

The Struggle to Define Hybrid Warfare: A Dialectical Analysis



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Chapter 1: Introduction

Hybrid warfare has, over the past decade, become an increasingly popular subject amongst military analysts, historians and theorists. Alongside dozens of articles, there have been numerous books and even government reports from Western states warning about the supposed dangers of this “way of war”. It begs the question, what exactly is hybrid warfare? That, however, depends on who is being asked. In military theory, like most disciplines, there is always debate surrounding definitions and conceptualization. Yet with this particular topic, there is less of a debate and more of a chaotic confusion.¹ Schools of thought have not been made apparent, if they exist at all. Sometimes, a detailed description is given, such as the case of *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present*, edited by Williamson Murray and Peter R. Mansoor.² Some, on the other hand, simply assume the reader knows exactly what they mean when discussing hybrid warfare; a recent example being *The Lands In Between: Russia vs. the West and the New Politics of Hybrid War* by Mitchell A. Orenstein.³

In one way, this is not too surprising. For contemporary theorists in any field, not just war studies, it is nothing new to claim one’s own era as revolutionary. Nor is it ever a surprise that there are dissenters to this proclamation. Therefore, when discussing the issue of hybrid warfare, it becomes apparent that this trend has continued as before. Since the end of the Cold War, the Western world has seen a wide variety of conflicts, including peacekeeping, conventional war, counterinsurgency and several complex stability operations. During the same period, the rest of the world experienced not just these kinds of warfare, but some that seemed not to fit cleanly into any particular category. For state and non-state actors alike, the success rate in these conflicts has been mixed at best. Moreover, the world has been swept up in a continuous storm of technological and societal changes in nearly every aspect of life. Therefore, military theorists have taken once again to explain these events, and use this foundation as a springboard for predicting the future.

While much has been written both on the nature of hybrid warfare and complex forms of conflict in general, there is a clear lack of systemization.⁴ Despite hybrid warfare being considered

¹ By this it is meant that there is not only confusion as to how to define hybrid warfare, but a chaotic intermingling of different concepts. As noted by Mikael Weissman, Niklas Nilsson, Bjorn Palmertz and Per Thunholm: “[Hybrid Threats]&[Hybrid Warfare] are problematic concepts. Contemporary scholarship on these phenomena lacks a common definition and the use of terminology remains contested. In fact, HT&HW are just two of a variety of distinct, but overlapping, concepts employed to described a similar phenomenon, where ‘Asymmetrical Warfare’, ‘Sixth Generation Warfare’, ‘Contactless Warfare’, ‘Grey Wars’, ‘New warfare’, ‘Next-generation Warfare’, ‘Ambiguous Warfare’, ‘Irregular Warfare’, ‘Non-linear Warfare’, ‘Full Spectrum Conflict’ and ‘Unconventional Warfare’ are examples of more or less synonymous terms. See: Mikael Weissmann, Niklas Nilsson, Bjorn Palmertz and Per Thunholm, *Hybrid Warfare: Security and Asymmetric Conflict in International Relations* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2021), 2.

² Peter R. Mansoor; Williamson Murray, *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

³ Mitchell A. Orenstein, *The Lands In Between: Russia vs. the West and the New Politics of Hybrid War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

⁴ See except above in citation 1, as well as Weissmann, Nilsson, Palmertz and Thunholm, *Hybrid Warfare*, 1: “...despite the attention, and a growing body of studies on specific issues, there is an imminent need for research bringing attention to how these challenges can be addressed in order to develop a comprehensive approach towards identifying, analyzing and countering HT&HW”.

new and exciting⁵, the debates surrounding it have been around long enough to expect some clear battlelines to have been drawn. Yet that does not appear to be the case, at least on the surface, and that is what makes the case so intriguing. Definitions, and even the existence, of not just hybrid warfare, but supporting areas of study vary widely amongst scholars. Until this issue is resolved, both scholarly study and real-world application of these concepts will remain stagnated. Therefore, as a beginning to a more extensive discussion in the future, a work should be done to establish the foundations of classification research into hybrid warfare, along with the concepts that underpin any emerging schools of thought. Once this categorization and initial analysis has been completed, a much more organized debate can occur. Such is the tradition of dialectic that has generally worked for both historians and military theorists for some time, therefore it is only natural it be continued concerning hybrid warfare. Once a basic classification analysis is conducted, more extensive analytic fields such as historiography can take the study further.

That is not, however, the end of the story: classification, or the failure to do so, begs the simple question of why. So, any successful classification will also have an explanation for said classification. Therefore, this study will seek to comprehensively examine the available literature on hybrid warfare, classify, then explain the sources and nature of changes that occur within this framework. This is because, to simply classify, or only explain the facts as they stand at a particular point in space and time where they are captured, leaves out how and why they developed this way, and where they are going from there.

Lastly, examination of the evidence as it relates to the two above fields will quickly reveal the limitations of a rigidly empirical or causal analysis of opinions on hybrid warfare. Subjects involving abstract notions expressed by humans, the combination of individuals and environments are far too complex to be fully captured by linear thinking. For that reason, a dialectical approach is required. That is, an analytic framework which emphasizes the relationships between different subjects, whether the connections be through reality or some abstract characteristic. Thus, when it is stated that there is a “dialectical relationship” between two or more things, this is not to say one or more *causes* the other. Still, something may arise from another, but it is not necessarily given its genesis directly by the original, but rather created from nothing by the circumstance of the original’s mere existence. This idea will be addressed in far greater detail once theories of dialectics and the one ultimately selected for this study are examined. For now, it is important to explain the questions that this study will attempt to answer, and why they are important to both military history and military theory in general. These questions are as follows:

1. What, if any, are the major schools of thought concerning both the nature and importance of hybrid warfare?
2. Why is there so little agreement amongst theorists when it comes to hybrid warfare?

⁵ Weissmann, Nilsson, Palmertz and Thunholm, *Hybrid Warfare*, 1: “Security challenges arising from hybrid threats and hybrid warfare...are today high on security agendas across the globe. Also see Ibid, viii: “Hybrid threats, as phenomenon and concept, have rapidly placed themselves at the centre of security policy discourse since the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014”; and Ibid, 21: “The concepts of ‘Hybrid Threats’ and ‘Hybrid Warfare’ have gained increasing prevalence in analyses of the contemporary security environment”.

These questions will be answered through an examination of the material using the following outline: chapter two will provide a literature review of American works concerning hybrid warfare, with a focus on the definitions of the concept provided. The purpose of this is to explain the diverse, even chaotic nature of academic and professional discussion of hybrid warfare, and therefore the difficulty in classifying the material without an assisting methodology. The analysis will only examine American authors, or, non-American authors who are extremely popular with these theorists, making their inclusion necessary, such as Lawrence Freedman and Hew Strachan. Their popularity amongst American authors can be noticed simply by viewing the hundreds of times Freedman's major works have been cited by scholarly papers, or how both authors' works are consistently cited within American monographs concerning military theory. Chapter three will then provide the four criteria which this study will use for evaluating the effectiveness of a methodology in classifying data. These criteria will be applied to the following methods: classification, sociology and dialectics, in order to determine which of each most satisfies the criteria and so best serves the purpose of answering the research questions. Each of these areas will be examined in their own section. In this chapter, it will be demonstrated that dialectics best satisfies and criteria and so should be used for analysis going forward. Chapter four will then provide a detailed timeline of the historical development of hybrid warfare in the American literature. This will also demonstrate a dialectical outline, even without having yet applied a formal dialectical framework. Chapter five will then give an analysis of the data using dialectics. Lastly, the conclusion will summarize the investigation as well as offer future areas of study that could follow this one.

Before beginning with the analysis, one concern remains: where to begin such an historical investigation? This can be answered by identifying when hybrid warfare began to literally be discussed as a concept by that name, then tracing its *immediate* origins. Doing so allows one to identify the period of 2003-2006 as the genesis of the concept, then following the direct connections back to 1991 and afterwards, that is, the post-Cold War era. Why focus on the immediate origins and causes? This is to avoid falling into the trap of seeing causes everywhere and misidentifying every connection as strong, when most are weak, if they exist at all. To do otherwise would be to commit to examining events going indefinitely backwards into the past, ultimately never moving the analysis forward.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

There is no consensus on the definition of the term ‘hybrid warfare’. This lack of consensus comes from debates over how to interpret the supposedly ‘hybrid’ nature of Russian, Chinese and sometimes Iranian approaches to modern conflict, both in terms of direct military conflict and the so-called “gray zone” between war and peace.⁶ Examinations of the varying definitions of the term will be limited to American understandings of the subject, only straying into a direct examination of the theories when it had a clear influence on American thinking. As for those other works being discussed or adopted as doctrine by these other countries, that will have to be addressed by a different work. This literature review will attempt a loose thematic categorization, rather than a timeline of chronological development. First, differing opinions on the origins of hybrid warfare will be addressed; second, an overview of interpretations of hybrid warfare that view it as a grand strategic, strategic or operational-tactical phenomena, respectively; third, the view that the concept is not novel, but rather historical; fourth, those that criticize hybrid warfare as a concept; and lastly, an outline of how definitions have changed over time.

Origins

Just as there is much contention over the definition(s) of ‘hybrid warfare’, there is such when it comes to its origins. This is hardly surprising, for if a theorist sees ‘hybrid warfare’ as a matter of strategy or grand strategy, they are more likely to trace its development along those lines, as opposed to someone who emphasizes the tactical and operational dimension.⁷

A radical explanation of hybrid warfare’s development is provided by Donald Stoker, professor at the Dwight D. Eisenhower School of the National Defence University, in his 2019 book *Why America Loses Wars: Limited War and US Strategy from the Korean War to the Present*, wherein he argues that it is little more than a modern version of the “limited war” school which dates to just after the Second World War. According to Stoker, hybrid warfare is a modernization of theories that were popular during the Cold War, such as US Navy Commander Harvey B. Seim’s concept of “fringe war”, which stated that because each direct, conventional action between nuclear powers is too risky, proxy engagements and many non-military actions were said to contribute to the overall Cold War.⁸ Therefore, what was previously considered strategic or even grand strategic and self-contained, were now more or less tactical in deciding the true conflict, the Cold War. Just as importantly, this geopolitical predicament made these conflicts different from traditional understandings of war. Stoker sees little difference between this and today’s expressions of hybrid warfare.⁹

⁶ For the origins of the term “gray zone”, see: United States Special Operations Command, *White Paper: The Gray Zone* (USSOCOM, September 9, 2015).

⁷ This will also provide insight into how the literature does not adequately capture the historical development of hybrid warfare within the context of American military thought, as will be demonstrated further in Chapter 4.

⁸ For the original article, see: H.B. Seim, “The Navy and ‘Fringe’ of War”, *Proceedings*, Vol.77/8/582 (August, 1951).

⁹ Donald Stoker, *Why America Loses Wars: Limited War and US Strategy from the Korean War to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 227-228. By “limited war”, Stoker is referring to a type of conflict that has not escalated to the point of being “total”, wherein all the resources of the actor are being utilized in order to conduct the war in question. This idea, which allowed for a distinction between nuclear war and other types of military

A more nuanced, but still simplified and linear explanation, is provided by Sir Lawrence Freedman, Emeritus Professor of War Studies at King's College London. In his book *The Future of War: A History*, Freedman argues that the Western, particularly American, concept of hybrid warfare was born from the Global War on Terror, Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan in 2001, and especially the Iraq War from 2003-2006, culminating in the Lebanon War of 2006. According to Freedman, American ideas about the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), Full Spectrum Dominance and AirLand Battle, which had found such success in the Gulf War, then in the early campaigns of Afghanistan and Iraq, proved lacking once the latter two conflicts transitioned out of conventional warfare, or as he calls it, the "classical model". Britain also faced problems, as they also found their doctrine, based on experiences in Bosnia during the 1990s, to be lacking.¹⁰ Freedman sees the American concept of 'hybrid warfare' as a direct successor to "Three Block War", coined in 1997 by Marine Corps Commandant General Charles C. Krulak – the term referring to how modern wars could involve conventional warfare, insurgency and peacekeeping all within a three-block area of a city.¹¹

Moreover, like Stoker, Freedman sees a continuation of trends that span several decades. For Freedman, the RMA was a simply another exaggeration of the effects made by great technological advances, similar to those after the Great War that believed bombers or tanks would make other forces obsolete.¹² This then combined with the tradition of American sensitivity to large casualties and long wars, which had only increased during and after the Cold War.¹³ Therefore, the US was looking for systems of thought which could achieve great strategic results with minimal time and human losses.¹⁴ However, when this system appeared to fail with Iraq by 2005, the system was rejected, but not the underlying desires of undertaking limited wars, resulting in a turn towards counterinsurgency and thus giving birth to 'hybrid warfare'.¹⁵ However, when this even newer system failed to explain Russian actions post-2014, once again the US looked for something new, adapting 'hybrid warfare' to great power politics and information warfare.¹⁶

Lastly, there are those who do more than simplify 'hybrid warfare' or throw it alongside other schools of thought. For example, Stephen Biddle of the School of the International and Public Affairs, Columbia University, states that the schools of thought of 'hybrid warfare' and Fourth Generation Warfare (4GW) are the same.¹⁷ According to him, they both supposedly argue for an historical progression over time towards a more irregular, yet hybridized, form of warfare. Therefore, according to Biddle, in an increasingly asymmetric battlespace, more irregular forces will be forced to adapt to the greater capabilities and spread of advanced weapons systems (that is, not only are weapons more effective, but are not owned by a minority of nations or even elite

deployment, was popular in the US during the 1950s and 1960s. The origins of this term and idea come from Robert Osgood, "Limited War: The Challenge to American Security", *University of Chicago Press*, 1957.

¹⁰ Lawrence Freedman, *The Future of War: A History* (New York: Public Affairs, 2019), 222-223.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 223.

¹² *Ibid*, 54-60, 186-187.

