov, Aleksandr P. Martofliak "Characteristics of the main features of modern military conflicts," *Voennaia Mysl* (Military Thought), No. 5, (2011); Vyacheslav V. Kruglov "Secret Threats to National Security of Russian Federation and Methods of their Exposure," *Voennaia Mysl* (Military Thought), No. 3, (March, 2010): 3-5.

than good to their own capability development. Concentrating on propaganda and making accusations against their former Cold War adversaries does not help in developing Russian hybrid warfare doctrine. Yet, this does not mean that Russia does not have any real capabilities in fighting hybrid wars. The war with Georgia in 2008 showed that Russia uses more than just conventional power in order to achieve its political goals.

B. CASE STUDY OF HYBRID CONFLICT: RUSSIA-GEORGIA WAR IN 2008

In addition to an analysis on the Russian or Georgian military performance in the five-day war in 2008, one must also analyze the non-conventional dimension of this war, which was applied in combination with military means. Several analysts and experts have proven that the military actions of the Georgian armed forces, and the subsequent invasion of Russian armed forces into Georgia, represented the final phase of a large operation that consisted of the political elements, propaganda, subversion, provocation, cyber-attacks, and economic pressure on Georgia and its pro-Western Saakashvili regime. Ronald Asmus defined the Russian-Georgian relationship as a years-long covert Cold War.²⁶⁴

Here one, of course, might question the assumptions of the Georgian President when he authorized a military attack on Tskhinvali, the capital of the separatist South Ossetia, and whether or not it was the most appropriate solution. Another question, however, focuses on the intents of Russia with regard to Georgia and the ways and means used by Russia in order to achieve its political objectives. This is the platform on which the question regarding Russia's capabilities in projecting hybrid threats and fighting hybrid wars must be asked. In this regard, one must analyze Russia's actions on political and diplomatic levels as well as steps taken to fight successful information warfare.

1. Political Confrontation

The Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003 established a pro-Western regime with its leader *Mikhail Saakashvili*. His strong dedication to move Georgia away from Russia

²⁶⁴ Ronald Asmus *A Little War that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West*, (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 54.

through NATO and EU membership drove Putin and his regime into furious anger.²⁶⁵ Russia openly warned Georgia many times about the consequences if it were to continue its political “escape.”²⁶⁶ In this regard, Russia did not hide its goals to keep control in the Caucasus. Georgia understood Russian intents and, in the end, decided to act with the use of force whereas “no Western diplomatic establishment nor NATO believed that a repeat of 1956 or 1968 was possible.”²⁶⁷

Until the war in 2008, Georgia did not believe Russia’s provocations despite a variety of covert and non-conventional actions exercised by Russia. These actions included political and psychological pressure on the Saakashvili government (executed by Kremlin ministers and Putin himself), economic embargos (the most known was on wine and mineral water), attempts to infiltrate pro-Kremlin politicians in the Georgian government, espionage, terrorizing civilians by irregular shelling on the border of Georgia and South Ossetian region, and public attacks on Georgian officials in international meetings and the media.²⁶⁸ None of them were enough to provoke a larger conflict. As a result, Russia used the “separatist card” as the most sensible and weakest part of Georgia and biggest threat to its future aspirations.²⁶⁹ Russia had to find a reason for a decisive action in order to set a trap for Georgia in a way that the West would not manage to prevent. This reason was provided by two international events.

The first event was Western support of Kosovo through *de iure* recognition. With this move, the Western world openly stood against Russian supported Serbia as well as

265 Ronald Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World*, 67; See also Dmitri Trenin *Post-imperium: a Eurasian Story*, (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2011), 95; Pavel Felgenhauer “After August 7: The Escalation of the Russia-Georgia War” in Svante E. Cornell’s and S. Frederick Starr’s (ed.) *The Guns of August 2008: Russia’s War in Georgia* (New York, M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2009).

266 Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World*, 1–2.

267 David J. Smith “The Saakashvili Administration’s Reaction to Russian Policies Before the 2008 War,” 122 in Svante E. Cornell’s and S. Frederick Starr’s (ed.) *The Guns of August 2008: Russia’s War in Georgia* (New York, M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2009).

268 Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World*, 72; See also Andrei Illarionov “The Russian Leadership’s Preparation for War, 1999-2008,” 56–70 in Svante E. Cornell’s and S. Frederick Starr’s (ed.) *The Guns of August 2008: Russia’s War in Georgia*.

269 Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World*, 72.

fired up Russia's own fears about a continued Western intervention, especially from the United States in its zone of interest.²⁷⁰

In 2006, Putin made a remark that "if somebody assumes that Kosovo can achieve full state independence, then why should we refuse it to the Abkhaz and South Ossetians?"²⁷¹ After the recognition of Kosovo, Russia openly told Georgia that "they would now pay the price for Western policy on Kosovo."²⁷² Considering these open signals, one may assume that Western leaders did not fully assess the seriousness of the situation and the level of Russian motivation to close Georgia's window of opportunity in getting away from the Russian zone of influence through a pro-Western course.

A second event subsequently strengthened Russian positions. The NATO Bucharest Summit in 2008 did not grant Georgia or the Ukraine with NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP), thus sending clear signals to Russia that NATO states would not get involved if any further actions were taken.²⁷³ The summit finished with a compromised decision promising that Georgia and the Ukraine would become NATO members, which Russia translated as a step in its own favor and continued to increase pressure on Georgia.²⁷⁴ After the NATO Bucharest Summit Putin, as well as his Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, came out with the announcement that Russia would do anything to prevent Georgian and Ukrainian accession to NATO as well as provide "practical assistance" to both South Ossetia and Abkhazia.²⁷⁵

Despite Georgian attempts in finding a solution to the increasing tensions of having an open war with Russia, they failed because of Georgia's inability to refrain from responding to Russian provocations and Russia's dedication to return Georgia to their zone of influence by any means. Russia wanted to show the Western world that it would

270 Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World*, 88; See also Trenin, *Post-imperium: a Eurasian Story*, 31–34.

