

# THE EVOLUTION OF HYBRID WARFARE IN THE CONTEXT OF NEW GEOPOLITICAL RECONFIGURATIONS WITHIN THE BLACK SEA AREA

Veaceslav UNGUREANU\*

## Abstract

*Currently, the nature of military conflict has suffered substantial changes, beyond conventional actions between state armies, towards non-conventional conflicts and hybrid warfare that brings about changes to the organization and structure of military forces, manner of action, fighting techniques and means. We are witnessing a new type of menace for military security, that proves to be a complex and multidimensional military warfare, with lethal consequences, and that includes strategies, tactics and symmetric, asymmetric, conventional and non-conventional techniques, its main subjects being both State and non-State actors that use information and communication technologies. As a result of the evolution of the technologies for developing modern conflicts/wars, we note the extension of the menace of hybrid non-conventional warfare, which generates an increased danger to all components of national security, as well as an impact on regional security.*

**Keywords:** *international and regional security, geopolitical interests, Black Sea area, different types of warfare, symmetric/asymmetric threats*

## 1. Geopolitical Importance of the Black Sea Area

In the international order model, constituted into a structure of unipolar-polycentric international system, military power has preserved its essential value in the process of ensuring national/international security. With the end of the Cold War, a new change was initiated in the paradigm referring to the appearance, amplification and multiplication of the new faces of asymmetric threats, highlighting the phenomenon of hybrid warfare, which cannot be hybrid only by means of the strategies and capacities involved, but also through the consequences it produces if it is not approached from the perspective of conceptual theory in order to understand and fight against this challenge. In the last decade, the nature of military conflict was transformed substantially, beyond conventional wars between state armies,

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\* Dr in Political Sciences, Judicial and Political Research Institute of AMS, Republic of Moldova. E-mail: [veaceslav.ungureanu@gmail.com](mailto:veaceslav.ungureanu@gmail.com).

towards unconventional conflicts and hybrid warfare, determining changes in the organisation and structure of military forces, in the strategies techniques and ways of conducting warfare. This tendency manifests itself at global level, where important actors adapt, modernise and professionalise their military power, revise their security strategies and military doctrines, develop new techniques and technologies, all of which characterises the importance of the increased interest in the security environment of the 21st century.

One of the repercussions of the collapse of the bipolar international system has been the consolidation of a new configuration of forces with the great powers in the Black Sea area, which has suppressed the old geopolitical map of regional security and has determined a new conjuncture in the evolution of international relations. The geopolitical importance of the Black Sea area has always been real. Even now, it represents the confluence of the geopolitical interests of great powers, the stake being the domination of Eurasia. M. Ionescu states that the geopolitical evolutions in the Black Sea area are directly determined by the general evolution of the international post-Cold War system, and the classic, asymmetrical security threats present in the region are, most of the time, identifiable at the level of the international security environment. At the same time, we witness the recrudescence of various conventional factors of inter-states conflicts, materialised through the perpetuation of conflict areas (in the East sectors of the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and South Caucasus), of the economic crisis, but also of risks and asymmetric security vulnerabilities like interethnic conflicts/rivalries, terrorism, the processes associated to the dissolution of state authority and the secessionist movements, uncontrolled migration towards the EU, internal political environment characterised by instability and/or structural corruption, organised crime and associated activities (guns, drugs, human trafficking and money laundering), problems related to the protection of the environment. In this context, the Black Sea area acquires an important, incontestable geopolitical and geostrategic importance in the larger frame of European continental security and stability<sup>1</sup>. Gh. Calopăreanu believes that the level of stability in the coastal states of the Black Sea area determines the European security system, which is why it is increasingly seen as one of the fundamental components of Euro-Atlantic security architecture<sup>2</sup>. O. Minchev considers that the energetic resources which transit the Black Sea area, the strategic

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<sup>1</sup> Ionescu, M., *Securitate și stabilitate în bazinul Mării Negre în epoca post-Război Rece. Marea Neagră de la „lacul bizantin” la provocările secolului XXI*. București, 2006, p. 367.

<sup>2</sup> Calopăreanu, Gh., *Implicații de securitate ale extinderii NATO și UE la Marea Neagră*. Impact Strategic, 2011, nr. 1 (38), p. 65.

importance that it has in the equation of European security, the delineation of the space as new field of confrontation for geopolitical and geostrategic interests under the conditions of the Russian Federation reaffirming and imposing itself as a great power, and the phenomenon of the frozen conflicts in the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, but also the recent military evolutions between Ukraine and the Russian Federation - all build the new geopolitical picture of security in the region<sup>1</sup>.

In our opinion, the geopolitical heterogeneity of the Black Sea area certainly demonstrates its geostrategic importance, the security void in the region, inherited after the Cold War, being supplied by the great powers. The Extended Black Sea area - a very intricate space from the point of view of the type of state in the region (as level of power and government system) -, the quality of the transit space - with a major impact on the energetic security of the EU states, but also on the economic security of the hydrocarbon exporting states (especially the Russian Federation) -, the existence of multiple regions - each with its own ethnic, confessional, linguistic and cultural specificity, influenced by the USA/NATO, EU and the Russian Federation/CSI by cooperation partnerships and/or membership of some coastal states - all have a substantial impact on the way in which the main actors edify and develop a vision of the security environment in this space, but also on the way in which they promote and defend their own geopolitical interests associated with the Black Sea area, as well as the associated inter-state relations.

I. Chifu believes in the same context of ideas, stating that the Black Sea area has become a security complex due to multiple considerations regarding the evolution of post Cold War international relations. After the frozen conflicts having emerged during the Soviet period (1988-1991), but ended following the collapse of the Soviet Union were reignited, a true re-dimensioning the geopolitical interests of NATO/EU took place, concluding relevant regional security agreements in the context of the 1999 OSCE Summit in Istanbul and of the final declaration, which stipulated the coming into force of the revised European Conventional Forces Treaty (FACE) and of the Treaty for retreating the arms and forces of the Russian Federation stationed on the territory of the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, agreement which was never respected; moreover, the Russian Federation stopped applying the FACE Treaty in 2007, and in 2015 decided to stop participating in consultative common group meetings, which led to their suspension becoming complete in the FACE Treaty. We agree with

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<sup>1</sup> Minchev, Og., *Interese și strategii fundamentale pentru regiunea Mării Negre*. Monitor Strategic, 2006, nr. 3-4, p. 12.

the supposition expressed by I. Chifu that the Black Sea area has always been disputed by means of geostrategic regional vocations, under the conditions of concentrating direct geopolitical interests of important actors at the level of the international system, admitting its integrity as opposed to the Middle East, the Caucasus area and Central Asia, especially from energetic security considerations. After the adherence of Romania and Bulgaria to NATO and the EU, the Black Sea became a strategic space for security, with all the associated features of interest centre and disputed geopolitical area for the great powers in the region. Especially after 2007, the Black Sea area came to be the confluence of NATO/EU and the Russian Federation, favoured for the transit between NATO/EU and the Caucasus, respectively Central Asia, where the new independent post-Soviet states are situated, rich in oil and gas resources, an alternative route that avoids the Russian Federation. Also, the Black Sea has ensured a transit channel towards the conflict area of Afghanistan (2001), Iraq (2003), but also towards potential tension areas like Iran. Moreover, the presence of Turkey has a major stability impact for the Middle East. Its constant growth in strategic form and its weight in the region and in the world determines the regional security perspective of the Black Sea area<sup>1</sup>.