¹³ For an in-depth explanation of this historical trend, see: Samuel Moyn, *Humane: How the United States Abandoned Peace and Reinvented War* (New York: Picador, 2022).

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 188-194.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 194-197.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 222-229.

¹⁷ For an explanation of this term and its accompanying school of thought, see page 15.

units within a particular military) by incorporating them into their doctrine. Meanwhile, more conventional forces will have to adapt to this by doing the reverse. Biddle argued that there is a debate amongst scholars with two camps, namely the ‘materialists’ and the ‘tribal’. The former argue that as non-state actors gain access to increasingly lethal military technology, state militaries and non-state actors’ practices will come to resemble one and other. The ‘tribal’ camp argue that non-state actors will continue to fight in an unconventional manner.¹⁸ As will be demonstrated, this is false, as ‘hybrid warfare’ is best viewed as incorporating elements of 4GW and yet providing a different system in response to the same issues being addressed (namely, the supposed trend away from conventional warfare).

Definitions & Levels of War

There are two schools of thought about the definitions of ‘hybrid warfare’. Some view hybrid warfare through a strategic level downwards perspective, the idea being that it is a form of *war*, whether it be merely a tactic or full-fledged strategy for victory. US Marine Corps (USMC) Lt. Colonel Frank Hoffman, one of the first, if not *the first* theorist to fully conceptualize hybrid warfare, initially took this approach in its most simplistic form. Working together with Lt. General James Mattis, then Commander of Marine Corps Combat Development Command, for the 2005 US Marine Corps Threat Concept, Hoffman claimed that experiences in operations in Afghanistan since 2001 and Iraq since 2003 had made apparent a rise in “hybrid wars”. Hoffman and Mattis attacked the prevalent theory of the RMA, which claimed that the US’ armed forces could dominate the entire spectrum of warfare (leading some to term this concept Full Spectrum Dominance/Warfare) by maximizing its capabilities in the areas supposedly going through a technological revolution. That is, no matter how the enemy deploys, they will be quickly found, fixed and destroyed by superior American speed, intelligence, coordination and manoeuvre brought on by advances in technology; just as had occurred in the 1991 Gulf War.¹⁹ Hoffman and Mattis disagreed, stating that this practice was indeed effective in open settings and traditional conventional operations, but far less so in urban environments and other “complex” battlespaces. However, unlike in previous conflicts, it did not appear that America’s enemies were simply moving to a fully irregular model of combating US forces. Rather, lines were being blurred and therefore the US could not afford to think there was a single system for dealing with all threats. Instead, Hoffman and Mattis emphasized the human, rather than technological aspects of 21st century warfare.²⁰

Oscar Jonnson of the University of California at Berkeley noted that the original formulation of ‘hybrid warfare’ by Mattis and Hoffman was purely strategic-downward, if not operational-level downward in some of its language. That is, rather than being an entity in of itself, it is mainly a strategic or operational response to an asymmetric dilemma. Hoffman also pointed

¹⁸ Stephen Biddle, *Nonstate Warfare: The Military Methods of Guerrillas, Warlords and Militias* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 6.

¹⁹ David Jordan, James. D. Kiras, David J. Lonsdale, Ian Speller, Christopher Tuck and C. Dale Walton, *Understanding Modern Warfare: Second Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 129-138.

²⁰ James N. Mattis and Frank G. Hoffman, “Future Warfare: The Rise of Hybrid Wars”, *Proceedings*, Vol. 131/11/1, 233 (November 2005), 30-32.

out that purely nonmilitary means were not to be considered characteristics of ‘hybrid warfare’ unless they clearly were subordinated to a military operation or used in association with irregular, criminal and/or terrorist activities.²¹ This can be seen in the following definitions of hybrid warfare provided by Hoffman:

Future contingencies will more likely present unique combinational or *hybrid* threats...Instead of separate challengers with fundamentally different approaches (conventional, irregular or terrorist), we can expect to face competitors who will employ *all* forms of war and tactics, perhaps simultaneously...It is not just that conventional warfare or interstate conflict is on the decline, there is a fusion of war forms emerging, one that blurs regular and irregular warfare.²² At the strategic level, many wars have had regular and irregular components. However, in most conflicts, these components occurred in different theaters or in distinctly different formations. In Hybrid Wars, these forces become blurred into the same force in the same battlespace. While they are operationally integrated and tactically fused, the irregular component of the force attempts to become operationally decisive rather than just protract the conflict, provoke overreactions or extend the costs of security for the defender.²³

This conceptualization saw ‘hybrid warfare’ as a form of actualization for an overall strategy of attrition (but there is a desire for decisive battlefield capability) and without any connection to the realm of grand strategy.

Since Hoffman, there have been several theorists who argue along the same lines. Greg Grant, of the Center for a New American Security, and a former senior analyst at the US Department of Defense, wrote an article in 2008 that mostly reiterated the theories of Hoffman.²⁴ For Anthony Cordesman, Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and a Middle East specialist, writing in 2019, hybrid warfare can involve just about any operations within open conflict, outside one, or during a limited war, that are not directly related to the engagement of official armed forces in open battle. Using Iranian options for combating the US, Cordesman argues that such operations can involve military actions targeting an economic objective, “false flags”, and/or diplomatic maneuvers. Tactically speaking, civilians could be open to attack, while “smart” weaponry provide flexibility and force multiplication to counter enemy numerical and firepower superiority.²⁵ The noted liberal international relations theorist Joseph S. Nye Jr. in 2011 used this interpretation of hybrid warfare, even quoting Hoffman to that purpose. Moreover, Nye describes the rise of hybrid warfare as merely a new, creative way for those with less hard power to maximize their soft and smart power,

²¹ Oscar Jonsson, *The Russian Understanding of War: Blurring the Lines Between War and Peace* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2019), 9.

²² Frank G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars* (Arlington: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007), 7.

²³ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁴ Greg Grant, “Hybrid Wars”, *Government Executive*, May 1, 2008.

²⁵ Anthony H. Cordesman, “The Strategic Threat from Iranian Hybrid Warfare in the Gulf”, *CSIS*, June 13, 2019.

while modernizing concepts from “asymmetrical warfare”, which according to him, have always existed.²⁶ In 2010, the Headquarters of the Department of the Army in *TC 7-100: Hybrid Threat*, defined such threats as “the diverse and dynamic combination of regular forces, irregular forces, and/or criminal elements all unified to achieve mutually benefiting effects”. This work also argued that such threats exist mainly in at the “operational” level.²⁷

Other authors who added to the emerging foundations of thought on hybrid warfare were the following US Army officers: first, Colonel Steven Williams, who argued for a link in development and conceptualization between 4GW and hybrid warfare.²⁸ Second, Colonel Margaret Bond, who attempted to apply Hoffman’s concepts to stability operations in failing states.²⁹ Third, Lt. Colonel Daniel Lasica, who theorized about the nature of victory in hybrid environments.³⁰ Fourth, Major Larry Jordan, who criticized US Army doctrine through the ideas of hybrid warfare in order to offer solutions to the problems of the mid-2000s.³¹ Lastly, Major Sean McWilliams, who both analyzed the 1976-1989 war in South Africa as a hybrid conflict, and was one of the first to suggest hybrid warfare, not just compound warfare, was a phenomena common to military history.³²

There are some who view hybrid warfare as the *operational actualization* of direct conflict between such great powers and their respective adversaries. Ever since it became clear that the Global War on Terror would decrease in importance and the subsequent return in interest to the supposedly rising power of Russia and China, there has been a return in focus to preparing the US armed forces (and especially the Army) for any possible threat. The point being that great powers could just as easily utilize irregular or even hybrid methods as traditionally irregular enemies, but with the resources of great powers needed to maximize their effectiveness for achieving political aims in great power competition. Therefore, a return in interest to preparation for a “unified” battlespace that is fully interconnected at all points within the military spectrum. This naturally makes one think back to RMA and Full Spectrum Dominance, but the emphasis is no longer on finding the proper technological and thus universal solution to all problems, but rather creating a “whole” which best brings all elements of national power in coherence for the purposes of largely conventional victory on the battlefield.³³

There were several works that took on the strategic downward view in the late 2000s and early 2010s. First, in 2010, RAND, always popular and influential within the US military and defence community, published a report entitled “Military Capabilities for Hybrid War”, which

²⁶ Joseph S. Nye Jr., *The Future of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), 34-39, 48-49.

²⁷ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *TC 7-100: Hybrid Threat* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, November 2010), v.

²⁸ Steven Williamson, *From Fourth Generation Warfare to Hybrid War* (Carlisle: US Army War College, 2007).

²⁹ Margaret Bond, *Hybrid War: A New Paradigm for Stability Operations in Failing States* (Carlisle: US Army War College, 2009).

³⁰ Daniel Lasica, *Strategic Implications of Hybrid War: A Theory of Victory* (Fort Leavenworth: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2009).

³¹ Larry Jordan, “Hybrid War: Is the U.S. Army Ready for the Face of 21st-Century Warfare?”, Master’s thesis, Fort Leavenworth: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2009.

³² Sean McWilliams, *Hybrid War beyond Lebanon: Lessons from the South African Campaign 1976-1989* (Fort Leavenworth: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2009). An overview of the above authors can be found in Fridman, *Russian Hybrid Warfare*, 38.

³³ Jordan, Kiras, Lonsdale, Speller, Tuck and Walton, *Understanding Modern Warfare*, 137-151, 438-447.

examined Israel's operations in Lebanon in 2006 and Gaza in 2008 through the lens of hybridization.³⁴ Also, in the same year, a report on hybrid warfare was written by the US Government Accountability Office, and then presented to the US House of Representatives' Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities.³⁵ As noted by Ofer Fridman, professor of War Studies at King's College London, while both of these reports added little to Hoffman's concepts, they helped spread these ideas through the US government and provide proof that not only was there a lively discussion occurring in defence intellectual circles, but this was being taken notice by American policymakers.³⁶

Then another work came just in time, during the year 2013³⁷: the book *Hybrid Warfare* by Timothy McCulloh and Richard Johnson, then both officers in the US Air Force (USAF). McCulloh and Johnson developed seven principles for understanding 'hybrid warfare': first, that its rise in a given conflict or battlespace is directly connected to the geopolitical conditions specific to that area – that is, the type of combatants, battlefield, cultures, etc. involved, either force hybridization or encourage it in order for one side or both to maximize their military capability. Second, there needs to be present an ideology (doctrine, strategic culture, political policy, etc.) that either forces or encourages a policy, strategy or culture of hybridization (that is, the tactical and/or operational role of forces is difficult or impossible to distinguish between being "conventional" or "irregular" in nature). Third, the threat being faced is perceived as existential in nature, and therefore it is believed any restraints in terms of morality, traditions, etc. must be abandoned for the sake of victory. Fourth, naturally, the conflict will likely be asymmetric in nature, whether at the start or continually through the time-period, thus encouraging one side, or both once the other responds to the changing circumstances, to adopt unconventional methods for achieving victory. Fifth, the hybrid actor will have fusion within its forces itself, not just methods, strategy or policy. Sixth and seventh, hybrid warfare is mainly a strategically defensive approach, which emphasizes attrition and psychological warfare to weaken and eventually defeat a stronger opponent over time.³⁸

In the second half of the book, the authors use the case studies of Vietnam and Iraq to argue that the US military culture needed to shift away from a 'one size fits all' interpretation of war, and embrace on the complex, at times hybridized, nature of war, especially as these were apparently becoming more prominent at the time. As for the operationalization of these concepts, the authors focus on how to turn psychological concepts into kinetic methods, rather than the other way around – that is, where the US had previously used its operational dominance to seek battle and thus break the enemy, they now had to realize these aspects were fused, meaning the enemy's psychological weaknesses must be directly attacked by kinetic means, rather than as an

³⁴ David E. Johnson, "Military Capabilities for Hybrid War: Insights from the Israel Defense Forces in Lebanon and Gaza", *RAND*, 2010.

³⁵ Government of Accountability Office, *Hybrid Warfare: Briefing to the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives* (Washington: United States Government Accountability Office, September 10, 2010).

³⁶ Fridman, *Russian Hybrid Warfare*, 38. For the original source, see: Timothy McCulloh; Richard Johnson, *Hybrid Warfare* (MacDill Air Force Base: Joint Special Operations University Press, 2013).

³⁷ Meaning it came out just before 2014, the year that Russia invaded Ukraine and created an explosion of discussion about hybrid warfare.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 39-40.

aftereffect.³⁹ Fridman argued this was in line with the current debate about the nature of a supposed “American way of war”, or if it even existed. Where the debate had previously been largely about focusing on America’s strength in technology and operational effectiveness, whether it be for the purpose of embracing or rejecting it, those promoting hybrid warfare stepped in to say neither was the answer. The question and the assumptions it entailed were in fact wrong: it was not a matter of “one or the other”, but rather the specificity of application as the new strategic paradigm was being operationalized on the battlefield.⁴⁰ Therefore, the primacy of the arguments being made was national, or strategic, in nature.

There are also many theorists who take a “strategic-grand strategic approach”, connecting hybrid warfare or “hybrid conflict/threat” to the concept of a “gray zone” in international relations, which originally was considered separate by most from what Hoffman would later term “gray zone conflict” (borrowing from the USSOCOM White Paper of 2015).⁴¹ That is, Hoffman viewed this ‘gray zone’ in terms of an already established state of armed conflict, and therefore a strategic-downward model, while gray zone in world politics was purely a matter of grand strategy/policy.⁴² Now, theorists in line with Jacob Helberg understand the former, like everything else, to be simply an extension of the latter.

War and peace have never been binary and have always been a spectrum...governments have increasingly sought to advance their interests and weaken their adversaries in the ambiguous ‘gray zone’ just between the conventional thresholds of war and peace...Today, this has become a predominant and pervasive feature of international politics, which is why I have chosen to describe the systemic global rivalry between democracy and autocracy as a ‘Gray War’... The outcome of this Gray War will be determined not so much by who controls some piece of territory...but rather by who controls the information networks and communications technologies that shape the distribution of world power...⁴³

Falling within this category are authors like Mitchell A. Orenstein, who fails to even provide a definition of hybrid warfare in his book *The Lands In Between: Russia vs. the West and the New Politics of Hybrid War*. The closest Orenstein comes to a definition is in a citation, wherein he

³⁹ Ibid, 41.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 42-45.

