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FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Political Studies

Department of Security Studies

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**The American Hybrid War? Operation Enduring Freedom
through the Hybrid Warfare Lenses**

Master's thesis

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Study programme: Security Studies

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Year of the defence: 2021

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on

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References

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Abstract

This diploma thesis delves into the possibility of a Western democratic state waging hybrid warfare. The hybrid warfare has been throughout its existence almost exclusively attributed to undemocratic regimes, which often utilized it in an aggressive fashion. In order to challenge this notion, this thesis seeks to reinterpret the conduct of the USA during the opening stages of the Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan 2001, through the lenses of hybrid warfare. Since hybrid warfare is rather wide, often poorly defined term, the author chose to conceptualize a well-known description of Russian hybrid warfare, created by András Rácz in 2015, through which the studied case is then reinterpreted. The possibility of the Western democratic state waging hybrid warfare is, as far as existing research goes, completely unexplored, hence this thesis is delving into a completely new research area. This thesis also ponders on how this realization of Western ability to wage hybrid war can influence our outlook on the phenomenon itself. With this thesis, the author seeks to offer a new, factual outlook on hybrid warfare, unhindered by biases and emotional undertone which sadly mires many contributions to the academic debate on the topic. This new perspective on hybrid warfare, in authors personal opinion, can greatly contribute to our objective understanding of the phenomenon.

Abstrakt

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá schopností západních demokratických států vést hybridní válku. Hybridní válka byla po celou dobu své existence téměř exklusivně připisována nedemokratickým režimům, které jejich metod používají často velmi agresivně. Ve snaze zpochybnit toto přesvědčení, tato práce reinterpretuje počínání Spojených států amerických během počáteční fáze Operace Trvalá svoboda¹ v Afghánistánu roku 2001, „očima“ hybridní války. Vzhledem k tomu, že pojem hybridní válka je velmi široký a často špatně definovatelný, se autor této práce rozhodl konceptualizovat dobře známý popis ruské hybridní války, vytvořený Andrássem Ráczem v roce 2015, skrze který bude zkoumaný případ reinterpretovat. Schopnost západních demokratických států vést hybridní válku je, co se týče dostupné literatury, zcela neprozkoumaná, tato práce se tedy zabývá naprosto novým tématem. Tato práce se také zamýšlí nad tím, jak může zjištění o schopnosti západních států vést hybridní válku ovlivnit naše chápání tohoto fenoménu obecně. Autor se skrze tuto práci snaží poskytnout nový, faktuálně zaměřený pohled na hybridní válku, nezatížený předsudky ani emocionálním podtextem, který bohužel zatěžuje mnohé příspěvky do akademické debaty na toto téma. Tato nová perspektiva na hybridní válku dle autora silně přispěje k našemu objektivnímu chápání tohoto fenoménu.

¹ V angličtině nazvaná Operation Enduring Freedom.

Keywords

Hybrid war, hybrid warfare, Operation Enduring Freedom 2001, USA, András Rác, Frank Hoffman, West, Western hybrid warfare,

Klíčová slova

Hybridní válka, hybridní válčení, Operace Trvalá Svoboda 2001, USA, András Rác, Frank Hoffman, Západ, západní hybridní válka

Název práce

Americká hybridní válka? Operace Trvalá svoboda z perspektivy hybridního vedení války

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Introduction

Hybrid warfare is a term that several years prior dominated the security studies and even filled the headlines of mainstream media outlets in the Western world. Accompanied by the shock caused by the Russian intervention in Crimea and the Eastern Ukraine in 2014, it was and still continues to be one of the most influential topics that surfaced in the realm of security studies and international relations in the last several decades. Naturally, it prompted many research papers, articles, and other kinds of academic work, where it was analyzed from various different angles.

Our current perception of the hybrid warfare, “us” meaning the inhabitants of the European and Northern American states, the so-called Western civilization, has been, for the last 7 years, defined by this Russian resurgence as an aggressive player in the political affairs of the Eastern Europe and its meddling in the internal affairs of other countries in the Euro-American space, such as Brexit (Ellehuus & Ruy 2020) or 2016 US presidential elections (Masters 2018). These events understandably unsettled us, and our concern, or fear even, has translated into how we view hybrid warfare significantly, as it often warps our view to the point when we consider every Russian malign action as a part of this strange, unsettling, and even dangerous phenomenon. Russia’s use of unmarked soldiers during its annexation of Crimea? Hybrid warfare (Stoltenberg 2015). Russia’s use of cyberattacks to pressure other countries? Hybrid warfare (Polyakova et. al 2020, p. 13). Russia’s use of its media outlet in foreign countries for spreading propaganda messages to the public of those states? Hybrid warfare (Giles 2015). Russia’s use of undercover agents to attempt murder on one of its ex-agents? Well, the answer to this seems to be obvious by know (Lucas 2018).

From this point of view, hybrid warfare just always seems to be strange, harmful, coming from the outside of our states/societies, seeking to damage us. Is that really so, however? If we were to take away all the negative connotation regarding our modern outlook on hybrid warfare, its harmfulness to our democratic societies, its inherent aggressivity or the fact that it always seems to be perpetrated by undemocratic states and looked at it from a strictly factual point of view, hybrid warfare would be else than a specific mode of waging a conflict. It has certain specific aspects, principles, and goals and if we were to think of it as a blueprint, it could be then used by anybody. It would be quite possible for any state to wage hybrid warfare, even a democratic one.

The research target of this thesis hence is to prove that even the democratic state can indeed conduct hybrid warfare. In order to do so, this thesis is going to select a case of a conflict waged by the Western democratic state and attempt to reinterpret it through the lenses of hybrid warfare,

as waged for example by Russia. Simultaneously, this thesis is also going to be interested in the implications of the possibility of Western democracy to wage hybrid warfare to our (Western) approach to hybrid warfare. Based on this, the research questions are going to be formulated as follows:

1. Can Western democratic states wage a hybrid war?
 - a. Did the USA wage a hybrid war during the opening stages of the Operation Enduring Freedom?
 - b. In case that Western democracies can and do wage hybrid warfare, what are the implications for our perception of the hybrid warfare?

As the case for reinterpretation, this thesis chose the opening phases of the Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan 2001, waged by the USA. Reasons for this are following: One, the case has a significant symbolic value. As a direct response to the attacks of 9/11, it constituted a beginning of the War on Terror, one of the defining features of the international politics of this century thus far. If this thesis can show that its opening phases could have been in fact waged in a manner of hybrid warfare, it would give its findings much more weight. It is also probable, that the reader of this thesis is going to be familiar with this case, further enforcing the message of this thesis.

Two, the case is very well documented. Due to its historical significance and the fact that the case happened 20 years ago, there have been many studies, articles and other research related material produced on its course. This will give this thesis a lot of resources to draw on during its research. Three, based on the preliminary research done for this thesis, the conflict shares some similarities with the Russo-Ukrainian conflict from the 2014, today the most prevalent example of the hybrid warfare. By drawing parallels between the two cases, one describing the use of hybrid warfare by undemocratic state and second by the democratic one, this thesis would support its main claim, the “ideological neutrality” of hybrid warfare.

In order to reinterpret the case, this thesis needs at least a basic concept of what hybrid warfare is. For this, it will utilize the description of hybrid warfare constructed by András Rácz in his famous 2015 study titled *Russia's Hybrid War in Ukraine: Breaking the Enemy's Ability to Resist*, from which it will derive a concept of hybrid warfare that will be later applied on the previously outlined case. The Rácz's description is, similarly to the studied case of this thesis, chosen because of its symbolic nature. The report on the Russian conduct caught the attention of academic community and became one of the most prominent sources on the Crimean and Eastern Ukrainian crisis of 2014. Praised for its detailed and comprehensive analysis of the events, it

remains one of the most prominent articles on hybrid warfare up to this day (Fridman 2018, p.112; Fabian 2019, p.313). As this thesis' goal is to show that even the Western democratic countries can wage hybrid warfare, it would support the legitimacy of its claims greatly, if the reinterpretation was done through a description of hybrid warfare that majority of the Western academic community accepts.

The outline of the thesis will be following: Firstly, there is going to be an examination of hybrid warfare as a scientific concept. Its history, development and the most notable contributors to the debate surrounding hybrid warfare will be summarized in order to give reader a solid idea on what hybrid warfare is and how it came to be. In second part, Rácz's description of hybrid warfare is going to be examined, analyzed for its most important features and operationalized into a concept through which the examined case will be reinterpreted. In the third part, the case of US conduct during the opening stages of the Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan 2001 is going to be introduced and thoroughly described. In the fourth part, the reinterpretation itself is going to take place, as the studied case is going to be described through the previously operationalized concept of hybrid warfare. Afterwards, there is going to be a summarization of this reinterpretation and reflection on what implication do the results of reinterpretation have on our current perception of hybrid warfare. The fifth and final chapter is going to be a conclusion, where the results of this thesis are going to be summarized.

1 Hybrid warfare and its development

Before we can assess whether USA waged hybrid war when they invaded Afghanistan in 2001, we have to clarify, what the hybrid warfare is. As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, hybrid warfare developed significantly since its inception. With its roots reaching into the closing years of the last millennium, the hybrid warfare is a surprisingly old concept, that has been a subject of many research papers, books, memos, and other academic literature. In this part of the thesis, there is going to be a research into the topic of hybrid warfare itself. The reader will be presented with a summary of the academic debate that followed its development, with regards to the most influential authors and their works regarding hybrid warfare. The reader should, however, keep in mind that the intention here is in no way to present him with exhausting description of the theoretical development of hybrid warfare, rather, to summarize the development of its concept and its key aspects as the time went.

1.1 The “precursors”

As far as we know, the first mention of the term goes as far as to the last turn of the century, to the year 1998, when the term was used by R.G. Walker in his Master Thesis, “*Spec Fi: The U.S. Marine Corps and Special Operations*”. The author described hybrid warfare as comprised of two distinct elements: special operations and conventional operations, differing from each other with regards to assets and techniques used, as well as intensity and other factors. Walker viewed hybrid warfare as the interstice between special operations and conventional warfare, possessing characteristics of both, “requiring extreme amount of flexibility, in order to transition operationally and tactically between the special and conventional arenas” (Walker 1998, p. 5). Walker admits that there is nothing essentially new to hybrid warfare, as these kinds of operations have been waged countless times throughout the history, offering the war of the American Revolution as an example (Walker 1998, p. 4-6).

Next recorded mention of the usage of hybrid warfare comes with W. J. Nemeth, who used the term in June 2002 in his master’s thesis titled *Future War and Chechnya: A Case for Hybrid Warfare*. There, Nemeth illustrated the nature of the hybrid war on the specific state of the Chechen society during its violent bids for independence after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Dubbing it “hybrid society”, he describes it as a prime example of the devolved state, “that has returned to more traditional socio-political organization, (...) operating under different set of norms than modern states” (Nemeth 2002, p. v). This is reflected in a way this society conducts

warfare, which does not fit the norms of their traditional Western counterparts. It combines irregular tactics, such as kidnapping, supply lines disruption and “massacres²”, with those that would be more traditionally bound to more conventional armies. Key among those is the inventive use of modern technology, such as Chechen novel use of media in order to spread disinformation and propaganda. Nemeth concluded his thesis with a prediction, that we are very likely to see more of this “hybrid violence” in the future (Nemeth 2002, p. 71-76).

1.2 Frank Hoffman and the military centric hybrid warfare

Although the two aforementioned authors, could be dubbed as “pioneers” of hybrid warfare, as their work dealt with topics and phenomena very close to what would later be the main focus of scholars of hybrid warfare, their work went largely unnoticed. It was much later, in 2005, when the arguably most influential author of hybrid warfare related literature, Frank Hoffman, wrote his first article on the topic, the *Future Warfare: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*. Along with his co-author J. Mattis, he described the hybrid warfare in strictly military terms, as a “merger of different modes and means of War” (Hoffman & Mattis 2005, p. 1). They further built on the previous concept created by gen. Charles Krulak, called the “three block warfare”, based on then-recent experiences of US Marine Corps during forward deployment missions, most prominently the infamous deployment in Somalia and the tragic Battle of Mogadishu. His concept elaborated on the role and duties of the US marines during their missions, explaining that the combat itself is only one of three “blocks” of warfare that US forces find themselves in. Aside from conducting strictly military actions, they must also be prepared to engage in other two blocks of what is now warfare: peace keeping and humanitarian operations (Krulak 1999, p. 4-7). Krulak stressed the rising importance of “non-military” factors of the war and the overall widening of the military space to areas, previously considered to be strictly non-military. Hoffman and Mattis seem to have agreed, adding a fourth block, which emphasized the need to manage the information space of the battlefield, being something of a “battlefield of ideas”, when narratives of the warring parties clash. Its control is crucial, as it influences the “spectators” of the war and shapes their opinion of the conflict (Hoffman & Mattis 2005, p. 2).

Since both the authors had a strong military background, their conception of hybrid warfare was also military-centric. They wrote the article at the time, when there was an important

² In this context, the author meant to describe war crimes such as killing of prisoners conducted with the intention to scare off enemy combatants and the general public.

debate going on, about the future form of the US army, its composition, strategy, and conception, linked to the dynamic changes of the international affairs. (Hoffman & Mattis 2005, p. 1).

Hoffman continued with his work on hybrid warfare, and in 2006 published two articles on the topic, first called *Complex Irregular Warfare: The Next Revolution in Military Affairs*. Here, he continued to ponder on the future of the US military, mainly in a sense of threats that it will be forced to face. He again proposed that due to its overwhelming conventional superiority, the most likely threat that the US Armed Forces will face, will come from “hybrid capabilities, custom-designed by (our) adversaries to thwart U.S. vulnerabilities” (Hoffman 2006a, p. 398). The adversaries will be using the “advanced irregular warfare”, which encompasses a wide range of technological, tactical, and organizational features. They will also be highly adaptable to changing security environment. With these claims he was going against then fairly widespread belief that the US military should be focusing on high-tech aspects of the modern warfare, hence following the trends of what was then thought of as the new Revolution in Military Affairs (Hoffman 2006a, p. 396).

In his second article, *Lessons from Lebanon: Hezbollah and Hybrid Wars*. Hoffman used the example of the 2006 war in southern Lebanon as a case of hybrid force (Hezbollah) successfully standing up to conventionally much stronger foe (Israel). The course of the conflict was similar to a possible scenario that the US forces could find themselves in: Israel tried to tackle Hezbollah with high tech conventional style of war, relying mainly on precision strike capabilities. Hezbollah answered with mixture of irregular and regular military tactics, resulting in a difficult stalemate that, even though was not Hezbollah overwhelming victory, proved that it can hold its own against Israeli army. Hoffman hinted at the possibility that this could very well be the fate of US Armed Forces, if they were not to prepare themselves for adversaries using hybrid capabilities (Hoffman 2006b).

The 2006 conflict in southern Lebanon is indeed one of the milestones in the development of hybrid warfare as it was for a long time considered to be the prime example of a hybrid conflict. Hoffman recognized this again in his famous 2007 study, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, where he summarized the so-far debate on the nature of hybrid warfare³, concluding that the future of warfare lies in a convergence of its various modes into hybrid warfare that “...incorporate(s) a range of different modes of warfare including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including indiscriminate violence and coercion and criminal disorder” (Hoffman 2007, p. 28-29). Based on a thorough analysis of its struggle against

³ Mentioning concepts such as Fourth Generation Warfare, Compound Wars and Unrestricted Warfare.

the IDF⁴, Hoffman dubbed Hezbollah as a prototype force capable of waging such conflict. (Hoffman 2007, p. 35-44). He also implied that the US Armed Forces must learn from IDF's experience and has to approach future conflicts comprehensively, flexibly, and be able to adapt to new, previously not encountered situations (Hoffman 2007, p. 43-54).

