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Private Military Force as Strategy to Counter a Hybrid Threat Posture: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract

The international community is currently facing a diffuse, shifting, and controversial set of security challenges. On the one hand, hybrid warfare creates both conceptual and strategic challenges to a state, as conventional military forces are simply not designed to operate in a legal "grey zone". As a result, certain ways and means, which are essential for the successful prosecution of an armed conflict, must be forfeited.

On the other hand, there are significant self-restricting political and legal partitions inherent in the modern strategic landscape, as the international community does not want an easy recourse to war. By having to remain below these political and legal thresholds, a disconnect is however created between the policy ends of a state and the strategic effect of its armed forces.

The combined effect of these challenges suggests that there is no suitable policy for dealing with hybrid threats, making the international community particularly vulnerable to exploitation. What is clear is that a more sophisticated, complex, and politically charged strategic response is required to counter a hybrid threat posture – one that effectively links policy ends to the ways and means of achieving those ends.

Throughout history many different entities – besides statutory militaries – have fought wars: families, ethnic groups, business enterprises, and private military forces. Today, by virtue of the extensive expertise embedded within the private military industry, private military forces strategically influence both the process and the outcome of conflicts. The objective of the subsequent research[i] was therefore to suggest a conceptual framework for private military force to counter a hybrid threat posture.

The collective findings of this follow-up research suggest that, if private military force is theoretically coherent; is underpinned by a realistic political dimension; is tailored to a creative and non-linear concept of operations; and is adequately equipped and supported by a state, then the concept of private military force as strategy to counter a hybrid threat posture is a compelling notion.

Keywords: Strategy, Military, Defence, Hybrid Warfare, Private Military Force

[i] Please note that "subsequent research" or "follow-up research" refers to research done after the primary research. This follow-up research provided additional information, which is reflected in this article.

Introduction

Two kinds of conceptual and strategic understandings of conflict underpin policy.[2] On the one hand, there is a tendency to impose a stereotypical version of war, drawn from the experiences of industrialised warfare over the last two centuries.[3] On the other hand, where policymakers recognise the shortcomings of the Clausewitzian concept of war, there is a tendency to treat conflict as unconventional or irregular.[4] Security analysts, defence scholars, and policy practitioners alike agree however that the binary understanding of modern warfare lags behind current developments and experiences on the battlefield.[5]

Chinese analysts use the terms "unrestricted warfare" and "three warfares"; Russian officials use the term "political warfare", while Western defence scholars use the terms "new wars", "asymmetric warfare", or "fourth-generation war" to describe modern warfare.[6] Although the term "hybrid war" has been criticised for being so broad that it has limited analytical value, it does however provide adequate grounds for understanding the complexities and challenges of modern warfare.[7]

When applied to states, the single critical expansion of the hybrid warfare concept involves the use of strategic ambiguity.[8] Strategic ambiguity is defined as 'hostile actions that are difficult for a state to identify, attribute, or publicly define as coercive uses of force'.[9] Strategic ambiguity falls below the legal threshold of war, and delegitimises the ability of a state to respond through conventional military force.[10] Reichborn-Kjennerud *et al.* explain that hybrid conflicts occur in situations that are neither war nor peace, where adversaries employ "measures short of war" to extend the reach of their policies.[11]

Monaghan explains that conventional military forces are simply not designed to operate in a legal grey zone.[12] Employing statutory military force to conduct operations in scenarios that are neither war nor peace carries the risk of international condemnation, escalation, and a conventional military response.[13] If tailored correctly, a hybrid warfare strategy can therefore target its adversaries and make consequential gains toward its strategic objectives without provoking a conventional military response.[14]

The international community has committed itself to abide by so-called "international law", which places formal constraints on the institution of war, and is closely intertwined with its stated values, beliefs, and norms.[15] Deviation from such "international law" is viewed as treacherous, immoral or illegal by those who tend to conceptualise war from a traditional Clausewitzian perspective.[16] The international community could undoubtedly remove its self-imposed partitions, or at least adjust them to the extent that they are less restricting; however, this is becoming increasingly unlikely, as said community discourages the use of state-centric force to resolve international disputes.[17] By having to remain below these political and legal thresholds, a disconnect is however created between the policy ends of a state and the strategic effect of its armed forces.[18]