⁴¹ See: United States Special Operations Command, *White Paper: The Gray Zone*.

⁴² For Hoffman’s conceptualization of hybrid warfare in relation to irregular vs conventional war and wartime vs peacetime, see: Frank G. Hoffman, “Hybrid Threats: Reconceptualizing the Evolving Character of Modern Conflict”, *Strategic Forum* (No. 240, April 2009), 1-8; For his later expansion of the idea and response to the grand strategic-strategic understanding of “gray zone”, in the same vein as the USSOCOM White Paper, see: Frank G. Hoffman, “Examining Complex Forms of Conflict: Gray Zone and Hybrid Challenges”, *PRISM* (Vol. 7, No. 4, November 2018), 31-41, more specifically, on pages 32-34, Hoffman clearly places hybrid warfare between irregular and conventional warfare on the “continuum of conflict”, while also distinguishing between it and quasi-war or the “gray zone”/“political warfare” in that the latter, unlike the former, is an aspect of geopolitics/grand strategy, simply taking using non-tradition versions of methods reserved for this area of activity.

⁴³ Jacob Helberg, *The Wires of War: Technology and the Global Struggle for Power* (New York: Avid Reader Press, 2021), xiv.

notes that some theorists have pointed out how Russia has no official doctrine called hybrid warfare, but rather uses terms like “strategic deterrence”. This concept is described as military and non-military means (in just about any form) used for the purposes of grand strategic deterrence.⁴⁴ This demonstrates Orenstein’s desire to lump anything and everything not obviously militarily conventional in nature into the category of hybrid war. Such ambiguity is made further apparent by Orenstein’s claim that the war in Ukraine since 2014 has been an “all-out” hybrid war waged at the region, intending not just to grand strategically harm western friendly nations in Eastern Europe, but all Western nations in general.⁴⁵ However, not once is this “war” defined beyond providing lists of tactics, such as intelligence operations, cyber warfare, propaganda, surveillance and espionage, all working in conjunction with military actions, but conventional and irregular.⁴⁶

A similar, but more nuanced view comes from Mark Galeotti, who rejects the view that Russia or China has a master strategy involving a reversal of traditional understandings of war, designed for the step-by-step destruction of the West. In fact, Galeotti argues these changes in doctrine are merely adaptations to international trends in warfare and grand strategy, altered to fit the specific needs and strategic cultures of the nation in question. Thus, any names used to describe supposedly new approaches to war are illusory, because they all are attempting to describe the same phenomena, while attempting to erroneously place the revolution within the realm of a specific area, time or event. Galeotti calls this phenomenon, “the weaponization of everything”.⁴⁷

Historical as opposed to Novel

Some theorists see ‘hybrid warfare’ as nothing new, and a largely historical phenomenon. Two useful examples are Williamson Murray and Peter Mansoor, who argue that hybrid wars form a separate category of warfare which are not revolutionary, but constant throughout the ages. This differs from Hoffman’s interpretation, where the fusion of conventional and irregular methods at all levels to be a phenomenon is unique to the 21st century. Murray and Mansoor’s conceptualization of hybrid warfare was provided alongside a collection of essays by different scholars examining supposed historical case studies. To them, hybrid warfare is a:

Conflict involving a combination of conventional military forces and irregulars (guerrillas, insurgents, and terrorists), which could include both state and nonstate actors, aimed at achieving a common political purpose. Irregular forces need not be centrally directed, although in many cases they form part of a coherent strategy used to oppose an invader or occupation force. Hybrid warfare also plays out at all levels of war, from the tactical, to the operational, to the strategic.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Orenstein, *The Lands In Between*, 179.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 9.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 10, 29-46.

⁴⁷ Mark Galeotti, *The Weaponization of Everything: A Field Guide to the New Way of War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022), 9-21.

⁴⁸ Mansoor; Murray, *Hybrid Warfare*, 2-3.

The simple nature of the definition and strategic-downward mentality can be clearly viewed in this excerpt. To Murray and Mansoor, the ultimate objective of a hybrid strategy is the same as that of an insurgency, where decisive victory becomes impossible for the enemy, leading them to withdraw or grow weaker over time so eventually the asymmetric nature of the conflict swings in favour of the originally hybrid combatant. Then and only then does the conventional aspect become dominant:

Throughout history, hybrid adversaries have been willing and able to extend wars in time and space to achieve their goals over the long run. Unless great powers possess a deep commitment, time is on the side of their hybrid opponents. If the clock runs out, the side that possesses the ground wins by default.⁴⁹

Others take the opposite view of the hierarchical relationship between hybridity and irregularity.

For example, Seth G. Jones of CSIS views hybrid warfare as merely a subset of insurgent and irregular warfare; that is, the shifting of strategy and tactics to fit the needs of the situation:

Some individuals have used such terms as “hybrid warfare” to describe a mixture of conventional and other strategies...But insurgent groups have long used a mixture of strategies. In fact, groups used more than one strategy in 44 percent of insurgencies. The data suggests several reasons why groups use more than one strategy. First, insurgents may switch strategies if one fails to achieve results...Second, groups may use different strategies depending on the balance-of-power with the government, which can change over the course of a conflict...Third, groups may use different strategies depending on their control of territory...⁵⁰

Jones extends this interpretation to what he sees as irregular warfare conducted by state actors. For Jones, irregular warfare conducted by state actors is any form of conflict short of conventional and/or nuclear war, while also being greater in its directed harm than “routine foreign policy”.⁵¹

A small but vocal group of theorists have rejected the concept of hybrid warfare altogether, or at the very least consider it a misleading term and so are highly skeptical of its usefulness. For example, Andrew J. Bacevich Jr. (former professor at West Point and Boston College) argued that during the 2010s, the War on Terror was, for the most part, over. However, according to Bacevich, rather than focusing on actual national security threats and admit that they are not militarized, the West had chosen to exaggerate smaller issues and connect unrelated issues together: to Bacevich, this is the true nature of hybrid warfare, counterterrorism, cyber warfare, etc. – they either do not exist, or are merely amalgamations of different things. Therefore, the best course of action would be to essentially return to isolationism (focusing purely on conventional warfare as it relates to security in the Western Hemisphere and NATO) and focus on combating current and future crises

⁴⁹ Ibid, 7.

⁵⁰ Seth G. Jones, *Waging Insurgent Warfare: Lessons from the Vietcong to the Islamic State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 54-55.

⁵¹ Ibid, 11.

involving pandemics, internal instability, civil-military relations and economics. For Bacevich, war is not necessary in the majority of cases, and so “creating” expansive concepts like hybrid warfare only increases the possibility of “mission creep”, “militarism” and logistical overreach. Only when hard power dominance and internal stability is ensured, Bacevich argues, can America and the West go forth and undertake any great military enterprises.⁵²

Sir Hew Strachan, a professor at the University of St. Andrews, wrote a book in 2013 titled *The Direction of War*. For the most part, the book simply provides a more thorough explanation of the arguments made in the previous article.⁵³ However, Strachan does briefly touch directly on hybrid warfare and the hybridization of conflict in the 21st century, describing it as the result of post-Cold War confusion in identifying types of sub-grand strategic conflict, as the decades-long understanding of conventional war as total in nature necessitated viewing anything else as something different. For Strachan, every war has been hybrid and asymmetric in some way, and so such terms are useless. Also, according to Strachan, irregular and conventional warfare enthusiasts battled, it created the conditions for a combination of concepts, built additionally off of shared characteristics both current and previous – hybrid warfare - which then in turn was confronted with a complete rejection of the compromises that had birthed it – the near total rejection of the distinction between irregular and conventional warfare, or at least the denial that there was some great revolution that required throwing away old concepts. However, as can be expected, this was not the end, for an additional unification of opposites was to quickly occur.⁵⁴

Change over Time

Finally, there is a need to address how definitions of hybrid warfare and concepts connected to it changed over time.⁵⁵ The origins of hybrid warfare can be found in the end of the Cold War. At this time, 4GW was being developed and expanded upon. This concept began with the 1989 article “The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation”, by William S. Lind. Since then, these ideas have been furthered championed by Thomas X. Hammes, while similar ideas have been promoted by Martin Van Creveld and Samuel Huntington. As already noted in the literature review, proponents of 4GW claim there have been four main generations of war throughout history, and the post-Cold War period includes the “fourth generation”. The first generation had warfare based on manpower, the second based on firepower and the third manoeuvre. The fourth is an insurgency not limited to geography or traditional limitations upon what involves military activity. Each of these transformations from one generation to the next were caused by a “military

⁵² Andrew J. Bacevich Jr., *After the Apocalypse: America's Role in a World Transformed* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2021), 4-9, 15-17, 23-68, 70-81, 85-102, 116-119, 124-170. This is an expansion of ideas also espoused in Andrew J. Bacevich Jr., *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2009), 1-27, 67-159; and Andrew J. Bacevich Jr., *The Age of Illusions: How America Squandered its Cold War Victory* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2020), 4-6, 29-44, 194-196.

⁵³ Hew Strachan, *The Direction of War: Contemporary Strategy in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1-45. Strachan was, with this book, building off of arguments made in Hew Strachan, “The Lost Meaning of Strategy”, *Survival*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (Autumn, 2005), 33-45.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁵⁵ This will also provide a literary background for the examination of hybrid warfare's historical development, to be provided in Chapter 4.

revolution”, specific to the era and coming to a climax right before the shift.⁵⁶ The result of the change towards 4GW would be that concentration of forces at a strategic and grand strategic level would be limited, and therefore the battlespace or even entire area of state conflict will increase in size, the line between strategic and tactical will become blurred, and any means of affecting the political will of the enemy will become an essential strategic component of conflict.⁵⁷ In the United States, these views and those like them, were often referred to as the “New Wars” school, because they were unified in the belief that current and previous doctrine was irrelevant for dealing with concurrent socio-military transformations.⁵⁸

The resounding American victory during the Gulf War in 1991 influenced many theorists for years to come. Firstly, military theorist and former US Army officer Harry Summers saw the conflict as a confirmation of his interpretation of the Vietnam War, as espoused in *On Strategy*.⁵⁹ In the sequel to that classic, *On Strategy II*, Summers traces the development of American strategic culture and doctrine from Vietnam to the Gulf War, concluding that they had relearned the lessons he claimed they lost just before 1965. Most importantly for him was the clear understanding of a separation between states of war and peace, as well as clear separation in duties between civilian and military officials.⁶⁰ Secondly, there was the adoption of AirLand Battle, which allowed America to maximize not only its tactical and operational ground and air capabilities in an extremely coordinated fashion, but transfer that success to the strategic realm.⁶¹ Lastly, this could not have been done without clear political and military objectives.⁶² Therefore, in the Gulf War, America found success and clarity in all the problem areas of Vietnam.

Such thinking was the foundation from which sprung those who believed in the RMA and especially those who argued the current “revolution” meant American conventional forces could quickly defeat any military problem it faced. These ideas built off the theories of USAF Colonel John Boyd, which stated that decision-making in military affairs can be explained through what he called the OODA Loop (Observe, Orient, Decide, Act); therefore, victory can best be achieved by interrupting this loop, thus crippling enemy C² (Command and Control), keeping the enemy

⁵⁶ Fridman, *Russian Hybrid Warfare*, 19-21. For the original works, see: William S. Lind, “The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation”, *Marine Corps Gazette* (October, 1989), 22-26. Lind further builds on his theory and updates it for the early 21st century in “Understanding Fourth Generation War”, *Military Review* (September-October, 2004). Also see: Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century* (St. Paul: Zenith Press, 2004); Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations: And the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011); and Martin Van Creveld, *On Future War* (London: Brassey's, 1991). Views similar to Huntington and Van Creveld were expressed by Robert D. Kaplan in Robert D. Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post Cold War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), based on Robert D. Kaplan, “The Coming Anarchy”, *The Atlantic*, 1994.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 22-24.

⁵⁸ Jordan, Kiras, Lonsdale, Speller, Tuck, and Walton, *Understanding Modern Warfare*, 132-134. This concept of “new wars” is different from the one used in Britain, popularized by Mary Kaldor of the London School of Economics. See: Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012).

⁵⁹ Harry G. Summers Jr., *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1984), 33-69.

⁶⁰ Harry G. Summers Jr., *On Strategy II: A Critical Analysis of the Gulf War* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1992), 7-40.

⁶¹ Ibid, 95-160.