In his articles, Hoffman developed his military centric view of hybrid warfare, focused mainly on its relevance for the future development of US Armed Forces. He imagined hybrid warfare as a type of warfare, comprised of multiple other modes of warfare, used by certain actor to achieve its goals. Notably, in *Conflict in the 21st Century*, Hoffman suggests that the hybrid warfare can be waged by both states and non-state actors, strongly implying that hybrid warfare is usable by Armed Forces of any kind of actor in international space. Could have this been applied to a conventionally capable army of a developed Western democratic state, perhaps the USA themselves? It is safely presumable that Frank Hoffman in 2007 would not say so. He thought of hybrid warfare as something that was created to counter conventionally superior forces, such as IDF or US Armed Forces, hence the possibility of them actually using that kind of strategy would probably seem unnecessary or nonsensical by him.

1.3 The Debate on the nature of hybrid warfare

These several articles authored by Frank Hoffman serve as the first articulated academic materials seriously engaged in the debate concerning hybrid warfare and he is hence rightfully considered to be something of a “spiritual father” of the term. Indeed, by drawing the attention of other scholars, he started the academic debate on the nature of hybrid warfare, whose most notable contributions will be further summarized below.

⁴ Most notably he mentions its ability to disperse into well-organized cells of fighters and use a mixture of conventional and unconventional military tactics, combining hit and run attacks and ambushes with strong entrenched positions and relatively high-tech, yet cost effective weaponry, such as advanced anti-armor missiles. The success of Hezbollah's tactics is also demonstrated by its ability to not only withstand IDF's attacks, but also to strike back through usage of short-, medium-, and long-ranged rocket artillery. Although the death toll and physical damage caused by those attacks were negligible, their psychological effect and the fact that IDF was unable to suppress them, had a great impact on Israeli population. Another important feature of Hezbollah's warfare was its use of information space, where it was able to project its “version” of the war with much more effect than the IDF. It managed to portray itself as an organization of freedom fighters, struggling against the aggression perpetrated by Israeli army. This in combination with strategic coverage of Lebanese civilians killed by Israeli strikes, while omitting its own breaches of laws of war, were enough to sway the hearts and minds of much of the general public to its side. More on the course of the 2006 Lebanon war, read MATTHEWS, Matt M. *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War*. 1. Kansas: U.S. Army Combined Arms Center Combat Studies Institute Press Fort Leavenworth, 2008. ISBN 978-0-16-079899-3. For a specific literature on the information aspect of the conflict, read KALB, Marvin a Carol SAIVETZ. *The Israeli-Hezbollah war of 2006: The media as a weapon in asymmetrical conflict*. Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics [online]. 2007, 12(3), 43 - 66 [cit. 2019-1-20]. ISSN 1081180X. Available from: doi:10.1177/1081180X07303934

First of those would be John McCuen, who, in 2008, wrote a short article titled *Hybrid Wars*. There, he brought up the idea that hybrid war comprises of two wars, the symmetric and asymmetric, and three battlegrounds, that of the population in the conflict zone, the home front population and the battleground comprised of international community. In order to win a hybrid war, one has to control all three battlegrounds (McCuen 2008, p. 107). McCuen also thought about hybrid warfare in the dimensions of its relevance for the US military, however, he seemed to be putting a lot more emphasis on the cognitive and psychological aspect than Hoffman initially did.

Another noteworthy author was Nathan Frier, contributing several articles on the topic in 2007 and 2009. First of those, *Strategic Competition and Resistance in the 21st Century: Irregular, Catastrophic, Traditional and Hybrid Challenges in Context*, represented Freier's thoughts on the relevancy of Department of Defense's 2005 National Defense Strategy and the "quad chart" of threats⁵. He concluded that the chart is still relevant, however, the "hybrid norm" will be that those challenges will come together and form the "hybrid challenges (Freier 2007, p. 46-63). In his next articles, both published in 2009, Freier pondered on the relevancy or appropriateness of the term "hybrid warfare", as it unnecessarily limits our perception of hybrid warfare only to its strictly military dimension. In *Hybrid Threats and Challenges – Describe... Don't Define*, Frier suggested to focus on broader "hybrid threats" that "...run along the boundaries artificially separating competition, classic war, troubled peace and different threat archetypes – political, military, socio-economic, natural etc....". He also hinted on the tendencies to dilute the true meaning of hybrid warfare, with hybrid challenges being "all things to all people" (Freier 2009, p. 7-8).

Freier's views on hybrid challenges, threats, and hybridity in general were still tightly knit to the US Armed Forces and the Department of Defense. However, he was one of the first authors, who viewed hybrid challenges in other than strictly military terms and his emphasis on its non-military aspects hinted at future broadening of the term.

Other contributors certainly worth mentioning, were W. Murray and P. Mansoor, with their comprehensive title, *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the present*, published in 2012. There, they presented their definition of hybrid warfare as "conflict involving a combination of conventional military forces and irregulars (guerrillas, insurgents, and terrorists), which could include both state and nonstate actors, aimed at achieving a common political purpose" (Murray & Mansoor 2012, p.2). The rest of the book was then filled with 9 shorter essays on the historical examples of hybrid warfare, according to their definition, from the relatively recent Vietnam war to the Roman effort to conquer Germania (Murray &

⁵ Conceptualized as traditional, irregular, catastrophic and disruptive.

Mansoor 2012, p. v). This approach to hybrid warfare is very specific, in comparison with most of the other mentioned, as it suggests that the hybrid warfare is not a novel military phenomenon, but rather one that is historically relatively common. The authors themselves compare the term hybrid warfare to a kind of buzzword (Murray & Mansoor 2012, p. 1), which was a reaction to its overuse by both military and civilian experts.

Another duo of authors came to similar conclusion, T. McCulloh and R. Johnson. In their extensive work, called *Hybrid Warfare*, the definition of hybrid warfare is centered around its “combinatory” aspect, when one combatant uses combination of all resources available to him, in order to defeat a conventionally stronger opponent (McCulloh & Johnson 2013, p. 16). The authors, similarly, to Murray and Mansoor, did not view hybrid warfare as something novel, as they also offered examples of hybrid warfare stemming from the antiquity to the War in Lebanon.

So, what does this tell us about the state of the hybrid warfare between late 2000s and early 2010s? It was very much US centric, with majority of authors being occupied with the relevancy of the concept to the country’s military forces. While the debate still had a mainly military character, with authors being occupied with the hybrid war’s influence on the physical act of war itself, we can observe several scholars that, aside from the military, investigated aspects of hybrid warfare not connected to the hard-security topics. As examples can serve McCuen who emphasized the role of “cognitive” battlegrounds and Freier, who viewed hybrid warfare as more comprehensive phenomenon that would blur the boundaries of the war and peace themselves. There has also been a number of scholars that rejected the whole novelty of hybrid warfare, claiming that it has been here with us since the antiquity, such as Murray, Mansoor, McCulloh and Johnson.

1.4 2014 Crimean crisis and the “Russification of the hybrid warfare”

The debate over the nature of the hybrid warfare would have somewhat calmed down in the early 2010s, which however changed with the 2014 invasion of Crimea by Russia and the subsequent war in the Eastern Ukraine. This unprecedented breach of international law shocked the international community, mainly the countries of the European Union, thanks to their geographic proximity to the conflict. With last war fought in Europe being the string of conflicts bound to the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the Western nations were perplexed, and to certain extent terrified, by prospects of one state being able to annex other state’s territory.

Another source of Western concern was the style of Russian actions. In order to achieve their strategic goals, the Russian Armed Forces utilized a wide range of regular and irregular military tactics, ranging from mobilization of its regular troops to conduct demonstration military maneuvers, insertion of unmarked soldiers and special forces, to utilization of regional militias and cyberattacks. Russia then combined those with economic and political pressures as well as massive propaganda campaign (Barber 2015).

The general public, military and academic circles in the Western countries all pondered on the exact nature of this “new” and extremely potent way of warfare, thanks to which Russia was able to conquer a part of its neighbor and severely contest another. So much so, that not many investigations went into other possible explanations, such as then-abysmal state of the Ukrainian armed forces (Soltys 2019). This “new way of warfare, however, turned out to be roughly fitting an already existing concept of hybrid warfare, and so many journalists and politicians “jumped on the bandwagon” and hybrid warfare became a sort of a buzzword, that made headlines even in the mainstream media (Kendall 2014). The academia was not far behind, as there has been an upsurge in the articles concerning hybrid warfare after the events of 2014 (Wither 2014, p. 73). The number of academic writings produced was not only high, but also quite diverse, when it came to approaches used and aspects that the individual authors deemed important. Since the community of hybrid warfare scholars so drastically expanded and their backgrounds became much more diverse, in stark contrast to the first handful of authors such as Hoffman, McCuen or Freier who all had military backgrounds, the debate on the topic became fragmented and hence much more difficult to track.

Many authors tried to summarize, analyze, or otherwise conceptualize the rapid and often chaotic development of academic literature on the hybrid warfare, amongst them Fabian, Wither or Fridman. The last mentioned published an extensive publication on the development of hybrid warfare as a concept in 2018, with particular focus of the phase after the Russian annexation of Crimea and on the subsequent politization of the term. In his view, the important milestones of post-2014 hybrid warfare include the 2014 NATO summit in Wales, where NATO declared determination in order to face hybrid threats, encompassing “... wide range of overt and covert military, paramilitary and civilian measures (...) employed in a highly-integrated design”, that was then followed by three “waves” of the debate on the topic (Fridman 2018, p. 108).

The first, in 2014, occupied itself mainly with the establishment of Russian conduct as a case of hybrid war, efforts to link it to previous concept of the hybrid warfare and the call for action to NATO and its members against Russia. This period is well illustrated by the Latvian

analyst Janis Berzins and his policy paper “*Russia’s New Generation Warfare in Ukraine: Implications for Latvian Defense Policy*” Berzins proclaims that Russia is putting a major emphasis on influence-related activities, such as internal and external (strategic) communication and deceptive and psychological operations in its new way of war (here called “New Generation Warfare”). (Berzins 2014, p. 5-7).

The second wave of the debate took place in 2015 and was concerned with deepening of the link between the Russian hybrid warfare and the original theory of hybrid warfare, coined by Hoffman and others, as well as with the push of NATO towards a constructive debate on what measures to take in reaction to Russian behavior. It also tried to link it to previously known Russian military publication, such as the infamous 2013 article by Valeri Gerasimov. Into this period falls one of the most prominent works on (Russian) hybrid warfare, and indeed the one that this thesis concerns itself with the most, the 2015 *Russia’s Hybrid War in Ukraine: Breaking the Enemy’s Ability to Resist*, written by András Rácz. This detailed analysis of the development of the theory of hybrid warfare, historical cases of conflicts that had features of hybridity and meticulous description of Russian conduct in Ukraine itself, is generally viewed as one of the most relevant sources of information on the topic. There, Rácz came to many conclusions about the Russian hybrid war, the most distinct of them being its division into three phases: preparatory, attack and stabilization. However, it also pointed to multiple conflicts between the original theory of hybrid warfare and the Russian conduct in Ukraine (Rácz 2015). Rácz’s work will be further analyzed in the conceptual part of the thesis.

The third wave of the discourse, occurring in 2016, was, according to Fridman, influenced by the doubts about relevancy of the concept, previously hinted at by authors such as Adamsky, Freedman or Rácz. This prompted a division of the discourse into two streams – first focused on the Russian point of view and its perception of the changing form of warfare, the second occupied itself with the division of the focus of the analysis into military and non-military areas. This further resulted in the focus of many Western authors on the information and cyber warfare aspects of Russian origin, which gained even more traction after the alleged Russian interference in the 2016 US presidential elections. (Fridman 2018, p.108-124).

Since then, hybrid warfare has been used indiscriminately by many actors, often times without a clear idea of what it is exactly. The debate on the true meaning of the term seems to be stuck, as there is no clear effort to unite the varying approaches to the topic and many authors utilizing the term without regard to its supposed meaning.

When thinking about the influence that the events of Crimean crisis had on the hybrid warfare the widening of the term is the most prevalent. Caused by the nature of the Russian conduct in Crimea, the heterogenization of the participants of the debate and their different backgrounds, and the mainstream attention it got, the hybrid warfare evolved from a strictly military term into a comprehensive concept that encompasses wide range of elements of national power, ranging from military, economic, to political and informational. Several authors even dropped the military aspects altogether and focused on the non-military ones, such as information and cyber warfare. Although this possibly made the concept more “up to date” with the current trends, it also made the original meaning of the hybrid warfare somewhat diluted, which, in comparison with the aforementioned mainstream interest in it led to severe loss of identity of the hybrid warfare. The original theses of Frank Hoffman are only hardly compatible with conclusions of articles such as *Hybrid War: High-tech, Information and Cyber Conflicts*, by Danyk, Maliarchuk and Briggs, stressing the utmost importance of cyber and high tech features for the national security. Claims against which, paradoxically, Hoffman originally protested.

As mentioned before, the events of 2014 also brought emotions into the debate. With many authors contributing to the debate after 2014 coming from Europe (Fridman 2018, 108-124), considerably closer to the source of the “hybrid” danger than Hoffman, Freier etc. ever were, their outlooks on it could have been influenced by the feeling of immediate threat. This led to many authors attributing hybrid warfare with extreme effectivity and dangerousness, as Russians achieved much success through its use.

Indeed, multiple highly regarded authors on the topic voiced their concerns over the overuse and “mythization” of the hybrid warfare seeing it as harmful to the objectivity of the debate (Kofman 2016). This is extremely well illustrated by the case Mark Galeotti’s accidental creation of the Gerasimov doctrine. Galeotti, as a respected scholar on Russian security, addressed its behavior in Crimea in his 2014’s article *the ‘Gerasimov Doctrine’ and Russian Non-Linear War*. There, when quoting a Russian official Valeri Gerasimov, he coined the term ‘Gerasimov doctrine’, according to his own words, in order to create a catchy title, seemingly implying an existence of specific Russian military doctrine on how to conduct hybrid warfare (Galeotti 2014). Fact, that Gerasimov was not mentioning any Russian official document, but rather was analyzing the events of Arab spring as an example of Western influence activities, was sadly omitted by many members of academic community, journalists and politicians, who went on to indiscriminately use the term and the ‘Gerasimov doctrine’ became an established academic concept for some time. Galeotti himself realized the error and was trying to make things right,

most notably in 2018, when he wrote an apology for accidentally creating ‘Gerasimov doctrine’ in the Foreign Policy (Galeotti 2018).

2 Rácz's hybrid warfare and its operationalization

After summarization of the hybrid warfare and its development, it is important to define how the research is going to utilize the term. Firstly, there is going to be a summary of Rácz's interpretation of the Russian hybrid warfare, with the outline of its most important features and traits. Secondly, Rácz's description of the Russian hybrid warfare is going to be operationalized into a concept of hybrid warfare, through which the conduct of US armed forces (before and during the opening stages of the Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan 2001) is going to be later reinterpreted.

2.1 Russian hybrid warfare according to András Rácz

In his 2015 study, *Russia's Hybrid War in Ukraine: Breaking the Enemy's Ability to Resist*, András Rácz divided his description of Russian hybrid warfare into three distinct phases, each of which he then further divided into three sections.

2.1.1 Preparatory phase

During *Preparatory phase*, the attacking nation, in this case Russia, maps out the "...strategic, political, economic, social, and infrastructural weaknesses and vulnerabilities of the target country..." (Rácz 2015, p. 58), in this case Ukraine. To do so, he employs a wide array of measures, most of which were similar or even identical to "soft power" and other diplomacy-related instruments. These included cultivation of culturally affinitive organizations, self-propagation in the defending state's media, and possible strengthening of ties with separatist movements present. The *Preparatory phase* consists of three sections, the first of them being the *Strategic preparation*. It consists of exploration of the defending state's administration, economy and armed forces by the attacker, its goal being an identification of any weaknesses he could possibly exploit in the future. During *Strategic preparation*, the attacker also establishes a network of loyal actors in the targeted country, such as NGOs, media channels and others. The attacker is also preparing its diplomatic and media assets to influence the international audience, for the possibility of future aggressive actions against the defendant (Rácz 2015, p. 58-59).