Regular statutory armies are very much connected to the basic political and social institutions in international relations, namely the nation-state.[19] Consequently, the monopolisation of the use of armed force has become a dominant feature of the Westphalian state.[20]

Throughout history, however, many different entities – besides statutory militaries – have fought wars: families, ethnic groups, business enterprises, and private military forces (PMFs).[21] Furthermore, PMFs have frequently played crucial roles in conflicts – from the disrupting of Axis plans at critical times during World War II to successful private military interventions in Angola, Iraq and, more recently, in Ukraine.[22] Please note, the current research[ii] associated PMFs with the existence of private military companies (PMCs).[23]

From the beginning of the Cold War (in 1947), the development of the private military industry constituted a path from ad hoc contracting to highly specialised corporate entities.[24] Today, the privatisation of military tasks has grown into a dynamic commercial sector, where PMCs form part of a complex security network that combines public and private stakeholders into entities not limited to a national setting.[25] Today, by virtue of the extensive expertise embedded within the private military industry, PMCs strategically affect both the process and outcome of conflicts.[26]

The employment of PMCs by a state however also reveals key strategic risks, particularly as the idea of a state relying on PMCs for its international security requirements is contrary to the concept of modern statehood.[27] Furthermore, supporting a state does not necessarily mean supporting the principles of sovereignty and self-determination.[28] The result is that there are opposing viewpoints between legal commentators, defence scholars, and policy practitioners alike who see the existence and activity of PMCs as a threat to national sovereignty on the one hand, and those who view the existence of PMCs as a 'fait accompli' on the other.[29]

A literature review pointed to the following: firstly, hybrid warfare creates both conceptual and strategic challenges for a state, as conventional military forces are simply not designed to operate in a legal grey zone.[30] As a result, certain ways and means that are essential for the successful prosecution of an armed conflict must be forfeited.[31] Secondly, there are significant self-restricting political and legal partitions inherent in the modern strategic landscape, as the international community discourages the use of statutory military force to resolve international disputes.[32] As a result, a disconnect is created between the policy ends of a state and the strategic effect of its armed forces.[33]

The combined effect of these challenges suggests that there is no suitable policy for dealing with hybrid threats, making the international community vulnerable to exploitation.[34] It is clear that a more sophisticated, complex, and politically charged strategic response is required to counter a hybrid threat posture effectively – one that links the political ends of a state to the ways and means of achieving those ends.[35] Today, however, by virtue of the extensive expertise embedded within the private military industry, PMFs strategically influence both the process and the outcome of conflicts.[36] The primary aim of the follow-up research was therefore to suggest a conceptual framework for PMF to counter a hybrid threat posture.

[ii] In this article, "current research" refers to the primary research done for the work as referenced here.

Defence scholars are familiar with Col. Lykke's equation where strategy = ends + ways + means.[37] **Strategy** is the approach under consideration; **ends** are the objectives of a given strategy; **ways** are concerned with the various methods to achieve the ends; and **means** refers to the resources required to execute the ways.[38] Consequently, exploring the secondary objectives of the follow-up research correlate with the four elements of Lykke's equation where:

- Strategy ≙ to creating a theoretical foundation;
- Ends ≙ to establishing the political dimension;
- Ways ≙ to designing a concept of operations; and
- Means ≙ to calculating adequate resources.

The current research acknowledged that there are significant moral and ethical concerns regarding the employment of PMFs.[39] Moreover, there are noteworthy implications concerning public accountability and democratic control over the use of privately owned and armed force.[40] These issues were however not debated in the current research; rather, the focus was on the strategic value of PMFs and the way they contribute to the right of a state to self-defence.[41] Furthermore, it is the conviction of this author that, if a state employs PMF as strategy to counter a hybrid threat posture, the PMF act according to and within the parameters of such states laws.