We underline the fact that M.C. Neacșu and S. Neaguț rightly state that the Black Sea area represents a geopolitical necessity for NATO/EU and the Russian Federation, highlighting the geopolitical load, which varies with both centres of power, this difference resulting from their different opinion towards the Extended Area of the Black Sea. In the geopolitical context of the post-Soviet Black Sea, it has a double geo-economic valence for NATO/EU: on the one hand, the EU integration of Eastern European countries and the access to considerable markets in the proximity of the Black Sea, and, on the other hand, access to immense resources and essential raw materials, especially energetic ones, by interconnecting the Black Sea area with the Caspian and Central Asian ones. The geo-economic dimension of the Black Sea area is doubled by the geostrategic and military ones, achieved by the extension of NATO, implementing the components of the American shield in the Western proximity of the Black Sea, and by the geopolitical one, materialised in the extension of Euro-Atlantic structures in the influence sphere of the Russian Federation<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Chifu, I. *Complexe de securitate și concepte regionale. Regiunea Extinsă a Mării Negre. Integrarea instituțională și capacitatea administrativă ca soluție pentru securitate regională*. În: *Impact Strategic*, 2011, nr. 2 (39), pp. 19-20.

<sup>2</sup> Neacșu M-C., Neaguț S., *Zona Mării Negre - o nouă „zonă gri”?* *Impact Strategic*, 2013, nr. 2 (47), pp. 41-42.

In Gh. Calopăreanu view, the complex of NATO relations in the Black Sea area includes three members of the Alliance (Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey), having advanced relations with Georgia and Ukraine as a consequence of the military conflicts with the Russian Federation (with Georgia losing territorial integrity and control over the Republic of Abkhazia and South Ossetia). At the same time, the risk of disintegration for Ukraine is a major one due to the loss of control over the Crimea Peninsula by the public central authorities, but also to the ascension of the conflict in the Eastern districts, allowing the extension in the South and South-West districts, two states with very developed action plans (Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova), and Armenia - member of the Peace Treaty, which nonetheless have a strategic partnership with the Russian Federation, demonstrates the fact that NATO is an important actor in the Extended area of the Black Sea, with all the costs, responsibilities and consequences this status implies. Gh. Calopăreanu agrees with M.C. Neacșu and with S. Negruț, making reference to numerous aspects of the Extended Area of the Black Sea, which represent a challenge for the EU, but also an opportunity in case of an eventual success. On the one hand, the enumerated risks and threats in the EU Security Strategy of 2003 are totally characteristic to the region of the Black Sea. On the other hand, the Black Sea area also has a positive potential, like the existence of a market for EU products or facilitating hydrocarbon transportation from the Caspian Sea into Europe<sup>1</sup>. We do not agree with the hypothesis that the European Neighbourhood Policy of the EU offers the necessary instrument for neutralising the threats coming from the Black Sea area and for valorising the regional economic opportunities, taking into account the fact that the actual policies in forming the EU Eastern Partnership cannot guarantee regional security and stability against the geopolitical interests of the Russian Federation promoted in the Black Sea area (which, by using all means, including the military one, amplifies its share in the sphere of political influence, thus generating a conflict with Ukraine, by which it extends the coastal perimeter, endangering European security). In our opinion, to fortify security and to set the immediate vicinity space, it would be necessary that the EU rethink its European Neighbourhood Policy and reshape the Security strategy, in the context of intensifying the conventional threats coming from the Russian Federation, which have as purpose the prevention of an eventual NATO and EU extension close to the borders of Russia, and restructure the European security system, but also reconfigure the international system, pleading for a multipolar one, in which the Russian Federation play a revisionist role.

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<sup>1</sup> Calopăreanu, Gh., *Implicații de securitate ale extinderii NATO și UE la Marea Neagră*. Impact Strategic, 2011, nr. 1 (38), p. 66.

According to Gh. Călopăreanu, the EU success presupposes a series of actions, like the more active involvement in solving the frozen conflicts in the Eastern Areas of the Republic of Moldova, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh, which, currently in a dormant state, can burst at any time, destabilising the whole area. Preventing such a disaster, which would affect not only the Black Sea area, presupposes that the EU efforts must be concentrated on internationalising the forces for maintaining peace and extending the format of negotiations, objective found in direct connection with the evolution of EU - Russian Federation relations, with a strategic importance for both actors. The necessity for harmonising the interests of the great powers in the Extended Area of the Black Sea could be the support needed by the EU, being in full process of substantiation of its own external and security policies, and the best suited actor for contributing to stability, development and modernisation, becoming the engine for intra-regional integration in this region. In order to obtain achievements in the field of regional security, democratic reforms which are correlated with the geopolitical interest of NATO and the EU in extending the trans-Atlantic security community are necessary. The perspective of increasing the stability in the Black Sea area should determine NATO and the EU to act together to launch large and multilateral initiatives in view of improving the security in the region. NATO starts having a key role in stabilising and defending the Black Sea area. Regardless of the position towards NATO of the countries in the Extended Area of the Black Sea, the presence of the North-Atlantic Alliance in the area could help improve the economic climate in the region, because improving the security conditions leads to better economic conditions. The essential element of ensuring the security conditions, the regional cooperation framework of the Black Sea, includes the Organisation for Economic Cooperation of the Black Sea and the Process for Cooperation in South-East Europe. If we accept the idea that there is a geopolitical necessity for developing an identity for the Black Sea area, under security conditions, and that NATO and the EU will manifest common interest, it becomes evident that the two organisations should cooperate in view of internal and external integration of the region and for fulfilling the Euro-Atlantic and local security objectives.