The second section is called the *Political preparation*, when the aggressor starts to (indirectly) pressure the defender, using knowledge of his weaknesses, acquired during the *Strategic preparation*. Through many aspects of his national power, most prominently diplomacy and

media, the aggressor begins to manipulate the general public of the defending state, spurring it against its own government. The attacker is also targeting prominent figures of the defender state's political, bureaucratic, criminal, economic, and military circles, either through establishing ties or outright bribes, in effort to "turn them over" to his side. Due to the specific conditions of the Ukrainian case, Rácz also highlighted the effort of the attacker to support separatist movements, present in the defending country, as well as to deepen any kinds of ethnic, religious, or other cleavages, present there (Rácz 2015, p. 58-59).

The third and final section of the *Preparatory phase* is the *Operational preparation*, when the attacker prepares to mobilize his assets in preparation for the imminent aggressive actions against the defender. Those are mainly, but not exclusively, the political and information assets, utilized to launch coordinated political and disinformation pressure against the defender, the persons of interests turned double agents, acquired by the attacker in the previous section, and finally the military assets. Those are not outright deployed on the border; however, they are moved nearby, often under false pretenses. (Rácz 2015, p. 58-59).

Rácz finishes his remarks about the *Preparatory phase* with the important note – all the mentioned activities that the attacker performs during it, cannot be classified as acts of hybrid warfare on their own. They could be all considered a standard part of "diplomacy-pressure" toolbox, and on their own never exceed the imaginary threshold prompting the defending country to adopt any serious countermeasures. (Rácz 2015, p. 59-60). For that, there needs to be an escalation of the pressure, which comes in the second phase of the hybrid warfare.

2.1.2 Attack phase

Attack phase constitutes the offensive part of the hybrid warfare. In it, the aggressor puts to use all his knowledge of the opponent's weaknesses and utilizes all the preparations he made in advance. According to Rácz, the most distinguishable factor in comparison to the previous phase of hybrid warfare, is the open use of physical force on the side of the attacker. He centers on the now infamous insertion of "little green men" by Russia, well equipped and trained unmarked soldiers that came up from seemingly nowhere in both Crimea and Donbas and started to seize power in the chaos of the "Revolution of Dignity". Russia supported the physical military operations with multiple instruments of its national power, such as its electronic warfare capabilities, economic power, and diplomacy, to put further pressure Ukrainian government, preventing it from effectively intervene. Rácz continues his structure of three sections-per-phase

in the *Attack phase*, first of them, fourth overall, being called *Exploding tensions* (Rácz 2015, p. 60)

By the term *Exploding tensions*, Rácz encompasses the various disruptive activities that start the forceful part of hybrid warfare. The attacker begins to incite anti-government protests in the defending country, mainly in the parts it seeks to acquire. Simultaneously, he infiltrates the desired parts of the country with unmarked soldiers, most often members of the special forces. Those start to not only support the demonstrators, as they pretend to be part of them, but also to perpetrate sabotages and capture some administrative buildings in the region, while cooperating with local actors loyal to the attacker. The attacker also puts up a significant effort to confuse and cripple the leadership of the defending country, by committing sabotages all around the defending country, such as electronic and cyberattacks, to divert attention from the territory of interest. He also conducts a massive media campaign aimed at both the defending country's general public and decision makers, aiming to intimidate and demoralize the former and confuse and distract the latter. Final notable feature of attacker's behavior during the *Exploding the tensions* section, is the outright mobilization of regular armed forces on the border with the defender. The regular troops are there with a clear message to dissuade defending country's leadership from intervening against the "rebels" in the targeted territory as they could at any time intervene in favor of them (Rácz 2015, p. 63).

The fifth section is called *Ousting the central power from the targeted region* and as the name suggests, it is during this section, that the attacker de-facto gains control of the targeted territory. Using his unmarked soldiers, with possible support of local loyal actors, the attacker takes over the centers of local governance. He firstly seizes the "political targets", such as the buildings of regional governments, then the offices of the lesser state administration, other civilian infrastructure, and media outlets. The last mentioned is very important, as the attacker also strives for a blockade of communication channels between the targeted territory and the defending's country's central power, creating attacker's information monopoly in the territory, ultimately tightening his grip over it. To achieve these goals, the attacker must cripple the military and police forces loyal to the central government, present in the targeted territory, causing as little bloodshed as possible. Attacker can achieve this in many ways, Rácz mentions blockade of barracks, bribing of commanders, breaking troops morale through means of psychological warfare etc. (Rácz 2015, p. 63). Indeed, none of those techniques require direct use of physical violence, however, mainly in the case of the blockade of barracks, the countermeasures against them on the side of the defender would require it if they were to be successful. Simultaneously with the "physical" aggression, the attacker is utilizing its diplomatic, military, and economic power to pressure the

defending country, diverting its attention and resources away from the crisis. He also utilizes his media power to target the international audience, manipulating it through false discrediting of the defending country and propagating his “story” of how the conflict is going (Rácz 2015, p. 63).

The last section of the *Attack phase* and the sixth overall is called *Establishing alternative political power*, during which the attacker solidifies his de-facto physical control over the targeted territory by creating loyal bodies of governance. The attacker begins by declaring a new political leadership of the territory, basing its legitimacy on certain separatist tendencies in the region, be they real or made up. This leadership replaces the previously existing governance and administrative structures, giving it de-facto legitimacy in the territory, which is further strengthened by the continuing information monopoly of the attacker’s media. Those not only support the new authority, but also blackmail the de-jure legitimate government of the defending country to estrange and detach the local population from it. The central government is continuously prevented from being able to put up any effective resistance against this process by the conventional forces of the attacker, stationed on the common border (Rácz 2015, p. 63).

At the end of the *Attack phase*, the targeted territory is de-facto in the hands of the attacker. Any resistance that the defender put up was broken, if there even was any to begin with, and the contested territory is controlled by the new government loyal to the attacker, supported by his armed forces and other elements of his national power. In the closing remarks considering this section, Rácz highlights the importance of a successful *Preparatory phase* as a key factor in the success of the *Attack phase*, because without the precise knowledge of the defender’s weaknesses and acquisition of loyal actors in his territory, the attacker could never carry out the offensive operation with such precision and success.

2.1.3 Stabilization phase

After undergoing a successful aggressive campaign against his target, throwing his country in disarray, and acquiring part of his territory, the attacker needs to consolidate and solidify these gains. In the cases of both Donbas and Crimea, Russia was quick to hold referenda, that were supposed to show local support for the new power holders and their decision to secede from Ukraine. Both supposedly had high turnouts and resulted overwhelmingly in favor of that decision, which strengthened the legitimacy of the new pro-Russian regimes⁶. The results of this

⁶ Although the results of both the referendums were disputed by civil right activists, claiming that they were falsified. The data concerning the referendum turnout have been disputed as well, supposedly because they were inflated.

independence were, however, different for the two territories – in Donbas it resulted into establishment of pro-Russian regimes in Luhansk and Donetsk, while in Crimea it resulted in its annexation by Russia (Rácz 2015, p. 64-65).

Final phase of hybrid warfare again has three sections, the first (seventh overall) is called *Political stabilization of the outcome*. This section encompasses the mentioned organization of the staged secessionist referendum by the puppet government of the targeted territory, while the attacker supports it with his media and diplomacy power. Once the referendum takes place, (probably falsely) legitimizing the new quasi-government of the region, that government pleads the attacking country for support (Rácz 2015, p. 67).

This brings us neatly to the eighth section of hybrid warfare, the *Separation of the captured territory from the target country*. This is the only section of Russian hybrid warfare, of which Rácz offers two possible versions. After hearing out the plea for help of its own puppet government, the attacker can either directly annex the territory or establish his military presence there, to support its proxy government in an armed struggle against the central government of the defending state. The second option leads to further weakening of the defending country, as it drains it of resources and puts it under continuous political and military pressure (Rácz 2015, p. 67).

The ninth and final section of Rácz's description of hybrid warfare is named *Lasting limitation of the strategic freedom of movement of attacked country*. This section is more or less Rácz stating, that the loss of territory puts the defending country in a very precarious position, since it translates to loss of infrastructure located there and income it generated, be it from any natural wealth located there or just collection of taxes. It also inevitably plunges it into a period of political instability and possibly humanitarian crisis. Rácz also deems worth of mentioning the fact, that since the country does not maintain territorial integrity, it is unable to join any international organization, that requires it as a condition of entry (Rácz 2015, p. 67).

2.2 Operationalization

As previously mentioned, the description of the Russian hybrid warfare does not constitute a broader conception of hybrid warfare. In his work, Rácz summarized the case of Russia's conduct during the Crimean and Donbas crises, best to his knowledge and abilities, and from this analysis, derived certain remarks on how Russia conducts hybrid warfare. Rácz's intention was never to create any comprehensive definition of hybrid warfare, hence his work must never be

classified as such. Since this thesis chose Rácz's description of hybrid warfare as its conceptual background mainly due to its symbolic nature, this does not constitute a problem. Still though, in order for it to be able to use Rácz's description for the reinterpretation of studied case, it must firstly operationalize it into a workable concept.

Now, because of its descriptive nature, Rácz's work is very case-specific, as Rácz himself on multiple occasions states. Hence, the operationalization must keep this in mind, to make Rácz's description of hybrid warfare somewhat applicable to other cases. This of course must be done very carefully, as the author must avoid excessive oversimplification of Rácz's concept, or the subconscious urge to modify it so just it fits the studied case as much as possible.

That being said, however, it must also be considered that wars and armed conflicts in general can take many different shapes and forms that can widely differ from each other, while still being recognized as such. Aspects, such as number of combatants involved, geographical scale, the nature of warring parties, can vary wildly, yet still, there is a certain set of expectations and conditions, that make it so, that the conflict is considered war. This leads the author to an assumption that when operationalizing Rácz's hybrid warfare, the sort of minimal definition, as defined by Gerring in *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework*, would be best way of doing so (Gerring et al. 2012, p. 135-136). Hence, the operationalization will do its best to describe the absolute core principles of hybrid warfare as described by Rácz

2.2.1 Case specific features

Firstly, in order to distinguish the core principles of Rácz's hybrid warfare, it is important to rid it of its case-specific features. First of those is the presence of attacker's ethnic minority in the defender's territory. Although Rácz mentions its presence quite often, even distinguishing it as one of the reasons why Russian hybrid warfare was so successful (Rácz 2015, p. 80-81), after a closer look, we can see that it could be interchanged for any dissatisfied social group present in the defender's territory. Indeed, its main importance in the conflict stemmed from the fact that Russian Federation pictured it as an oppressed group in foreign state, in whose protector it then titled itself, supposedly gaining support of the oppressed minority (Rácz 2015, p.60). This role, however, could have been arguably fulfilled by any minority social group in any other country, that would have been labeled as oppressed and in need of help. The presence of attacker's ethnic minority in the defending state hence is not a defining aspect of hybrid warfare and will be omitted

in the final concept, although there will be an accent on the local actors on whose support the attacker could rely on or use as an excuse for his incursion into the defender's territory.

Second is the accent on geographic proximity and from it stemming links between the two countries. Rácz elaborated on the positive influence of the geographic proximity between the attacker and the defender mainly when it came to the overall logistics of the attacker's forces and their role as a deterrent when stationed on the common border with the defender (Rácz 2015, p. 63). However, the relevance of geographic proximity in the case of Russian hybrid warfare was magnified by the very specific goals that Russia had when conducting hybrid warfare against Ukraine – acquisition and contestation of specific parts of its territory. Had the goals been different, the relevancy of territorial proximity would have probably diminished. Rácz even mentions, that the proximity of territories can be “supplemented” by presence of military bases or other kind of military presence in the region (Rácz 2015, p.82-83), which supports this assumption. Hence, the close geographic proximity between the two countries was a pleasant convenience to the attacker, that in this case increased the effectiveness of his hybrid conduct, however, was not its precondition.

The third feature of Rácz's hybrid warfare that is not going to be considered during operationalization, is the specific order of events as described during the *sections* of hybrid warfare. While the author of this thesis believes that the division of hybrid warfare into three wide phases describing the course of hybrid operation from the point of view of the attacker is a helpful idea, Rácz's further division of these phases into smaller *sections* that meticulously describe the course of events is too case-specific. As previously mentioned, conflicts can take many different forms and have differing courses, hence the logic would dictate that hybrid conflicts would be subject to the same principals.

2.2.2 Principles of the operationalization

Once the Rácz's hybrid warfare is cleansed of all of its case-specific aspects, it is possible to derive its minimal operationalization. As previously mentioned, the overall backbone of Rácz's description of the division of hybrid warfare into three phases will be preserved from here on simply called *Preparations, Offensive and Stabilization*. The author views this division of hybrid warfare as logical as vast majority of pre-planned offensive operation, which hybrid warfare in this case surely is, is built around this structure of preparation, attack, and consolidation of/capitalization on planned gains. Rather than being further divided into consecutive *sections*,

the author will only present an outline of key aspects (actions, techniques used) present in every phase that should be utilized by the attacker, for his actions to be considered hybrid warfare.

2.2.3 Operationalized concept

During the *Preparations*, the attacker is preparing position for future hybrid offensive against its target. He is mapping his adversary's state administration, economy, military, security forces, political "circles", crime scene and civil society, searching for weaknesses of any kind that he could later exploit. These weaknesses can take many shapes or forms, such as knowledge about particularly unstable segment of economy, obsolescence of military equipment, underdevelopment of certain part of state infrastructure etc. The attacker also strives to establish ties with local actors in the target territory – state officials, influential figures, or whole social groups. Their common denominator is willingness to assist the attacker in his actions against the defender. In conjunction, the attacker mobilizes his assets, which can encompass any aspect of his national power, such as military, economic, media, diplomatic, political or others, and through them starts to cautiously build up pressure against the defender. This could, again, take many forms, depending on the previously acquired knowledge about the defender's weak points – incitement of social tensions, if there are any exploitable societal cleavages in the targeted country, support of anti-system parties if such parties exist in the defending state etc.

During the *Offensive*, the attacker launches an aggressive campaign against its target, utilizing all previously mobilized assets as well as any loyal actors previously acquired during the *Preparation*. Based on the gained knowledge, the attacker will use any vector of attack that he previously deemed as useful against the defender. This includes, but is not limited to, infiltration of some of his security forces into the defending country, imposition of economic sanctions, conduct of massive information campaign against the defender and political and diplomatic pressure. The attacker is also influencing the population of the target country as well as the international audience with an effort to influence the "story" of the conflict so that it paints the attacker in as positive way as possible. With the help of local actors, the attacker then moves to dismantle the central power of the defending country – defeats the military of the defending country and takes control of the strategic locations. After that he establishes an alternative political power in the defending country, in collaboration with the local allies. Following the establishment of this new leadership of the targeted country, the attacker supports its new regime economically, militarily, and politically.

During the *Stabilization*, the attacker seeks to legitimize the new leadership of the defending country among the country’s population and the international audience. Hence a measure of internal legitimization is taken, that could take form of a referendum or elections. The attacker is of course continuing his support for the new government in the contested territory, as it constitutes its lifelines.

<i>Preparations</i>	<p>Mapping the targeted country for weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic, military, political, administrative <p>Establishing ties and alliances with local actors</p> <p>Mobilization of assets accordingly to the found weaknesses</p> <p>Perpetration of first cautious pressure operations against the targeted state</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spread of disinformation, blackmail, diplomatic pressure etc.
<i>Offensive</i>	<p>Multi-vectoral offensive operation against the defending country, based on the knowledge of its weaknesses gained during the <i>Preparations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mobilization of loyal local actors - Influencing of local population and international audience in such a manner that legitimizes the attacker and condemns the defender - Others <p>Dismantling of the defending state’s central power</p> <p>Establishment of surrogate political leadership</p> <p>Support of the new regime</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political, economic, military
<i>Stabilization</i>	<p>Legitimization of the new political leadership of the now controlled territory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The act of legitimization – referendum, elections etc. <p>Continued support of the new political leadership</p>

This operationalized description of Rácz’s hybrid warfare will be applied to the US conduct during OEF in Afghanistan 2001. In order for the case to be classified as a hybrid war, it should be able to be divided into three distinct sections, in which the outlined aspects of the sections will be observable. These aspects do not have to take place in any specific order in the boundaries of the sections.