"Strategy": Creating a Theoretical Foundation

The first element in Lykke's equation is "strategy": the approach under consideration, which, according to the follow-up research, corresponds to creating a theoretical foundation. In Gray's book *Strategy Bridge*, Aaron is quoted as saying, 'strategic thought draws its inspiration at each moment of history from the problems which events themselves pose'.[42] In the same work, Brodie is quoted as saying that strategic theory is 'for action … a practical tool for achieving objectives efficiently'.[43] Creating a theoretical foundation for PMF to counter a hybrid threat posture is therefore essential. The current research created a theoretical foundation by asking three important yet basic questions:[44]

- Is private military force a concept of strategy?
- How does private military force augment a state against a hybrid threat posture?
- What are the guidelines for employing private military forces against a hybrid threat posture?

This section briefly explains how the current research addressed the three questions listed above.

Private Military Force as a Concept of Strategy

Esterhuyse and Louw explain that on the one hand, strategy by design is an attempt to achieve strategic effect and outcomes through deliberate planning.[45] On the other hand, strategy by implication is where tactical outcomes drive strategy.[46] This tends to open up a debate about the disconnect between tactics and strategy.[47] Along similar lines, Gray

argues that it is essential to differentiate correctly between strategic concepts.[48] The misrepresentation of strategic concepts implies that there is little chance of recognising the relationship between military tactics and achieving strategic and political effect.[49] It is therefore important to determine whether PMF is a concept of strategy if policymakers want to achieve strategic and political effect from its employment.

Private military companies are characterised as being structured according to corporate principles, with clear executive hierarchies, boards of directors, and independent professional management.[50] They require financial reporting and licensing, and a substantial regulatory framework governs their behaviour.[51] Essentially, PMCs are business organisations, competing and surviving in the global marketplace for private military force, and, although at times national security policy informs their contracts, most remain autonomous from government.[52]

Furthermore, Gray argues that the function of strategic theory is to 'distil the essence and meaning of a subject … and to aid in understanding how and why the subject under examination works'.[53] Gray continues to explain that the general theory of strategy is designed to help educate military and political leaders by assisting them in understanding strategic thought and the meaning of military action.[54] A principal value of strategic theory is therefore its purpose of distinguishing between tactics and strategy.[55]

The current research answered the question whether PMF is a concept of strategy by showing that the nature and characteristics of PMFs correlate with the fundamental concepts of the general theory of strategy.[56]

Private Military Force Augmenting a State against a Hybrid Threat Posture

The current research found that hybrid warfare creates both conceptual and strategic challenges to a state, as conventional military forces are simply not designed to operate in a legal grey zone.[57] Consequently, certain ways and means that are essential for the successful prosecution of an armed conflict must be forfeited.[58] Additionally, there are significant self-restricting political and legal partitions inherent in the modern strategic landscape, as the international community seeks to prevent war to solve complex challenges.[59] As a result, a disconnect is created between the policy ends of a state and the strategic effect of its armed forces.[60] Most modern states however possess well-equipped, technologically advanced, and highly developed armed forces with which to counter threats to national security.[61] It is therefore important to understand how PMF augments a state against a hybrid threat posture.

A key characteristic of hybrid warfare is that it blends the lethality of conventional warfare with irregular warfare, crime, and the fanatical and protracted fervour of terrorism – simultaneously.[62] A hybrid warfare strategy strikes at the seam of conventional and irregular warfare, targeting perceived red-line thresholds of its opponents and operating below them.[63] Typically, the international community avoids intervening in a conflict unless it detects a breach in legal protocols.[64] If tailored correctly, a hybrid warfare strategy

can target its opponents and make consequential gains toward its strategic objectives without provoking a conventional military response.[65]

Gray explains that numerous influences (from within the modern strategic landscape) affect the design and development of strategic plans.[66] In order to explain the political and legal influences originating from within the modern strategic landscape, the current research analysed the political, economic, ideological, strategic-historical and military dimensions.[67] A key partition inherent in the modern strategic landscape is the political dimension, which is characterised by near-term thinking and risk aversion.[68] This has resulted in an increasing difficulty for the strategist to balance opposing political interests in light of a singular, all-embracing conceptual framework that benefits the consumer-citizen, political agencies, and national security policy as a whole.[69]