Gh. Calopăreanu also sustains that it is not enough that the EU perceives the Extended Area of the Black Sea from a security point of view, and that hidden tensions and their causes should be directly approached, and NATO must play a main role in developing a strategy for extending the military cooperation in the Black Sea area, which could lead to the reduction in the number of problems that could affect regional security. In this case, if the states in this geopolitical area do not find a way of solving

the existing conflicts, the probability that the Extended Area of the Black Sea to have its own identity, under security conditions, remains very low.

## **2. Black Sea, Russian Federation and NATO - Geopolitical Implications**

The existence of geopolitical interests between NATO and the EU and the Russian Federation in the respective geopolitical space are dominant in regulating frozen and active conflicts, significantly diminishing any coherent political success in small states, the Russian Federation being the greatest geopolitical beneficiary. Nevertheless, the extending of NATO in the Black Sea area must be accompanied by a change in direction if a design in stability is desired where it is needed. Many of the EU concerns, like drugs, guns, human trafficking, illegal immigration, terrorism and potential nuclear proliferation can only be approached by including the Black Sea in the institutional framework of NATO. Moreover, the areas where there are frozen or active conflicts, support and recruitment areas for terrorist or criminal organisations are of real and evident interest to NATO. We agree with Gh. Calopăreanu that the Russian Federation will continue to act in the Black Sea area according to their interests which, are not currently focused on solving regional problems and creating a security area in the Black Sea space, uncertainty and lack of coherent identity of the region being the context that the Russian Federation wishes for<sup>1</sup>.

M. C. Neacșu and S. Negruț accredit the idea that, for the Russian Federation, the Black Sea area represents a “geopolitical clamp” by means of which it ensures its presence in Europe. The vitality of the Russian Federation’s interest in the Black Sea results from its geopolitical destiny of being a Eurasian power, which might correspond to its novel geographical position, and the Eurasia geopolitical dimension is ensured by two territorial landmarks: its presence on the Baltic Sea and its presence on the Black Sea, where it suffered considerable losses when USSR collapsed in both cases. More important in the actual geopolitical context is its presence on the Black Sea, where the Russian Federation suffered great losses, with Ukraine inheriting a considerable part of the ex-Soviet coastline, its most important harbours, the Crimean Peninsula and the proximity to the Danube, and with the Russian Federation keeping just a small part of the

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 66-69.

seaside, its own geopolitical interests being harmed, especially in the context of Ukraine's ascending relations with the EU and NATO<sup>1</sup>.

According to I. Delanoe, by attaching Crimea, in March 2014, the position of the Russian Federation in the Black Sea has changed radically. The Russian Federation became the state with the longest coastline on the Black Sea; it regained full sovereignty over the most important harbour in the Black Sea basin, Sevastopol, and over its naval base; it took control over the shores of Kerch Strait, recovered part of the Ukrainian continental maritime plateau and took control over the gas and oil resources of Pallas in the area of Kerch Strait; the Azov Sea became a Russian interior sea. Moreover, the Russian Federation recovered almost 1000 km of coast on the Black Sea, including Sevastopol, Theodosia and Kerch harbours. Before attaching Crimea, the Russian Federation remained, following the collapse of the USSR, with a Black Sea coastline of 400 km, which is predominantly rocky and unsuited for navigation and harbour activities, between the Taman Peninsula and the border with Georgia, and with a second maritime opening, in the Azov Sea, 570 km long. After the war with Georgia, the Russian Federation extended its Black Sea maritime interface by establishing a military protectorate over Abkhazia, recovering another 200 km of coastline on the Black Sea. By losing Crimea, practically the naval presence of Ukraine in the Black Sea area disappeared, the Ukrainian fleet of the Black Sea being almost completely eliminated. Without its Ukrainian army 50 army garrisons, the military potential of Kiev drastically diminished. At the same time with Crimea, Ukraine lost 57 military ships, while the potential of the air fleet and anti-air defence were down by 20%. By attaching Crimea, the Russian Federation increased its strategic presence in the region of the Black Sea. Crimea is now situated at the centre of the Russian Black Sea-Caucasus military apparatus and can be considered as the "South strategic bastion" of the Russian Federation in Europe. It has the double mission to stop the expansion of Western influence, but also to reactivate the Russian influence in the Black Sea. Attaching Crimea and Sevastopol greatly confuses the strategic data in the Black Sea area and allows the Russian Federation to resolve, militarily, a series of inherited security deficiencies in the Black Sea strategic context created after the fall of the USSR. The loss of sovereignty of the Russian Federation over Crimea in 1991 is seen as one of the elements which have facilitated the reflux of Russian influence in the region of the Black Sea. The extension of NATO in 2004, as well as the growing influence of the USA in the Caucasus, up to the Caspian Sea, led to diminishing the Russian

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<sup>1</sup> Neacșu M.-C., Neguț S., *Zona Mării Negre - o nouă „zonă gri”?* Impact Strategic, 2013, nr. 2 (47) pp. 42-43.



influence inside its sphere of privileged interests (near proximity). This process reversed its course, firstly after the Russian-Georgian conflict of August 2008, which ended the process of diminishing Russian influence in the Black Sea area, and secondly by attaching Crimea, which opened new perspectives for renewing the maritime power and the presence of the Russian Federation on the Black Sea and, from here on, to the Mediterranean Sea. The strategic presence of the Russian Federation in the Black Sea area will be more consistent under the conditions of Russia launching, in 2011, a programme of rearming its forces, which also comprises the renewal of military capacities in the Black Sea basin<sup>1</sup>.

I. Chifu's opinion is that the Russian Federation interpreted the geopolitical events seeing the exit of Ukraine from the new formula of Eurasian integration as a signal of failure of the Eurasia Union, which was to be launched at the beginning of 2015. The Russian Federation acted in order to protect its vital interests and opted for armed intervention to defend all Russians and all Russian speaking people living in Ukraine<sup>2</sup>. L.C. Dumitru expresses the opinion that, presently, the Russian Federation makes considerable efforts to keep its status of political and military super power on an international scale, and also as an active international actor. In this context, the Russian Federation has elaborated a strategy of priorities in the "nearby vicinity", even as a preventive action against major threats, by the unilateral use of nuclear weapons. At the same time, an increased energetic dependency of some EU member states on the Russian Federation may be observed, which consolidates the geopolitical position of Russia and undoubtedly favours its interests within the Independent States Community (ISC) space. The Russian Federation did not accept easily the role and place that were attributed to it in the new post-Cold War security equation of the Black Sea area, acting to regain its lost positions. In addition to its actions to create the ISC out of the ex-Soviet countries, the Russian Federation generated and maintained, in its own interest, the frozen conflicts in South Caucasus (Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh), in the Eastern areas of the Republic of Moldova, Crimea, as well as the recent secessionist tensions in the East, South-East and South Ukraine, preconfiguring instability throughout a huge space in the North area of the Black Sea. In general, the perpetual presence of the Russian military in the ex-imperial space, where there is no highlighted perspective for retreat, is had in view. The new Russian military doctrine supports the

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<sup>1</sup> Delanoë, I. Amprenta rusă tot mai marcată în Marea Neagră și Mediterană. În: <http://www.curentul.ro> (Accessed on 14.05.2017).