⁶² Ibid, 17-19, 180-199.

passive and reactive and unable to inflict a strategically vital blow against one's own forces.⁶³ RMA theorists expanded this concept by referring to armed forces as systems, and thus the aspects contained within them as other systems. The RMA was said to use technological superiority to influence the "system-within-a-system". In short, domination of certain technologies could allow one to dominate a particular aspect of the battlespace, and thus a particular part of the overall system, allowing for domination then of that part of the enemy's specific system related to that aspect – if this could be achieved in the majority of critical nodes of the network/system, both in the overall battlespace as well as those specific to the enemy, then the enemy could be made to always be passive and reactive. The ideal situation would be quick and decisive crippling of key parts to the enemy system of operation, especially relating directly to C², leading to overwhelming victory with minimal cost to friendly forces. This battlefield isolation was not limited to C², but applied to everything beyond the enemy frontline, due to advancements in precision-guided munitions, information technology, and maneuver capabilities – thus, the whole battlespace could be open to friendly forces, while only the front line was open to the enemy, and friendly forces could move onto the decisive area too fast for the enemy to properly react.⁶⁴

Alvin Toffler's⁶⁵ concept of "war vs anti-war" was influential in the mid 1990s. Building on his previous ideas of a "shift" going on in the societies of the West, and the world in general, wherein the world is not only more interconnected, but related to economic conditions. Toffler comes to the conclusion then that there are two kinds of conflicts in the modern age, often confused for one another: war and anti-war. War, of course, is a conflict meant to destroy the enemy on the battlefield, but anti-war is conflict whose purpose is to prevent or limit war. As a result, Toffler argues, there needs to be a distinction within doctrine, theory and policy that reflects these changes.⁶⁶

Others felt very differently about the war and the consequences of American victory in the Cold War, the Soviet Empire having crumbled from within in 1989, then the Soviet Union itself dissolving in 1991. Less radical thinkers such as John Nagl, believed that the crushing American victory in both situations, but especially the Gulf War, meant that in the future no enemy would be foolish enough to combat a new sole superpower in a conventional environment.⁶⁷ Others, such

⁶³ Jordan, Kiras, Lonsdale, Speller, Tuck, and Walton, *Understanding Modern Warfare*, 262.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 130-132. Also see: Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 895-912. Examples of theoretical literature supporting RMA include: Andrew Krepinevich, *The Military-Technical Revolution: A Preliminary Assessment* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2002); William A. Owens and Ed Offley, *Lifting the Fog of War* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001); Douglas A. MacGregor, *Breaking the Phalanx: A New Design for Landpower in the 21st Century* (Westport: Praeger, 1997); Richard Simpkin, *Race to the Swift: Thoughts on Twenty-First Century Warfare* (Sterling: Potomac Books, 1998); and Robert Leonhard, *The Principles of War for the Information Age* (New York: Presidio Press, 2000).

⁶⁵ Alvin Toffler was an American futurist. His other works on futurism include: *Future Shock*, *The Third Wave* and *Powershift*.

⁶⁶ Alvin Toffler, *War and Anti-War: Survival at the Dawn of the 21st Century* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), 3-5.

⁶⁷ University of California Television, "Counterinsurgency with John A. Nagl - Conversations with History", *Youtube*, April 16, 2015. These views, originating in the 90s, would culminate in John Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005). For similar views from this time on a future for the US fighting irregular opponents, see: Roger W. Barnett, *Asymmetrical Warfare: Today's Challenge to U.S. Military Power* (Washington: Brassey's, 2003).

as the Israeli military theorist and historian Martin van Creveld, made bolder claims, such as the idea that:

...contemporary 'strategic' thought about every one of these problems is fundamentally flawed; and, in addition, is rooted in a 'Clausewitzian' world-picture that is either obsolete or wrong. We are entering an era, not of peaceful economic competition between trading blocks, but of warfare between ethnic and religious groups. Even as familiar forms of armed conflict are sinking into the dustbin of the past, radically new ones are raising their heads ready to take their place. Already today the military power fielded by the principal developed societies in both 'West' and 'East' is hardly relevant to the task at hand; in other words, it is more illusion than substance.⁶⁸

Not long after Van Creveld described his own interpretation of the unfolding military revolution of the 1990s, a similar event was occurring in China with the publishing of *Unrestricted Warfare*, by two People's Liberation Army Colonels, Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui. While this work is not American, it is important for understanding the international outlook of the time, was meant as an analysis of RMA in America, and lastly has since been influential in the works of theorists concerning irregular and modern warfare in general.⁶⁹ In this work, Liang and Xiangsui summarize their thesis with the following words:

When we suddenly realize that all these non-war actions may be the new factors constituting future warfare, we have to come up with a new name for this new form of war: Warfare which transcends all boundaries and limits, in short: unrestricted warfare...this kind of war means that all means will be in readiness, that information will be omnipresent, and the battlefield will be everywhere. It means that all weapons and technology can be superimposed at will, it means that all the boundaries lying between the two worlds of war and non-war, of military and non-military, will be totally destroyed, and it also means that many of the current principles of combat will be modified, and even that the rules of war may need to be rewritten.⁷⁰

This led Liang and Xiangsui to conclude that war in the 21st century would become "four-dimensional". For most of human history, they say, war was two-dimensional, wherein an army defeated another by either moving forward, or enveloping them along the flanks. In the 20th century, with the development of aircraft, war became three-dimensional, as technology now allowed for the front to be bypassed through vertical envelopment. Today, established planes of maneuver are no longer clear: pathways to and from nodes within the general societal system are

⁶⁸ Martin Van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: Free Press, 1991), ix.

⁶⁹ Fridman, *Russian Hybrid Warfare*, 12-17. Also see: Andrew Krepinevich and Barry Watts, *The Last Warrior: Andrew Marshall and the Shaping of Modern Defence Strategy* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 193-194, 206-207.

⁷⁰ Qiao Liang; Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare* (Brattleboro: Echo Point Books and Media, 2015), 5.

seemingly infinite.⁷¹ As explained by Liang and Xiangsui, technology in the new Information Age breaks down traditionally isolated realms between military and civilian concerns, as everything has become interconnected on systemically reliant on one another. As a result, nearly every domain, military and civilian, has wartime significance, to the point that previous distinctions between “war” and “peace” do not adequately explain the current technological and informational state of the world.⁷²

During the 1990s, there were other conceptualizations of non-conventional warfare. As it first appeared, hybrid warfare was an updating of “compound warfare” and “three-block war”. The former was first coined in 1997 by the American historian Thomas Huber in an article titled “Napoleon in Spain and Naples: Fortified Compound Warfare”.⁷³ In 2002, these concepts were expanded upon by Huber in a collection of essays alongside other historians, titled *Compound Warfare: The Fatal Knot*.⁷⁴ Compound warfare began as something akin to Williamson Murray and Peter Mansour’s conceptualization of hybrid warfare: that this was a strategic and/or operational-tactical method deployed throughout history, meaning the idea was not new, let alone revolutionary. As can be expected from something that claims to span across entire centuries and throughout the globe, there was not much in terms of theoretical framework at first. To Huber, compound warfare was simply the combination of conventional and irregular methods at the same time and/or space. These actions were little more than pragmatic reactions to strategic conditions, with conventional forces achieving objectives unsuited to irregular forces, and vice versa. This situation was when a land is being *occupied*, and in a clear state of disadvantaged *asymmetry*. The less powerful force then is forced to embrace irregular warfare, but in order to maximize flexibility and power, they do not simply throw away their conventional capabilities and transfer everything into a fully irregular campaign or system of politico-military operations. Further flexibility can occur purposely or accidentally with variation in unity of command. According to Huber, the most successful form of hybrid warfare is “fortified compound warfare”, where the disadvantaged side has a safe haven to gather and recover conventional or irregular forces or both, along with the resources and logistical systems that keep them in the fight.⁷⁵ Lastly, Hoffman stresses the differences at the strategic level between hybrid and compound warfare: mainly, that the former is unified and at times indistinguishable, through all levels of the conflict, while the latter involves a strategic synergy between mostly distinct and tactically separated units and/or methods.⁷⁶

As for “three-block war”, it was first introduced in 1997 from a speech by General Charles C. Krulak (then Commandant of the Marine Corps), which was later republished in 1999 as an article for *Marines Magazine* titled “The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War”. This was a part of the emerging “Mission Command” system of leadership, wherein every level of command is made aware of the intent of their overall mission and commander’s means of achieving it, thus allowing for flexibility in achieving their part of the mission as they saw fit

⁷¹ Ibid, 28-32.

⁷² Ibid, 30-32.

⁷³ Thomas Huber, “Napoleon in Spain and Naples: Fortified Compound Warfare”, in *C610: The Evolution of Modern Warfare, Term I Syllabus/Book of Readings* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1997).

⁷⁴ Thomas Huber, *Compound Warfare: That Fatal Knot* (New York: University of the Pacific Press, 2004).

⁷⁵ Fridman, *Russian Hybrid Warfare*, 24-27.

⁷⁶ Frank G. Hoffman, “Hybrid vs. compound war”. *Armed Forces Journal* (October 1, 2009).

(given their placement on the ground, and thus at the best position to make decisions in the moment concerning their tactical situation). Therefore, Krulak argued that future wars would be more complex, even in purely tactical scenarios, as a regular infantry unit could be forced into fighting technically three separate types of wars in one city, separated by block: for example, one that is conventional, another that is counterinsurgency, and another that is peacekeeping, stability operations, etc. Thus, the battlefield of the future was thought to be rather fluid and even the most tactical aspects of the fighting, subject both to extreme change and direct relation to the strategic environment.⁷⁷

The Global War on Terror, initiated in 2001 and the subsequent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, got theorists thinking that perhaps neither of these extremes was adequate for explaining the current military environment. Beginning in 2002, and finishing their work in 2005, a series of authors came together to consider whether recent events had fundamentally altered the “principles of war”. This effort was sponsored by the Office of Force Transformation (OFT)⁷⁸, so one would expect the findings to emphasize the conventional-warfare aspects of RMA. However, outside of essays which looked at conventional warfare at the operational level, this is not the case.⁷⁹ Colin S. Gray, then professor of international politics and strategic studies at the University of Reading, criticized the apparent cultural preference in America for relying on technology, mass, maneuver and firepower.⁸⁰ Robert H. Scales, a former US Army Major General, and President of Colgen Inc., argued that a “second learning revolution” was required for success in Afghanistan and Iraq. According to Scales, this is similar to the apparent lack of preparation his generation had for Vietnam, in that the US military relied too much on technology and large units. Instead, Scales recommends emphasis on small units and understanding local culture, so as to conquer the emerging complexity of modern warfare.⁸¹ Antulio J. Echevarria II, director of research at the US Army War College, dismissed an overly operational emphasis on Clausewitzian principle of war as outdated, argued instead that policy success should be prioritized over military victory. Also, Echevarria criticizes RMA as continuing this overemphasis on decisive battle, arguing instead for focusing on “restraint, legitimacy and perseverance”, because, according to him, the Global War on Terror is primarily a political conflict.⁸² National security columnist Harlan Ullman makes statements similar to Van Creveld, insisting that the proponents of the RMA failed to understand how the changes of the 21st century and Global War on Terrorism made it so that military technology as no longer as dominant as it used to be. Ullman further states that national defence is no longer strictly military in nature, and ideas about power and military victory must also be

⁷⁷ Charles C. Krulak, “The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War”, *Marines Magazine* (Air University 1999). For the original speech, see: <https://www.c-span.org/video/?92628-1/marine-corps-future#> It should be noted, however, that Krulak’s purpose in writing this was not to create a new system or theory of war, but rather to improve upon leadership within the Marine Corps. It was others later that took this idea from the article and expanded it beyond its original purpose.

⁷⁸ This was established within the Office of the Secretary of Defence, by Donald Rumsfeld in order to provide research and recommendations related Rumsfeld’s plan for “transformation” of the US Armed Forces along the lines of RMA theory. Established October 29, 2001, and disbanded October 1, 2006.

⁷⁹ For such essays, see: Anthony D. McIvor, *Rethinking the Principles of War* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 95-108, 109-124, 143-206.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 29-36.

⁸¹ Ibid, 41-52.

⁸² Ibid, 62-75.

updated.⁸³ Not surprisingly, both Thomas X. Hammes and Frank Hoffman argue that the future of war will be more irregular than conventional in nature. They are joined in this opinion by Steven Metz, professor at the US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute.⁸⁴

The literature reflects the U.S. situation at the time, where it ended up involved in two simultaneous counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. As a result, the previously sidelined minority of military officers, scholars, and theorists who from the 1990s to the early 2000s who proclaimed the future to be one of irregular warfare, found their ideas gaining new traction.⁸⁵

This provided the intellectual background out of which emerged hybrid warfare and its initial variations. However, after 2010, as already hinted at throughout this literature review, certain views of both hybrid warfare and American military theoretical thinking overall, changed. One example is Rod Thornton, who connects the emergence of “hybrid warfare” with Russia after 2010, but only because the Russians believed they were reacting to such methods being used against them by the United States. Thornton argues that this Russian view of hybrid warfare combined previous ideas such as information warfare and comprehensive integration to form something new, wherein conventional and irregular operations could be used in concert to, in effect, direct a total war without actually committing to this in a traditional grand strategic manner. Thus, the battlespace is simultaneously blurred and wholly integrated inside and outside the societies in question. Thornton states that while Russian thinkers built from the foundations built by Frank Hoffman, it was they who first formalized hybrid warfare as both a full system and a doctrine.⁸⁶ More critically, Americans had until that point had all the components in place, but they were merely operationalized, rather than made strategic, let alone grand strategic in nature. The result is a “contactless war” waged between Russia and NATO since at least 2014, which is like a proxy war, but far more intense and encompassing the whole of the two sides’ diplomatic and information capabilities, even though the two forces are not directly engaging in combat.⁸⁷

After the 2014 Russian invasion of Ukraine, Hoffman himself criticized his earlier conceptualization in a blog on *War on the Rocks*, for not including economic and other mainly “diplomatic” methods within a hybridized framework. Hoffman also openly declared that Russia was indeed fighting a hybrid war, and the US was still too trapped in a narrow-minded, Clausewitzian approach to conventional warfare, rather than one that did not neatly fit into a clear distinction between conventional and counterinsurgency. That is, even a clearly conventional campaign of contest and internal disruption, such as that being conducted by Russia against Ukraine, was very hybridized in its planning, execution and international perception.⁸⁸

Another example of the changing attitudes of the time is Brookings military analyst Michael O’Hanlon’s *The Future of Land Warfare*, updated in 2015, from the original, published

⁸³ Ibid, 83-94.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 263-316.

⁸⁵ See: Fred Kaplan, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013).

⁸⁶ Rod Thornton, “The Changing Nature of Modern Warfare: Responding to Russian Information Warfare”, *The RUSI Journal*, Vol. 160, No. 4 (2015), 41-42.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 42-45.