The current research answered the question about how PMF augments a state against a hybrid threat posture by demonstrating that the nature and characteristics of PMF overcomes the conceptual and strategic challenges of a hybrid threat posture as well as the political and legal partitions inherent in the modern strategic landscape.[70]

Guidelines for Employing Private Military Force against a Hybrid Threat Posture

Gray reminds us that employing military force remains risky, as in any international confrontation, the commitment to military combat may lead to escalation and unintended confrontation – even if the relevant action is tactically and operationally successful.[71] To put it simply, before assigning missions to PMFs, it is essential to understand the internal and external constraints governing these forces.[72]

To determine guidelines for employing PMF against a hybrid threat posture, the current research conducted three case studies on PMFs countering irregular and unconventional threats.[73] The case studies were grouped into three broad models:

- The African example of Executive Outcomes, covered its operations in Angola and Sierra Leone between 1990 and 1997;
- The United States (US) example of Blackwater, covered its operations in Iraq between 2003 and 2010; and
- The Russian model of the Wagner Group, covered its operations in Libya and beyond between 2010 and 2020.[74]

Consequently, by investigating and comparing the operations of the three PMFs countering irregular and unconventional threats, the current research derived guidelines on how PMFs achieve tactical, operational, and strategic-level success against a hybrid threat posture.[75]

To conclude this section, by elaborating on how to answer the three important yet basic questions, the current research created a theoretical foundation for PMF to counter a hybrid threat posture.[76] The next section discusses the establishment of the political dimension.

"Ends": Establishing the Political Dimension

The second element in Lykke's equation is "ends": the objectives of a given strategy, which, according to the follow-up research, correspond to establishing the political dimension. Evans explains that, if the politics of a counterinsurgency campaign are misconceived, then the strategy drawn from those politics is almost certain to be flawed.[77] Moreover, Millet and Murray argue, 'in any type of war, no amount of operational virtuosity can redeem fundamental flaws in political judgement … that any political-strategic error will lead to strategic deterioration, and ultimately, to political defeat'.[78] It is therefore essential to establish a realistic political dimension for PMF to counter a hybrid threat posture.

According to this author, establishing the political dimension is achieved by analysing several strategic decision-making steps, which link the political ends sought to the private military mission objectives required to achieve those ends. The strategic decision-making steps range from abstract and broad decisions concerning long-term national security objectives, to narrow and tangible decisions concerning private military mission objectives.[79]

Please note, this author acknowledges that the involvement of the private military role player is not applicable to all phases of the strategic decision-making process. As PMCs are essentially business organisations competing in the market for private military force, they may however need to demonstrate to policymakers how their services contribute to the desired political end-state.[80]

Setting the National Security Objective

According to Drew and Snow, the first step in the strategic decision-making process is to set the national security objective.[81] If the objective is ill defined, inconsistent, or not supported by some degree of national consensus, then the task of the strategist becomes exceedingly difficult.[82] Furthermore, Liddell Hart explains that it is essential to be clear about the distinction between political and military objectives.[83] The two are different but not separate.[84] Nations do not wage war for the sake of war, but for the pursuance of policy, where the military objective is the means to a political end.[85] The military objective is therefore governed by the political objective.[86]

The author suggests when setting the national security objective of a state, it is important to understand that the hostile and aggressive behaviour of an adversarial state is the product of its politics, which produces its policy and provides its strategy with direction and purpose. Given that political intentions initiate all military behaviour, it is suggested that the national security objective of a state – when facing a hybrid threat posture – should include changing the policy of the adversarial state.

Determining the Nature of the Threat

Evans maintains, '[T]he acid test of strategy is to know and understand your enemy.'[87] Additionally, Clausewitz's famous dictum states:

> [T]he first … act of judgment which the statesman and commander have to make is to establish the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for nor trying to turn it into something alien to its nature.88

Consequently, the current author suggests that the next step in the strategic decision-making process is to determine the nature of the threat facing the state.