271 Andrei Illarionov, "The Russian Leadership's Preparation for War," 61.

272 Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World*, 89.

273 *Ibid.*, 89.

274 David J. Smith "The Saakashvili Administration's Reaction to Russian Policies Before the 2008 War," Svante E. Cornell's and S. Frederick Starr's (ed.) *The Guns of August 2008: Russia's War in Georgia*, 126.

275 Illarionov, "The Russian Leadership's Preparation for War," 68; Smith, "The Saakashvili Administration's Reaction to Russian Policies Before the 2008 War," 127.

decide what would happen with its neighboring regions. The West, at the same time, did not believe Russia's intentions, and thus were not ready for this "Russian Gambit," nor did they take "seriously enough small war in the periphery of Europe."²⁷⁶ There was no back-up plan for Georgian defense after recognizing Kosovo's independence; rather, there was the widely interpretable outcome of the NATO Bucharest Summit 2008, and the total Western misunderstanding of Georgian and Russian natures and their interaction within the framework of conflict.²⁷⁷

It is hard, however, to declare that all these political and diplomatic actions could be characterized as patterns of the hybrid conflict. Russia executed strategic deception and diplomatic gambits against Georgia; one may find similar actions in the world's history before both world wars and in a number of smaller conflicts during the Cold War. These actions have not excluded the use of hybrid warfare tactics but rather strengthened and established an appropriate environment for later military intervention. In this regard one must look at the information war that was executed before the start of military confrontation and during the conflict itself.

2. Information War

The main point of gravity for Russia in 2008 was that the Georgian war was an information war being executed by both sides. The information war had started long before the military confrontation began and it is still ongoing after the end of the military conflict.²⁷⁸ Moscow successfully managed to use all its available sources that the official government had created in the years of Putin's governance. These included a variety of state run media services from news agencies, televisions, radios and Internet sources to formally independent representatives of social media.²⁷⁹ To make the task easier, Moscow identified three key themes that media had to develop in war against Georgia:

²⁷⁶ Stephen Blank "From Neglect to Duress: The West and the Georgian Crisis Before the 2008 War," 121 in Svante E. Cornell's and S. Frederick Starr's (ed.) *The Guns of August 2008: Russia's War in Georgia* (New York, M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2009).

²⁷⁷ Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World*, 222.

²⁷⁸ Paul A. Goble "Defining Victory and Defeat: The Information War Between Russia and Georgia," 181-182.

²⁷⁹ Thomas, *Recasting the Red Star*, 240.

The first theme was to send the message that Georgian President Saakashvili in particular and Georgia more generally was the aggressor; second, that Moscow had been left with no choice but to intervene in the defense of its citizens and their human rights and thus deserved unqualified support of the international community; and third, that the United States and the West had no basis for criticizing Russian actions because of NATO's earlier actions in Kosovo and elsewhere.²⁸⁰

Similar preparations were also realized on Georgian side. However, they were not as massive in numbers as the resources from the Russian side.²⁸¹ Russia was definitely preparing for an information war and a direct propaganda campaign against Georgia before the war. There were prepositioned journalists in Tskhinvali before the start of shelling, fabricated media footages and war pictures, and the constant appearance of Russian political leaders and senior military officers bringing the narrative on air on a regular basis.²⁸² Without repeating other works describing the Russian-Georgian information war in all its details, it must be considered that both sides achieved some victory in this dimension of war. If one looks at Russian side, its information operations succeeded in the fact that Russia received justifications for its actions and subsequent condemnations of Georgian actions from such Western (and also NATO members) countries such as Germany.²⁸³ Even after changing the tone of their criticism, these countries partially fell into the trap of Russian propaganda machinery and the strategic game Moscow was playing.

Georgia's only success in the information war was its quick reaction and capability to assess the situation in the public space. This resulted in regular and intensive communication through Western media, making the Georgian president the central provider of the message. Additionally, Georgia closed information channels coming from Russia and those involved in producing propaganda news. This may be speculation but Georgia's suffering and the amount of territory lost from the Russian invasion would have been bigger if there had not been live media coverage forcing Russia to behave

280 Goble, "Defining Victory and Defeat: The Information War Between Russia and Georgia," 183.

281 Ibid., 183.

282 Ibid., 186–187; See also Timothy Thomas *Recasting the Red Star*, 240–244.

283 Goble, "Defining Victory and Defeat: The Information War Between Russia and Georgia," 185.

more properly in order to not lose its strategic objectives by showing itself as the pacifier not the aggressor. Aside from the Russian military performance and its weaknesses, the world must learn the lesson that Russia was well prepared for fighting a modern war and in achieving its political goals with the assistance of media.

Another aspect that showed Russia's effectiveness in the contemporary conflict was the use of cyberspace in order to decapitate Georgian electronic media, governmental communication channels, critical infrastructure objects, and the private sector such as banking services. Cyber-attacks started before the military phase and stopped at the time of the declared ceasefire on August 12.²⁸⁴ The cyber-attacks on Georgia in 2008, as well as in Estonia in 2007, showed Russia's attempts to create the powerful non-conventional capability to fight in cyberspace.²⁸⁵ Moreover, cyber operations against Georgia were integrated in the general plan and were realized according to the previously established political and military objectives.²⁸⁶ As such, it would be shortsighted to look at Russia's military performance only from the criticism addressed to its military performance. The invasion of Georgia was the first real operation that implemented conventional and non-conventional instruments in the combined battle space. While it was not outstanding nor did it provide a decisive victory, the war with Georgia showed Russia to be a serious candidate in being capable to project hybrid threats and fight hybrid wars in the future.

