

PLENARY SESSION

“THE NEW THREAT: HYBRID WARS AS A TOOL OF SUBVERSION”

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If war, as defined by Clausewitz, is a state's effort to impose its will upon an adversary by other than political means, it is in the logic of every hostile use of force that it will be complemented by other (e.g. economic, social, informational) measures to make it more efficient. In the essentially political context of war, what is called “hybrid warfare” is not a new phenomenon. The combination of the use of conventional military force with tactics of disinformation, acts of terror, destabilization, starving of the enemy population, etc. has characterized warfare throughout the ages. What is new are the technical means by which the conventional use of arms is complemented to make the kinetic operations more efficient, whether in the form of cyberwarfare, sophisticated propaganda techniques, and an ever larger array of irregular warfare tactics that, with the rapid development of technology, in particular information technology, have become available to a large number of non-state actors. The new technical possibilities have given new meaning to the concept of “total war” that was described by ideologues of warfare, as early as in the period of World War I, as an effort, inter alia, to undermine the social order and paralyze the will of the “enemy population.” Modern hybrid warfare, whether applied by state or non-state actors or a combination of both, appears to be a 21st century version of this “total war” doctrine, increasingly blurring the lines between the domains of the military and civilian, state and non-state actors, regular and irregular warfare. In one important respect, however, it is essentially more than the Clausewitzian imposition of a state's will upon another state because it integrates the conventional military effort into a comprehensive strategy to subvert the enemy society and eventually recreate the state according to the adversary's will – by all means available. Questions as to the morality and compatibility of hybrid warfare, understood in this sense, with international law must not be dismissed as irrelevant if one is committed to a just and stable world order.

Vectors of discussion:



Hybrid warfare: the **challenge of definition** in view of the convergence of physical, psychological and political means of imposing a state's/group's will upon the adversary and the blurring of the distinction between combatants and non-combatants (How to distinguish warfare from terrorism and criminal activity?)



Hybrid warfare: **new qualitative step** in the use of force, triggered by technological developments, or continuation of traditional methods of "compound wars" (coordination between regular and irregular forces) in earlier centuries?



Hybrid war: **variation or reversal of von Clausewitz's paradigm?** (From war as continuation of politics by other means to war by means of politics, i.e. including political methods?)



The developing doctrine of "hybrid warfare" and **the double standards of major military powers** (Mutual recriminations re. use of hybrid methods and the need to be prepared to defend against these methods)