Hoffman describes a hybrid threat as 'any adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs a fused mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism and criminal behaviour in the battlespace to obtain their political objectives'.[89] The application of the many forms of warfare, simultaneously, characterises hybrid warfare strategies and distinguishes it from the classic understanding of conventional or unconventional warfare.[90] Furthermore, Putter *et al*. explain that, in hybrid warfare, plausible deniability is a strategy where an actor denies involvement in its actions as they are covert or ambiguous.[91] In the form of plausible deniability, strategic ambiguity avoids responsibility through the use of non-state military force.[92]

The current author suggests that, if it is difficult for a state to identify, attribute, or publicly define coercive uses of force originating from an adversarial state, then it is likely being targeted by a hybrid warfare strategy.

Selecting the Instrument of Power

Drew and Snow explain that, after the national security objective has been set (and the nature of the threat defined), it is necessary to decide which instrument of power is best suited to serve the national interest.[93] It may be worth remembering that, during the Cold War, the US organised itself to wage war by a variety of mechanisms, collectively referred to as 'political warfare'.[94] The term was coined by former US diplomat, George F Kennan, and describes the employment of all the means at a nation's command – short of war – to achieve its national security objectives.[95] Kennan describes political warfare as the logical application of Clausewitz's doctrine in a time of peace, and suggests methods both overt and covert to achieve the national security objective of a state.[96]

Galeotti explains the method of conflict, as described by Kennan, has recently been reframed as 'Gerasimov's doctrine'.[97] Gen. Gerasimov, Chief of the Russian General Staff, argues that the role of non-military means to achieve political and strategic goals has increased, and in many cases, exceeds the conventional use of military force; that the emphasis on armed conflict has shifted towards non-militarised methods.[98] Conventional military force should then only be used during the final phase of the conflict.[99] Moreover, Hoffman maintains that force planners should abandon the dichotomous choice between conventional and unconventional war.[100] He suggests that the choice is no longer between preparing for long-term stability operations or high-intensity conflict, but is rather a matter of considering alternate joint force postures.[101]

Furthermore, from the current research it was clear that PMFs overcame the conceptual and strategic challenges of a hybrid threat scenario, as well as the political and legal

partitions inherent in the modern strategic landscape.[102] Consequently the current author suggests employing PMF to counter a hybrid threat posture. PMF is however not an instrument of statecraft in itself; rather, it is a distinct means at the disposal of a state.[103] Additionally, military outsourcing should be administered solely through a government agency with experience in managing military-type force.[104]

Current US military doctrine recognises seven categories of state power: diplomatic, informational, military, economic, finance, intelligence, and law enforcement (abbreviated as the acronym DIMEFIL).[105] The intelligence instrument, however, plays an important role in advancing a state's national security and foreign policy objectives abroad.[106] The current author therefore recommends selecting the intelligence instrument to achieve the national security objective of a state against a hybrid threat posture – supported by PMF.

Please note, hybrid threats are a broad, complex, and multifaceted national security issue.[107] Consequently, the current research assumed that all the instruments and agents of a state will be brought to bear against a hybrid threat posture, and that strategic success will be determined largely to the extent to which this base can be mobilised and applied to achieve the national security objective of a state.[108]

Assigning the Mission

Drew and Snow explain that the definition of grand strategy includes the development of all the instruments of a state, as well as the application and coordination of these instruments in pursuit of policy objectives.[109] It is essential to understand that, without clear, coordinated direction, the instruments of power can work against each other.[110] To prevent this, the grand strategic process assigns missions to the instruments of a state.[111]

Clausewitz argues, 'the object of war is to impose our will on the enemy, to do which we use the maximum means of force available with the aim of rendering him powerless'.[112] Unconventional warfare, however, is the antithesis of the maximum use of military force.[113] In Baker and Jordaan's work, *Contemporary Counterinsurgency*, Gossman explains that an essential characteristic of unconventional warfare implies that 'combat operations are directed in such a manner as to win over the support of the local population – rather than to defeat the occupying or government forces in combat'.[114] Additionally, Galula suggests, 'the character of unconventional warfare … is 80% political and 20% military'.[115]

Furthermore, the current research determined that PMF had limits; that before assigning missions to PMFs, it is essential to understand the internal and external constraints governing these forces.[116] The author therefore suggests that, when allocating the mission to the intelligence instrument, it should be limited to the broad spectrum of unconventional warfare and the interrelated fields of covert or clandestine warfare operations.

