

The Complexities of Hybrid Warfare. A Study in Contemporary Military History.
Bachelor thesis by Joosep Grents
Prague, 2016. Extent of 147 pages (approx. 199 standard pages)

Thesis review by the supervisor

This Bachelor's Degree thesis, named *The Complexities of Hybrid Warfare. A Study in Contemporary Military History*, submitted by Joosep Grents, borders on genres of historiography and historical sociology. I would understand it as belonging rather to historiography, inspired by some analytic tools from the arsenal of sociology. Within current Czech context I would label this thesis as belonging to *military history*, clean as a whistle, despite the fact, that author analyzed also conflicts of current, ongoing nature, such as so called War in Donbass. Overall this thesis can be understood as an attempt to find a new, different breed of military history.

Author choose no easy topic. It is true that concept of hybrid or asymmetric warfare represents a phenomena of crucial importance for many key historic conflicts (e.g. American War of Independence), but in connection with so called War of Terror (2001-) the related debate really almost grew out of proportions. The topic is especially difficult because of the fact, that the relevant debate is not always scholarly, but valuable insights come often also from military personnel or political analysts.

Epistemological range of current historiography has become sometimes exceedingly wide, but author in my opinion selected really solid inspiration of renowned sociologist of warfare Sinisa Malesevic. Using some of his theoretic concepts, author attempted to trace back and analyze interaction of the military and social realms. Malesevic proposes that there are two developmental processes of cumulative bureaucratization of coercion and centrifugal ideologization, crucial for development of warfare. Joosep Grents understands those two as concepts, which can be used to study what he calls *social organisation of the hybrid adversary*.

Implicit motivation of this thesis is apparent: *there is something wrong with current debate*. Its terms are inadequate and recent developments in Ukraine call for new conceptualization. Author answers this call, using comparative historical perspective of analyzing two hybrid wars, one from 2006 (Second Lebanon War) and one contemporary (War in Donbass 2014-).

Author divides his thesis in six chapters. In Chapters 1 and 2 author traces back the concept of hybrid warfare and explains theoretical base of the text. Author shows deep understanding of current hybrid warfare debate and his grasp on most relevant authors like William Nemeth, Thomas Huber, Frank Hoffman, John McCuen or Makhmut Gareev is firm. Third Chapter discusses the conceptual framework, where he explains why he adopted the comparative stance. Fourth Chapter represents conflict

analysis of both Second Lebanon War of 2006 and current War in Donbass. Fifth Chapter consists of theoretical reflections and delineating of two new proposed theoretical terms to be used in the debate. Final chapter contains author's own contribution to the debate, an attempt to establish two new analytic terms, which would better differentiate between classic, rather defensive kind of hybrid warfare – and new type of mostly offensive hybrid warfare, as recognized in qualitatively different nature of both conflicts studied.

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My remarks can be summed up with following 5 main points:

1) I certainly appreciate overwhelmingly calm and analytic manner of this thesis, despite the topic being laden with potential strong value judgements. Despite author had to study a lot of analytical literature, written by military professionals, he did not succumb to their worldview and their emphasis on so called *operational art* and technological determinism. On the other hand, author displays very good understanding of what John Keegan would probably label as *military mechanics* of the hybrid war, which is quite uncommon ability among current Czech social scientists.

2) Especially in discussing problem of centrifugal ideologization related to Hezbollah as a hybrid adversary in 2006 war, author ventures into the proverbial minefield of discussing propaganda and counter-propaganda, used in that war. Author struggles with this problem and keeps mostly in line with his theoretical commitment – not to waste time by attempting to ascertain *what is the truth*, but to analyze the propaganda and its problems in their importance towards the centrifugal ideologization process.

Nevertheless there are some paragraphs (esp. p. 52-55), where author apparently unwillingly leaves history for political science and labels various players of the conflict as *liberal democracy*, which is *keen on protecting the freedom of speech and press* (Israel) or *closed society* exerting strong control over the media (Hezbollah). These statements are too general and vague to be included in the thesis relevantly and would surely deserve more elaboration. In present form they represent rather unconscious *ideal types* than analytical terms.

I would also suggest using less terminology verging on political science - like *West* instead of what should be possibly *Occident* in historic sociological way of understanding. In the part, dealing with War in Donbass, there are also terms employed, showing clear influence of political science, like *Kremlin*, *Russia* (p. 62-63) or *chaos and anarchy in Ukraine* (p. 64) etc. These should be replaced by more analytical terms.

3) Despite some minor mistakes, the text displays strong reflexivity and the author is well aware of many problems of contemporary debate, such as the cloak of military secrecy (meaning lack of standard documentary sources), misleading activity of military propaganda channels etc.

4) Final chapter, using Malesevic defined concepts of cumulative

bureaucratization of coercion and centrifugal ideologization in comparative manner, to try distinguish qualitative developmental characteristics of War in Lebanon and War in Donbass, is in my opinion the strongest part of the thesis. It shows, that military history can be done *differently*, than inside prevailing rather conservative paradigm, typical for Czech milieu and emphasizing study of operational art, technological determinism and using many essential categories, unconsciously borrowed from political science or commentary. By analytically highlighting the developmental character of warfare, qualitative difference between various historical kinds of hybrid warfare, this thesis helps to correct the outdated conservative myth, that there is something perennial in the conduct of war.

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Joosep Grents shows us, that proverbial incursion of social science into historiography can be productive indeed. I do not know which way author now plans to continue his studies. In case he would like to proceed to a post-gradual study course, I would strongly suggest keeping in line with his current research, upgrading his Russian language skills and continuing to research the War in Donbass.

What is perhaps most laudable thing regarding this thesis, is an effort to bring something new to the debate, to contribute to development of the theory by coining new analytic terms, enabling us to see the phenomena of hybrid warfare clearer. Joosep Grents thus proposes to develop a new distinction between traditional *General Hybrid Warfare*, understood and employed as strategically defensive concept and *Specific Hybrid Warfare*, understood as offensive and aggressive concept, typical for state or quasi-state combatants.

In my opinion Joosep Grents delivered a text, which significantly exceeds standard requirements for Bachelor thesis at this Faculty in many aspects. I would like to mention especially skilful use of difficult theoretical apparatus and ability to think and reason in innovative and analytic manner and even to intelligently propose new theoretical distinctions.

Therefore I hereby propose to accept this Bachelor thesis and to grade it as *Excellent* (1 – Výborně).

In Prague, January 19th 2016

Mgr. et Mgr. Petr Wohlmuth