<sup>2</sup> Chifu, I., *Geopolitica Regiunii Extinse a Mării Negre după criza ucraineană*. Impact Strategic, 2014, nr. 3 (52), p.11.

concept of “near vicinity” and represents the materialisation of the efforts to regain and fortify the positions lost after the end of the Cold War<sup>1</sup>.

In Zb. Brzezinski’s view, Ukraine is an important geopolitical pivot, because its simple existence as an independent country helps Russia’s transformation. Without Ukraine, the Russian Federation ceases to be a Eurasian empire; it can still aspire at the status of empire, but then it would become a predominantly Asian imperial state, possibly attracted into conflicts. which will weaken it, with the central Asian countries, it would be full of resentment due to the loss of their recent independence, and would be supported by the Islamic countries in the South. At the same time, if the Russian Federation regains geopolitical control over Ukraine, with its population of 52 million inhabitants and with its important natural resources, but also with its access to the Black Sea, then the Russian Federation regains the necessary means for becoming a powerful imperial state, spreading in Europe and Asia. Ukraine’s loss of independence would have immediate consequences for Central Europe, because it would transform Poland into the geopolitical pivot on the Eastern frontier of the EU<sup>2</sup>.

According to M. C. Neacșu and S. Negruț, the importance of Ukraine for the Russian Federation lies in that it represents a bumper state between NATO/EU and Russia. From the point of view of the Russian Federation, the NATO extension in Ukraine is a great threat on the geopolitical interests and the national security of the Russian federation, mostly promoting the disintegration of Ukraine in the Russian oriented East and the European oriented West, the federalisation or awarding a special status to Lugansk and Donețk, thus opposing Ukraine’s process of EU and NATO integration.<sup>3</sup> In our opinion, these hypotheses may come true in the context of the hybrid war in the Eastern areas of Ukraine (Lugansk and Donețk) and of the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation. At the same time, under these circumstances, it is less probable that the process of Ukraine approaching NATO and its exiting of the Russian Federation sphere of influence can be interfered with, despite the exercising of geopolitical pressure coming from Russia, which uses numerous instruments of political, economic, energetic and ethno-linguistic nature. In case the Russian Federation does not continue the military path, there are

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<sup>1</sup> Dumitru, L.C., *Securitate versus instabilitate în Regiunea Extinsă a Mării Negre*. Buletinul Universității Naționale de Apărare „Carol I”, iunie 2014, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Brzezinski, Z., *Marea tablă de șah. Supremația americană și imperatiile sale geostrategice*. București: Univers Enciclopedic, 2000, p.59.

<sup>3</sup> Neacșu M-C., Neguț S., *Zona Mării Negre – o nouă „zonă gri”?* Impact Strategic, 2013, nr. 2 (47), p. 44.

premises which will result in consolidating the Ukrainian desiderate of intensifying the cooperation relations with NATO in view of fortifying the defence and security capacities, meant to reduce the threat coming from the Russian Federation, including its effects on the regional security of the Black Sea area.

### 3. Hybrid Warfare – the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Threat

According to C. C. Ioniță, following the evolution of the military conflicts at the beginning of the 21st century, which tend to frequently change their physiognomy regarding the degree of sophistication and character, numerous military experts pay special attention to the complexity and dilution of the types of war, as well as to combining the increased frequency with the lethality of actions. Known at a theoretical level as hybrid warfare, this new type of war comprises a unique combination of hybrid threats which allow the exploitation of a multitude of challenges resulting from using all tactical and strategic actions, most of the time simultaneously<sup>1</sup>. F. Hoffman and R. Glenn express the supposition that hybrid warfare does not represent a novelty, but the actual ones are carried out differently, by mixing and diversifying the levels of leading with new and complicated methods of carrying out military actions, underlining the necessity of elaborating a theoretical-conceptual framework about the phenomenon of hybrid war<sup>2</sup>. C. C. Ioniță believes that hybrid warfare represents a new approach in the unconventionalities against a very developed technology, where state or non-state actors could choose from a multitude of tactics and technologies which they may combine into innovative procedures, and which will satisfy their own cultural aspirations, based on the geostrategic position and geopolitical ideology in the confrontation of the armed forces of the Western civilised world. Combining the ways of developing the conflict does not manifest itself as a major interest to the actors; more important is fading the levels of war, by use of various hybrid tactics and techniques, with the purpose of obtaining strategic effects and political objectives. The industrial period of the 20th century brought about symmetrical and proportioned armed confrontations, known as “conventional conflicts”. The current information period is characterised by a reduction of massive armies and by an

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<sup>1</sup> Ioniță, C., *Este războiul hibrid ceva nou?* Impact Strategic, 2014, nr. 4 (52), p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> Hoffman, F. *Further thoughts on hybrid threats*, <http://www.smallwarsjournal.com> (Accessed on 25.02.2017).

increased technological potential of a number of super-developed states, resulting in major technological gaps between states, together with substantial reduction of military budgets and restrictive access to resources and information. This cumulation of characteristics has changed the nature of armed conflicts – being attributed a nonconventional character, and being carried out by a coalition/alliance against an adversary or asymmetric state – launched against international terrorism, adding disproportionality not only to the economic and technical potential employed, but also to the technology and professionalism of the personnel involved. In order to counter such discrepancies, the adversary, at state or at non-state level, has had to mix conventional, unconventional and terrorist actions with actions specific to the informational space. As a consequence, more and more military specialists, C. C. Ioniță among them, consider that future military conflicts will manifest three tendencies, especially according to the capacity and possibility of combatants to face the new requirements of the contemporary operational space: super-technical conventional warfare – super-fast and extremely costly, which may be supported by a limited number of economic and military super-developed states; hybrid warfare – which will use a mix of new technologies and old doctrines, innovative combination with various types of tactics and techniques, whose frequency and lethality will grow; generalising asymmetrical conflicts – which will use conventional and unconventional forces, atypical means like terrorism and organised crime<sup>1</sup>.