Allocating Mission Objectives

After the national security objective has been set, the nature of the threat determined, the instrument of power selected, and the mission assigned, the strategic decision-making process allocates mission objectives to the selected instrument of power.[117] Mission

objectives are goals which if accomplished, will achieve the mission assigned by the grand strategic process.[118] Col. Eickmeier however argues that the centre piece of military planning is accurately identifying an adversary's centre of gravity (COG).[119]

Clausewitz introduced the concept of a COG, which he defined as 'the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends'.[120] A COG is not necessarily a target on the ground, but rather a source of strength, the destruction of which will have the most effect on achieving the national security objective of a state.[121] According to literature there are several approaches to identifying the COG of an adversary, including the 'strategic framework analysis';[122] Warden's 'five ring model';[123] and the 'critical factor analysis'.[124]

Waller suggests however, that conventional models may not apply to identifying the COG of non-state hybrid actors.[125] It is important to note however, that according to the current research, national security threats characterised by hybridity are contextualised within the makeup and organisation of a state.[126] Furthermore, in Scholtz's article, *The Namibian Border War,* Van der Waal is quoted as saying:

> [R]evolutionary war differs from conventional war as its COG is not found in the destruction of the opposing armed forces, or the occupation of territory; but rather, in the hijacking of the socio-political system of the state to gain control over the population.[127]

According to the current author, identifying the COG of a national security threat characteristic by hybridity should therefore be contextualised within the socio-political system of the adversarial state. Consequently, the author argues that when allocating mission objectives to the intelligence instrument (i.e. PMF), they should include identifying and disabling the COG of the adversarial state.

To conclude this section, by discussing several strategic decision-making steps linking political ends sought to the private military mission objectives required to achieve those ends, a realistic political dimension is established. The next section deals with designing a concept of operations for PMF to counter a hybrid threat posture.

"Ways": Designing a Concept of Operations

The third element in Lykke's equation is "ways": the various methods required to achieve ends, which, according to the follow-up research, corresponds to designing a concept of operations. A concept of operations focuses on the actions required to achieve the desired political end state.[128] "Actions", or a "concept of operations", describes how military force will be employed to achieve the mission objectives assigned by grand strategy.[129] Designing a concept of operations is therefore essential for PMF to counter a hybrid threat posture. This section suggests how to design a concept of operations by examining several fundamental principles of military theory, doctrine and tactics.

Clausewitz characterised the essence of war as a situation 'clouded by fog, disrupted by friction and controlled by chance … which occur through countless minor incidents

combining to lower the level of performance so that one falls short of the intended goal'.[130] Furthermore, planning is defined as 'a process which sets goals, develops strategies, and outlines tasks and schedules for the attainment of desired objectives'.[131] It needs to be appreciated that designing a concept of operations should include joint planning sessions between the private military role player and the state.

Although Meiser acknowledges the value of the "ends + ways + means" formula, he argues that it has become a crutch undermining creative and effective strategic thinking, as strategy is not clear-cut and therefore not susceptible to a mathematical equation.[132] Furthermore, Lt Gen. McMaster termed Lykke's equation 'dangerous', as most strategic problems in the world are not bullet-sizable.[133] To be clear, designing a concept of operations should include applying creative and non-linear thought processes.

Strategy can be thought of as having many interconnecting dimensions, which profoundly affect strategic performance.[134] Howard identified four dimensions of strategy, which Gray further developed into seventeen.[135,136] According to Gray, the dimensions that contribute most to the making and execution of strategy are the social, cultural, technological, logistical, operational, geographical, and temporal dimensions.[137] The core issue at hand is that designing a concept of operations should take into account the complex interactions between the dimensions of strategy.

Propaganda is defined as the systematic mistreatment of the truth, and serves an essential purpose during war: to direct public sympathies toward some groups and away from others.[138] Furthermore, Mao Zedong is quoted by Scholtz as saying, 'guerrilla warfare will fail if the sympathy, cooperation and assistance of the people cannot be gained'.[139] Moreover, in the same article, Vietnamese General Giap is quoted as saying, 'political activities are more important than military activities and fighting less important than propaganda'.[140] In terms of war, the battle for public opinion is as important as the employment of military force.[141] Consequently, designing a concept of operations should include applying the concept of war propaganda.