3. Use of Criminalist Paramilitary Units

One more aspect proving Russia's attempts to influence Georgian side was use of irregular Chechen units including the notorious Vostock Battalion. For most of the Western World these units do not mean anything than other entities of the Russian Armed Forces located in the Caucasus region. For Caucasian populations, the Vostock Battalion is the worst nightmare of modern type mercenaries who were used to bring "the destruction against economic targets and Georgian property that can only be classified as

284 Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World*, 167.

285 Ibid.

286 Ibid., 168.

terrorism, targeted killings and looting.”²⁸⁷ The use of covert criminalists who have been legalized by the state-actor to exercise war crimes against civilian populations is nothing more than another edge of the hybrid warfare. Finally, in 2012 Russia’s president Putin recognized that Russia had invasion plan for Georgia and one of the tasks was to train and prepare South Ossetian militia units for the indirect warfare with Georgia because they were not able to conduct warfare as conventional units but were effective enough to serve as auxiliary forces for whatever purpose Russian command would task them.²⁸⁸

C. CONCLUSIONS

Russia has enough capabilities to engage in hybrid wars as well as project hybrid threats against small neighboring states like Georgia and Estonia. During Putin’s regime, the intelligence and military special operations apparatus had not lost its grit in executing information operations, espionage, subversion, sabotage and other actions that are related to the penetration of a potential adversary’s sovereignty, political stability and the socio-ethnic conditions of its society. There is full support from the political level and the development of sophisticated non-conventional instruments has been officially declared as a priority in number of strategic level documents.

Furthermore, political and military practitioners receive full support and huge involvement from the academic field. Russia has always proved that it possesses strong theoretical potential both from military and civilian theorists. Currently, the biggest investment has been in making detailed studies of Western experiences and lessons learned from the United States and NATO allies. Yet, the academic field suffers from ideological impact thus the focus is more on subjective criticism about Western political motivations and the global reach of American foreign policy. This makes academic input obsolete and not applicable to the real-life threat environment.

287 Frank Hoffman “The Hybrid Character of Modern Conflict,” in Paul Brister, William H. Natter, III, Robert R. Tomes ed. *Hybrid Warfare and Transnational Threats: Perspectives for and Era of Persistent Conflict*, (New York: Council for Emerging National Security Affairs, 2011), 45.

288 Pavel Felgenhauer “Putin Confirms the Invasion of Georgia Was Preplanned,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* Volume 9:152 in http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=39746&cHash=177fd31d57370a96ac7da644dc280014 accessed at 08/19/2012

Meanwhile, one may doubt Russian capabilities to defend itself from hybrid threats posed to its own security. Of course, another question is about the motivations and necessity of the states to engage in a cyber-conflict with a nuclear superpower that has weakened, albeit still large, conventional, political, and economic power. However, Russia has already felt Chinese interest in stealing Russian industrial secrets and the Chinese capacity in reverse engineering. In this regard, the limitations of the military industrial complex and the lack of skilled human resources may have a serious impact on Russia's capabilities in future.

Nevertheless, Russia has proven that it will use its window of opportunity and create the fog of war by executing hybrid warfare against states in the region in order to satisfy its imperial ambitions and retain the status of a global, or at least regional, super power thus changing the international order. NATO should take its lessons learned from that and understand what it can and what it cannot do in order to manage and if possible neutralize such hybrid-threat actors like Russia and other states or non-state actors that possess a significant interest into weakening North-Atlantic community.

VI. NATO IN THE POST-9/11 WORLD: WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

Shortly before the NATO Chicago Summit in 2012, Jamie Shea cited Winston Churchill, who once said “Gentlemen, we have run out of money. So now we must think.”²⁸⁹ Later in the same article Shea added:

NATO will have to track potential threats at a much earlier stage and achieve a more sophisticated understanding of how hybrid threats are formed from the interconnection of trends such as terrorism, narcotics, or organized crime.²⁹⁰

Like Jamie Shea, many other experts from NATO member states or non-NATO countries have recognized that war in the twenty-first century will be different than it was decades ago. In this kind of war the battle of narrative will be more important than battle of a kinetic nature itself.²⁹¹ Nevertheless, NATO has experienced changes in warfare since its inception and rise of new threats is nothing new to the Alliance. Moreover, NATO will be involved in more out-of-area operations after withdrawing its forces from Afghanistan, including responses to state and non-state actors.²⁹² NATO has responsibility for these crises because of the potential that they will spread into allied territory either directly as armed conflict or in such spillover effects as mass influxes of refugees or economic pressures.

These are just some of external challenges NATO is facing in a post-9/11 world of security. In addition, internal challenges for the Alliance are no less serious. First, the

289 Jamie Shea “Keeping NATO Relevant,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Policy Outlook*, (April 2012): 14.

290 *Ibid.*, 14.

291 Grier continues this thought arguing that every war or even single battle will require specific adaptation to circumstances that define the situation in which adversaries meet each other. “When conflict is intense, it will require one kind of “message”. When fighting for the peace, it will require another. In both cases, governments must be prepared to take the offensive or they will find themselves on the defensive. Extremists will use every opportunity to sow discord and discontent, to deceive their audiences, and to embarrass the West. A lie is as good as a truth if it achieves its objective. Extremists know that excessive violence is always reported — over and over and over — by the media. All they must do is create mayhem, and the media broadcasts high definition pictures of the aftermath with much speculation and commentary to the rest of the world.” In Samuel Grier *NATO and 21st Century War*, NATO Defense College, (Rome: Occasional Papers Series, October, 2007), 69.