The military experts from the United States of America are the first to have developed the theory of hybrid threats, after Al-Qaeda transformed into an international terrorist organisation, specifying in their theory the first category of subjects involved in military hybrid actions, like: Iraqi rebels, fanatic and religious factions in the Middle East (Hezbollah and Hamas), as well as the foreign jihad fighters of Afghanistan. Subsequently, using the experience accumulated in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the analysis carried out after the 2nd war in Lebanon in 2006, and the war in Chechnya of 2008, in defining and describing hybrid threat, the bankrupted states were included in the subjects category: “any adversary who, in a simultaneous and adaptable way, uses a necessary complex of conventional, unconventional, terrorist or criminal ways and activities in the operational modern space. The hybrid threat or challenge may consist in a combination of state or non-state actors”<sup>2</sup>. S. Roșca’s statement, however, is that it was only after the annexation of Crimea, in 2014, that western experts and Russian theoreticians of the hybrid war have theorized this new art. V.

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<sup>1</sup> Ioniță, C., *op. cit.*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 66.

Gherasimov believes that, in the 21st century, we are witnessing a deletion of borders between the state of war and peace. The role of non-military ways for achieving political and strategic purposes has increased and, in many cases, they surpass firearms in what concerns efficiency. The direction of applying conflict methods has shifted towards using political, economic, informatics, humanitarian and other non-military measures on a large scale. All these are supplemented by the military actions they cover, including informational conflict actions and actions of the Special Forces<sup>1</sup>.

According to T. Frunzetti, the theoretical analysis of the conventional and unconventional aspects of military actions require the achievement of some conceptual delimitations, of the existence of multiple paradigms and of a large variety of formulations, especially in what concerns the new types of conflicts. The debate on the conventional/unconventional dichotomy in the framework of military actions must consider the main categories envisaged: on the one hand, the war with diverse forms – classic conventional war, nonconventional war, unregulated war, sub-conventional war, nuclear war, guerrilla war, civil war, war based on networks, terrorist war, war against terrorism, information war, hybrid war; on the other hand, military action other than war, like post-conflict, stability, peace imposition/maintenance/sustaining, humanitarian or psychological military operations<sup>2</sup>.

J. McCuen believes that hybrid warfare illustrates the most eloquent example of the impossibility of a clear delineation of the conventional dimension of military actions as opposed to the unconventional one, merging conventional war with the unregulated one and with cybernetic war. Moreover, hybrid war is a combination between symmetric and asymmetric war, where forces carry out military conventional operations against enemy forces and targets and, at the same time, try to obtain control of the local population in the conflict zone by ensuring security and stability in the area<sup>3</sup>.

We must mention that the evolution of the hybrid war phenomenon is in a permanent dynamics, ensuring an epistemological reflection on the practical aspect of applying the multidimensional strategies and tactics which have modified the paradigm of carrying out contemporary war. In this context, the hybrid threats were presented in the declaration of the

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<sup>1</sup> Roșca, S., *Reflecții conceptuale asupra noțiunii de propagandă: istorie și actualitate*. În: *Relații Internaționale Plus*, 2016, nr.1(9) pp. 63-64.

<sup>2</sup> Frunzetti, T. *Convențional și neconvențional în acțiunile militare*. *Impact Strategic*, 2012, nr.4, pp. 7-8.

<sup>3</sup> McCuen, J. *Hybrid wars*. *Military Review*, 2008, vol.88, nr. 2, p. 108.

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Summit, which was held between 4 and 5 September 2014 in Wales, as a large area of military, para-military and civil actions carried out in plain sight or hidden in a strongly integrated manner. This definition stands as technical support, preceded by the events in Ukraine, to highlight the quintessence of the phenomenon, but also to update the previous definition of hybrid threats, specifying that threats are represented by adversaries who have the capacity to simultaneously use conventional and unconventional ways in view of achieving their objectives<sup>1</sup>.

In C. C. Ioniță's view, the hybrid threat was analysed more as a problem and not as a theoretical-conceptual approach, which might be a solution to it. Some military theoreticians consider that the events in Iraq and Afghanistan served as rightful cycle of accelerated training for insurgents and terrorists in what concerns obtaining and using, more and more efficiently, tactics and techniques for fighting, as well as the continuous adaptation of improvised explosive devices to the operational environment, defining them as hybrid conflict<sup>2</sup>. From the perspective of hybrid conflict evolution, C. Gray states that conflict may be characterised as a hybrid combination of traditional and unconventional tactics, a decentralised planning and execution, as well as the actions of some non-state actors which can use simple and sophisticated technologies in an innovative way<sup>3</sup>. C. C. Ioniță highlights the fact that this definition includes hybrid threats and hybrid challenges (traditional, unconventional and terrorist), as well as the physical and conceptual dimensions of the conflict, the former being the fight against an armed adversary, and the latter – a more extended fight for control and sustenance of local population in conflict areas, maintaining public support inside participant states, as well as obtaining the support of the international community<sup>4</sup>. Developing the theory of hybrid war, F. Hoffman, sustains that, in the future, war will be a more accentuated combination, manifested by a mix of capabilities called hybrid war, whose specificity is that it involves any enemy who uses, simultaneously and in an adaptable way, a complex combination of weapons and unconventional means, unconventional war, terrorism and criminal approach in the current battle space, mixing the lethality of inter-states conflicts with the fanaticism and prolonged fervour of

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<sup>1</sup> Barbu, F.M., *Considerații privind războiul hibrid*. În: *Impact Strategic*, 2015, nr.2, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> Ioniță, C., *Este războiul hibrid ceva nou?* *Impact Strategic*, 2014, nr.4 (52), p. 66.

<sup>3</sup> Gray, C., *Încă un secol sângeros. Războiul viitorului*. Londra: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2006, p. 14

<sup>4</sup> Ioniță, C., *op. cit.*, p. 67.

unconventional war, in order to reach its political objectives<sup>1</sup>. O. Shynkarenko believes that the actions carried out by the Russian Federation in the Crimean Peninsula and in the Donbas area also involved actions of the Special Forces, who carried out various tactics and techniques, as well as disinformation campaigns and exploitation of Ukrainian internal vulnerabilities, fitting the theory of hybrid war. The Russian Federation uses commando and mercenary troops on a large scale in Ukraine to fight alongside the local volunteers, therefore achieving its political objectives in an indirect way, carrying out a new type of war – a hybrid war in which armies do not directly adopt the role of aggressor. In exchange, they serve to intimidate, while the important groups of mercenaries, together with local extremists and the criminal gangs in the area, take part in military operations<sup>2</sup>. In this context, J. Mattis and F. Hoffman express the supposition that hybrid wars are not a new phenomenon, but currently they are carried out differently. In this type of war, the forces are hard to identify in the framework of the same army or in the same operational space. The combination of unconventional capabilities with conventional forces, integrated at tactical or operative level, may constitute a considerable challenge for international security. At the same time, J. Mattis prioritises the notions of hybrid enemies, hybrid military forces, in the frame of hybrid war, which differs from the classic war by the fact that it allows the adversary to occupy parallel battle positions, while forwarding a new set of actions for military forces<sup>3</sup>.