3 Operation Enduring Freedom: the US defeat of Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan 2001

In order to reinterpret the US conduct during the opening stages of the Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan 2001 as a case of hybrid warfare, we first have to describe it, which will be the main content of this chapter. Its goal will be to not only cover the military actions that the US Armed Forces US conducted in Afghanistan, but also to inspect the broad spectrum of non-military actions that accompanied the US effort and strongly contributed to its overall effectiveness. In doing so it will draw on information sources produced in the years after the operation by experts or ex-participants of the operation, describing and analyzing the conduct of USA in Afghanistan in depth, as well as reports produced during the operation, namely the news coverage that surrounded the 9/11 and the subsequent US reaction, recovered through the Wayback Machine⁷. This combination of resources allows for a comprehensive description of the events which will later lead to their more accurate analysis in the later chapter.

This chapter is going to be divided as following: Firstly, there is going to be a short introduction to the historical context of Afghanistan leading to the US military intervention. Secondly, there is going to be a description of the US immediate reaction to the official casus belli, the infamous 9/11 attacks. Thirdly, the events preceding the official beginning of the US military campaign in Afghanistan are going to be described, mainly the US' preparations for the campaign. The fourth subchapter is going to describe the undergoing of the military campaign, as well as other non-military aspects of the US effort against Afghanistan. The sixth short chapter is going to focus on the short period after the campaign and the beginning of Afghan post-conflict reconstruction.

3.1 The Graveyard of Empires

The modern history of Afghanistan started to be written in the first half of the nineteenth century, when this territory on the north-eastern border of India caught the eye of its colonial masters, the British Empire. Being caught up in what later came to be known as “ The Great Game”, Afghanistan had to endure several British incursions into the country, which ended in 1878 when Afghanistan became a British protectorate (Barfield 2010, p. 139-148). Afghan gained

⁷ The Wayback Machine – Internet Archive is an internet archive, which collects hundreds of billions of webpages from today to up to two decades back. For more information, read: THE INTERNET ARCHIVE. About the Internet Archive. The Internet Archive: Wayback Machine [online]. 2021 [cit. 2021-4-28]. Available from: <https://archive.org/about/>

de-facto independence in 1919 after the end of third Anglo-Afghan war, however it was constantly mired by internal disputes and even embroiled in civil strife. After enjoying a relatively peaceful period in 1930s it entered a period of modernization, which however indirectly led to weakening of the existing monarchy, resulting in its dethroning in 1973, paradoxically by a member of royal family, Mohammad Daoud Khan, who became a head of the new government (Barfield 2010, p. 17-27, 139-148, 181, 183, 188, 207).

This coup kickstarted the almost continuous era of instability and chaos that engulfed Afghanistan well into the next century. Daud's regime was overtaken in 1978 by the Afghan communist Party (PDPA), leading to the establishment of heavily pro-Soviet Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. After some infighting, the PDPA engaged in radical industrial and social modernization of Afghanistan (Hilali 2005, p. 713), which however led to rebellions mainly in the rural areas of Afghanistan, forcing PDPA to ask USSR for help. Moscow delivered; however, the rebellions were already out of control and to make matters even worse, the PDPA started infighting again (Knabe 1988, p. 139).

The USSR, being long termed provider of military and economic aid to Afghanistan lost faith in its domestic leadership and, in the December of 1979, it militarily intervened. The invasion succeeded and new, pro-Moscow leadership was installed (Hilali 2003, p. 118-119). Soviets wanted to swiftly leave the country, however their new puppet-government had almost no popular support and it required the presence of a large Soviet military contingent in order to stay in power. (Hughes 2008, p. 327-329). This led to prolongment of the Soviet occupation combined with anti-insurgency fighting, that lasted well into year 1989. USSR's rival, the USA, exploited this and in effort to make the occupation into USSR's very own Vietnam war, supported the rebellion. Using Pakistan and its security services as a proxy, it financed armament, training, and on the ground military support to the mujahedeen rebels. This support was undoubtedly one of the strongest elements contributing to the Soviet ultimate withdrawal (Hancock & Wexler 2014, p. 335, 338, 341-342). After the war finally ended, Afghanistan was left in shambles.

The fighting in Afghanistan was, however, far from over. The Soviet occupation, amongst other things, completely disrupted the almost 100 years of political centralization in Afghanistan and effectively led to establishment of new powerful regional leaders, previous resistance fighters against Soviet occupation. With the central power further weakened and discredited, thanks to its collaboration with Soviet Union, which ceased to exist soon after it is retreated from Afghanistan, it did not take long before Afghanistan de-facto descended into warlordism. This escalated in 1992, when one of the most notable mujahideen, Ahmad Shah Masoud, captured Kabul, toppling

the now completely impotent central government and unintentionally kickstarting a lengthy civil war (Barfield 2010, p. 245-249).

The country was in dismal conditions after the lengthy occupation, and the civil war only worsened them. The continuing violence and economic problems put a heavy strain on the already battered Afghan population, which grew tired of the ongoing conflict and wished for peace and stability. It was in these conditions, that a new player came to the scene – the Pakistan supported religious movement called Taliban. Presenting themselves as heralds of peace and stability, Taliban gained a large base of support in the southern part of Afghanistan and under the leadership of its military and religious ruler, Mullah Omar, took control of Kandahar in 1994 (Barfield 2010, p. 257). Taliban used a clever rhetoric, blaming the local mujahedeen leaders of inability to maintain order and security in the country. It then based its legitimacy on doing just that – upholding law and order for which it indeed gained a large amount of sympathy, from the average Afghans. Taliban at first also cleverly held back on enforcing its radical Islamic laws, as to not tarnish its public image (Barfield 2010, p. 257).

After the consolidation of its new gains, Taliban commenced another phase of its expansion, taking city Ghazni in 1995 (Barfield 2010, p. 258). After a tough fight, Taliban also captured Kabul in September 1996. Shortly after, the remaining Afghan warlords formed the “United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan” further called the “Northern Alliance” to face their common enemy (Barfield 2010, p. 260). Its most powerful members at this point were Ahmad Shah Masoud, Ismail Khan and Rashid Dostum, who held a northern part of Afghanistan. In the following years, however, the situation became even more difficult for them, as Taliban successfully expanded north-east, taking the city of Herat in 1998, and effectively controlling around 90% of Afghanistan’s territory. Taliban’s successes were the result of severe fragmentation of Afghanistan’s political leadership, staunch Pakistani support, as well as support of international religious extremists, which filled Taliban’s ranks with well-motivated and trained troops. They also sponsored Taliban financially (Barfield 2010, p. 260).

After its victories, Taliban established a harsh theocracy in Afghanistan which soon led to steep decline of its popularity and international condemnation. Only three countries, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, ever established diplomatic relations with Taliban’s Afghanistan, and the latter two soon suspended them due to its conduct. However, Taliban’s grip on the country was still strong (Barfield 2010, p. 261-268). Things only changed when Al-Qaeda, a terror organization and staunch Taliban ally located in Afghanistan, orchestrated its infamous

attacks on USA in the September of 2001. After that, Afghanistan again came into the center of the world's attention and later became a target of USs retaliation.

3.2 11th September 2001 and the US plan of retaliation:

Osama bin Laden was in US sights for a long time as his Al-Qaeda perpetrated several terror attacks against US-related targets all around the world (Reuters 2011). Beginning in the 1998, USA started to pressure Afghanistan into extraditing him, which Mullah Omar strictly refused. After the 11th of September 2001 this attitude, however, became further untenable. It was on this day when 19 members of Al-Qaeda abducted four commercial flight planes in the USA, using them to conduct the most destructive terror attacks in the modern history. Crashing two of them into the World Trade Center in New York and one in the building of Pentagon⁸, Al-Qaeda caused death of almost 3000 people and shook the US confidence in its foundations (Britannica 2011). To describe the full extent of the 11th of September attacks' influence on the USA and the world affairs in general would require a separate thesis, however, it certainly can be said that that it was severe. Of course, an attack of this magnitude could not have been left without a response and the USA almost immediately started to plan their reaction.

The major question that the US leadership had to answer, was what exactly this response should look like. The US intelligence services were quick to identify Osama bin Laden as the perpetrator of the devastating attacks, naming him as the prime suspect on the same day as the twin towers fell (CNN 2001a), the most obvious goal hence was to bring him, and any of his collaborators, to justice. How to do it, however? Bin Laden was still located in the Taliban-controlled part of Afghanistan, a hard to reach region, even if the Taliban regime was cooperative with the USA, which it most certainly was not. How to overcome this obstacle? Should USA try to leverage their soft power capabilities and use diplomacy to make Taliban hand bin Laden willingly over, or should they rather use their overwhelming military superiority to attack Taliban directly and get Osama bin Laden, dead or alive? Another question was whether the US response should be limited only to bin Laden's capture/liquidation, or whether it should be more comprehensive, dealing with the Taliban regime who provided bin Laden with the base of operation, necessary for the organization of the attacks, or maybe even the issue of world terrorism altogether? It was very soon decided that the USA would choose the comprehensive approach. Utilizing a wide range of US national power elements – diplomatic, informational, military, and

⁸ The fourth plane crashed into the ground near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, after its passengers found out what happened in New York and Pentagon and rose up against their kidnappers.

economic (Wright et al 2010, p. 28), it would wage what would soon become known as the “War on Terror” and the particular operation aimed at dealing with Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan would be just its opening stage.

3.3 11th September – 7th October, preparations on all fronts

As mentioned before, the USA had been taking notice of the Al-Qaeda’s activities for a long time, specifically with specific focus on its leader. CIA had allegedly received a kill order for bin Laden as far back as in 1998 (Hancock & Wexler 2014, p. 460), however, it had never been fulfilled, as bin Laden was notoriously hard to track, and never stayed in one place for too long.

The hunt for bin Laden was not entirely a failure, however, as during its course, CIA managed to establish a reliable network of contacts within the Afghanistan itself as well as to gain significant amount of intelligence, regarding local actors, culture, economic situation, and the living conditions in general. This, in combination with its previous expertise on Afghanistan, gained during the support of Mujahedeen fighters against the Soviets in the 1980s, put the CIA in an ideal position to head the first operations in the framework of the new US campaign into Afghanistan (Hancock & Wexler 2014, p. 460, 466). On the 17th of September, then-director of CIA, George Tenet, received presidential approval for the CIA to employ lethal force in order to disrupt al-Qaeda worldwide, as well as to operate freely on the territory of Afghanistan (Lambeth 2005, p. 45-49).

After much debate, based on the available knowledge of Taliban’s strengths and weaknesses, the CIA settled on the tested method of waging warfare against a remote target, with as limited usage of the US “boots on the ground” as possible, successfully tested in the earlier stages of the Laos and Vietnam campaigns. This method combined conventional and unconventional military means, overt and covert, with intense intelligence-related activities. It relied on a mix of highly trained CIA specialists and operatives that would be covertly inserted into Afghanistan itself. There, they would gather as much intelligence on the enemy as possible as well as mobilize local actors, dissatisfied with the rule of the central government, the US enemy. Those indigenous fighters would then be supported by inserted US specialists, as well as the precision firepower that of the US air force. The goal of this strategy was to wage warfare as effectively as possible, with as little US involvement as possible, the brunt of fighting was to be done by the indigenous forces (Hancock & Wexler 2014, p. 466-468).

The United States Central Command⁹, which was to be naturally involved in the campaign as well, came to similar conclusion, although due to its different organization and overall nature, it took it severely longer time to agree on the exact way in which to engage. In the end, however, it decided to take on similar “minimalist” approach of its deployment that counted on small squads on the ground in Afghanistan, comprised of soldiers of Special Forces and Air Force’s combat air controllers¹⁰ which would assist the Northern Alliance’s troops with intelligence and air support (Wright 2010, p. 43-44).

Until today it is not entirely clear, to which extent did CIA and CENTCOM coordinated their efforts. We can say for sure that during the planning phase, the two organizations had to cooperate – it was for example impossible for CIA to ensure sufficient firepower for the planned air support of the ground force. In the operational phase, as will be elaborated later, the level of cooperation was probably much lower. Although they utilized similar methods when conducting military activities, and for sure engaged in intelligence sharing (Hancock & Wexler 2014, p. 473) the teams of Special Forces and CIA operatives did not seem to cooperate directly on the ground. They rather coexisted there, contributing to the later war effort in similar, yet slightly differing ways. For example, the CIA operatives had better abilities and position to collect intelligence, communicate with and influence the indigenous fighters on the ground, preparing suitable conditions for the Special Forces teams to arrive in, while those had more specialized equipment which allowed them to call in precise airstrikes (Hancock & Wexler 2014, p. 468-473).

Although in certain aspects difficult to execute, a strategy chosen seemed to be well-suited for the specific conditions of contemporary Afghanistan. Taliban’s rule made it increasingly unpopular amongst the ordinary population and in the north a staunch, relatively well organized, and motivated resistance group, the Northern Alliance, was still holding on to a small batch of territory. This meant that there certainly were many in Afghanistan, who could have been coerced into fighting Taliban and al-Qaeda. Of that was the latter seemingly aware, as on 9th of September, al-Qaeda’s operatives conducted a suicide attack, successfully targeting Ahmad Shah Masoud, then-main and arguably most capable commander of the Northern alliance¹¹ (Barfield 2010, p. 269). Nevertheless, this turned out to be a much less of an obstacle than initially thought, as number of other Northern Alliance commanders stepped up and took control of the organization. The most notable among those was Abdul Rashid Dostum (Williams 2010, p. 615).

⁹ CENTCOM

¹⁰ Specialists on the ground, able to navigate the precision strikes, be it in a form of cruise missile or a bombing run.

¹¹ Due to the closeness of both events time wise, it is hard not to draw connections between them, although it could have also been a coincidence, as Masoud’s assassination would fit into the overall picture of Al-Qaeda activities in then-Afghanistan.

While the preparations of the combined intelligence and military part of the campaign were in full swing, USA committed to its other components. The 9/11 attacks shook not only the USA but the whole world of which the USA were the only superpower, which naturally gave them a lot of traction. For several weeks, they became the “top story” all around the world – the news outlets filled their front pages with latest developments of the investigation and further development concerning the attacks, the politicians expressed their sorrow and support for the victims, as well as condemning the perpetrators. The USA naturally used this to their advantage and began to amass international support for their retaliation, a global initiative targeting the international terrorism, which soon gained the name “Operation Enduring Freedom”.

They swiftly secured the support of Pakistan, the original patron of Taliban, who was since its expression of support on 13th September actively pushing Taliban to heed US demands and extradite Osama bin Laden (CNN 2001b). USA also put up a great effort to gain support of other countries in the Afghan neighborhood, Russia, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, which was overall a success, as it was able to station troops in Uzbekistan on the 5th of October and establish collaborative relationship with Russia (CNN 2001d; Lambeth 2005, p. 27-29). Other Asian countries, China, Malaysia, Japan, India, New Zealand, Australia and others, were also swayed by the US effort and pledged their support, either moral or factual, to the global fight against terrorism (CNN 2001c). Mexico and other Latin American countries also soon stated their support of the USA, through The Organization of American States (CNN 2001j). Many Islamic states of the Middle East were also gained for the US effort, with the main focus of the USA being to assure them, that their campaign is not focused on Islam as a religion, but on the issue of international terrorism. President Bush himself made sure to outline this fact many times, notably on his 20th September Presidential Address (Wright 2010, p. 30-31) and even the name of the operation itself, “Enduring Freedom”, was a result of change from the original “Infinite Justice”, due to its connotation with Islamic religion (Lambeth 2005, p. 52-53). It is said that USA counted on the US traditional ally, Saudi Arabia, to help in this endeavor (CNN 2001f). And indeed it was Saudi Arabia, together with Kuwait, who proved as staunch allies, offering USA to use their territory in order to support their campaign (Lambeth 2005, p. 33). NATO countries, of course, were also quick to support the USA, most active among them being Tony Blair’s United Kingdom. The 9/11 attack was officially classified as an attack of foreign power, targeting NATO member-state, hence invoking the article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which obliged all other NATO member-states to join USA in the defense (Gordon 2002).