292 Goldgeier, “The Future of NATO,” 6.

burden-shifting strategy is becoming more intensive and “bloody” due to an economic depression in most NATO member countries as well as the U.S. plans to reduce its defense expenditure and shifting its attention closer to the Middle East and South East Asia where challengers to the United States and the global commons are developing at a high operational tempo. Last but not least, NATO is an organization that is successful when it is able to actualize itself in major operations where all command structures are working and kept busy.²⁹³ After ending its major operations in Afghanistan, which have gone on for more than a decade, NATO services will still be required because of the unique capacity the Alliance possesses.

It is certainly true that in a post-9/11 world NATO allies have divergent views over the question of what should be considered as a threat to the Alliance and what should be the role of NATO in the following decades. Despite the promise the New Strategic Concept adopted in 2010, which was to satisfy expectations of all NATO members, in reality it is more than obvious that there is still divergence not only between both sides of the Atlantic but also within Europe. There are allies that still consider Russia as the main threat to their sovereignty (and the war with Georgia in 2008 was more than visible proof of that), while others like “France and Portugal did not wake up in the night fearing an insurgent Red Army.”²⁹⁴ There are allies that want to see NATO as a global player such as the United States, the United Kingdom and France and allies that are willing to see Alliance with less ambitions but being able to fulfill its current tasks and missions without putting a greater burden on allied members’ weakened economies.²⁹⁵

Finally, the burden-sharing/-shifting issue has been more than a hot topic among allies because of austerity within the Eurozone as well as the changes of the U.S. strategic direction towards Southeast Asia. The wars of last decade, the American contribution to

²⁹³ Ibid., 4.

²⁹⁴ James M. Goldgeier “The Future of NATO,” 6–7

²⁹⁵ Rebecca R. Moore “Partnership Goes Global: The Role “The Future of NATO,” of Nonmember, Non-European Union States in the Evolution of NATO,” 227-238, Bastian Giegerich “Budget Crunch: Implications for European Defence,” *Survival*, 54:4, (August-September, 2010): 87; Zbigniew Brzezinski “An Agenda for NATO: Toward a Global Security Web,” 1.

the NATO common budget and the recent NATO operations in Libya do not speak for the Alliance as being able to counter hybrid threats with the decreased American involvement whether of a financial or resource nature.²⁹⁶

A. NATO’S CURRENT “ARSENAL” AGAINST HYBRID THREATS

NATO is organization that has survived because of being in permanent adaptation process and being able to transform according to the threats it experiences. Moreover, NATO has several strategic level instruments like North Atlantic Treaty, strategic concepts that formulates tasks, defines threats and ways how to fight with them as well as legitimizes cooperation between NATO members and NATO partners already on the established and proven basis what might be disadvantage of the hybrid threat actor because it does not possess such cooperative structures nor it has legitimate basis for that. Furthermore, NATO has strategic institutions—strategic commands that are responsible for the implementation of the tasks described in the strategic concepts and defense of the values of the North Atlantic Treaty. The biggest challenge for these commands is to apply right instruments that are enough effective to prevent or manage hybrid threats.

Hybrid threat actors can easily threaten NATO’s security within the territory of the Alliance despite the fact that NATO troops are deployed outside its borders with the direct aim to prevent the spread of threats and violence within the North Atlantic territory. Therefore, more than ever NATO must have necessary arsenal of strategic instruments through which to manage the danger of the hybrid threats and deter the hybrid-threat actors to the extent that NATO’s member states and their populations do not experience repetition of “hybrid 9/11.” The relevant components include the norms of

²⁹⁶ “NATO’s Operation Unified Protector in Libya exposed, once again, entrenched asymmetries between the United States and all other allies, especially in the conduct of intelligence-driven air operations. Most of these deficiencies were already evident during NATO’s Allied Force air campaign over Kosovo in 1999.

The United States now covers 75 percent of NATO defense budgets even if that does not mean in practice that 75 percent of NATO is a single ally. Meanwhile, the great majority of allies today allocate much less than NATO’s benchmark 2 percent of gross domestic product to defense. Only five allies (18 percent of the overall total) meet this benchmark. Only eight allies today have a full-spectrum force. The others increasingly provide niche capabilities. Recent reductions in European defense spending risk making dependence on the United States even greater. Moreover, budget and force structure reductions are happening without sufficient transparency or coordination among allies, or consultation with NATO itself. Those reductions are not following the capability targets (formerly force goals) that had been accepted by nations as part of NATO’s defense planning process.” In Jamie Shea, “Keeping NATO Relevant,” 6

the North Atlantic Treaty, the NATO Strategic Concept, NATO Strategic Commands, with their military and civilian potential, and also NATO's partnership with a significant number of the most powerful states around the world.

1. North Atlantic Treaty

Considering its role in countering hybrid threats, the North Atlantic Treaty might be considered a more persuasive document with its legal background than the United Nations Charter or international humanitarian law. This bold argument is based on the recent experience of the United Nations being unable to solve the crisis situation in Syria or to follow the letter and spirit of international humanitarian law on the basis of growing ignorance from the non-democratic state actors.²⁹⁷ In this regard, the North Atlantic Treaty seems to be more effective when applied in real action than either of the above-mentioned documents. One should note that the consultation mechanism defined by Article 4 of the Washington Treaty has been shown to work much faster and more effectively. The recent request from Turkey to commit the North Atlantic Council to political consultations under auspices of Washington's Treaty Article 4 speaks to this point.²⁹⁸ Being aware of the very nature of a hybrid threat's quick reaction capabilities on the strategic level is among the most important virtues enabling the Alliance to project necessary force against potential hybrid-threat actors.