C. Popescu underlines the fact that the hybrid war is derived from the paradigm of total war, representing a more complex and an extremely heterogeneous stage, in accordance with the current technological and informational process. The hybrid war is not a total novelty, hybrid tactics were also applied in the past. The difference is determined by the great destructive potential, by the heterogeneity of resources, by the extension of the phenomenon at a global scale, subsequent to globalisation and to the interconnection of financial-economic, communication and transportation systems, and by the risk of starting a nuclear conflagration, which limits the hard power options in favour of soft power or smart power<sup>4</sup>. According to the expert, hybrid war represents the most recent, the most complex and,

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<sup>1</sup> Hoffman, F., *Hybrid warfare and challenges*. The Joint Force Quarterly Magazine, 2009, nr. 52, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Shynkarenko, O., Russia's hybrid war in Ukraine. <http://www.iwpr.net/report-news/russias-hybrid-war-ukraine> (Accessed on 12.03.2017).

<sup>3</sup> Mattis, J; Hoffman, F. *Future warfare: the rise of hybrid warfare*. U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, 2005, pp. 30-32.

<sup>4</sup> Popescu, C., *Observații privind actualitatea războiului hibrid. Studiu de caz: Ucraina*. Impact Strategic, 2014, nr. 4, p. 126.

probably, the most extended expression of contemporary war, mixing elements of the conventional armed conflict with the unconventional one of psychologic, informational, propagandistic, imagologic type, taking the classical form of armed confrontations and elements specific to terrorism, guerrilla war, insurgency and insurrection, of the armed symmetric and asymmetric conflict<sup>1</sup>, while M. Galeotti considers that hybrid war is a postmodern one, its main element being that it is not declared officially, but carried out permanently with military and non-military means, from undercover missions to cybernetic attacks, and even to massive lobby operations<sup>2</sup>, and D. Dungaciu defines hybrid war as an intertwining of military non-military and societal interventions, the aggressor following the exploitation of various weaknesses in his enemy, as well as ethnical tensions, corruption and liability of its institutions, economic dependencies and vulnerabilities<sup>3</sup>. F. van Kappen expresses the opinion that hybrid war represents a joining of classic war with the use of new elements, which manifests itself by concluding agreements between the country involved in hybrid war and the non-state participants by its side, like volunteer fighters, local groups of population, para-military organisations, totally denying the direct connection with them<sup>4</sup>. Other experts support the contrary, observing the clear difference between hybrid war and classic war, underlining the fact that hybrid war is not a classic war where mass propaganda, provocation, activation of groups inside the state are used. In the case of classic war, the main way of achieving its purposes is the use of normal military forces. Hybrid war is a variety of armed conflict, which is carried out with normal troops and classic military manoeuvres, but especially with using a large range of means and methods of unconventional fight, respectively, cybernetic attacks, actions meant to destabilise on economic and social level, as well as actions of a diversionist nature with special units, unregulated forces, para-military groups. S. Cebotari defines hybrid war approaching it from the perspective of the totality of operations prepared in advance by the state, with the implication of diplomatic and informational actions targeting strategic purposes<sup>5</sup>.

F. Hoffman accredits the supposition where he defines two concepts: composite war and hybrid war. In his vision, the composite war represents a large scale war, which combines regular and irregular forces, strategically

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 125.

<sup>2</sup> Roşca, S., *op. cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 64.

<sup>4</sup> Gorbulin, B., Hybrid war as a key instrument of Russian Geostrategy. <http://www.gazeta.zn.ua/internal/gibridnaya-voyna-kak-klyuchevoy-instrument-rossiyskoy-geostrategii-revansha-.html> (Accessed on 15.03.2017).

<sup>5</sup> Cebotari S., *Războiul hibrid. Unele considerațiuni*. În: *Revista Militară*, 2015, nr.1 (13), p. 33.



coordinated by a unique command centre. In the case of hybrid war, this combination becomes much more complex, the ways of operating being intricate and convergent. If the composite war presupposes synergy at a strategic level, but not at operative or tactic level, irregular forces are used more as auxiliary to the regular and operationally separated ones, in the case of hybrid war, we witness a synergy on all levels: strategic, tactic and operational, with a high degree of mixing actors, tactics and methods of operating. Hybrid war combines the lethal character of inter-state conflicts with the fanaticism and unlimited fervour of the asymmetric war, where potential adversaries exploit the access to modern military capabilities, including encrypted command systems and other lethal modern systems, promoting and sustaining insurgences that use ambush, improvised explosive devices and ordered assassinations<sup>1</sup>. C. Popescu does not agree with the affirmations of W. Mitchell, according to whom limited war is meant to test the status quo of the international system and the political-dynamic, economic and military reaction capacities of the great powers, saying that hybrid war is, in fact, a limited war with reduced risks and costs, anticipating a total war; for him, hybrid war is not a limited war, but a limited war can be a hybrid war. The beginning of a hybrid war is determined by the interest of global spaces, encompassing various forms – military and non-military, conventional and nonconventional; it may be extremely costly and devastating, and can be prolonged as long as the power is interested in maintaining it. For these reasons, it is not a limited war, its length being determined by the power that conducts the hybrid war, and that can confer a limited or unlimited character to it, according to the degree of achieving the initial objectives<sup>2</sup>.

B. Fleming believes that conceptual hybrid war has its source in the conflict of 2006 between Israel and Hezbollah. The necessity of this syntagm was determined by the need of describing the complexity of an anachronistic confrontation space from the theoretical perspective of the event, in which Hezbollah fighters surprised the Israeli Defence Forces by the capacity to simultaneously combine, in an innovative manner, classical military capabilities with unregulated rapid fight methods, in order to create immediate strategic effects. The adoption of the concept was not perceived as a source for a real doctrine and organisational revolution in the military field, highlighting the fact that, in a conventional manner, combatants constantly use a combination of fighting methods according to the means available, in view of achieving the desired objectives. Recent conflicts have

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<sup>1</sup> Hoffman, F., *op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Popescu C., *Observații privind actualitatea războiului hibrid. Studiu de caz: Ucraina*. Impact Strategic, 2014, nr. 4, p. 127.

demonstrated that, regularly, during war time, there were conventional forces as well as unconventional ones; although coordinated at a strategic level, they were, most of the time, geographically separated and not integrated at operational level. In the expert's opinion, hybrid actions of hostile actors during a contemporary war are determined by a complex approach to using technology for aiding various methods and ways of fighting, which, undoubtedly, represents factors that can annihilate the military superiority of conventional forces<sup>1</sup>.