US’s diplomatic endeavor was supported by its effort in the field of strategic communication. Due to the aforementioned reasons – the shock value of the 9/11 attacks – the

USA and their reaction to the attack received a lot of media exposure. USA, again, naturally leveraged this to their advantage and were able to push their message, regarding the issue, to the international audience virtually unopposed, without the other side of the conflict, Al-Qaeda and later Taliban, being able to disrupt or undermine their narrative. Based on their diplomatic successes, it is safe to say that USA were successful in establishing bin Laden's responsibility for the attacks as an undeniable fact long before they even presented their allies with any actual evidence, which did not happen until the 2nd of October (CNN 2001). They also very quickly and clearly communicated to the world audience the way in which they would react to this attack, with Colin Powell, then secretary of state, declaring on the 12th of September that the USA will hold the perpetrators of the attack accountable, and anybody who would support them would be treated as if he was a part of their organization (Lambeth 2005, p. 14). Furthermore, the USA framed the 9/11 attacks as an act of war, when President Bush declared on 15th of September that the USA are at war with "terrorists" (Lambeth 2005, p. 14), further upping the stakes and urgency of the situation. The USA continued to escalate their rhetoric, specifically towards Taliban, demanding the extradition of Osama bin Laden (CNN 2001n). USA hence aptly used their "communicative advantage" to narratively corner Taliban, presenting themselves as not wanting to attack it, however willing to do so, if it would not hand over the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks. With that, the USA not only completely controlled the information space of the soon-to-be conflict but also prepared their position for further military actions against Taliban.

Another aspect of the US preparation for future campaign, was their effort to deprive their opponents – Taliban and the Al-Qaeda – of their financial flows. Previously overlooked issue of the terror group's financing was now brought up and USA took specific measures to derive Al-Qaeda of money, such as adopting President Bush's Executive Order 13224 which allowed the US government to freeze assets of foreign entities that committed or were in a risk of committing terrorism (Wright 2010, p. 31). They also pushed for a UN Security Council Resolution no.1373, demanding any country to stop its support for entities financing terror organization (The UN Security Council 2001a). The USA was also considering targeting drug production and drug trade flowing from Afghanistan, which was deemed as an important source of terror-funding (CNN 2001g).

During all of this, the hard-power related aspects of the operation were finally set in motion. Just a little more than a week after the 9/11 attacks, the first CIA team, codenamed "Jawbreaker" was on its way to Afghanistan. The exact date of its entry into the country is still unclear, however, we can say for sure, that on 19th of September, the team reached the capital city of Uzbekistan, Tashkent (Hancock & Wexler 2014, p. 468), from where it continued to the Afghan

territory, controlled by the Northern Alliance. The team itself was quite small and highly professional, its goals were to link up with the Alliance's leaders, assure them of the US willingness to support them and help them to coerce other tribes in the region to mount an offensive against Taliban. In order to achieve these goals, the Jawbreaker was "equipped" with \$3 Million in cash, in case that some tribal leaders needed an extra stimulus for their contribution and for Northern Alliance leaders to be able to pay their troops. Additionally, Jawbreaker was supposed to collect intelligence of any kind, relevant for the continued fight against Taliban, most notably IMINT¹², which was crucial to the planned precision strikes that were to be conducted by the US air force (Hancock & Wexler 2014, p. 468-470; Lambeth 2005, p. 70-72).

The military was not far behind the CIA, as since the 19th of September there have been a significant buildup of the US vessels, airplanes, and sailors in the broader region of the Middle East, stationing themselves in the allied bases in the region, mainly in Saudi Arabia, Oman and in French and British bases in the region as well, secured during the diplomatic preparation by the USA. On 20th of September, the leadership of US Central Command Air Forces¹³ was moved to the base in Saudi Arabia, preparing the necessary conditions for the commencing of the air campaign. Furthermore, in the beginning of October, more than 1000 members of the specialized US Army's 10th Mountain Division arrived in bases in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. (Lambeth 2005, p. 58, 64-66, 69)

The strikes themselves begun on the night of the 7th of October, when the US and GB planes begun their attacks on the previously outlined Taliban and Al-Qaeda related targets – training camps and other military installations. The Operation Enduring Freedom has officially begun (Wright et. al. 2010, p. 63).

3.4 7th October – 5th December, the OEF commences

Without any official declaration of war, the USA was now conducting overt military actions against Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, in combination with the covert ones previously outlined. The opening salvos of the war were targeted based on the previously gathered intelligence, hitting Taliban radars as well as the supposed headquarters of its armed forces (Lambeth 2005, p. 79-80). As mentioned before, the airstrikes were supposed to be one of the two major aspects of the military effort of the US in this conflict. However, the second main aspect,

¹² Imagery Intelligence.

¹³ CENTAF

the small teams of special forces on the ground, that would navigate those strikes as well as support the indigenous fighters from the Northern Alliance on the ground, were still for the most part missing. This was to be changed very quickly.

Another part of Jawbreaker's responsibilities was to lay ground for an arrival of additional specialist teams, some comprised by CIA members while some of the members of US special forces and Air Force. While the former started to covertly arrive sometime around the middle of the October, the former arrived in its second half, with the first two special forces units, ODA¹⁴ 555 and ODA 595 arriving on the 19th of October and immediately linking up with the local Northern Alliance commanders. From now on, they would support the Northern Alliance troops in several ways: Firstly, they would provide them with advice concerning the best possible approach against both Taliban and Al-Qaeda, as the members of the Special Forces teams had an extensive experience with regards to military affairs. Secondly, they would directly support Northern Alliance troops, sometimes taking direct role in the regular combat, as well as conducting targeted raids against enemy high-value targets. Thirdly, the Special Forces teams brought with themselves the specific equipment, necessary for the effective tactical navigation of the precision strikes directly on the Taliban battle positions (Wright et. al. 2010, p. 67, 68, 73-75; Hancock & Wexler 2014, p. 470)

The collaboration between the members of Special Forces and Northern Alliance soldiers proved to be effective, as they were soon able to start pushing Taliban back at an unexpected rate. Thanks to the monetary and moral support that the USA provided to the Northern Alliance, its commanders were able to mobilize sufficient number of fighters, which, supported by the activities of US Special Forces and coalition airstrikes, proved to be an effective military force. Their potential increased exponentially as more and more US Special Forces teams arrived in Afghanistan during late October and early November. The first major battle that proved this effectiveness took place on 5th of November Darya Suf¹⁵ in the Northern Afghanistan, soon followed by capture of Mazar-e Sharif on the 10th of November and surrender of Kunduz on the November 23rd which basically led to total collapse of Taliban in the Northern Afghanistan. (Knarr & Frost 2010, p. V-1 – V-31; Wright et. al. 2010, p. 73-82)

In the South-eastern part of the country, the story was quite similar. Already on the night from 20th to 21st of October, the US special forces captured a strategic airfield 50 miles from

¹⁴ ODA stands for "Operational Detachment Alphas" and encompasses a small, versatile team consisting of 12 soldiers of the US Special Forces. For more information, read U.S. ARMY. Special Forces. U.S. Army [online]. 2021 [cit. 2021-04-09]. Available from: <https://www.goarmy.com/special-forces/team-members.html>

¹⁵ Sometimes also the Valley of Caves.

Kandahar, which then served as a strategic position for the coalition planes conducting operations against Taliban (Lambeth 2005, p. 96). On the 14th of November, Kabul fell to another force of Northern Alliance, assisted by teams of US Special Forces (Wright et. al. 2010, p. 96-97). At this time, the USA also made an alliance with Hamid Karzai, one of the future leaders of post-Taliban Afghanistan, who they supported with weapons, supplies and finally with another team of Special Forces, ODA 574, inserted here in the early-to-mid November. Together, they secured a strategic town of Tarin Kowt on 16th November and with the help of additional US Special Forces teams, namely ODA 583 and local allies, most important of which was Gul Agha Sherzai, they encircled and finally took Kandahar on the 7th of December (Wright et. al. 2010, p. 98, 100-105, 111-112). This effectively concluded the military actions against Taliban in the first phase of the Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, ending with its defeat

While the US Air Force continued to conduct the precision strikes and the Special Forces teams on the ground supported the Northern Alliance and other local allies, it is worth mentioning other sections of the US military that were focusing on a different aspect of war effort altogether. As a part of the psychological warfare, the so-called PSYOPS, the US leadership was trying to capture the “hearts and minds” of the average members of Afghan population. The main way of doing so was to explain to them, why are the coalition forces attacking their country, and emphasizing the fact, that neither the USA, nor any other member of the coalition forces has anything against them and that their grudge is with Taliban and, most importantly, Al-Qaeda.

The members of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda were also targeted, with intent to undermine their morale by accenting their inevitable defeat by conventionally much stronger coalition forces. There were two major means in which this message was spread. First, even before the start of the air campaign, on the 5th of October, the USA were broadcasting radio transmissions across Afghanistan. They were narrated in both Dari and Pashto languages¹⁶, accompanied by the thematic Afghan music, intended to underline the severe tone of the message and after the destruction of the Taliban radio transmitters, USA started to transmit even on its frequency. Since only small portion of Afghan population had access to radio, the US Air Force started to airdrop small portable radios for ordinary Afghans to pick up. However, the most prominent role of the US Air Force in the OEF’s PSYOPS part, was the dissemination of paper leaflets, containing the aforementioned messages (Wright et. al. 2010, p. 65, 66).

Another aspect of the US effort, following the military campaign, was the airborne distribution of humanitarian rations to the average Afghans. The US Airforce undertook the task

¹⁶ Both official languages of Afghanistan.

with great intensity, dropping round 150 000 humanitarian rations during first 4 days of the air campaign (Wright et. al. 2010, p. 64-65, 82-83). While they sure were meant as a relief for the Afghans, from the abysmal conditions that they found themselves in in a war-torn country, it is also certain to say that they served as a part of the US aforementioned effort to reach the “hearts and minds” of Afghan citizens, underlining the fact that the war that USA waged was against the Al-Qaeda and Taliban, not Afghan people. The USA also used this as a part of their strategic communication effort, for example when Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, stressed the “broadness” of the US mission in Afghanistan (CNN 2001o).

3.5 5th December – July 2002, hunt for bin Laden and the establishment of the new Afghan government

With the fall of the last major city, the main portion of fighting with Taliban seemed to be over. However, the main goal of the USA, set when committing to the war effort, was not yet fulfilled – the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks have still not been brought to justice, far from it. This almost changed in the beginning of the December when the US intelligence got a memo that many members of Al-Qaeda and Taliban were moving to remote areas on the Afghan/Pakistani border, one of which was Tora Bora, a fortified complex of bunkers, where approximately 2500 Al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters were stationed. It was widely believed that leaders of both organizations, Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden, could have been stationed there. The CIA operatives and the newly inserted ODA 572 of US Special Forces quickly moved in with their local allies and commenced the attack on the 6th of December. While the battle overall was a success, as the defenders were in the end defeated, due to a poor coordination of between US and indigenous forces, and carelessness of the latter, many members of Al-Qaeda and Taliban were able to slip away from Tora Bora, Osama bin Laden being most probably among them¹⁷ (Wright et.al. 2010, p. 113-120).

While the US and their local allies unsuccessfully concluded their hunt for bin Laden, at least for now, the new interim Afghan government had to be formed. It was officially established on the 5th of December in Bonn, Germany, where there was a meeting of several most notable members of anti-Taliban resistance. With Taliban not being invited to this conference, it was up to this varied group of local political leaders, bureaucrats, and intellectuals, to decide on the new government of Afghanistan. The differing nature of the actors present in Bonn, would suggest

¹⁷ It was later concluded that Mullah Omar was probably never located at Tora Bora.

that the process was to be lengthy and difficult, however that was, in the end, not the case. The USA played a crucial role during the negotiations in Bonn, mainly through the personality of their envoy to the Afghanistan's political delegation, Ambassador James Dobbins. Thanks to the bilateral meetings he held with the members of different Afghan political groups, he was able to influence them in order to find a solution to the power vacuum that would be accommodating to all of them (Fields & Ahmed 2011, p. 1-3). The assembled Afghan elite then chose to construct the new government of Afghanistan in such a way, which would accommodate a wide range of power brokers in then-Afghanistan. The resulting body was headed by Hamid Karzai and its key posts were taken by other local leaders. However, the most influential ones were given to the previous members of the Northern Alliance and other US allies (The UN Security Council 2001b).

This government was to be provisional and lead the country through the post-conflict reconstruction until the time when the proper democratic elections could be held. Until then, the legitimacy of the interim government was to be derived from the decision of "Loya Jirga", an assembly of fifteen hundred representatives from the whole Afghanistan, who gathered in Kabul in July 2002 and confirmed the legitimacy of this interim government (Barfield 2010, p. 283-284, 294, 295, 297). Nevertheless, the government gained international support through the UN Security Council's Resolution 1383, adopted on the 6th of December, which supported the new government and called for all Afghans to implement the results of the Bonn agreement (The UN Security Council 2001c).

Since this new Afghan government was comprised by many of the US local allies, it is unsurprising that it was strongly supported by them. Firstly, they provided it with a continuous military support as a part of the International Security Assistance Force, established by the UN Resolution 1386. As a part of a broader effort of war against terror, the US soldiers allocated there were to support the interim government with upholding security in the country, training Afghan military and other related tasks (UN Security Council 2001d). At its high point in 2011, the USA had around 98 000 soldiers in Afghanistan (Garamone 2021). Secondly, since USA made the humanitarian aspect an important part of their campaign in Afghanistan, they were naturally interested in its post-conflict reconstruction. Beginning almost immediately after the formation of the new government, the USA provided it with strong economic support. President Bush himself went on the record to liken the US effort to the Marshall Plan, referring both to its ambitions and goals (Donovan, 2002). Although its effectiveness is often disputed, the total amount of US aid to Afghanistan reached up to \$50 billion in 2010 (Tarnoff 2010 p.1) and is continuing to grow up until today (US Department of State 2021).

4 The reinterpretation of the US conduct during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan through the hybrid warfare lenses

In the previous chapters, this thesis delved into the Andrász Rácz's understanding of the hybrid warfare, its aspects, and important features, as well as the conduct of USA before and during the opening phases of the OEF in Afghanistan. In this chapter, the results of the previous will be combined, as the US behavior during the opening stages of the Operation Enduring Freedom will be reinterpreted through the concept of hybrid warfare operationalized earlier.

The chapter will proceed as follows: Firstly, based on the framework established in the Conceptual section of this thesis, the US actions as described previously will be reinterpreted accordingly to three phases of the operationalized concept of hybrid warfare – the *Preparations*, *Offensive* and *Stabilization* – and examined for the presence of the defined aspects as of those phases. After that, this chapter will deal with results of this analysis and its meaning for our understanding of nature of hybrid warfare.

4.1 Preparations

This section of hybrid warfare encompasses attacker's activities prior to the beginning of the overtly hostile phase of the conflict. The focus here hence is on various scouting, intelligence, and pressure activities, mostly unrelated to attacker's military capabilities.