297 The latest proof for this argument is the failure of the United Nations Security Council to adopt resolution about stronger sanctions against Syria whose governing Assad's regime uses heavy armor and weapons in order to penetrate civilian opposition that basically is located in separate towns and villages. See in United Nations "Security Council Fails to Adopt Draft Resolution on Syria that Would Have Threatened Sanctions, Due to Negative Votes of China, Russian Federation," SC/10714 of 6810th Meeting, 19 July, 2012 accessed on 07/21/2012 <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2012/sc10714.doc.htm> See also Washington Post "Red Cross Labels the Syrian Conflict a Civil War," July 16, 2012 accessed on 07/21/2012 http://www.washingtonpost.com/red-cross-labels-the-syrian-conflict-a-civil-war/2012/07/16/gJQAucaJoW_video.html The New York Times "Syria Denies Attack on Civilians, in Crisis Seen as Civil War," July 15, 2012 accessed on 07/21/2012 <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/16/world/middleeast/syria-denies-use-of-heavy-weapons-in-deadly-village-fight.html> see also Kostis Geropoulos "NATO Calls for Enforced Solution in Syria After Russian UN Veto," *NEWEUROPE Online*, (July 21, 2012) accessed on 07/21/2012 <http://www.neurope.eu/article/nato-calls-enforced-solution-syria-after-russian-un-veto>

298 "NAC Statement on the Shooting Down of a Turkish Aircraft by Syria," Press Release (2012) 085 issued on 26 June, 2012, accessed on 07/21/2012 http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-628DECDC-0625B699/natolive/news_88652.htm?mode=pressrelease see also "The North Atlantic Treaty" Article IV, Washington D.C., 4 April, 1949 accessed on 07/21/2012 http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-64CD02A2-F878B0FB/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm?selectedLocale=en

On the other hand, the Washington Treaty exposes the weakness of the Alliance from deterring hybrid threats or even guaranteeing certain legality of being involved in hybrid conflict. Article 5 provides guarantees only against armed attacks as a common agreement for mutual assistance while none of the new threats (e.g. cyber-attacks, the disruption of energy resources, political sabotage or open endangerment of the global commons) can be a matter of interpretation under this article.²⁹⁹ Furthermore, the Washington Treaty may be a weak instrument in helping the Allies reconsider the acts of hybrid threat actors because of the non-kinetic nature of the threats applied or just because only a minor part of the member states has suffered from cyber-attacks, the disruption of energy supplies or political sabotage. Others may not consider these activities as part of a hybrid war but rather merely marginal issues of a sociopolitical or criminal nature that do not mean any threats toward NATO in general. Due to this, other instruments, along with the North Atlantic Treaty, should be examined.

2. NATO Strategic Concepts

NATO Strategic Concepts serve as roadmaps for the Alliance with a longer perspective. They define allied policies, security interests, and set the stage for collective defense actions to be taken in the long-term. NATO Heads of State and governments the New Strategic Concept of November 19, 2010, which must be considered as the most appropriate document for dealing with dangers related to hybrid threat exposure and the possible emergence of hybrid conflict. Before the adoption of the New Strategic Concept Karl-Heinz Kamp noted that:

The new strategy should not be an intellectual “Maginot Line” that only codifies NATO’s *acquis communautaire*. Instead, it must fully reflect the broadest possible range of political–military contingencies to avoid strategic surprises.

NATO’s new strategy must contribute to winning the battle of narratives. It must serve as a public rallying point to gather support, particularly for

²⁹⁹ Karl-Heinz Camp “Towards a New Strategy for NATO,” *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 51:4, (August-September, 2009): 23–24.

the military dimension of security, and be seen as a strategic communications tool vis-à-vis an increasingly critical public.³⁰⁰

In response to these expectations, the New Strategic Concept confirms NATO's commitment to defend allies and their populations from a variety of threats far more than only military aggression or nuclear strike.³⁰¹ The New Concept also recognizes and pays attention to modern threats that have arisen in the last decade such as cyber threats, the development of technologies that could be applied to violate populations and the infrastructure of NATO member states, and a growing interdependency on communication lines, transport and transit routes providing allies with information and resources necessary for appropriate functioning of states and governments.³⁰² Subsequently, the New Strategic Concept notes NATO's commitment to investing in common cyber defense capabilities as well as invites an increase in contributions related to the protection of the critical infrastructure of energy supplies.³⁰³ Yet certain critiques must be addressed.

First of all, the New Strategic Concept has not mentioned hybrid threats per se or provided:

an insight into the magnitude, likelihood, nature, or nuances of the emerging security challenges nor addressed the possibility of having to face some or many of these challenges simultaneously, or the threat posed by the convergence of these separate many elements, which when braided together constitute a threat of a different nature.³⁰⁴

300 Camp, "Towards a New Strategy for NATO," *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 22.

301 The Article 4 of the New Strategic Concept defines three essential core tasks – collective defense, crisis management, and cooperative security. All of these dimensions to certain extent are responsible for defending allies from hybrid threats that could be applied in combined modes and requesting political action and force projection through all of these dimensions in "Active Engagement, Modern Defense: Strategic Concept for the Defense and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization adopted by Heads of State and Government in Lisbon," 19 November, 2010.

302 NATO New Strategic Concept, Articles 10–15.

303 Ibid., Article 19.

304 Aaronson et al., "NATO Countering the Hybrid Threat," 111.

In response to this argument one should take into account that the New Strategic Concept is not a solution itself but should be treated more as a list of strategic directions for Allied civilian and military institutions responsible for the implementation of common policies.