⁸⁸ Fridman, *Russian Hybrid Warfare*, 109.

in 2000, which includes amongst other subjects, a critique of the RMA. O'Hanlon does not outright deny the importance, or even near-revolutionary nature of technological developments, but states that American RMA theorists of the 1990s and early 2000s exaggerated the importance of these changes to contemporary warfare. As he did in 2000, O'Hanlon argues that the only aspect of the RMA that can be considered "revolutionary", are those connected to information warfare. However, O'Hanlon acknowledges that the US both prefers and dominates in the conventional battlespace, while repeating his assertion that the armed forces were unprepared for the irregular wars of the 21st century. What is also noted is America's increasing desire to avoid large-scale casualties and thus overreliance on the force multiplication provided by technological superiority over their adversaries, both current and potential.⁸⁹

Yet, O'Hanlon differs from the trend one sees in works from the mid-2000s that began with such arguments, for he emphasizes the importance of conventional military power in the current international climate, advises against peacekeeping and nation-building, and predicts the previously mentioned American culture and reliance on technology will result in more use of UAS in tandem with special forces rather than infantry-heavy COIN operations. Also, the book both affirms the dangers of terrorism to states while also noting that previous theories and doctrine had exaggerated their effects, reach and fundamental nature as a part of modern warfare or the international political, cultural and economic environment. This is because the increased capabilities of technology, whether real or perceived, as well as the increased strategic effects of methods previously considered limited in nature (again, real or perceived), may make states believe they can wage quick and decisive conventional wars, likely conducted in proxy battlespace due to deterrence between nuclear powers.⁹⁰

The Gap

Thus, we are left with a confusing mess of definitions, concepts, ideas and interpretations. This review took a largely thematic approach: the originators of concepts which eventually led to hybrid warfare; the defining of hybrid warfare as tactical-operational, strategic or grand strategic in nature; the idea that the concept is not novel, but rather historical and/or a subset of hybrid warfare; criticisms of the concept; and lastly changing definitions over time. Such a thematic approach to categorizing the available literature does little other than move authors around. There is no immediately clear *origin* for these themes, nor any explanation for the connections that exist outside the presented themes. There appears to be no overarching theme which serves as a foundation and guide for the whole body of literature. Also, there is a lack of explanation for the mere variance of opinion to begin with. Moreover, there are clearly changes that occurred both to hybrid warfare and American military theory in general, that happened over time. Lastly, there are clear overlaps in supposedly siloed concepts, rather than a straightforward delineation between them (for example, RMA and Unrestricted Warfare influencing one another, even though the latter is closer in opinion to irregular warfare-centric ideas like those of Van Creveld). So, we are left with a dilemma: how can this conflict between thematic and chronological categorization be

⁸⁹ Michael O'Hanlon, *The Future of Land Warfare* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), 15-19.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 19-31.

resolved? Just as importantly, why is there a great degree of variance that gives birth to these categorizations, and the difficulty of immediately classifying them?

As for the timelines provided by other authors, they are absent the most important element of the theoretical development leading to and within hybrid warfare: the conflict on interpreting supposed changes to the military environment of the time, while simultaneously building off from previous developments. The *transition* occurring and genesis of new ideas is neither a smooth movement from one to the other, nor a succession of complete breaks with the past. Rather, it is an evolution of previous ideas and conflicts, while both incorporating new components as well as compromises with earlier concepts. Nor do the old schools simply vanish, but rather continue to contribute to the discussion, adding further fuel to the continuous pool of ideas from which conceptualization or doctrine emerge (or sometimes vice versa). This is the genesis of discovering the overarching theme which is lacking within the literature: the dialectical nature of transition from idea to idea. That is, the merging of opposing conceptual frameworks alongside building blocks of context (experiences, cultures, events, etc.), which create a combinational framework from which the cycle may begin once again.

Chapter 3: Selecting Methods of Classification

With simple thematic or chronological categorizations of the literature not suitable for explaining the differing opinions of hybrid warfare, an alternative becomes necessary. Consequently, this chapter will endeavour to identify a suitable means to answer the research questions. Once this objective is achieved, the required analytical tools will be available for elaborating on the data that will be laid out in the next chapter concerning the origins and development of hybrid warfare as a concept in America. This chapter will determine the explanatory power of three different options for analyzing the literature: first, classification theory; second, sociology of knowledge; third, theories of culture; and lastly, dialectics. Through this examination, it will be demonstrated that the criteria are fulfilled by using dialectics. The following criteria will be used for determining the level of explanatory power of a particular method of classification:

1. Does it explain the sources of change that occur throughout the literature?
2. Does it explain the nature of the change that is occurring?
3. Is it parsimonious?
4. Does it deal with competing ideas?

Why these four criteria specifically? The goal is to provide an analytical framework, which covers the whole picture of the descriptive process. Naturally then, once it is clear a change has occurred, one is inclined to ask how and why that change occurred. This explains the necessity for the first two criteria. Next, in building a framework out of these two aspects, one must be able to simplify the process to more easily explain it. If parsimony were not an issue, then one could simply describe things as they are, and leave it at that, no further analysis required. However, this does not mean that the framework should be overly simple to avoiding losing all the complexity that encompasses reality. Therefore, true parsimony finds a proper balance between the two extremes of overly complex and overly simple. Lastly, any good theory should be able to adequately respond to criticism. By this it is meant that there are extensive logical responses to internal and/or external criticism, not that it is clearly proven or scientifically falsifiable.

Method 1: Classification

Overview

In order to assess how well classification fits the above criteria, a brief overview of classification theories is required. By this it is meant classification in its most foundational sense, rather than anything specific to certain fields of inquiry, such as biology. Classification and categorization will be used interchangeably. Classification is a subject that is as old as philosophy, so it is only proper to begin with one of the most important philosophers who ever lived: Aristotle.⁹¹

The Aristotelian or classical theory of categorization/classification divides all things into *classes* and *objects/subjects*. Classes are collections of objects, and objects are the point of relation or observation of the world. Thus, the former is largely abstract, while the latter is usually material. All things can be grouped through ten explanatory concepts or “categories”: *substance*, *quantity*, *qualification*, *relative*, *place*, *time*, *position* (relative to a greater whole), *state/condition*, *action*, and *affection/passion*. Substance can be primary or secondary, with the former being some fundamental, indivisible feature that cannot be predicated and the latter being one that can be predicated. Quantity, place, time, position and action are self-explanatory. Qualification is a feature that provides a clear status of description, but is still divisible. Relative is how something is related to other things. Condition is that which is contained by or attached to another thing or greater whole. Lastly, affection is how change caused by some other thing influences the original thing. This can also be something emotional or psychological when dealing with humans.⁹²

As for how things relate to one another, there are the “five words”: *species*, *genus*, *difference*, *property* and *accident*. The species of something is its fundamental essence and is specific to that thing. Genus is similar, but a trait which is fundamental yet still shared with other things. The positive attributes amongst members of the same genus are properties, while the negative ones (i.e. differences) are differences. As for those that are accidental, or having nothing to do with connections between things, they are accidental.⁹³ Furthermore, according to Aristotle, all things have the dynamic potential for change, and so the aspects of their being may change over time. Most things are affecting others, and in turn being affected themselves, creating change and further conditions for the exchanging of characteristics.⁹⁴

The founder of sociology, Emile Durkheim points out the problem that classification is naturally a product of the mind, which is greatly influenced by social factors. Then, the social

⁹¹ Much of the western tradition in philosophy, stretching over two thousand years, is connected to Aristotle’s thought, whether directly or indirectly. Bryan Magee, *The Story of Philosophy* (London: Dorling Kindersley, 2010), 34.

⁹² A.C. Grayling, *The History of Philosophy* (London: Penguin Books, 2019), 86. For the original treatise *Categories*, see: Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation, Volume One* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 3–27. For a detailed explanation of Aristotelian/Classical Theory of Classification, see: J.M.E. Moravcsik, *Aristotle: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 75–145.

⁹³ Grayling, *The History of Philosophy*, 87.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 88.

organism, being made up of different individual and collective categorizations, pushes a more uniform conception of reality upon its members.⁹⁵ Therefore, Durkheim stresses returning to fundamentals when attempting as close to an objective, or natural, idea of classification. As might be expected, this most basic form of classification involves the establishment of clear antitheses; that is, something is defined in its being in of itself, based upon its direct opposition in such being to something else. Examples involve the concepts of dark and light, skin colour, gender, age, geographical location, etc. However, life is far more complex (if you try explaining anything with just these basic characteristics, without getting into combinations and other minute descriptions, you will have a very difficult time) and so nearly anything that is human is subject to some aspect of fluctuation. That is, things are not just complex in their static description, but in how they *change over time* – just because a description is adequate in one moment, does not mean it will be so in a different reference point in space and/or time. This may be the case in objective reality, or simply the result of changing perspectives, which themselves form the very basis that determines the categories.⁹⁶ The very existence of great variations alongside generic conceptions relating to both social and individual “images”, means that relying upon such arguments alone will always make such an analysis incomplete.

Since Durkheim, several theories of classification and categorization have emerged. The famed philosopher of logic and language Ludwig Wittgenstein argued that much of classification is done simply through context. That is, the semantic meaning of language is not necessarily universal or properly basic, but rather determined solely or in conjunction with the situation the person speaking finds themselves in. This is not just a matter of scenario or the basic intentions of the speaker, but also the cultures at play.⁹⁷ One of the founders of Pragmatism, Charles Sanders Pierce sought to build on Aristotle by approaching things from a graduated perspective, wherein substance forms the centre of gravity from which the present condition of the subject is analyzed, with further analysis taking place from universal to particular and in relation to past or future.⁹⁸

Criteria 1: Sources of Change

As pointed out by Michael Carithers, ideas are more than just individual beliefs that exist alone, but rather they are in co-essence with “narratives”. That is, an idea can be expressed through an overall representation of the world, or this narrative can give birth to an idea by one’s particular interpretation of it. Narratives are not just stories, but rather the connectiveness between ideas, things, and the environment through time. This “narrative thought” as Carithers puts it, is crucial to every complex organization of societal attitudes and therefore social behaviour. No one can escape narrative, only admit to its existence. Otherwise, there could be no way to organize

⁹⁵ Emile Durkheim, *Selected Writings*, Edited with an Introduction by Anthony Giddens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 259.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 260.

⁹⁷ Grayling, *The History of Philosophy*, 86.

⁹⁸ Charles Sanders Pierce, “On a New List of Categories”. *Wikisource* (1867).

phenomena into a coherent whole, let alone derive a system from it. Moreover, narratives allow for one to progress beyond the abstract and enter into specific action, because there is clearly no pure universality to social behaviour; a person may theoretically treat every situation the same, but that is very far from how the average human behaves. Most people combine abstract concepts with experience and “lessons” or “rules” from narratives, enforced either by oneself or a recognized institution, to react to everyday situations. One may switch between different narratives, but this is the minority of cases. Thus, when examining groupings of people and the ideas they give birth to, we must also note the narrative being created, as well as the sharing of narrative that may have brought these people and ideas together in the first place. Most importantly, since narratives themselves are a system of interrelation between things over space and time, one cannot examine them without accepting the notion that “process” is axiomatic; that is, it is a prerequisite for further investigation, and denying it would necessitate rejecting the whole method⁹⁹ (and, this author would argue, logic itself, given what has been stated about the nature of human thinking in the abstract).

Classification, then, when relying on essential qualities and their relations to others, leads one to categorize based on idea strands, for the fluid progression of thought as they pass from person to person, group to group, stage to stage and era to era. What then one must be looking for is the conceptual foundation, the instigation to change, and the process of change itself, and the result from the change that produces new ideas and continues the trend onward. This view is summarized brilliantly by Durkheim the following passage:

We must therefore select for our classification characteristics which are particularly essential... We know that societies are made up of a number of parts added on to each other. Since the nature of any composite necessarily depends upon the nature and number of the elements that go make it up and the way in which these are combined, these characteristics are plainly those which we must take as our basis... one might term that part of sociology whose task it is to constitute and classify social types *social morphology*... it is known that the constituent parts of every society are themselves societies of a simpler kind... in order to make our classification we should only have to follow the way in which these simple societies joined together and how these new composites are combined.¹⁰⁰

This provides a solid reasoning for classification of something “in the moment”. The essential quality of the object or idea in question, or the transition from one object or idea to another. However, when one follows the logic of understanding qualities and their interconnections between one another as fluid and procedural, a dilemma arises: how can the transition between

⁹⁹ Michael Carithers, *Why Humans Have Cultures Explaining Anthropology and Human Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 82-91.

¹⁰⁰ Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method: And Selected Texts on Sociology and its Method* (New York: Free Press, 2013), 72.

essential qualities itself be explained? Simply identifying the change does little to further this question. So, classification satisfies the first criteria.

Criteria 2: Nature of Change

Classification theory does not deal specifically with the nature of change, but rather the identification of the elements of things within stages of change. The underlying nature of the change, then, remains hidden. It then becomes necessary to insert some other method into the overall framework. This is demonstrated with Aristotle, who applies his own metaphysical philosophy¹⁰¹, and Durkheim, who applies his own sociological philosophy. For Aristotle, *genus* and *species* are constitutive elements in a system, rather than a single formula. They are added together to understand the qualities of things. A similar method is used by Durkheim, as his philosophy of “structuralism” understands “society” through the combination of “social facts”. Identification and explanation, then are tied together, but ultimately separate. Moreover, it is simply assumed that the addition of things will result in something, without wondering about the internal force that drives this change, and how it functions. This is a serious flaw in using classification theory alone for understanding the nature of variance, especially over time, of ideas. Lastly, it has already been noted that following the logic of classification inevitably leads one to a methodology which emphasizes the process of development and natural fluidity of concepts. Therefore, classification does not satisfy the second criteria, and in order to do so, must abandon its emphasis on immediacy (examining something purely “in the moment”, without reference to other things).

Criteria 3: Parsimony

It can be agreed that classification is rather parsimonious, but perhaps too much so. That is, it is overly simplistic. It ultimately says very little to only identify the essential quality of something. Not only does it beg the question of the nature of the change occurring, but it also opens many doors for further interpretation that lay outside the realm of classification. So, while it opens the way to further issues, classification does meet the criteria of parsimony.