French General and theoretician Andre Beaufre is credited with expanding the concept of strategy beyond the purely military realm into what he termed 'total strategy'.[142] Beaufre recognised the criticality of non-military elements of power, and that strategy was neither exclusively a wartime activity nor restricted to planning against an enemy.[143] Moreover, Drew and Snow explain that it is almost impossible to consider using the military instrument in isolation to resolve an international dispute. Political, diplomatic, and economic pressures are as decisive in resolving a conflict as the military instrument.[144] To be clear, designing a concept of operations should include allocating tasks to all the instruments and agents of a state.

According to D'Amura, 'deception is an inseparable part of the concept of operations … which manipulates the enemy's perception of the battlefield'.[145] Additionally, Sun Tzu writes, 'deception is most successful when it reinforces the enemy's predisposed tendencies or obsessions'.[146] To be effective, though, deception must take place over each phase of the operation and should be fully embraced by all participating parties.[147]

It needs to be appreciated that designing a concept of operations should include applying the tactic of deception.

Sun Tzu argues, 'to subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill'.[148] Tzu has become the intellectual father of a school of warfare that advocates winning by psychologically dislocating an opponent.[149] An adversary who is shocked, distracted, and ends up in a state of imbalance will lose the initiative.[150] Moreover, in his indirect approach to military strategy, Liddell Hart emphasises movement, flexibility, and surprise.[151] He suggests that, in most military campaigns, dislocation of the enemy's psychological and physical balance is a prelude to victory.[152] Consequently, designing a concept of operations should include applying the tactic of surprise.

Private military companies are fundamentally business organisations trading in the global marketplace for private military force.[153] PMCs are considered independent legal entities bound to their employees by official contracts.[154] They are driven by corporate profit, and are willing to undertake military-type risks while remaining autonomous from the government.[155] The issue at hand is that designing a concept of operations should include assigning tasks to the basic business functions of a PMC, such as finance and accounting, human resource management, procurement and logistics, and administration.[156]

To conclude this section, by elaborating on several fundamental principles of military theory, doctrine and tactics, the author suggests how to design a concept of operations for PMF to counter a hybrid threat posture. The next section discusses calculating resource requirements.

"Means": Calculating Adequate Resources

The fourth element in Lykke's equation is "means": the resources required to execute ways, which, according to the follow-up research, corresponds to calculating adequate resources. General Eisenhower explains, 'battles, campaigns, and even wars have been won or lost because of logistics'.[157] Moreover, Gray argues that adequate resources are an essential part of strategy and critical for the attainment of the strategic objective.[158] Any strategy attempted without sufficient resources will flounder at the operational, and tactical levels of war.[159] Calculating adequate resources for PMF to counter a hybrid threat posture is therefore essential. The author therefore suggests how to calculate adequate resources by elaborating on some of the foundational principles of military logistics.

Jomini originally defined military logistics as 'comprising the means and arrangements which work out the plans of strategy and tactics'.[160] Furthermore, according to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) handbook, military logistics is defined as 'the science of planning and carrying out the movement and maintenance of forces'.[161] Additionally, Van Fenema and Van Kampen describe military logistics as the link between the strategic-level instruments of national power on the one hand, and their expression at the operational, and tactical level of war on the other.[162]

The above definitions demonstrate that, for a state, the objective of military logistics is to enable and maintain a condition of readiness for war (fighting power).[163] The fighting power of a state is, however, more than the availability of means; there must also be a commitment to deploy those means if and when required.[164] The alignment between capacity and capability, if properly developed, becomes fighting power.[165] It needs to be appreciated that calculating adequate resources should align private military capacity and capability.

It is important to understand that military logistics is related to various core functions, which can be broadly divided into three groups:

- Firstly, **production** logistics, which is closely connected to the industrial domain, and includes the planning, design and procurement of material and equipment.[166]
- Secondly, **service** logistics, which bridges the gap between production and the user, and is closely related to the functions of procuring, receiving, and storing of material and equipment required for supporting military forces.[167]
- Thirdly, **operational** logistics, which includes distributing material and equipment, the construction of life support facilities, and supplying transport.[168]
- To be clear, calculating adequate resources should include incorporating the above core functions of logistics.