Second, the unanswered question is whether the reader and user of the Strategic Concept, from the tactical-level operator up to the political-level decision maker, understands that the modern threats described in the Concept may emerge in combinations where a single response to a cyber-attack or the diversification of natural gas supplies does not mean that hybrid threat actor has been deterred and that the “war is over.” The Concept does not answer how to deal with such situations, particularly if they are created from state actors that NATO considers as partners both politically and formally. By no means should NATO’s greatest concentration remain the same, which is the deterrence of possible conventional or nuclear threats. Hybrid threats, however, can make this task harder because of being applied in earlier phases of conflict before direct military or nuclear threat and the NATO Strategic Concept does not provide a clear answer in how to deal with such situations.

3. NATO Strategic Commands and Institutions

NATO represents a unique organization possessing civilian and military institutions that have dealt with different types of threats for more than sixty years. Along with the NATO Main Headquarters, Allied Command Operations (ACO) and Allied Command Transformation (ACT) there are also fifteen centers of excellence and institutions responsible for intelligence fusion and computer incident response.³⁰⁵ All of these institutions contribute in order to provide a better allied response to contemporary

³⁰⁵ NATO official website accessed on 07/21/2012 <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-BA8A453D-B28027D3/natolive/structure.htm> Considering NATO’s success in sharing intelligence information for better political and strategic action Jamie Shea has remarked that “Recent reforms in NATO, such as the establishment of an intelligence unit to fuse civilian and military inputs and of a strategic analysis capability, have given the allies the necessary crisis-prevention tools. But the political will must exist on both sides of the Atlantic to use them, and to share intelligence more regularly at both the strategic and tactical levels. It is easy to put the word “prevention” in summit communiqués; but NATO needs to think harder about what it means in practice and what levers the Alliance has to influence events around it, short of the default option of deploying military forces.” in Jamie Shea “Keeping NATO Relevant,” 8.

threats including those of a hybrid nature. Yet, almost all of these institutions are busy with major ongoing NATO operations in Afghanistan as well as other issues on NATO's daily agenda such as missile defense, cooperation with Russia, and piracy countermeasures in the Gulf of Aden. Theoretically, all of the above-mentioned agendas are related to the hybrid war issue. However, at the end of the day there is only some activity from the side of Allied Command Transformations in dealing directly with the hybrid threat issue.³⁰⁶ In the analysis devoted to hybrid threat problems, the NATO ACT concludes, "hybrid threat is more than just the sum total of its constituent parts ... Combating such threats does not require new capabilities as much as new partners, new processes and, above all, new thinking."³⁰⁷ In order to increase NATO's capabilities to counter hybrid threats, ACT suggests starting closer cooperation between NATO and civilian and private organizations that possess specific knowledge and resources, which might be helpful for a common purpose in acting against hybrid threat actors.³⁰⁸ But before reaching and outsourcing specific intellectual and technical resources, NATO needs to be sure that the Alliance has used all of the options it owns to a maximum. It is also important to acknowledge that NATO "experts, diplomats, military and defense planners have understanding about the new threat environment, there is increased level of intelligence sharing among the allies that subsequently results in more qualitative policy analysis, which provides that NATO summits and ministerial meetings are no longer blessing pre-cooked decisions, but serves as an opportunity for the kind of open dialogue which alone can correctly identify the challenges that NATO faces and therefore generate the troops, money, and political will essential for success."³⁰⁹

306 NATO Allied Command Transformation (ACT) has addressed the issue on hybrid threats in couple publications. Among them there is ACT's input in preparation of the NATO New Strategic Concept as well as more detailed representation on the issue has been done in ACO/ ACT NATO Capstone Concept representing military contribution to countering hybrid threats in "Multiple Futures Project: Navigating Towards 2030," NATO Allied Command Transformation, April, 2009, NATO Supreme Allied Commander, Europe and Supreme Allied Commander Transformation " Bi-SC Input to a New NATO Capstone Concept for the Military Contribution to Countering Hybrid Threats," 1500/CPPCAM/FCR/10-270038, 5000 FXX 0100/TT -6051/ Ser: NU0040, August 25, 2010.

307 Michael Miklaucic "NATO Countering the Hybrid Threat," *NATO Allied Command Transformation*, (23 September, 2011) accessed on 07/21/2012 <http://www.act.nato.int/top-headlines/nato-countering-the-hybrid-threat>

308 Ibid.

309 Jamie Shea "A NATO for the 21st Century: Toward a New Strategic Concept," *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, 31:2, (Summer 2007).

4. NATO Partnerships

NATO's partnership with non-NATO member states and with other international, regional, and non-governmental organizations is one more solution in helping to protect the Allies from hybrid threats. NATO already has experience cooperating with the United Nations, as does its subordinated agencies in building common civil-military capabilities in cooperating with counter-narcotics operations, crime prevention, and security building in the post-conflict zones as well as sharing intelligence information and special technical resources.³¹⁰ Similarly NATO has common interests in providing security in, for example, China, Brazil and India where common action in creating a much safer cyberspace would be a win-win situation for all involved parties.³¹¹ Another example is the NATO-led operation in Afghanistan where, under the flag of the Alliance, there are twenty-two non-NATO states involved, including Australia, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea and Japan.³¹²

The involvement of partners in NATO operations shows an understanding that there is greater value in supporting a global NATO than in dealing with worldwide threats without the Alliance. Yet NATO still does not have iron-clad assurances that its partner nations will follow Alliance policies or support its attempts in countering terrorism and violence in cyberspace. Thus, it is a crucial task for NATO to preserve its partnerships and redirect them into new tasks and directions after the war in Afghanistan is over.³¹³