Criteria 4: Competing with Different Ideas

In studying the literature concerning classification, we find that the vast majority do not even address other kinds of idea interpretation, except other ideas of classification. So, the debates are entirely internal to their own overall school of thought. This is not conducive to a well-argued system, because it leaves itself open to devastating criticisms such as those already mentioned. So, classification does not meet the criteria of competing with different ideas.

¹⁰¹ Moravcsik, *Aristotle: A Collection of Critical Essays*, 75-145; Durkheim, *Selected Writings*, 266-267.

Observations

In examining classification's ability to meet the criteria set for this study, we find that it only satisfies the first, explaining the sources of change, and the third, parsimony. The main issue is that classification only provides a "snapshot" of the subject in space and time, and says little on the overall processes which takes something from one point to another. This is partially why there is an isolation from other schools of thought, because those promoting classification clearly do not understand that this is indeed a serious problem. They simply examine a subject in a specific place and time, then state that the work is done, the debate is over. This is simply false. In order to properly address the whole picture of categorization, classification must be rejected, or made to work in conjunction with some other method which, at the very least, addresses sources of change.

Method 2: Sociology of Knowledge

Overview

Just as with classification, it is useful to begin with an overview of sociology of knowledge. Sociology generally focuses on the origins and nature of social behaviour. Sociology of knowledge focuses on those related to social thought. That is, how social conditions affect our beliefs, and how ours affects those of others, as well as larger social groups. This is the area of study that will allow the investigation to dive deeply into the fundamental reasons why humans form schools of thought, and thus how theorists on hybrid warfare fall into certain categories. To begin, this section will explain the foundational axioms which sociology of knowledge builds off of, before delving into the different views from scholars that have developed over the years.

As pointed out by John Searle, there is a “background” to all thought when connected to social interactions. That is, certain prerequisites and continuous norms are well established without any need for explanation. When asked to cut a cake, one instinctively knows to use a knife, and a lawnmower when cutting the grass, not vice versa.¹⁰² The same can be said for a chess game, where neither players plan for such eventualities as outside interference, the game being cancelled or some magical or illogical event taking place. Grander concepts can be found in the theory of the “collective unconscious”, as formulated by Carl Jung, such as order, chaos, certain moral ideas, etc.¹⁰³ These are very simple axioms, but they can certainly be expanded upon when considering the full extent of the “collective consciousness”, as Durkheim called it. Of course, essential or fundamental collective axioms allow for basic connections upon interaction between individuals or groups, but in greater connection and thus communalization requires interconnectivity between more specific aspects to both particular and general “background”. The social mind, both as an individual and group, are constantly evolving reformulations of background, unique buildings off that foundation and a feedback loop from the one to the many, then back again.¹⁰⁴ As Hegel would say, we do not truly reach self-consciousness and the true formation of intellectuality until we engage in imaging with other minds. That is, dialectic with the self extends onto others, before coming back onto ourselves. We are not us, until we understand what is not us, and we do not develop until we find agreement, disagreement and combinations of the two with the opinions and experiences of others.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² John R. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality: Illustrated Edition* (New York: Free Press, 1997), 143; Ibid, *The Rediscovery of the Mind* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 185. This does not mean that one is born knowing what these things do, just that it is basically rational for humans to understand that a smaller cutting object is meant for a smaller object being cut. The point is that we have innate concepts of scale and how utility relates to it. We may need to be taught how to use something, but we can understand that to cut something, one needs something sharp, and different tools are better served tackling certain problems.

¹⁰³ Carl Jung, *Man and his Symbols* (St. Louis: Turtleback Books, 1997), 57.

¹⁰⁴ Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society* (New York: Free Press, 2014), 201-222.

¹⁰⁵ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), Sections 93, 132-133, 140-146, 179-184.

With this sociological investigation into collective social phenomena came identifications of differing “cultures” which were believed to greatly influence human behaviour. For example, Durkheim argues that humans naturally divide themselves into groups based upon appearance, behaviour, age, gender, degrees of strength, mental or emotional fortitude and sociability. These are then exacerbated by the inevitable societal “division of labour”, wherein certain skills and natural conditions within each individual and group are used to organize society in what is perceived to be both the most efficient and “moral” manner. These divisions continue onward as more subgroups form, creating cultural hierarchies which, by matters of degree respective to their place on the hierarchy, influence both individual and group behaviour. This is how classes, norms, traditions, and the like are formed. Naturally then, ideas, follow suite, guided by the structures and substructures of the society.¹⁰⁶

However, there is a problem with this system of thought. First, the connection between social grouping and idea formation is largely assumed. Second, it also assumes that the materiality of the human individual comes first, instead of their mentality. These problems are confronted by those who study sociology of knowledge. The classic text on this subject, *The Social Construction of Reality* by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, will demonstrate the complexity of human knowledge and ideas, as well as the necessity of viewing humans, and thus social groups, as primarily thinking phenomena.

Previously, sociologists had seen knowledge as merely a subset of structural aspects of society, as already noted, and further argued that human interaction was based mainly on the division of labour, with most things being built off this fundamental organization of individuals, as well as social facts (anything that affects behaviour in a particular social group).¹⁰⁷ This, however, is not how reality works, as humans must first think, and more importantly, understand, in order to communicate, and thus establish a community. There is first the most basic of communication before any division of labour can be formed and increase their complexity.¹⁰⁸ Also, every individual has a unique experience in their interaction with objective reality in the abstract (that is, excluding anything outside their unique mental world), which then produces a subjective reality which influences how they behave and thus interact with others. These subjective realities can combine form social beliefs largely separate from objective reality, even if one were to try in vain to trace it back to some aspect of the division of labour.¹⁰⁹ Division of labour then, is far more influential in the realm of *specific*, rather than *general* knowledge.¹¹⁰ Therefore, sociology of knowledge is not investigation into the system of deviation from common belief, but rather the system of commonality emerging from fundamental different subjective realities. This forcing of coherence and cohesion from natural anarchy is the basis of social organization. Subjective reality then, forms through a *process* of individual subjectivity from objectivity, before transforming into

¹⁰⁶ Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society*, 75-77, 108-109, 201-222, 231-235.

¹⁰⁷ Peter L. Berger; Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1966), 6-12.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 35-46.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 23-49.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 65-77.

collective subjectivity via interaction between different individual subjective realities.¹¹¹ Therefore, *knowledge* is the key to understanding trends in human interaction; Berger and Luckmann stress that neither ideology, nor even ideas in general, are central to the formation of societies (this, the most primitive form of social knowledge was the area they wished to focus on, after all),¹¹² but that is not the concern of this investigation, only how ideas are formed within social groups, meaning their observations are still extremely valuable.

Criteria 1: Sources of Change

As noted by Berger, sociology of knowledge works upon the premise that though pure reality is different from both pure thought and the internal logic or knowledge that results from their interaction, they are always intimately connected and when analyzing human knowledge should not be separated. Nothing and no one lives entirely alone to themselves without any interaction. Knowledge, then, is simply the “social construction of reality”.¹¹³ Society, then, and its composite parts, are the interactions of separate knowledge contained within ideas, applied to the material world and undergoing the continual, fluid process of interaction and adaptation. However, it should be noted that there is a distinct difference between narratives or cultures and the everyday knowledge associated simply with living. The latter is based mainly on surviving and simplifying the world around them for that purpose. The former is the opposite, despite our attempts both personally and as theoreticians to simplify things for the purpose of analysis. Everyday knowledge has little need for grand connections between ideas and things, while the narratives that underpin cultures and institutions are literally based upon them, and their inherent complexity is a perquisite to ensure diversity and the infinite progression that is natural to thought itself. Thus, the sociology of knowledge that examines the greater effects of culture and the influence of “elites”, “intellectuals” and relatively small groups of idea association, and therefore the subject of study in this work, must be differentiated from everyday knowledge.¹¹⁴

What then, constitutes a sociology of knowledge specific to higher studies of any given subject? That is, groups which consider for themselves more than everyday thoughts and patterns of behaviour, and associate themselves with cultures and narratives beyond that very limited scope. Firstly, they typically have more access to information than the general public, more resources available to them as well, place more importance upon the specific issue they’re addressing, and feel more attached to the specific ideas and institutions involved in their narrative dispute. These are powerful factors that will inevitably affect their social development, both in general and in the specific cases of ideas, narratives, organizations, institutions, cultures and their interactions.¹¹⁵ Therefore, in addition to the principles used by Berger as laid out in the literature review, concerning both the general social construction of reality and that specific to certain groups, we

¹¹¹ Ibid, 53-61, 163-180.

¹¹² Ibid, 14-15.

¹¹³ Berger; Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 2.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 10-23.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 76-83.

must utilize concepts tailored to those who orient their lives around ideas: that is, intellectuals (in this case, meant not as any group, such as often done in derogatory fashion, but rather those who spend much of their career and life thinking about, criticizing and spreading ideas).

In their in-depth paper on the subject of the sociology of intellectuals, on both its history and nature, Charles Kurzman and Lynn Owens identify three historical methods of examining these individuals: class-bound, class-less, or class-in-of-themselves.¹¹⁶ The first option has its origins in Marxist thought, and so given this work's dismissal of Marxist dialectics, can be rejected. The third option must also be rejected, given the definition provided earlier, which itself is tailored to the needs of this study, being that it is a widespread examination of thought across many different American institutions. As will become even more clear later during the analysis, the theoreticians being examined did not consider themselves as a single group of intellectuals, and objectively speaking, if this were the case, it is miniscule in terms of importance and thus should be relegated to another aspect of interactive social networks, as described before in explaining the study's approach to cultural levels of analysis. Therefore, the focus must be on the sociological phenomena of intellectuals as something class-less. Building off the work of Weber and Mannheim, Ahmad Sadri identified four categories of intellectuals: other-worldly compared to this-worldly, and paradigm-founders compared to paradigm-followers. That is, while intellectuals are indeed tied to their social context, they are not fully bound by it, and relate to each other and their social groups based upon their position in relation to the narrative. All are contributing, because that is the point, but some are push for more while others seek to add onto the established core material. Some create major ideas, while others carry them or expand upon them. Some think wildly and in the abstract, while others are more concerned with the application of ideas.¹¹⁷ So, sociology of knowledge does meet the first criteria, but this is an alarming fact that when one goes beyond the foundational level of human behaviour, it is required to add more methods which address specific phenomena.

Criteria 2: Nature of Change

How then does this apply to specific groups of people, in this case, collections of intellectuals? Again, we return to Durkheim, who notes that there is a fundamentally dialectical nature to societal progression over time, as explained in his definition of social morphology:

It is known that the constituent parts of every society are themselves societies of a simpler kind. A people is produced by the combination of two or more peoples that have preceded it. If therefore we knew the simplest society that ever existed, in order to make our classification we should only have to follow the way in which

¹¹⁶ Charles Kurzman; Lynn Owens, "The Sociology of Intellectuals", *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 28 (2002), 63-77.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 73-74.

these simple societies joined together and how these new composites are combined.¹¹⁸

However, Durkheim's system had faults, the most critical of which was that it was not fully dialectical. This is because the system was based around "structural functionalism", which treated every social fact as a separate piece that when combined with others formed a social organism. As these social facts involved, interacted and adapted, so too did the organic whole, and any system that involved the interaction of social organisms. This mechanic system analysis misses the critical nature of fluidity to social interaction, and more importantly, to the self-generating, self-evolving nature of ideas.

The realization of this fault led Peter Blau to update Durkheim's functionalism through the examination of "dynamics", and thus giving birth to his version of dialectical sociology.¹¹⁹ At the heart of Blau's system, is the understanding that human activity and thought is not patterned around things in stasis, but rather problems that require solving. This is true in the everyday environment, but even more so in the realms of elites and groups focusing on the debate of ideas. Problems for humans, especially the more they tend toward the abstract, are always reducible to a given dilemma. It is as simple as this: the whole of an idea is all-encompassing, therefore to include another that is not a direct subset of it, is to introduce a fight for influence in the normative functioning of both the individual and group. Therefore, both individuals and groups are constantly waging an internal battle to determine the proper selection, division of labour and economy of resources for ideas in the overall system of belief. This is ever changing, because ideas themselves are never stagnant, and neither is life. Thus, dilemmas evolve alongside ideas, people, groups, institutions, etc. and in turn are influenced by them in a never-ending cycle.¹²⁰

And so, sociology of knowledge does not satisfy the second criteria, because in order to do so, it requires expanding the method far beyond its original focus on the very base level of human behaviour. This is different from the first criteria, because in that case, the idea was to expand and specify the original concept, while in criteria two, the limits of sociology of knowledge and functionalism require external methodological additions.

Criteria 3: Parsimony

Depending on how far one takes sociology of knowledge, the level of parsimony involved will differ, and in every case will not be very satisfactory. If one were simply to begin and end with the fundamental theory, the most one knows is how humans interact with ideas at a very basic level. That is not very useful when trying to apply it to specific cases. As for the specificity provided by those who attempt to narrow down and apply the ideas of sociology of knowledge, it becomes extremely complicated. And that has to do with the highly minute nature of this approach:

¹¹⁸ Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method and Selected Texts on Sociology and its Method* (New York: The Free Press, 2013), 72.

¹¹⁹ Michael A. Weinstein; Deena Weinstein, "Blau's Dialectical Sociology", *Sociological Inquiry*, Vol. 42, No. 2, 173-175.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 176-181.

it breaks down the system to an individual level! It would take forever, and probably not be very revealing, to attempt something so ambitious for the subject matter being considered. Thus, sociology of knowledge does not satisfy the third criteria.

Criteria 4: Competing with Other Ideas

Sociology of knowledge does indeed compete well with other ideas. This is demonstrated by the breadth of literature within this school of thought, and the fact that throughout these works other philosophical and sociological schools are criticized.¹²¹ However, the main issue that is not properly addressed is that of parsimony. There is little to no addressing of this problem within the literature, nor is there any answer to them which is immediately apparent to the author. Still, there is enough to satisfy the fourth criteria.