The US deployment in Iraq and Afghanistan required the projection of combat power over an 'expeditionary distance', which is broadly defined as 'any distance over which extended and robust logistical replenishment must occur to sustain combat operations'.[169] In other words, expeditionary logistics is required when military forces operate at some distance from their national support base.[170] Furthermore, Prebilič argues that logistical effectiveness and distance are inversely proportional, with effectiveness reducing as distance increases.[171] The fundamental issue at hand is that calculating adequate resources should make provision for effective expeditionary logistics.

The operational effectiveness of military forces further depends on a high standard of repair and maintenance of equipment.[172] "Repair" refers to implementing measures to restore equipment to a serviceable condition in the shortest possible time.[173] "Maintenance of equipment" implies taking all possible actions to maintain equipment in an operational condition, which naturally depends on a high standard of preventive maintenance.[174] Additionally, the design of equipment must take into consideration the functions of repair and maintenance.[175] Consequently, calculating adequate resources should take into consideration the design, repair and maintenance of equipment.

Fulloon explains that supporting a PMC generally includes a wide range of life support services, such as:

- Construction of installations and facilities;
- Power generation and water treatment services;
- Firefighting and food preparation services; and
- Demining and explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) services.[176]

Of particular importance is ensuring that the petroleum supply chain responds to the operational requirements of the mission.[177] It needs to be appreciated that calculating adequate resources may require close cooperation with civil companies specialising in providing life support services.

In Barlow's book *Human Intelligence*, the author explains, 'intelligence is the fuel that drives any realistic and sustainable strategy … that it is the lifeblood of any military campaign or operational design'.[178] At the strategic level, intelligence is a pre-requisite for effective political and military liaison activities.[179] At the operational level 'military intelligence advises, assists and guides military commanders'.[180] At the tactical level military intelligence 'is aimed at giving own forces an advantage over the enemy'.[181] To be clear, calculating adequate resources should include delivering intelligence '[to] the right people, at the right time and with the right security'.[182]

In Gray's book *Modern Strategy*, the author argues, 'although resource planning provides for the massing of military force on the battlefield, it also provides for the development of contingency plans and measures'.[183] Contingency planning lays out the various measures that must be taken by an organisation to reduce the risk of the adversary threatening the strategic, operational, and tactical plans for the campaign.[184] Contingency planning likewise provides for a medical system to treat and evacuate sick or injured and wounded personnel.[185] The core issue at hand is that calculating adequate resources should include an integrated contingency plan.

Gray argues, 'no matter the character of a conflict – be it a total war for survival or a contest for limited stakes – almost every campaign is shaped in its course and outcome by the financial dimension'.[186] Furthermore, financial planning is the ability to forecast the financial resources required to pursue a campaign to a successful conclusion.[187] The anticipated financial demand serves to alert defence planners of any potential shortfall which could impede achieving the strategic objective.[188] It needs to be appreciated that calculating adequate resources should include detailed financial planning.

To conclude this section, by elaborating on some of the foundational principles of military logistics, the author suggests how to calculate adequate resources for PMF to counter a hybrid threat posture.

Conclusion

The primary aim of the follow-up research was to suggest a conceptual framework for PMF to counter a hybrid threat posture. The collective findings of this research suggest that, if private military force is theoretically coherent; is underpinned by a realistic political dimension; is tailored to a creative and non-linear concept of operations; and is adequately equipped and supported by a state, then the concept of private military force as strategy to counter a hybrid threat posture is a compelling notion.

Clausewitz reminds us:

> [T]he first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment which the statesman and commander have to make is to establish the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for nor trying to turn it into something alien to its nature.[189]

Yet, war can take on many forms, and different forms of warfare require varied types of forces, equipment, doctrine, and training. The question that remains is important and basic: Are policymakers willing to empower private military forces to think and act strategically in the grey zone between peace – and the costly, risky, and indefinite commitment of war?

Endnotes

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