Crisis management, including preventive actions against possible terror acts, cyber defense, the elimination of organized crime, piracy and ensuring the non-proliferation treaty of weapons of mass destruction are some areas in which NATO has

310 Jamie Shea "Keeping NATO Relevant," 2.

311 Ibid., 12.

312 Rebecca R. Moore "Partnership Goes Global: The Role of Nonmember, Non-European Union States in the Evolution of NATO" in Gulnur Aybet and Rebecca R. More eds. *NATO in Search of a Vision* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2010), 224-227; Jamie Shea "Keeping NATO Relevant," 2; James M. Goldgeier "The Future of NATO," 4; See also "NATO Relations with Partners Across the Globe" at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49188.htm accessed on 07/23/2012

313 Jamie Shea "Keeping NATO Relevant," 16.

long-term goals that could be attained more easily with global partners in all geographical directions. One need not doubt that cooperative action in such areas would also be a critical factor in eliminating hybrid threats.

B. RETHINKING THE FOUNDATIONS: A NEW MODEL OF DETERRENCE?

Amid such promising elements, one might still ask whether NATO has the right model of deterrence to help the Alliance to deter potential adversaries from hostile acts against the members of the Alliance. On the one hand, deterrence is fundamental to NATO's strategic position and a well-honed practice since the age of the Cold War. On the other hand, such a basic function also shows the extent to which NATO's thinking has—and has not—changed to accommodate new realities, including hybrid threats.

Without question, the model of “punishment deterrence” that was effective during the Cold War and threatened retaliatory nuclear strike against the Soviet Union if that wanted to attack the United States or any other NATO member country is not working in the twenty-first century. First, there is no more bipolar world order (where each side was absolutely certain whom to deter and how to deter them) that created certain rules of the game. In this model of deterrence both the United States and the Soviet Union knew what they could expect from each other. Today, no such certainties exist, meaning deterrence must be more nuanced and flexible.

Second, organizations like Al Qaeda or states like Iran have showed that the threat of punishment does not stop their attempts to achieve their political and military goals, particularly the acquisition of nuclear weapons. (The credible possibility of a nuclear Iran, for example, acts as its own deterrent to certain kinds of response.) Third, NATO can neither politically nor legally respond with a nuclear strike every time the threats are other than nuclear.³¹⁴ Punishment is not the answer how to deter hybrid-threat actor from

³¹⁴ Karl Heinz-Kamp “NATO and 21st Century Deterrence” in Karl-Heinz Kamp and David S. Yost Ed. *NATO and 21st Century Deterrence* (Rome: NATO Defense College, NDC Forum Paper No. 8, 2009), 6–10.

attacking NATO, especially, when one does that anonymously in cyberspace or using economic or political propaganda methods. In this regard experts talk about the concept of the tailored deterrence which

rejects the idea of “one size fits all” preparations. It calls for avoiding self-centered mirror-imaging and the projection of one’s own values and priorities onto others. If “tailored deterrence” is feasible, its proponents say, it will be founded on detailed knowledge of particular adversaries and their decision-making patterns and priorities, not on *a priori* assumptions about the functioning of deterrence derived from Cold War experiences.³¹⁵

This model of deterrence requires more work from NATO defense planners because they are forced to analyze not only the military capabilities of their potential challengers but also their political, economical, cultural and social weaknesses in order to use them for better deterrence policy.

It has been also recognized in the NATO Capstone Concept for the Military Contribution to Countering Hybrid Threats that “hybrid threats will seek to exploit gaps in both the broader security environment and within NATO’s security policy across the entire spectrum of conflict,” thus requiring a better understanding of the cultural and systemic environment in which the hybrid-threat actor lives as well as more agile NATO’s action through the lens of the comprehensive approach.³¹⁶ From this perspective, NATO seems all set to counter hybrid threats—the Strategic Concept considers a constellation of different types of threats, from military and nuclear to economic, and threats projected by failed states and in cyberspace.³¹⁷ There is a

315 David S. Yost “NATO and Tailored Deterrence: Surveying the Challenges” in Karl-Heinz Kamp and David S. Yost Ed. *NATO and 21st Century Deterrence* (Rome: NATO Defense College, NDC Forum Paper No. 8, 2009), 14.

316 NATO Supreme Allied Commander, Europe and Supreme Allied Commander Transformation “Bi-SC Input to a New NATO Capstone Concept for the Military Contribution to Countering Hybrid Threats,” 1500/CPCCAM/FCR/10-270038, 5000 FXX 0100/TT -6051/ Ser: NU0040, August 25, 2010, 4–5.

317 “Active Engagement, Modern Defense: Strategic Concept for the Defense and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Adopted by Heads of State and Government in Lisbon,” http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68580.htm accessed on 08/12/2012

recognition on the operational level that, as a matter of fact, hybrid threats are real and they might be exposed in different domains, not only in the military realm.³¹⁸

The issue remains that most of NATO's means and measures can be introduced in practice only when real crisis occurs similar to terrorist attacks against the United States or cyber-attacks against Estonia that makes NATO neither proficient at preventing hybrid threats nor effective in managing these threats. To hedge against a catastrophic event, then, it is most important that NATO designs the right model of deterrence that will be effective enough to deter the possible hybrid threat actor not through fear of punishment but because NATO can reach hybrid adversaries in dimensions other than conventional or nuclear responses. Once NATO proves that violation of its space assets, attacks on cyberspace, political sabotage, propaganda actions or sanctions of economic nature against its members will be deterred by imposing similar threats to the crucial functions and elements important for the existence of hybrid threat actor itself, the danger of hybrid threats might be decreased to the level that will not expose lethal threats to NATO populations. NATO has all prerequisites to achieve that level. It should only find the right balance among its ways and means in order to achieve the desired ends—the adaptation to contemporary threats.