According to the assertion of F. M. Barbu, future conflicts will be as complex as human society, the tendency being that of fighting forces carrying out military actions specific to the entire spectrum of conventional, as well as unconventional, operations, most probably in a simultaneous manner. This approach is perceived as a relevant element of the hybrid war, where the subject that launches the aggression makes use of the whole array of asymmetrical techniques for exploiting the vulnerabilities of the adversary<sup>2</sup>. In his opinion, hybrid war is a combination of strategies and techniques meant to combine fighting methods, to make use of tactical success so as to obtain strategic effects by rapid exploitation of the advantages in the moral and cognitive field. A war cannot be called hybrid only according to the capacities used and by the effects it produces; it has to be approached from a logical and theoretical point of view, especially for understanding and combating it. The military forces capable to manage any hybrid threat must be created so as to have professional military training, which focuses on forming cognitive abilities necessary for identifying anachronistic situations and rapidly adapting to them<sup>3</sup>. We do not accept the idea sustained by F. M. Barbu, that the birth of hybrid war does not represent the end of traditional or conventional warfare, but adds more complexity to the process of planning defence in the 21st century. We believe that the birth of a new phenomenon like hybrid war, specified in military doctrines and strategies, has contributed to ending the chapter of traditional or conventional war and to the beginning of a new stage in the evolution of contemporary warfare. F. Hoffman states that the greatest challenge in future will be determined by the capacity of belligerents to identify with precision the separation lines between ways of conducting war, the real danger being represented by non-state countries or entities, which will use the entire panoply of tactics and technologies, in innovative combinations, to achieve the strategic objectives set in keeping with their

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<sup>1</sup> Fleming B., *The hybrid threat concept: contemporary war, military planning and the advent of unrestricted operational art*. În: <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ada545789> (Accessed on 15.03.2017).

<sup>2</sup> Barbu, F.M., *Considerații privind războiul hibrid*. Impact Strategic, 2015, nr. 2, p. 55.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 57.

culture and the necessities imposed by the geopolitical space where they hold interests<sup>1</sup>. According to him, hybrid actions may include a large and diverse array of conventional and asymmetrical fighting methods exercised by classic military forces and unregulated military groups, which may include, in an extreme approach, terrorist acts and generalised violence propaganda targeting the population, as well as actions that might favour public disorder. These activities must be tactical and operationally directed so as to obtain synergetic effects both in the physical dimension and in the psychological dimension<sup>2</sup>.

In C. Băhnăreanu opinion, besides the classic fighting actions regularly carried out by states, at the beginning of the 21st century, asymmetric, unconventional and hybrid actions carried out by non-state actors increasingly express their own specific ideas on this matter.<sup>3</sup> Along these lines, we will take into account the supposition expressed by C. Clausewitz, that each era has its own type of warfare, its own limitations and its own perceptions; consequently, for each era, conflicts and wars should be analysed by means of their particularities<sup>4</sup>. F. Hoffman notes that, although currently it is not fully accepted by military experts, being an undefined term, hybrid war best reflects the particularities of the time, having in view the fact that states and non-state actors employed in this form of conflict exploit all methods of destabilizing the existing order: conventional, unregulated, terrorist and criminal. C Băhnăreanu states that the supporters of the hybrid war concept use this syntagm for describing the area where regulated and unregulated war interconnect and combine, and where, as M. Ishewood suggests, the difference between conventional and unregulated war are cancelled. Moreover, according to F. van Kappen, this area represents a combination of classic war and the use of unregulated armed formations, creating a new type of war. Components, tactics, techniques and procedures specific to both faces of the war lead to a new type of threat – the hybrid one; although not new in the evolution of war, hybrid actions highlight a new manner of combining and using conventional and unconventional tactics and instruments specific to the last generation of wars<sup>5</sup>. F. Hoffman mentions that hybrid threat may incorporate the entire range of ways to carry out war, including conventional capabilities, tactics and unregulated formations, other

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<sup>1</sup> Hoffman, F., *op. cit.*, p. 35

<sup>2</sup> Hoffman F., *Conflict in the 21st century: the rise of hybrid wars*. Arlington: Ed. Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007. p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Băhnăreanu, C., *Evoluția războiului de la acțiunile clasice la cele hibride*. Impact Strategic, 2015, nr. 2, p. 59.

<sup>4</sup> Clausewitz von, C., *On war*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989. p. 593.

<sup>5</sup> Băhnăreanu C., *op. cit.*, pp. 65-67.

violence and crimes<sup>1</sup>. T. Huber, M. Knox and W. Murray express their disagreement with conceptualising hybrid war under the aspect of its novelty in military doctrines, and of the threat to military security, considering that this type of war is not something new, only its instruments are much more sophisticated and destructive, requiring an answer of the same nature. In their opinion, hybrid war is nothing else than a manifestation of a sort of conflict periodically encountered in history, the differences being that it does not require distinct forces (conventional and unconventional), and that it does not imply the existence of two types of war (regulated and unregulated), but an efficient combination of various tactics specific to the two faces of the war<sup>2</sup>. We share C. Băhnăreanu's provision that contradicts them, underlining that, although hybrid war continues not to be totally accepted as a new phenomenon by military experts, being an undefined term, it still presents many unknown aspects which continuously require to be studied and analysed from a theoretical point of view so as to edify a conceptual-theoretical basis of the phenomenon. This type of war, as well as everything it involves, will rapidly lead to the re-evaluation of the current operational doctrines, so that the states and their military forces are ready to counteract and efficiently reply to tactics, techniques and procedures of the hybrid type<sup>3</sup>.

#### **4. Asymmetric Threats – Signature of Hybrid Warfare**

T. Frunzetti makes an interconnection between asymmetric and hybrid threats, stating that 21st century wars, in as far as asymmetric actions are concerned, are carried out, almost exclusively, by non-state actors like Islamic neo-terrorism, degenerated guerrillas, transnational criminal organisations, narco-terrorism. Asymmetry is manifested at various levels: strategic, operative and tactical, meaning adaptation to the adversary or to a security threat. Whether it is partial or total, adaptation may be integrated in a more conventional confrontation formula, moving and enlarging the conflict area to a simple political and media battlefield<sup>4</sup>. In this context, E. Antoine believes that asymmetric actions cover a large array of operation modes, starting with non-violence and ending with political violence, from

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<sup>1</sup> Hoffman, F., *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Băhnăreanu, C., *op. cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 67.