4.1.1 Mapping the targeted country for weaknesses

The USA, namely its external intelligence service, the CIA, has had a been interested in both Al-Qaida and Afghanistan long before its engagement in 2001. CIA specifically played a crucial role in the support of Mujahedeen rebels in the 1980s, and although it didn't operate on the ground in Afghanistan in any severe way back then, it is reasonable to expect that it was still able to collect considerable amount of intelligence on the country (Hancock & Wexler 2014, p. 339-340). The Afghanistan arguably never left the CIA's sights, as in the late 90s, CIA begun to closely interest itself in the country again, because of bin Laden's presence there. In its hunt for the terrorist, CIA sent its agents into the field, establishing contacts with members of anti-Taliban alliance, a logical ally in its hunt for bin-Laden as al-Qaeda was in league with Taliban. The result of this effort was a network of Afghan informants that loosely monitored bin Laden's movement

(Hancock & Wexler 2014, p. 460). CIA had also started to utilize UAVs for the purposes of intelligence collection in Afghanistan (Hancock & Wexler 2014, p. 462).

After the 9/11, when the USA started to conceive their plan to attack al-Qaeda and Taliban in Afghanistan, which we know happened several days after the attacks themselves (Hancock & Wexler 2014, p. 462), the effort to reveal their weak points was escalated. CIA inserted its covert teams into the country long before the official beginning of the campaign, to, besides other things, further collecting intelligence. However this time, its focus was mainly on Taliban, specifically on the exact positioning of Taliban troops in the northern Afghanistan (Hancock & Wexler 2014, p. 468-470).

Based on the available information, we can say that the USA had a very good picture of the overall situation in Afghanistan prior to the beginning of the Operation Enduring Freedom. They had an accurate overview of the power relations between local power brokers as well as a substantial amount of information on the fixed Taliban military targets in Afghanistan. This means, that the USA were very well aware of the weaknesses of their enemies in Afghanistan, and as will the further chapters describe, they were able to fully exploit them.

4.1.2 Establishing ties and alliances with local actors

Aside from the aforementioned network of spies gained by the CIA in Afghanistan, the USA have established a very strong ties with the most significant anti-Taliban force in Afghanistan – the Northern Alliance. As previously described in-depth, the USA were in contact and later in collaboration with this organization, sending aforementioned Jawbreaker team there, possibly as soon as on 19th September (Hancock & Wexler 2014, p. 468). These operatives had been explicitly tasked with establishment of friendly ties with the leaders of Northern Alliance and were specifically chosen and equipped to do so – they had knowledge of local language and customs as well as \$3 million to bribe local authorities if their level of cooperativeness was not as high as the USA or the Northern Alliance wanted it to be (Hancock & Wexler 2014, p. 468).

4.1.3 Mobilization of assets accordingly to the found weaknesses

It is undeniable that the USA has planned thoroughly its advance against Afghan regime, based on the intelligence they had available. While this thesis does not have access to the resources regarding the exact course of the US decision making process, when coming up with the strategy

to attack al-Qaeda and Taliban in Afghanistan, based on the assets mobilized prior to the attack itself, we can derive the weaknesses they strived to exploit.

Firstly, the USA moved a large amount of their military forces in the vicinity of Afghanistan. Their ships arrived in the international waters in the Arab Sea and Persian Gulf, airplanes were stationed in the allied bases in the region and finally, the land forces were stationed at the previously diplomatically secured bases in the Central Asian republics (Lambeth 2005, p. 58, 64-66, 69). Since the USA was the world only superpower back in 2001, it is safe to assume that it did not perceive the Taliban forces as particularly strong in respect to their own military might. The Taliban's armament was quite rudimental and although it possessed some relatively advanced weapons, such as jet planes and air-defense systems (Air Force Historical Research Agency 2002, p. 3) their severely limited quantity gave them no real ability to effectively stand against the US Armed forces in a conventional fight.

Secondly, the USA utilized their capability to strategically communicate, securing the information environment and promoting their message to the international audience and gaining its support for its further actions. Thanks to its theocratic and overall violent nature (Barfield 2010, p. 261-263), the Taliban government in Afghanistan had a bad reputation internationally, with United Nations regularly calling it out on its violation of human rights, especially those of women (Economic and Social Council 2000). Its ally, al-Qaeda was a designated terror organization, hence they both had a very weak international appeal, leading to a weak position to influence the international narrative surrounding the crisis after the 9/11. The USA on the other hand, were considered as a paragon of democratic values, enjoying one of the highest approval rates amongst the population of other countries (Wike et. al. 2020), their position in this regard was hence very strong. The fact that they were under attack by one of the internationally recognized "bad actor", supported by other "bad actor" just made it easier for the USA to exploit the Taliban/al-Qaeda weakness.

Thirdly, the USA activated their diplomatic assets, in order to secure an international support aimed against international terrorism, starting with the Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. Somewhat linked to the previous weakness, Taliban had almost nonexistent international relations. With its ruling class having no experience with diplomacy and being driven by religious motives, Taliban found it difficult to establish any external ties, with only three countries, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, ever doing so (Barfield 2010, p. 263-268). Its international diplomatic position was hence its weakness, which the USA, again, were able to fully exploit, as they were able to secure support of many countries for their future campaign,

including its NATO allies, traditional allies in the Persian Gulf, Russia, and other key states in the vicinity of the Afghanistan itself.

4.1.4 Perpetration of first limited pressure operations against the targeted state

Before the start of the military campaign, the USA exerted pressure against Afghanistan in several ways, linked to the mobilized assets of national power, outlined previously. Firstly, it was the information pressure. As described beforehand, the USA leveraged the “shock value” of 9/11 and were able to completely control the information space surrounding their conflict with al-Qaeda and Taliban. This allowed them to rhetorically pressure Taliban to hand over Osama bin Laden in front of the world audience (CNN 2001b), with Taliban having no legitimate and coherent way of facing this pressure, due to its low credibility and overall bad reputation internationally.

Linked to this was second vector of pressure which had a diplomatic character. In their effort to quench the international terrorism, USA started to form a wide coalition of states which would support their endeavor, whose first target was to be the Taliban controlled Afghanistan. This support would take many forms, some states would contribute only rhetorically, some with intelligence, however some, such as the Great Britain, promised to contribute with military assets. Even Pakistan, the “patron” of Taliban, was coerced by the USA into pressuring Taliban to comply with the US demands and extradite bin Laden (CNN 2001b).

Third pressure vector was connected to the aforementioned military buildup of the USA. As mentioned previously, the USA started to move naval, aerial and land military elements in the region of the Middle East, sometimes in the direct neighborhood of the Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. This for sure was a strong signal that the USA was willing to engage with anybody who would stand in their way towards punishing al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.

Lastly, it is worth it to mention the fourth vector that was indirectly aimed at the Taliban and al-Qaeda’s economic assets. USA adopted the Presidential Executive Order 13224, allowing them to freeze any assets of foreign entities, suspected to be linked to international terrorism (Wright 2010, p. 31), and pushed for UN resolution 1373 that would prohibit any country from supporting terror organizations (UN Security Council 2001a).

4.2 Offensive

This section of hybrid warfare encompasses the direct pressure operations against the defender, when the attacker makes use of the position built up during the previous section. The attacker will utilize the assets it mobilized during the *Preparations* in order to exploit any offensive vector that he outlined previously.

4.2.1 Overt and covert military actions

The military aspect of the USAs attack on Afghanistan was the most powerful of all the instruments of national power they used during the whole conflict. They could be divided into two distinct parts. The first were the covert military actions taken against the Taliban regime, which took form of precise airstrikes conducted with the use of air dropped ordnance as well as cruise missiles. Beginning on the 7th of October (Wright et. al. 2010, p. 63), they firstly destroyed several strategic targets outlined thanks to the previously acquired intelligence, such as Taliban radars and military compounds (Lambeth 2005, p. 79-80). They ravaged the Taliban military forces virtually unopposed, because the Talib anti-air capabilities were destroyed in a first wave of attacks (Air Force Historical Research Agency 2002, p. 3). The US planes struck from the bases around Afghanistan as well as the Aircraft carriers located in the international waters, where they were previously stationed.

Around two weeks later, the USA inserted their first Special Forces teams to Afghanistan, namely ODA 555 and ODA 595 which, in combination with the CIA teams already present, assisted the forces of the Northern Alliance, previously convinced to join the fighting. Presence of those teams not only increased the effectivity of the airstrikes, as they brought with themselves specialized experts and equipment which allowed for their better accuracy, but also that of the native anti-Taliban fighters(Wright et. al. 2010, p.73-75). Those were then used as a reliable land force, which the USA supported with both overt and covert military means.

4.2.2 Mobilization of loyal local allies

The local actors were one of the crucial elements of the US ultimate success in the conflict. The Northern Alliance and later other unrelated anti-Taliban groups in the south of the country, comprised the bulk of terrestrial fighting force the USA utilized during this conflict, supporting it with only a handful of Special Forces soldiers and CIA operatives. The majority of the indigenous

fighters were located in the north of Afghanistan, where the USA contacted them, paid them and ultimately supported their advance against the Taliban positions further south. This collaborative effort bore first fruits in the beginning of November, when the Northern Alliance won the first major battles against Taliban in Darya Surf. Just several days later, it captured first major Afghan city, Mazar-e Sharif, and since then, the string of similar successes followed until the Kabul fell on the 14th of November (Knarr & Frost 2010, p. V-1 – V-31). In the south, the USA gained other indigenous allies, unrelated to the Northern Alliance, whom they helped to encircle and finally capture Kabul, which was the last major city still in hands of the Taliban (Wright et. al. 2010, p. 98, 100-105, 111-112).

4.2.3 Influencing of local population and international audience in such manner that legitimizes the attacker and condemns the defender

The USA continued in their “rhetorical warfare” against Taliban, however not in such an intensity as before the attack itself, as by this time, the narrative favoring the USA in the conflict was already established. This can be seen very clearly, as there was no relevant backlash from the international community, when the USA started to bomb Afghanistan. Aside from its efforts to gain international support for its cause, however, the USA also tried to gain favor of the local population in Afghanistan itself. As a part of their PSYOPS, the USA used several different means to reach to the locals, explaining to them why exactly they were conducting attacks against their country, that their goal was not to hurt Afghan people but to remove the radical Taliban who was harboring terrorists who attacked the USA prior. There were two main ways of how to get this message across: First, the USA were broadcasting radio messages, specifically produced to be appealing to the average Afghans – spoken in local languages and accompanied by traditional music, to increase their emotional weight. Second, the US Air Force was dropping thousands of leaflets containing the message across the whole Afghanistan, again, written in native languages and in such a manner which increased their effectiveness (Wright et. al. 2010, p. 65-66).

In the context of the US effort to influence both indigenous and global audience, its humanitarian effort should also be mentioned. The USA allocated considerable amounts of finances as well as assets in order to provide the Afghan population with at least basic nutrition, in order to improve their poor living standards (Wright et. al. 2010, p. 82-83). While surely meant altruistically, the humanitarian airdrops could be very easily seen as another part of US effort to present itself in a positive way, both internationally and to the Afghan population. Internationally, the humanitarian aid could have helped to balance the violent actions of the USA, putting a

somewhat “humanitarian spin” on the whole campaign, which is something that namely Donald Rumsfeld did on at least one occasion (CNN 2001o). And of course, the aid could have had improved the overall image of the USA amongst the Afghan citizens, who, although living in fear of the attacks of US Air Force’s warplanes, had the opportunity to somewhat improve their living conditions thanks to US help.

4.2.4 Dismantling of the state’s central power

The USA skillfully used their indigenous allies, who they supported, to root Taliban out of Afghanistan. By methodically targeting their most important bastions and cities, the Taliban military was defeated in just several weeks, its effective resistance being broken on the 23rd of November, when the Kunduz and its garrison surrendered (Wright et. al. 2010, p. 73-82). After the fall of other major Taliban holdings in the south, most notably the city of Kandahar, one of the first major Taliban conquests back in the late 1990s, the only organized Taliban resistance moved to the complicated terrain of the Afghan-Pakistani border (Wright et. al. 2010, p. 111-112, 113-120). With the defeat of its military, the Taliban government was completely without any protection or support, its allies deserting them and switching sides to the winners. Members of Taliban hence had very limited options with regards to what to do next – either to flee the country, enter illegality or outright capitulate to the victorious attackers. As a result of US actions, Taliban government completely ceased to exist (Barfield 2010, p. 269-270).

4.2.5 Establishment of surrogate political leadership

After the fall of Taliban regime, the new interim government was established. This happened on the 5th of December during the international conference in Bonn, Germany, where members of all anti-Taliban forces in Afghanistan met in order to decide on the new government of Afghanistan. The US diplomatic delegation was also present, mainly through the envoy James Dobbins and strongly influenced the negotiating process, through bilateral dealings with various parties within the Afghan elite (Ahmed & Fields 2011, p.1-3). As the result, a wide, almost National Front-like interim governing body was then established, headed by a major US ally Hamid Karzai and filled majorly with members of Northern Alliance and other allies of the USA, who previously assisted them to dethrone Taliban (UN Security Council 2001b). The legitimacy of this government was then strengthened by the UN Security Council Resolution no.1383 (UN Security Council 2001c), which fully supported the implementation of the Bonn Agreement. While we do not have any tangible evidence regarding the negotiating process behind the draft of

this resolution, based on the dominant position of USA in the international affairs of the early 2000s, the diplomatic backing they acquired during the several months prior to draft of this resolution and the prestige they acquired after the decisive defeat of Taliban regime in Afghanistan, it is safe to assume that the USA had a strong position during the construction of this Resolution. Its contents also seem to be in line with then-US interests, which arguably was to solidify international recognition of the new Afghan regime which had good relations with the USA.

It is hence safe to conclude that while the USA was not the sole international force behind the establishment and recognition of the new government, they surely strongly influenced the negotiation process. Through their diplomatic delegation, they were able to do so in such a way that the results of the dealings would fall in line with the US interests and that the US allies would play a crucial role in the further political development in Afghanistan.

4.2.6 Support of the new regime

After its establishment, which itself was to certain degree US achievement, the new Afghan regime was supported by the USA in 3 major ways. First was the political support, embodied by the supportive UN Security Council Resolution no. 1383, of which the USA was a member, and the overall role that the USA played in the formation of the new government, described previously. Second was the military support, which was realized in the framework of the Security Assistance Force, through which the USA maintained a sizeable military contingent in the country, upholding security and performing other tasks, such as training the Afghan Army (UN Security Council 2001d). Third area of support was the US continuous financial support of the post-Taliban Afghanistan. Since the USA used the humanitarian effort in Afghanistan as one of the justifications for its attack, there was a strong incentive on their part to show the commitment to the improvement of the living conditions in Afghanistan. As can be seen, the USA delivered, as they provided Afghanistan with substantial amount of financial aid, reaching \$50 Billion in 2010 and further growing until today (Tarnoff 2010, p. 1).

4.3 Stabilization

This section of hybrid warfare is akin to an epilogue of its course. At this point, the attacker achieved his strategic goals, he is control of the targeted territory and established a new leadership

there, with which he has very good relations and which he supports in many ways. The last thing that he now needs to do, is to legitimize the new leadership of the territory.

4.3.1 Legitimization of the new political leadership of the defending country

While the USA did help immensely to secure the international recognition of the new Afghan regime, the legitimacy of the interim government itself had to be solidified inside of the Afghanistan itself. It seems that the USA relied on its allies in the government, namely Hamid Karzai, to find the most appropriate way of achieving internal legitimacy, which he sought to do through the assembly of Loya Jirga. This was a convention of thousand and a half notable figures from all of Afghanistan, representing the different ethnic as well as religious groups in the country. Of course, convention of such magnitude was not easy to organize, especially in a post-war country, which is why it took several months until all the delegates finally arrived at Kabul in the July 2002. Then, the Loya Jirga confirmed the legitimacy of the new government, solidifying its mandate to lead Afghanistan until the democratic elections could be held (Barfield 2010, p.283-284, 294-295, 297). As a mean of solidification of the international legitimacy, the USA helped to adopt the aforementioned UN Security Council's Resolution 1383, which solidified the agreements reached in Bonn, Germany on the 6th of December, urging all members to the international community to recognize the new Afghan government.