Observations

Sociology of knowledge, then, only satisfies the first and the fourth criteria. This is because the school of thought focuses too much on the minute aspects of idea development and change. So, in providing a very nuanced explanation for the foundations of human behaviour, it sacrifices the larger picture. Also, there is the issue of going beyond the basic human-to-human interaction and examining the more complex dynamics that occur when one includes the unique attributes of different individuals, cultures, organizations, etc.

¹²¹ See especially the opening chapter of Berger; Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*.

Method 3: Culture

Overview

Despite this contemporary tendency in sociology to understand culture, as well as collective thought in general, as an evolving system of interconnection and interdependence, many social historians and military theorists maintain that a single level of society holds the defining characteristics which drive conceptual development. Some argue that the emphasis should be placed on civilizational culture, others national/strategic culture, and others organizational culture. In this case, emphasizing the civilizational level of culture means that there is something unique to “Western” societies which create a shared military culture to a certain degree.¹²² Some divide Western military history into distinctive phases of development.¹²³ The proponents of 4GW also follow the same line of thinking.¹²⁴ Those emphasizing national or strategic culture argue instead that priority should be given to the uniqueness of a country.¹²⁵ The next level down is organizational or institutional cultural analysis, where emphasis is placed on groups below the strategic or national level.¹²⁶

Criteria 1: Nature of Change

The first thing that must be noted is that any system which claims to be unitary is incompatible with the social language that has been developed in the sections of classification and basic social relations. Therefore, there can be no simple answer that selects one of the competing systems as unequivocally the one, true method. This should not be too controversial, for as noted earlier, most of these theories do not deny the importance of other levels of analysis, but merely emphasize one as the most important of them all. However, in dialectical reasoning, one is not

¹²² Those who emphasize the civilizational level include: John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 1992), xvi, 386-391; Victor Davis Hanson, *Carnage and Culture: Landmark Battles in the Rise of Western Power* (New York: Anchor Books, 2002), 20-23, 233, 270-275; and Max Boot, *War Made New: Weapons, Warriors, and the Making of the Modern World* (New York: Penguin Group, 2007), 13-14.

¹²³ See: Martin Van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 18-62, 224; and Sean McFate, *The New Rules of War: How America Can Win – Against Russia, China, and Other Threats* (New York: William Morrow, 2020), 28-29.

¹²⁴ William S. Lind; Gregory A. Thiele, *4th Generation Warfare Handbook* (Kuovola: Castalia House, 2015), 3-37. Also see: Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone*.

¹²⁵ In this case, the United States. For those who emphasize national or strategic culture, at least when it comes to the study of American military history, they have their origins in the work of Russell F. Weigley. See: Rose Lopez Keravuori, “Lost in Translation: The American Way of War”, *Small Wars Journal* (November 17, 2011).

¹²⁶ For example, there is John Nagl, who identified the culture of the U.S. Army as a non-learning institution, as well as disinclined towards irregular warfare. See: John Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 6, 10-11, 140-142, 198-204, 205-208, 215-223. For a view that emphasizes both continuity and learning in the US military institutions, see: Peter R. Mansoor; Williamson Murray, *The Culture of Military Organizations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 17-20, 33-34, 449, 452-454, 456-458. For the US Army, see especially: Benjamin M. Jensen, *Forging the Sword: Doctrinal Change in the U.S. Army* (Stanford: Stanford Security Studies, 2016).

concerned with hierarchical levels, nor with superseding phenomena over another, but rather fluidity, networked subjects that work equally in tandem. The only emphasis provided is to essential elements of the subject: the *species* and the *genus*. Therefore, in the examination of the data to take place later, emphasis will not be given to any level of analysis, but instead on how in each case the dialectical nature of the situation provides a fuller framework for cultural analysis. As for what exactly entails American military culture at each level of analysis (the U.S. as a part of “Western” civilization/culture, the U.S. national/strategic culture, and the organizational cultures of U.S. Army and U.S.M.C.) these will be scrutinized both by themselves and in relation to a dialectical system for each of them in turn. Also, since this timeframe is the focus of this study, the interpretations offered both by the schools laid out in the literature review, as well as that provided by this work, will be examined in reference only to the historical data given in the fourth chapter. The same will naturally then be applied to any related cultural data which did not come up in that chapter or the literature review which may be considered as relevant to the analysis. To save on time, such new data will be kept to a minimum, and will usually be considered only as extensions to subjects previously discussed.

To begin, an emphasis on the civilizational level of analysis immediately begs the question as to why there is so much debate, controversy and change going on within the civilization in question. Of course, one may respond that the West is culturally bound to internal disruption and criticism due to its promotion of individuality, decentralization, economic competition, etc., but this results in incoherence as it brings into question the validity of focus on civilizational trends when the most important “trend” is to not have them. It is more logical then to take note of trends towards such cultural characteristics, but refer such patterns to the natural development of human thought, being enforced by grand strategic aspects of culture, rather than the other way around. This makes sense since one cannot possibly deny the existence of internal changes and criticism amongst non-Western cultures, only point to the greater prominence of it in the West than in others. Therefore, dialectical frameworks for the development of military thought is a human element, and thus universal, but it is influenced by uniquely Western and American cultural characteristics.

Moreover, an interpretation that closely follows Hanson, Bacevich and their like, or even those irregular warfare enthusiasts who too state the West and America have an obsession with conventional warfare and technology, further begs the question why so much criticism of such an obsession consistently occurs. Now, it is perfectly logical to say that there is some preference occurring, or the existence of well-entrenched doctrines, cultures and traditions, but to exaggerate this to the point of near denial of America’s history of complex military thought (even just since the end of the Cold War) is denial of the facts laid bare.

What then of the next level down, national and/or strategic culture? While this study has no logical criticism that demonstrates any kind of incoherence, as with the last school of thought, there are notable problems with the supposed evidence used by its promoters. Firstly, as noted by Max Boot in his book, *The Savage Wars of Peace*, America has a martial tradition that does not exclusively emphasize conventional warfare. The U.S. Army, Navy and especially Marine Corps, have fought irregular wars during every generation since the founding of the United States. It is only with the question of whether to mobilize the whole society for a particular war, where one may point to a tradition, though rather weak and inconsistent, of preferring conventional warfare. Ironically, despite attempts at higher levels of decision-making to avoid these types of wars, such

as the reforms undertaken after the Vietnam War and especially the Powell Doctrine, America has always fought in and thought intensively about irregular wars and complex military operations in general.¹²⁷ As with the civilizational level, there may be room to say there is a trend in preferring conventional warfare but this is constantly tested, fought against and changing in its fundamental nature and application. This would partly fit the evidence. A better interpretation would be that there is a tendency towards conflict directed towards the particular focus given by the power structure of the whole society, institutions, government, etc., with a trend towards resolving the conflict by applying previous concepts in new ways, adapting old concepts, or synthesizing them in some manner. Sometimes the greater amount of power was held by conventional warfare promoters, sometimes by irregular warfare promoters, sometimes roughly split equally, and sometimes a combination thereof. In each case, the competing side that lost the immediate race to power, did not disappear, but rather reformed itself via integration and thus adaptation, or set itself up as a pure oppositional force, its identity consisting of the exact opposite of the reigning doctrine.

Still, there are other versions of the view that if America had a tendency towards conventional warfare, it changed at some point, but come closer to this study's portrayal of the complexity of the subject. Aspects of this idea can be seen in the arguments made by Donald Stoker, whereas seen in the literature review, he argued that hybrid warfare and other non-conventional systems emerged as a consequence of limited war theory during the Cold War. Can we be content in listening to Beatrice Heuser when she describes the evolution of Western strategy as a matter of escalation, then de-escalation? That is, following explicitly in the footsteps of Edward Rice, Colin McInnes and Rupert Smith, making the case that the West has been forced away from the "Napoleonic paradigm" in strategy and grand strategy since 1945, and especially 1991. Can the development of American military theory be explained as a progression towards total war, then backpedalling away from it once nuclear weapons made such conflicts impossible?¹²⁸ Or, similarly, that like Adrian Lewis claims, the US simply tailored its historical obsession with technology to the specific aspects of each generation? Is hybrid warfare merely a representation of the complexity of current technologies, and ambiguity of their overall relationship to military-civil relations?¹²⁹

The short answer is no, as both these two interpretations only work if the debate started, or at least greatly intensified, after 2003, if not farther into the future. However, this period saw only the increase of an already present conflict. To identify a supposed change in the general mindset and/or policy to a particular factor, technological or otherwise, ignores the nature of how ideas develop. They do not appear out of nowhere, but instead are accumulations of previous ideas, themselves consisting of the same going far back in time. Yes, events and environments specific to a time are important, but they are not something which force ideas to revolve around them. Rather, they revolve around each other. Such is the limitation of viewing the world from a purely

¹²⁷ Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), xii-xx. The Powell Doctrine is named after Colin Powell, 12th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, serving in that position from 1989 to 1993. It was a journalist coined term meant to describe American foreign policy and way of war in the lead up to the Gulf War, where emphasis was given to fighting where there were clear national security interests, high public support and using overwhelming conventional force.

¹²⁸ Beatrice Heuser, *The Evolution of Strategy: Thinking War from Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 444-485.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 325-330.

causal framework, rather than dialectical. Simple causality fails to explain the expansion, adaptation and synthesis of older concepts into new ones. It also takes all life out of smaller aspects to cultural change, and most importantly, the dynamic between different levels of analysis, as they struggle through the complex nature of acting and reacting to both real-world events and intellectual developments. Lastly, it is also, like every other framework that emphasizes a single overarching concept, rather simplistic, and thus cannot possibly capture the full picture of complexity that is the subject matter.

How then should American military culture during the period in question be framed? First, as before, foundational principles must be established. Based on the investigation conducted throughout this study, how can culture in general be described? Hegel gives a satisfactory articulation:

Culture and its laborious emergence from the immediacy of substantial life must always begin by getting acquainted with *general* principles and points of view, so as at first to work to a *general conception*...of the real issue, as well as learning to support and refute the general conception with reasons; then to apprehend the rich and concrete abundance [of life] by differential classification; and finally to give accurate instruction and pass serious judgment upon it.¹³⁰

This is further demonstrated by the nature of social thought and classification itself, which has been established throughout this study to be focused on essential elements and the characteristics which bind these core identities together, thus creating narratives, paradigms and other collective associations relating to human thought. The nature of this process is explained well through the phenomenological concept of “intentionality”. That is, every thought has an “intention”, or direction aimed at a particular subject.¹³¹ In the realm of culture, this can be interpreted as every idea or collection of ideas being focused upon a subject in its core identity, as well as its essential similarities, differences and other connective branches towards other ideas – the same then exists for the social groups or individuals related to such ideas. The actualization of this concept comes in the development of thought that emphasizes its relationship to a particular subject, in this case the nature of war, American warfare and the world from the 1990s to today. Also, these ideas emphasize their relationship with other interpretations of the same subject, often even forming and adapting based on what another groups does or thinks. This trend can clearly be seen within the historical development of hybrid warfare in the fourth chapter. Even if one accepts that American policymakers, analysts, scholars and military officers since 1991 have favoured conventional warfare (which is an assumption that is often made without much hard statistical or doctrinal evidence), it cannot be denied that not only was there an influential minority examining irregular warfare and hybrid warfare, but they had a definite influence upon the development of doctrine, policies and further debates. The same can be said for the subjects of technology, force structure, definitions of war, etc. The only permanent and overarching trend is the push-pull of doctrinal emphasis, resulting in some form of compromise, while some thematic universal is maintained, if

¹³⁰ G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 3.

¹³¹ See: Vittorio Hosle, *A Short History of German Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 176-177, 192-194, 201-210.

not established or adapted for the age in question. Such complexity is the annoying reality of culture when examined in great detail.

The question remains then about how this process emerged, and more importantly, operated. In fact, the cycle of cultural influence, at least where the U.S. is concerned, involves the civilization, nation, and its constituent institutions and individuals addressing some issue, based in the geopolitical environment (real or perceived), and/or the intellectual climate (often with a real or perceived conflict between different interpretations of the world). In this case, it is indeed both, with Americans having to address the end of the Cold War, apparent changes to the world and thus war in general, apparent changes to America, as well as a vibrant intellectual milieu. With the latter in particular, it both fed this need to confront the seeming difficulty of the times and was in turn further invigorated by geopolitical concerns that sustained or increased such desires for reform. Once the conflict between conventional and irregular warfare interpretations of the military intellectual and policy environment was established, it became self-sustaining, forcing its natural synthesis into a new area for debate via a new lens from which interpretive concepts could further compete: hybrid warfare. Therefore, hybrid warfare was a vehicle for this dialectical process as a singular idea, then later its own vast subject in which further debate could flourish. This process was created and sustained through important social networks. So, unless one includes all levels of analysis, emphasis purely on culture does not adequately explain the nature of change occurring. Therefore, any school of thought which emphasizes a single level of analysis, does not satisfy the first criteria.

Criteria 2: Sources of Change

The sources of cultural change are social networks. This is the case whether the change in question is more a top-down process, or more a bottom-up one. Either way, what is required to establish a culture is a small network becoming a large one, because the tenets are being adopted by the majority of the society or institution in question. Thus, there is a transition from individual beliefs or a sub-culture, into a culture proper. As explained by the historian Niall Ferguson of Stanford University's Hoover Institution:

Social networks, then, are the structures that human beings naturally form, beginning with knowledge itself and the various forms of representation we use to communicate it, as well of course as the family trees to which we all necessarily belong, even if only some of us possess detailed genealogical knowledge. Networks include the patterns of settlement, migration and miscegenation that have distributed our species across the world's surface, as well as the myriad cults and crazes we periodically produce with minimal premeditation and leadership. As we shall see, networks come in all shapes and sizes, from exclusive secret societies to open-source movements. Some have a spontaneous, self-organizing character; others are more systematic and structured. All that has happened – beginning with

the invention of written language – is that new technologies have facilitated our innate, ancient urge to network.¹³²

Given our previous findings in the realm of sociology of knowledge, we can disagree with Ferguson on his final point on the emphasis of technology, but simply replace that word with “ideas” and those events that shape them, and the passage works perfectly for our purposes. Cultures change then, when certain social networks gain more power than others, achieving priority in the determining of policy within the group being examined.