<sup>4</sup> Frunzetti, T., *Acțiuni asimetrice, neconvenționale și hibride în războiul secolului al XXI-lea*. Impact Strategic, 2013, nr.1, p. 9.

terrorism to different types of informational war, the latter being facilitated by the revolution produced in information technology and communication, giving access to states, but also to non-state actors. Symmetric actions are defined by the fact that one of the actors does not respect the commonly agreed rules. In case of war, rules are most of the time set in the benefit of one of the protagonists, who thus finds a way to ensure his superiority. It is normal that after he has tried to abide by all the rules of the game, which did not advantage him, the adversary tries to avoid them so as to re-establish equilibrium, restarting his initiative to compensate a weakness that would be fatal to him<sup>1</sup>. According to T. Frunzetti, hybrid actions will be included as a form of armed warfare, the war evolution tending towards hybridisation, which will take place on two levels: action modes, and actors and their alliances. Hybrid actions combine conventional, asymmetric, terrorist, organised crime type capacities to carry out singular and often innovative actions simultaneously able to show symmetry and asymmetry. Guerrilla, terrorist or organised crime organisations want to achieve abilities and skills specific to national armies: electronic and cybernetic war, earth-air rockets associated with radars. The convergence of techniques and ways of action constitutes the pertinence of a more and more evasive dichotomy between symmetry and asymmetry, being a systemic combination, hybridisation of alliances between state and non-state actors allowing asymmetrical and symmetrical regrouping capacities. In future, the most capable adversaries will combine real destructive capacities with traditional, asymmetrical or catastrophic ways of war. In this context, many experts express their previsions regarding the complexity of the forms of war through combining increasing frequency with lethality. This construction is described as hybrid war, where the adversary will very probably show unique hybrid threats, envisaging the state's vulnerabilities. Hybrid actions will be a simultaneous mix of all forms of conventional, asymmetric, terrorist war and corresponding tactics. Non-state actors who use hybrid action achieve an innovative melange of strategies, tactics and technologies according to their specific culture, geography and objectives envisaged<sup>2</sup>. W. Nemeth underlines the notion that hybrid forces may incorporate advanced technologic systems in their structure, and then may use them differently from the initial specified parameters. Nevertheless, the

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<sup>1</sup>Antoine, E. Le concept de conflit asymétrique a-t-il un sens? [www.alliancegeostrategique.org/2011/05/06/le-concept-de-conflit-asymetrique-a-t-il-un-sens-i/](http://www.alliancegeostrategique.org/2011/05/06/le-concept-de-conflit-asymetrique-a-t-il-un-sens-i/) (Accessed on 20.03.2017).

<sup>2</sup> Frunzetti, T. *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

functionality of hybrid military forces is superior in comparison with the occidental forces in the hybrid war they carry out against them<sup>1</sup>.

S. Roșca is in favour of theorisation and development of the hybrid war concept, expressing the assertion that hybrid war is a form of undeclared and unconventional inter-state conflict, carried out openly or hidden on multiple plans: political, military, diplomatic, economic, energetic, financial, propagandistic, media, cybernetic and subversive. Hybrid war could be interpreted as an unconventional and unlegislated form of informational war, where the kinetic components undertaken by special forces have a substantial higher share<sup>2</sup>. According to I. Gîrneț, the current events that are taking place in Donbas, Ukraine, have not produced any mutation in the phenomenon of hybrid war, remaining a continuation of politics carried out by means of violence. The notion of hybrid war, so highly promoted nowadays, remains an older, well-known, strategic action procedure, which does not require a complementary conceptual-theoretical research, being reactivated by certain major actors with a view to achieving geostrategic objectives in the areas of geopolitical interest. At the same time, armed war, like other components of war, has remained the same and is carried out abiding by the same laws and principles valid until now on all three levels: strategic, operative and tactical<sup>3</sup>.

We do not agree with the hypothesis sustained by a group of military experts and polemologists that hybrid war is an asymmetric war with minimal use of military potential meant to achieve geostrategic interests and objectives. We also reject F. van Kappen's affirmation that hybrid war includes a large spectrum of actions where the military component has an insignificant role, a major importance being attributed to other non-lethal means like the political, informational, psychological and economic, which might allow it to obtain the necessary results, causing prejudices to the adversary's state functioning mechanism, therefore demoralising the society<sup>4</sup>. We consider the nonlethal approach of the hybrid war as wrong, as well as creating a false state of safety for the state, where any military implication of any state is rejected; also, not paying attention to in-depth research of the geopolitical premises and to the context favourable to starting the military phase of the hybrid war is deemed false, this being the contributor to achieving geostrategic interests. We must mention that the

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<sup>1</sup> Nemeth, W., *Future war and Chechnya: a case for hybrid warfare*. Monterey: Ed. Kindle, 2012, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Roșca, S. *op. cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>3</sup> Gîrneț, Iu., „Războiul hibrid” între istorie și actualitate. *Revista Militară*, 2015, nr. 1 (13), p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Cebotari S., *op. cit.*, 2015, nr. 1 (13), p. 27.

most important phase of the hybrid war, also one of its initial phases, is the military one, following the information-propaganda and political-diplomatic stages, and having a destructive impact on the infrastructure and a psychological impact on the civilian population. It is only after the constraints imposed on the aggressor by the international community that the military component is preserved, while subsequently applying all the non-lethal methods of undermining the development potential of the state, which determines the evolutionist character of the hybrid war.

## **5. Short Concluding Considerations**

In conclusion we underline that currently we are confronted with a new form of threat on military security, which is manifested as a complex and multidimensional war, with lethal consequences, and which involves strategies, tactics and techniques of a symmetric, asymmetric, conventional and unconventional type. Its participating subjects are state actors, as well as non-state actors, who use communication and information technologies. It requires theoretical research intended to identify the genesis, quintessence and repercussions of this phenomenon, having as goal the development of military strategies that will regulate prevention, control and post-conflict actions. The fundamental role of ensuring national and international security is thus attributed to the military dimension. We believe that such a threat may be classified as an unconventional war of a hybrid type, its indispensable central element remaining the conventional component which, despite the diminishing of its symmetric role and of its classic application in a war, has preserved its military importance, being completed by numerous tactical operational elements with a dynamic character and with the ability to use them. This has facilitated the emergence of a new military paradigm in the framework of a new stage of carrying out contemporary war, whose organisation is determined by the geopolitical re-dimensioning of the regional situation. As a consequence of the technological evolution in carrying out contemporary conflicts/wars, we come to the conclusion that the extension of the threat of unconventional hybrid war, generates an increased danger for all components of national security, and impacts the regional security in the Black Sea area.

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