4.3.2 Continued support of the new political leadership

As mentioned in the previous subchapter, the USA supported the new Afghan regime well after the initial phases of the Operation Enduring Freedom. Their monetary support continues up until today, with monetary support from the program US Aid alone reaching more than \$1billion in 2020 (US Aid 2021) and the US forces are still stationed in Afghanistan as a part of the international peacekeeping force, with the USA withdrawing it only today, in 2021 (BBC 2021).

4.4 Summary

As we can see, the reinterpretation of the US conduct during its attack on Taliban controlled Afghanistan would suggest, that the USA were waging hybrid war in Afghanistan 2001. Through it, we can see that the USA used a wide variety of instruments of their national power to prepare a strong position from which it later attacked Afghanistan, mobilizing strategic

communication, diplomacy, intelligence, and covert as well as overt military assets. When this position was considered to be sufficiently strong, the USA commenced the offensive, utilizing all the previously mobilized assets to conduct a multi-vectoral aggressive operation against Afghanistan, which, in combination with the attack of the USA-sponsored local actors, the Northern Alliance, achieved overwhelming success. Taliban government was uprooted and on its place was established a new regime, collaborative with the USA, which then received their staunch military, political and economic support.

4.5 Implications of the results of the analysis

What does conclusion regarding the reinterpretation of the studied case tell us with regards to our approach to the nature of hybrid warfare? The most important implication of this fact is that we can see that even the democratic countries are capable of waging hybrid warfare. If we look back on the development of the hybrid warfare as a scientific term, as summarized in the theoretical chapter of this thesis, we can see that in each stage of the debate regarding its nature, there has often been certain bias towards its perpetrator. Neméth in 2002 used the term to describe a style of warfare implored by the “hybrid societies”, which devolved from the modern state into basically a tribal society, against conventionally stronger, modern opponent (Nemeth 2002, p. 71-76). Hoffman, the spiritual father of the hybrid warfare, thought of the hybrid warfare as a future type of conflict that the US Armed Forces would be waging in the 21st century, against technologically lesser developed modern enemies. He saw Hezbollah, an undemocratic force, as the prototype of a force capable of waging such a conflict (Hoffman 2006b). While the debate in the late 2000s and the early 2010s did not delve into this aspect of hybrid warfare any further, after the 2014 we can observe almost a demonization of hybrid warfare’s perpetrator, with the debate being solely focused on the undemocratic, authoritarian Russia, using hybrid warfare to aggressively acquire a part of other state’s territory (Fridman 2018). To summarize, the hybrid warfare and its perpetrators were by majority of its scholars, including the most influential ones, always perceived as something foreign and potentially harmful, against which the West has to defend itself.

This thesis disproves this notion as the USA in the 2001 were the paragon of the global democracy. Still in the momentum gained due to their victory in the Cold War, they were actively promoting the democratic values around the globe, with the OEF being at least initially viewed as a continuation of this “export of democracy”. And while Russian use of hybrid warfare while achieving its goals was internationally condemned, the US utilization passed without notice, even

up until today. As far as the research done in the boundaries of this thesis goes, there has been no case of the opening phases of the OEF in Afghanistan being examined for hybrid war features.

Now that we can see that the US conduct during the OEF in Afghanistan 2001 can be understood as a case of hybrid war, do we label the USA as one of the “bad guys”? And based on that, should they be feared and closely watched in case they would try to perpetrate something similar again? The author of this thesis is of opinion, that we should not, and as we can see today, the international public seems to agree, as the USA are still accepted as a respected member of the international community, although their public image is much more controversial than it was several decades before (not because of their actions in the beginning of the OEF, however).

What we probably should do instead, is to reconsider our outlook on hybrid warfare in general. For far too long it has been viewed as something strange, unwanted, or outright wrong. Now that it can be seen that hybrid warfare can be waged by democratic as well as undemocratic states, we should start to view it as a mode of warfare, unencumbered by any ideological or emotionally based prejudice. It is a very specific mode, which in order to be effective requires certain conditions, however, when they are met, state or non-state actors are able to employ it, regardless of their ideological background.

To view hybrid warfare in this way, not mired by our internal bias, can benefit the professional community in several fields. First is the analysis of hybrid warfare. The goal of any analytical effort should be to assess the examined phenomenon in as much unbiased manner as possible, as only then can the analysis reach the most accurate results, as can any conclusions derived from this analysis. Our current outlook on hybrid warfare, however, goes against this principle, as it is mired by our preconceived notions regarding the phenomenon. This is principally wrong and creates an unhealthy research environment, where personal bias can very easily get in way of solid academic work and potential valuable research outcomes concerning the nature of hybrid warfare and possibly even the Russian foreign policy itself. The scholars of hybrid warfare should hence start to apply a more objective approach to their research subject, as only then can they most accurately describe what hybrid warfare is and what are its main features.

This is linked to the second field, the recommendations or policy drafting, when the professional community can use the results of their unbiased analysis when for example drafting the best possible countermeasures to hybrid warfare targeting their countries.

The realization of our own ability to wage hybrid conflict should prompt us to research this possibility even further and take a wider look at the actions the Western states took in recent history as there possibly could be more of them. On a similar note, this realization could also offer

us a new, unique perspective on our relationship with other countries, namely Russia. The notion that Russia is in danger of forms of hybrid pressure, as described by Gerasimov in 2013 (Galeotti 2014) is, although quite hard to grasp from our Western point of view, still worthy of further research. It could theoretically help us better understand the reasoning for some of the Russian actions in international politics, which could be otherwise viewed with complete lack of information on the Russian motivation for them, hence misunderstood. This however, is just an assumption, which would require more thorough research into Russian policy making process in order to be confirmed or refuted.

Conclusion

In order to follow its research target and answer the research questions which it set up to answer, this thesis delved deep into the topic of hybrid warfare as well as the US conduct during the Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan 2001, later combining the gained knowledge to reinterpret the latter through the former.

Firstly, it summarized the development of hybrid warfare since its inception in the late 1990s and early 2000s by Walker and Nemeth, through its establishment in the late 2000s, by Frank Hoffman and later research by authors such as Freier and McCuen, until its resurgence in 2014 when it became a number one security topic for several years, when authors such as Fridman and RÁCZ debated its true nature.

Secondly, this thesis delved specifically into the description of hybrid warfare conceived by András RÁCZ, and through the process of operationalization outlined its major features. RÁCZ's hybrid warfare was summarized into three distinct phases, the *Praparations, Offensive and Stabilization*, during which the attacker carefully prepares his position for a multi vectoral offensive against his target, which he later perpetrates, after which he solidifies his gains.

Thirdly, there was a comprehensive analysis of the actions of the USA, concerning the opening phases of OEF in Afghanistan 2001, taking in account US behavior in the military, diplomatic, informational, and other domains. Multitude of academic sources, articles, books and research papers, in combination with then-news coverage of the campaign were utilized, in order to construct as comprehensive description of the US behavior as possible.

Fourthly, this thesis successfully reinterpreted the studied case through the operationalized concept of RÁCZ's hybrid warfare, demonstrating that democratic countries can indeed wage a hybrid war. Afterwards, it derived a set of implications that this means for our understanding of the hybrid warfare. The most important being the fact, that the hybrid warfare must start to be viewed unbiasedly, with accent on its real, existing features, without any inherent prejudice about its nature, such as its inherent undemocratic nature. To view hybrid warfare in such a manner, simply as a mode of warfare, can help the Western states' ability to analyze and understand it correctly, as well as draft policy recommendations against its utilization by foreign actors. There is also a possibility, that this new, unbiased outlook on hybrid warfare can help us better understand and grasp the actions of some other actors in the international relations.

Overall, this thesis achieved its goals, satisfyingly answering the research questions it set up for itself. The research into a Western utilization of hybrid warfare is indeed an untraditional

approach, one which for sure would deserve further, more thorough follow-up. Mainly the Western academic community must start to view hybrid warfare for what it at its core is: a mode of warfare. We have to stop look at the phenomenon through the glasses of our own bias, which should be one of the core principles of any academic activity anyways. Is hybrid warfare currently utilized mainly by the states with undemocratic governments? Yes, it seems to be so. It ,however, doesn't always has to be its way. Maybe in the future, the circumstances will force the Western world to conduct hybrid operations against its opponents as well.

By this claim, however, this thesis in no way trying to relativize or otherwise downplay the existence or severity of the actions conducted in the manner of hybrid warfare, which happened in the recent memory. Especially Russia undoubtedly violated international law and norms on multiple occasion and there should be consequences to bear on her side. The Western states should also be on guard, as Russian behavior in the realm of the international relations still seems to be quite assertive and there is always a possibility of renewed pressure of hybrid character in Eastern Europe. What they should do, however, is to also look on the Russian actions in other context than that of a simplistic outlook on the inherent Russian undemocratic nature leading to its aggressiveness. Maybe this could help them in drafting a more effective policies towards Russia.

Coming back to the future possibility of the Western states waging hybrid war, there are also other, more far-reaching implications. When we think of a future way of conflict in general, one has to wonder whether the hybrid warfare couldn't be a sign of things to come. What if this mode of warfare is just a precursor to the future way in which states will wage conflict? Maybe it is its natural evolution, to the way our opened, globalized international community functions today, when massive open military conflicts of the major world powers are starting to look less and less viable, due to the high economic connectivity between those states and the ever-present eventuality of the use of nuclear weapons, both being solid inhibitors to any state who would seek to achieve its goals in a purely military fashion. Hybrid warfare offers a wide pallet of techniques and means in which to conduct pressure against other states, it could be argued that it is an approach to waging a conflict more than anything else. In todays world, where states created strong economic, cultural and information based channels between themselves, hybrid warfare, with its multi vectoral approach, could theoretically be used with especially strong effect, as those channels could become vulnerabilities waiting to be exploited. Maybe the hybrid will become a more frequent way of waging conflict between the states. Maybe even, the hybrid will become a new norm.

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Master's Thesis Summary

CHARLES UNIVERSITY
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Institute of Security Studies

Diploma thesis proposal

**The American Hybrid War? Operation Enduring Freedom through the
hybrid warfare lenses**



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Introduction to the topic

No matter how one puts it, the hybrid warfare is one of the most interesting and influential phenomena that surfaced in the areas of international relations, security, and military studies in the recent memory. Not only did it prompt a heated academic debate and numerous research papers, but the term also resonated in the professional and later even general public. This led to hybrid warfare becoming almost something of a buzzword and its exact nature becoming diluted and unclear as more and more authors, journalists, politicians or other influential figures started to use the term and put their own different spins on it without any regards to the broader discussion.

In the context of the current academic debate and mainstream political narrative, the term hybrid warfare has been almost exclusively used in the connection to aggressive actions of international actors, whose democratic nature is supposed to be dubious at best. States like Russian Federation, Peoples Republics of China, North Korea and others have all been accused of waging this kind of warfare at some point in the past or present. However, it was not always so. One of the most (in)famous usage of the term came from senior Russian official, Valery Gerasimov, and was used to describe a new way of waging war that is coming from the West and possibly pressuring Russia¹. This way of warfare would include combination of military and non-military means, that, according to Mr. Gerasimov, Russia needed to ready itself for.

This led me, as an author of this thesis to a reflection – could the hybrid warfare be waged even by a democratic nation of distinctly “Western” nature? Could it be, that even the western-styled democracies are capable or have in fact already waged a conflict, that according to it’s today recognized standards, could be deemed as a hybrid? And if so, what would this mean for the broader understanding and perception of the phenomenon? The answer is, in my opinion, yes. The western-styled democratic states can indeed wage conflicts in a hybrid manner and it has far reaching consequences for the main-stream understanding of the concept as such.

I have decided to support my claim by analyzing a case of forceful action conducted by a western democratic state against another state and proving that its conduct during this action can be classified as hybrid. As a case of this, I have chosen the conduct of US forces during the opening phases of the Operation Enduring Freedom (further only OEF), which I will then explain through the interpretation of hybrid warfare created by András Rác.

Delving into the possibility of western power waging offensive hybrid warfare is very relevant, because the term is currently shrouded in unclarity which this new approach could at least partially lift. As was

already hinted above, we (the members of Western civilization) tend to see hybrid warfare as something with strictly negative connotations, coming from the “outside” to harm us. This fear of the unknown clouds our judgment when dealing with and examining hybrid warfare to the point when we sometimes even mythicize it, attributing fantastic features and capabilities to it, believing that it gives capacity to badly hurt, if not outright destroy our core values and society to any adversaries wielding it against us. The past, I dare to say, hysteria surrounding the hybrid warfare, its subsequent “buzzwordiness” and the current confusion surrounding the exact nature of hybrid warfare is I believe caused partly by its above described strangeness. However, if I can prove, that even we (as a Western democratic nations) are capable of using hybrid warfare tactics against the enemy it is possible that much of this strangeness would go away. If we acknowledge, that the hybrid warfare is something that we ourselves can use, hence understand, there is a good chance that we shall approach it with much more clarity, which would restrain us from misusing the term in the future.

If the hypothesis of this research would be confirmed, it could change the perception and nature of the hybrid warfare as a strictly “evil” action only being conducted by undemocratic “bad guys” in order to harm the “good guys” in the West. It could then maybe spark a reflection of the western states on their previous actions and more importantly on the perception of certain foreign actions that were previously seen as unreasonably aggressive. By “westernizing” the hybrid warfare, we could maybe stop seeing it as a scarecrow and instead view it simply as a mode of warfare that can be used by any capable actor in the realm of international relations.

Research target, research question

The research target of this thesis is to show, that even the democratic countries can conduct hybrid warfare. To support this claim, I will be interpreting US conduct during the opening stages of the Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, through the concept of hybrid warfare as described by András Rácz. From this, I will then derive a set of implications that I believe will be relevant for our perception of hybrid warfare and the meaning of the term in general.

To conduct the research, I will progress as following: Firstly, I will introduce the broader debate surrounding the topic of hybrid warfare, map its development through time and note some of the most influential authors on the topic. I will also conduct an in-dept analysis of Rácz’s concept of hybrid warfare, outlying its major features, and explaining why I have chosen it as a model of hybrid warfare that I will be using further in my thesis. Then, I will thoroughly analyze the US conduct during the opening phases of the Operation Enduring Freedom, which I will then compare with Rácz’s description of the Russian hybrid

warfare. The final part of the research will revolve around the implications that this comparison could have for our understanding of the nature of the hybrid warfare and its utility.

The research question is hence defined as following:

1. Can a western democratic state wage a hybrid war?
 - a. Did the USA wage a hybrid war during the opening stages of the Operation Enduring Freedom?
 - b. In case that western democracies do wage hybrid warfare, what are the implications for our perception of the hybrid warfare?

Literature review

Before going through my research, I have conducted a literature review. This was done for two reasons: firstly, to find out how much and what kind of information is available to me, meaning to get the idea what I can and cannot research. After setting those “boundaries of the research”, I was able to fulfill the second reason, finding robust main sources of information for my research. In the end, I found 10 core sources of information, that will serve as a base for my research, which I will now briefly introduce.

1. The Russian hybrid warfare strategy – neither Russian nor strategy (Sandor Fabian, 2019)

The author of this paper conducts a critical examination of the existing hybrid warfare literature in order to dissect the Russian hybrid warfare. The serves not only as a very good summary of the existing takes on the hybrid warfare, but it also acts as a good general introduction into the topic.

2. Making Sense of Hybrid Warfare (James K. Withers, 2016)

Withers article focuses on the break-down of the so-far debate on the nature of hybrid warfare. The author neatly summarizes the development of the literature since the year 2014 and the different interpretations of the hybrid warfare that various authors came up with.

3. Complex Irregular Warfare: The Next Revolution in Military Affairs (Frank Hoffman, 2006)

One of the most important papers in the history of development of hybrid warfare. In it, Frank Hoffman, arguably the most influential author on the topic, stressed the need of the post 9/11 US armed forces to be ready to face opponents basing their strength on hybrid capabilities, which, with some of his later work, led to popularization of the term “hybrid”.