C. WHEN PUSH COMES TO HYBRID SHOVE

Ready or not, the fact is that NATO is already in hybrid conflict with those actors that expose hybrid threats against the Alliance directly or indirectly and it does not have full operational capability to engage in such type of conflict for different reasons. First of all, NATO has already experienced violence in the cyberspace, most spectacularly against its member state Estonia in 2007. Here NATO's capabilities are limited due to the fact that there is not credible and effective international legal regime that could create normative environment similar to non-proliferation treaties created to restrict the use and spread of weapons of mass destruction. The current international norms that regulate questions about collective security, rights for self-defense, *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*

³¹⁸ NATO Supreme Allied Commander, Europe and Supreme Allied Commander Transformation “ Bi-SC Input to a New NATO Capstone Concept for the Military Contribution to Countering Hybrid Threats,” 1500/CPPCAM/FCR/10-270038, 5000 FXX 0100/TT -6051/ Ser: NU0040, August 25, 2010, 2.

are obsolete because they have been created in order to regulate kinetic conflicts not cyber space, which was just science fiction at the time when documents such as the Geneva Conventions or the UN Charter were created. NATO is forced to seek its own ways to prevent cyber threats, notably in the New Strategic Concept. Still, due to the fact that prevention of cyber threats requires combined response from political, diplomatic, and military authorities as well the appropriate technological backup, NATO must identify those situations where cyber space violence against a member state's civilian and military institutions might be considered an Article 5 situation and when that is minor issue and when that might be a part of larger action—hybrid conflict.

Second, there is hybrid threat actor right in front of NATO that uses wide range of assets to increase its political power positions. Russia, though formally a NATO partner, has proved that its political, military, and academic authorities are seeking ways to restore the country its former status of global superpower. This agenda includes the use of direct and indirect violence that undermines NATO presence and defense credibility in the neighboring regions of the Russian Federation. The war with Georgia in 2008 was first of all information war, a variety of sophisticated provocations and cyber-attacks until final phase of conventional invasion into the territory of Georgia. Technically speaking, this case does not represent direct attack against NATO, as Georgia has not acceded to membership in the Alliance. But it was close enough to demonstrate the need for NATO to formulate a response to such a threat constellation, especially projected against its weaker members that have common borderline with Russia.

Even if a hybrid threat never materializes as a full-on Article 5 crisis, the unresolved question of the Alliance's ability to respond weighs heavily on NATO's credibility and necessity, especially in times of economic hardship. According to David Yost:

Collective defense means maintaining the Alliance's political cohesion and military capabilities to deter cohesion and aggression and, if necessary, to conduct military operations to restore security and integrity of the territory protected by the Alliance's commitments.³¹⁹

In an era of hybrid threats and continuing internal conflicts over burden sharing among the allies, it will be challenging enough for NATO leaders to prove that the Alliance is still capable of ensuring collective defense effectively with its existing capabilities.

D. CONCLUSIONS

Despite this pessimism showing weaknesses and restrictions of NATO to defend from hybrid threats and engage in hybrid conflicts, this thesis has proved that hybrid threats do not toll the Alliance's funeral bell. First of all, through whole its existence NATO has survived only because it has been able to adapt and transform its policies and capabilities accordingly to the threats exposed to it. Moreover, NATO has been so successful in its transformation that its former main adversary—the Soviet Union—no longer exists. Meantime, NATO persists, and no one argues the role and importance of the Alliance in the global, regional or security architecture.

Additionally, NATO possesses a variety of strategic tools that have endured the test of time and proved to be effective for defense of allies. There is North Atlantic Treaty whose spirit and letter in some cases are much stronger than other international norms. No matter what kind of threats NATO member states face, they still have their rights for consultations under auspices of Article 4. Furthermore, despite their blur nature hybrid threats might be a subject of Article 5 conditions thus giving authority for NATO to respond against them in robust manner of visible force demonstration.

Third, NATO adapts its capabilities through strategic concepts that subsequently give tasks and authorize NATO strategic commands for further action. The New Strategic

³¹⁹ David S. Yost *NATO Transformed: The Alliance's New Roles in International Security*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), 269.

Concept recognizes the threat constellation that contributes to hybrid threat concept thus paving the basis for further transformation of the Alliance to face and triumph over contemporary challenges.

Fourth, NATO has global partners like Australia, Japan or New Zealand that share common democratic values of the NATO member states supporting NATO for decades both politically, militarily and through crisis management operations. This cooperation narrows the space for hybrid threat actors to operate and manages to provide security guarantees of the Alliance far beyond its territories.

Finally, NATO still has potential to transform its policies and capabilities in order to create new model of deterrence that would work in the same manner as Sun Tzu philosophy and hybrid threats. In other words, NATO has enough capacities to design and demonstrate a “tailored deterrence” against potential hybrid adversaries, thus sending the message that beyond direct conventional confrontation, Alliance is able and ready to use other ways and means in order to prevent threats exposed to its territory and populations.

Hybrid threats surely do not represent the last new threat or transformational impulse that NATO will face in upcoming decades. They might, however, herald the tailoring phase between the classic ways of war fighting and a brand new approach of waging wars and projecting threats. NATO has recognized the issue and its historic capacity to adapt and transform provides the answer for how to prevent other wars, including a “hybrid 9/11,” leaving any potential adversary without a chance to undermine security of the North Atlantic community.

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