4. Bi-SC Input to a New NATO Capstone Concept for The Military Contribution to Countering Hybrid Threats (NATO, 2010)

In 2010, even before the “outbreak of hybrid warfare” in the Ukraine in 2014, NATO articulated a comprehensive document, in which it described the “hybrid threats” that its member states could possibly face from the outside actors. It is another interesting take on the problematics of hybrid warfare which will help me in my research.

5. MCDC Countering Hybrid Warfare Project: Countering Hybrid Warfare (MCDC, 2019)

This is one of the newer, but highly elaborate and very interesting takes on the concept of hybrid warfare, what it consists of and how to defend against it. Developed by a multitude of countries as a kind of handbook on the hybrid warfare, it comes up with helpful conceptualization of the hybrid warfare.

6. Russia's hybrid war in Ukraine: breaking the enemy's ability to resist (András Rácz, 2015)

This is one of the most well-known papers on the hybrid warfare, conceived after the 2014 event in Ukraine. Rácz developed a comprehensive concept of hybrid warfare, based on the (presumed) Russian conduct in the country. It could be very interesting to see how his description of Russian hybrid warfare related activities compares to that of the USA in the Afghanistan in 2001.

7. Toppling the Taliban (RAND Corporation, Walter L. Perry, David Kassing, 2015)

This comprehensive document is a summary of US conduct during the OEF, with an elaborate description of means it used and actions it conducted. It is very useful in-depth source of information.

8. Operation Enduring Freedom: A Case Study Assessing U.S. in Irregular War (Brigid Myers Pavidonis, 2008)

As its name suggests, this paper tackles the question of how the US military responds to enemy that bases its strength on irregular capabilities. Furthermore, the author uses the example of the US conduct during the OEF as an example. This document provides another source of information on the US army operations during the OEF.

9. General Dostum and the Mazar i Sharif Campaign: new light on the role of Northern Alliance warlords in Operation Enduring Freedom (Brian Glyn Williams, 2010)

This document is very specific in its nature and explores the relations between the USA and the so-called “Northern Alliance”, a force indigenous to Afghanistan, that was very important to

the US victory in the war. This is, for our research, a very important aspect of the US war effort, as utilization of domestic actors is an important factor of many definitions of hybrid warfare.

10. Operation Enduring Freedom Battle Reconstruction: Battle Site Survey and Ground Force Data Reconciliation (William M. Knarr, Jr. John Frost, 2010)

This expansive document is quite unique in its nature, as it describes the attempted reconstructions of the early period of the OEF. It is filled with important data about the operation, including description detailed description of the event and interviews with several commanders of the Northern Alliance.

11. Air power Against Terror: America's conduct of Operation Enduring Freedom (Benjamin S. Lambeth, 2005)

This is yet another expansive document on the US conduct of OEF. It was prepared by RAND Corporation, a renowned research organization, for the United States Central Command Air Forces. It is filled with a valuable organization on the course of the OEF.

To end this section, I would like to mention that this is not a definitive list of sources for this research. To add to these resources, I will be using a multitude of reports, articles, books and other sources of information as I will see fit, although of course these sources will serve as core sources for this thesis.

Conceptual and theoretical framework

This thesis is going to be occupied with only one major concept, and that is the concept of hybrid warfare itself, as described by András Rácz in his 2015 paper, “The Russia’s Hybrid War in Ukraine: Breaking the Enemy Ability to Resist”. Firstly though, I would like to introduce the hybrid warfare in general. The term hybrid warfare has been present in the literature since the year 2002, when it was first used by William J. Nemeth to describe the style of warfare, specific to the Chechen fighters during their struggles for independence in the late 90s and early 2000s. As mentioned above, the term has been then popularized by Frank G. Hoffman in 2006 and it has gotten even more traction with its linkage to the 2006 Lebanon War, when the Hezbollah reportedly utilized hybrid tactics against the Israeli army, with a great deal of success. As the time went, much more authors (McCuen 2008, McCulloh, Johnson 2013...) and even military authorities (US, British, Israeli army) started to delve into the topic further.

However, the real “advent” of hybrid warfare came with the events of the 2014 in Ukraine. The Russian conduct during this quite turbulent year for Ukraine could be summarized as a combination of regular and

irregular military means, propaganda-related activities and many others, through which it annexed the Crimean Peninsula and supported the eastern-Ukrainian rebels, as well as further politically pressured the central Ukrainian government. This really “catapulted” the term hybrid war into mainstream prominence as it brought a lot of attention to the term, with even more researchers, journalists, and politicians (Rácz, 2015, Galeotti 2016, Lanoszka 2016 and others...) using it indiscriminately to describe Russian conduct. This sadly led to certain dilution of the term, as there was no effort for a unified definition of what the hybrid warfare even is.

So, what even is hybrid warfare? As hinted above, there are multiple definitions conceived by many different authors, however, at its barest core, it refers to a combination of certain regular and irregular elements in waging of conflict. Those can range from the utilization of soft power to outright military actions. However, for the purpose of this research, there will be a need for a specification of the term and this thesis is going to be reliant on the model of Hybrid warfare as based on its description by András Rácz. This concept of the hybrid warfare was created in 2015, in a wake of Russian annexation of Crimean Peninsula and its subsequent support of the rebels in the eastern Ukraine. Based on those events, Rácz outlined a model of hybrid warfare, describing what are the preparations, its course and goals, from the point of view of its perpetrator (the Russian Federation).

I have chosen this concept because of the two main reasons. Firstly, the case upon which it is modelled is to extent similar to the case of US actions in opening stages of OEF. Both are undoubtedly offensive incursion into foreign territory – although admittedly in later stages it differed, as USA did not annex any part of Afghanistan – and both have seen a utilization of mix of irregular and regular military techniques. Secondly, the Rácz’s concept has been widely cited and generally revered as a valuable piece of academic literature, hence it is viewed by many as a reliable interpretation of hybrid warfare. If I can show that the USA (a western democracy) indeed waged a hybrid war in Afghanistan, while using a model that has been used exclusively to describe the conduct of Russian Federation (a quasi-authoritarian state), it will support the legitimacy of the results of my research.

Rácz divides the hybrid warfare into three operational phases: Preparatory phase, Attack phase and Stabilization phase, with each of those phases further divided into three sections. The Preparatory phase is the period during which the perpetrator of the hybrid warfare mainly maps the target and slowly adds up the pressure. The preparation is done in three sectors, according to which Rácz conceptualizes the three sections of this preparatory phase. First is the Strategic, when the perpetrator explores vulnerabilities Its strengths but more importantly its weaknesses are assessed, be it in the realm of military, politics or economy. The perpetrator is then using this knowledge to prepare measures that would allow him to avoid the strengths

and exploit the weaknesses most effectively, which is done in the second and third sections, named Political preparation and Operational preparation respectively. In the first of these, the perpetrator prepares capabilities in the political realm, such as sowing political dissent or strengthening the existing ties with local actors or establishing entirely new ones. In the second, the perpetrator starts to use soft power to pressure the target, mobilizes its allies inside as well as its own forces outside of the country (Rácz 2015, 57-59).

The Attack phase is characterized by the exploitation of the weaknesses mapped in the preceding phase. Rácz, again, divides it into three sections. Section number four is called “Exploding the tensions”, and it consists of launch of massive disinformation campaign, incitement of civil unrests, provocations and sabotage. Section number five is named “Ousting the central power from the targeted region” and as the name suggests, it consists of destabilization of the current government of the territory by capturing the local infrastructure, blocking its ability to communicate with the rest of the country and disarming its present military forces, however in non-violent ways, while the conductor’s media and diplomacy is continuously attacking the target. Section number six is called “Establishing alternative political power”. This revolves around establishment of an alternative political center and further informational pressure towards the target’s central government (Rácz 2015, 60-64).

The final Stabilization phase is focused on the consolidation of the so-far gains and strengthening of the position in the annexed territory. Again, there is a division into three additional sections. Section number seven, “Political stabilization of the outcome” is consisted of the organization of a referendum in the annexed country, that will cement the new leadership, which will then ask for support against the central government. In the section number eight, “Separation of the captured territory from the target country”, the conductor annexes the targeted territory and firmly establishes its presence there while continuing its pressure on the target’s central government. The final ninth section called “Lasting limitation of the strategic freedom of movement of the attacked country” describes the current state of attacked state, that is facing severe economic and political problems, stemming from the territorial friction and that is currently unable to join any political alliance that would require territorial integrity. (Rácz, 2015, 64-67)

Rácz created this concept exclusively based on the Russian involvement in Crimea and eastern Ukraine, which were in essence a forceful action of Russian forces, that combined both the regular and the irregular factors in order to annex a specific part of Ukrainian territory and contest another one. It shows, as especially later stages of his concept of hybrid warfare are very specific, being clearly modelled according to this exact case, with the phases and sections focusing specifically on the actions linked to the integration of annexed territory, entrenchment of attacker’s position there etc.

Empirical data and analytical technique

Case selection

I would like to begin this section of my thesis project by outlining the case upon which I will conduct the research, which is the involvement of the US forces in the Operation Enduring Freedom. The OEF was a military campaign which was organized as a reaction to the infamous 9/11 terror attacks of 2001. Its purpose was to topple the Taliban regime in Afghanistan (which was blamed for giving sanctuary to Al-Qaeda, a terrorist organization that claimed responsibility for the attacks) and later to stabilize the country and maintain peace and democracy there. The OEF officially started on October 7th 2001, however US army made its first actions as early as on 26th September, with the insertion of CIA's operatives in Afghanistan. Its first phase was then concluded with the removal of the Taliban regime in the December of 2001, with the fall of Kandahar and the establishment of the new Afghan government. The OEF then continued well into the year 2014, with its main goals being the eradication of the remnants of Taliban and A-Qaeda that survived the initial phase of the OEF and training of the new Afghan armed forces (Lambeth, 2005, Summary).

This research is going to consider only the early stages of the OEF with the addition of its preparatory phase which started right after the September 11th 2001. This would put the researched timespan between the September 11th 2001 and the end of the December 2001, that saw the establishment of the new Afghan government. I have chosen precisely this timespan because it very much differs from the rest of the operation and in my opinion could be viewed as a military campaign separated from the rest of it. While the later stages of OEF, after the establishment of the new Afghan government, were much more about waging irregular warfare against the remnants of Taliban forces and in the end resembled a peacekeeping operation more than anything else, the first phase saw a much higher intensity of fighting and its manner was reminiscent more of a combination of regular and irregular warfare. It then makes much more sense to research only this part of OEF, rather than the whole operations, when researching the hybrid warfare.

I have chosen this precise case because of several factors: first and foremost, the course of the operation (as described earlier) is quite suspiciously similar to the current descriptions of Russian hybrid warfare, and I think that it is important to bring that up. As pointed out in the beginning segment of this work, its target is to show that even the democratic states are able to wage a hybrid warfare, and I believe that example of US involvement in OEF is a prime example of this.

Secondly, the case has a severe symbolic significance. The OEF was a direct US response to the 9/11 terror attacks of 2001 and as such constituted a beginning of what we now call the War on Terror, which is the US-led initiative of global struggle against terror organizations. The War on Terror went on to have a tremendous impact to the development of international politics ever since, garnering many supporters as well as opponents, achieving notable successes, however raising numerous controversies. Its influence on the global affairs in areas such as military law or human rights is undoubtable. All of this makes this case of military conduct suitable for my research, because if I want to try to change the perception of hybrid warfare, I should do it on a case that already has certain significance. It will make my research more accessible to any potential reader as it is more likely that he/she will already be familiar with the case.

Thirdly, the case is very well documented. Since the OEF began almost twenty years ago, and as written above, had a severe impact on the further development of the international order, it has been a subject to many articles, research papers, studies and other analytical material throughout the years. Almost every aspect of it was researched – from the military, economic, cultural and other points of view. This of course means, that there is a tremendous amount of literature from me to draw on as resources for this thesis, most of which is written in English.

Fourthly, as hinted above, there is a considerable time distance between the presence and the case. I believe that it is a This allows me to investigate the events that took place without a majority of obstacles that most of researchers delving into other, more recent topics, have to face, such as prejudice based on cultural or ideological differences, unclarity, unreliability or scarcity of the information at one's disposal etc. This distance also contributed to the second reason why I chose this topic.

Data collection

As hinted in the Literature review, the main sources of information for this thesis is going to be a primary literature – books, research papers, articles and others, both in the theoretical and empirical parts of the thesis. To complement these, I will also delve into numerous articles posted online that reported on the topics.

In order to summarize the academic debate on hybrid warfare up to today, I will delve into the literature on the topic of hybrid warfare – mainly books, research papers and articles – and summarize the development of the topic so far. To outline the Rác's interpretation of hybrid warfare, I will analyze his paper "The Russia's Hybrid War in Ukraine: Breaking the Enemy Ability to Resist" and outline its main points, as I have partly done in the previous section of this thesis project

Regarding the case itself – the USA’s conduct in the opening stages of the Operation Enduring Freedom, I will examine the vast literature on the topic, from the memoirs of the participants, official recounts of the events, research papers examining specific aspects of the operation and other sources, to get the best possible picture of the nature of USA’s actions, so that my analysis can be as exact and accurate as possible.

Operationalization and the research techniques

The main features of the Rácz’s description are in my opinion the phases and sections of the hybrid warfare, as well as specific instruments of national power that the attacker utilizes when conducting the hybrid war. I believe that these are the best “clues” to follow, when deciding, whether the USA indeed conducted hybrid war with their attack on Afghanistan. The operationalization of Rácz’s description will lie in the focus on those two elements – the timeline and the means used – and those I will operationalize in accordance with how Rácz describe them, I will just look for by him emphasized features in the American conduct.

Here I would like to mention one and only problem, that I could might encounter when pursuing my research, and it stems from the fact that the Rácz’s description is based on the specific case of annexation of Crimea and one of its notable aspects is the will of the attacker to take control of part of defender’s territory. I will deal with this by slightly adapting the theory on the examined case and instead look for the will of the attacker to take control of the whole country. I do not think that it will by any means disregard Rácz’s work or make my thesis self-serving, because the territorial aspect will still be very relevant and from it stemming sections concerning the establishment of new government on the territory will be still observable (or so I believe). I think that Rácz’s concept is still very viable for my case.

This thesis is admittedly not as rich in the department of analytical techniques. After the description of the hybrid warfare debate and outline of key features of Rácz’s interpretation of hybrid warfare, I will analyze the US conduct of the OEF. After this, I will reinterpret the action from the point of view of Rácz’s concept and outline what are the implications for the concept as a whole. This makes the thesis nomothetic, meaning that I will be deriving implications from the study of one case, that can be implied for a wider phenomenon.

Planned thesis outline

- Table of content
- Introduction (app. 4 pages)
 - Here I will briefly outline the topic of this thesis as well as introduce the method of my research.
- Theoretical background: The Hybrid warfare – the core values and interpretation (app.15 pages)
 - Here I will introduce the reader to the academic debate regarding the hybrid warfare. I will outline the establishment and the development of the term, as well as elaborate on the role that democratic or undemocratic state constituency plays in the concept.
- Conceptual part: The András Rác's hybrid warfare (app. 8 pages)
 - Here I will elaborate on the Rác's interpretation of hybrid warfare, analyze operationalize it.
- Empirical part: The analysis of the US conduct in the opening stages of the Operation Enduring Freedom (app. 30 pages)
 - In this part, I will thoroughly analyze the US conduct during the OEF, as well as a short time period that preceded it, as it was crucial for the course of the whole operation.
- Analysis of the empirical findings (app. 10 pages)
 - Here, I will analyze the results of the from the previous part and describe how they match the Rác's concept of hybrid warfare. I will also deduce what it means for the concept as a whole.
- Conclusion (app. 4 pages)
 - Here, I will summarize my findings.
- Sources and Bibliography

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