However, we cannot logically assert that social networks alone fully account for the sources of cultural change. It is a similar issue to that of classification: is it really sensible to assume that when one social network overtakes another, that it is entering into a vacuum, a *tabula rasa*? This is, of course, is absurd. The previous social network, and those before it, have done much work in shaping things into their image. Therefore, there will always be some “residue” which will influence the new network in power. Moreover, these other networks were not sitting idly by, but also exerting influence, however small. And they too, being a part of the system which was more greatly influenced by a particular network, will themselves be influenced in some way, however small, by the ruling cultural regime. Moreover, where is the model to fully capture the emergence of and transition in power between social networks? Sociology and social history has struggled with this for decades, and one will find dozens of such attempts within the literature. There needs to be a system which unites the “micro” and the “macro”, the isolated picture and the process. No such unifying theory exists, and thus social networks cannot satisfy the second criteria.

Criteria 3: Parsimony

As already noted, there is a logical problem with emphasizing the civilizational level of analysis, as any argument that views change as something culturally consistent, has to explain why such a contradiction can exist. It does not do this. It is simply left without explanation. Moreover, any emphasis on a particular level of analysis leaves open the question why this level is most important, and how the other levels affect the overall system. In the literature, the typical approach is simply to emphasize one level and then leave it there. Also, and most importantly: any attempt to generalize hundreds of years of complexity into neat categories is, in the opinion of the author, seriously flawed and unlikely to adequately classify the information at hand. Any attempt to apply this framework to the full breadth of the evidence laid out in the historical development of hybrid warfare and American military thought in general since 1991, would be extremely difficult. It is only when the system of categorization utilizes classifications which emphasize the fluidity of the information, rather than rigid, “siloeed” areas, that a proper picture becomes laid out. That is, a system which balances the importance of both the “macro” and the “micro”, and does more than simply addresses their existence; rather, it synthesizes their influence together into a functioning system. Therefore, the third criteria is not satisfied either.

¹³² Niall Ferguson, *The Square and the Tower: Networks and Power, from the Freemasons to Facebook* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 17.

Criteria 4: Competing with Other Ideas

This method has a strong history of competing with other ideas. There is a rich historiographical and philosophical debate both within and without this school of thought. However, there is little literature that tackles either the views of dialectics or the problems which have been laid out above. Still, this is enough to state that cultural analysis does indeed satisfy the fourth criteria.

Observations

Despite an extensive breadth of literature, both in terms of general theory and addressing American military history specifically, cultural analysis only satisfies the fourth criteria. This is because of the unexplained and incoherent obsession with one particular level of analysis, as well as framing any investigation along a particular space and time. Put simply, if one wishes to explain how and why ideas change, they cannot simultaneously put a microscope to only a fraction of that total process. This can only result in oversimplification of an inherently complex issue.

Method 4: Dialectics

Overview

Dialectics has its origins in ancient Greek philosophy, notably with the “Socratic Method” as expressed in the works of Plato. The typical format of these philosophical dialogues involved Socrates engaged in debate with others through a rigorous questioning of certain opinions or initial hypotheses. This is the most basic form of dialectical reasoning, wherein the concept in question is severely critiqued until determined to be useless or it is improved, setting the conditions for further analysis that progresses overall knowledge and leads one closer to the answer.¹³³ Key to the Socratic method was finding proper definitions for things, for no discussion could progress without that axiom being first established. Moreover, reduction to the most essential elements allows one to know the true nature of a thing, because it can then be examined in its full, or *ideal* form.¹³⁴ This is important for our investigation, because it notes how dialectics and establishing foundational definitions are deeply intertwined; we still not be considering the Platonic notion of idealistic forms or any similar notion as this is not a treatise on metaphysics, but the reduction towards foundational characteristics will inevitably prove crucial.

Modern dialectics, however, focuses less on a subjective analysis of a particular viewpoint and more on the objective nature of concepts in general, as well as human reasoning itself. Key to this approach to logic is the rejection of purely linear reasoning, instead emphasizing relationships between things and the elimination of incorrect characteristics to an argument while also merging correct ones with the intention of inching towards, yet never reaching the perfect answer.¹³⁵

It was Immanuel Kant who first realized that causality is always by itself incomplete, because both deduction and induction rely on an assumed and unobstructed connection between the mental and the physical realms. Therefore, in order to give meaning to the experiences around us, we must assume the mental world gives such things life, and vice versa. Thus, laws of contradiction (foundational for both dialectical and every other form of logic) require a synthesis between things *a priori* and *a posteriori* (before and after evidence, respectively).¹³⁶ This is the beginning of the modern understanding of dialectics, moving beyond the idea that such a method is just that, but instead an insight into the nature of human thinking and reality itself. However, Kant’s method was merely the starting point for an investigation into metaphysics, rather than logic, so it did not develop much beyond thesis-antithesis-synthesis. That is, dialectical logic starts with the formation of an idea, the thesis, which itself gives rise to its opposite, the antithesis, with the two eventually merging through some compromise into a synthesis, which becomes the new thesis for a new cycle to begin.¹³⁷

¹³³ Grayling, *The History of Philosophy*, 61-63.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 62.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 63.

¹³⁶ Hosle, *A Short History of German Philosophy*, 62-65.

¹³⁷ Michael Allen Fox, *The Accessible Hegel* (London: Humanities Press, 2005), 43.

Next, and most importantly, there is Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel. As noted by Vittorio Hosle, Hegel's dialectical system begins with a profound realization about the ontology (the study of being) first, before epistemology (the study of knowledge):

According to Hegel, the concept of pure being...is self-contradictory, because it signifies indeterminacy but is itself determined by this signification; therefore the concept of determinate being as something determined is progress...what is crucial is the inclusion of the negative in the absolute...a positive concept is followed by a negative concept, and finally by a completing synthetic concept.¹³⁸

Such a conclusion about the fundamental nature of the universe in its abstract naturally leads one to an application to the material, including humanity and its relationship with the world. Where Kant focused his dialectics on the phases of being, Hegel also notes the importance of the spirit of change and the whole process coming together as a whole:

Universal History – belongs to the realm of *Spirit*. The term '*World*', includes both physical and psychical Nature. Physical Nature also plays its part in the World's History, and attention will have to be paid to the fundamental natural relations thus involved. But Spirit, and the course of its development, is our substantial object. Our task does not require us to contemplate Nature as a Rational System in itself...but simply in its relation to *Spirit*. On the stage on which we are observing it – Universal History – Spirit displays itself in its most concrete reality.¹³⁹

We may ignore the inherent spiritualism in Hegel's words, to invoke the core point which he is espousing: dialectical processes are not just snapshots of reality, but phases in an overall process, spurred on not by some external force, but by the nature of being itself. This is very important for understanding the true nature of dialectics, and therefore why Hegel's more detailed analysis is more appropriate for this examination than Kant's much more basic formulation.

Criteria 1: Nature of Change

Hegel's essential argument was that history is dialectical because the world, and humanity, has its basis, whether partly or in totality, in the essentiality of logic and ideas. That logic may be entirely internal in nature, yet one cannot deny it does not exist in some form; nothing that is human or empirical can be stated to be entirely random. Therefore, the world, and humans, and thus the system wherein these two forces shape one another, are themselves shaped by ideas and logic. Moreover, ideas themselves are also interactive, and thus provide an infinite force of momentum

¹³⁸ Ibid, 118-119.

¹³⁹ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 16.

which maintains both its own internal progression, as well as the external world that is humanity and nature. This is the starting point of viewing history through a dialectical lens.

It must be stated that a proper dialectical analysis is sociological. The same is also the case vice versa. Sociology and dialectics together allow for all the other levels of analysis to be joined in an organic system, where each of these methods alone only provide a single aspect of the whole, however accurate its description of that aspect it may be. When one loses sight of this dynamic, active-reactive aspect of the system, not just in the dichotomy of sociology-dialectics, but in every fusion of different analytic devices, what is complex is oversimplified and the whole point is lost. Therefore, it makes perfect sense to maintain the basics of Blau's dialectical sociology. Also, given the premise of classification that the focus be on essential identities and essential elements in the connections between ideas that create "narratives", it makes most sense to retain the classic "Hegelian" dialectic system in its purest form: thesis, antithesis and synthesis.

In using this dialectical system, one has a useful model for explaining the nature of change. This method resolves problems with other schools of thought mentioned earlier, as it captures both the stationary moment in time and the overall process. The same can be said about approaching a subject both in the "micro" and the "macro", while being able to unify the two. No matter how one looks at an issue, so long as they are using dialectics, there will be an explanation for the change occurring. So, dialectics satisfies the first criteria.

Criteria 2: Sources of Change

The sources of change in the dialectical system is what is so fascinating and useful about this particular method: as noted throughout this chapter, one can easily take certain parts of the other methods and apply them here. Ultimately, these methods reveal a dialectical way of approaching the situation. For classification, firstly there is the realization that things are never fully static, but rather fluid, constantly changing. Yet, in using Aristotle's observations about the essential elements of a subject, one can know what something entails at a particular moment in time. The difficulty then is combining those two observations. Dialectics is able to do this, by understanding change to be the combination of essential elements to create something new. For sociology of knowledge, the one can see how this process occurs at the most minute level, with the creation and interaction of ideas. It is culture then that becomes the method for expanding this concept into a bigger picture, introducing levels of analysis. However, there remains a difficulty in combining these minute observations and cultural levels of analysis together into a coherent system. Dialectics again rescues the situation, by providing a method which not only works at every level, but allows them all to come together. Therefore, dialectics also satisfies the second criteria.

Criteria 3: Parsimony

When it comes to parsimony, the main issue to consider is logical in nature: Does dialectics mean the abandonment of the concept of contradiction being inherently illogical? Not necessarily. While indeed dialectics is skeptical of a blanket indictment of contradictory ideas, it also stresses the categorization of phenomena based upon their “absolute”/“ideal” form, and so these must be deemed separate from each other. This means that when the essential characteristics of two phenomena contradict, they can be combined, but the product would be of the same synthetic essential quality. It is only in the process of unification that the opposites are no longer held apart. A is fully contained within A(B), but A is neither identical to A(B), nor to B. For A and B to merge they must first have been connected, yet still separate. The key is reducibility vs irreducibility. If the contradiction is reducible to its constituent, essential elements, then it is workable. If it cannot be, then it is illogical.

Next, there is the possibility that dialectics overly simplifies historical and sociological processes. Now, if one was to completely embrace Hegel’s philosophy of history, or at the very least, take it at face value, this might have some validity. Indeed, almost anything can be interpreted dialectically when looking at the larger picture, then not so much when getting into the minutia. However, the point of this work is not to provide a complete overview of the dialectical method, nor to argue for its adoption at every level of analysis. Rather, it is the use of dialectics to provide a coherent system which addresses all the issues brought up by the other methods, as related to the criteria being used, in the particular subject of American hybrid warfare. The point is to have a method which can simplify the overly complex, while addressing complexity where things appear to be overly simplified. This is what dialectics can, and does achieve, thus satisfying the third criteria.

Criteria 4: Competing with Other Ideas

The beauty of dialectics is that it not so much competes with other ideas, as it synthesizes them by using what works, while ridding itself of what does not. As for responding to criticism, dialectics has a rich history of defending itself. The notion that it promotes logical absurdities by embracing contradictions has already been dealt with, noting that such an accusation is a misunderstanding of what dialectics argues. Being overly simplistic is another accusation that holds little merit, as already addressed earlier. Each method has either strengths which it can use to attack dialectics, but their greatest weakness, being contained to themselves, is not one shared by dialectics. Dialectical philosophy is not something that seeks the sole embracing of itself at the expense of all others, but rather the utilization of dialectics as umbrella, or connective tissue, through which other methods can most thrive. This will be demonstrated in the following chapter, which lays out the history of hybrid warfare’s development in relation to American military history and theory since 1991: by identifying the essential elements of ideas, networks, cultures, subcultures and their interactions, as well as how they ultimately follow a dialectical pattern as time progresses.

Conclusion

	Method 1: Classification	Method 2: Sociology of Knowledge	Method 3: Culture	Method 4: Dialectics
Criteria 1: Nature of Change	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Criteria 2: Sources of Change	No	No	No	Yes
Criteria 3: Parsimony	No	No	No	Yes
Criteria 4: Competing with other ideas	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

Diagram 1: Table of Satisfaction of Criteria 1-4 by Methods 1-4

The findings concerning how each of the methods satisfies the four criteria are laid out in the table above. Method 1, classification, only satisfies the first criteria, explaining the nature of change. Method 2, sociology of knowledge, only satisfies the first criteria, explaining the nature of change, and the fourth criteria, competing with other ideas. Method 3, culture, only satisfies the fourth criteria, competing with other ideas. Only dialectics satisfies all four criteria. Therefore, in investigating this subject matter, the ideal method for satisfying the criteria through this investigation, is a dialectical analysis.

Chapter 4: The History and Development of Hybrid Warfare

In this chapter, a timeline of the origins, creation and development of hybrid warfare will be given. The purpose of this is to not only correct the errors and simplifications of other scholarly timelines used, as laid out at the end of the literature review's first section, but also to identify the data with which the framework must work. Throughout this chapter, it will be demonstrated how the unfolding of events and ideas followed a dialectic pattern. Hybrid warfare is less of a single concept, but an intellectual process which follows the behavioural pattern of the time previous, concurrent, and continuing on to this day. This pattern being one where out of a collective identity, there emerges events and ideas that take this key aspect as their foundation, but then, diverge as a "dialectical "image" – an idea (thesis), with a fundamental concept at its core, is formed, which naturally gives birth to its opposite (antithesis), from the same pool of intellectual and experienced phenomena, and the two contest one another until they merge to form a compromise (synthesis), which becomes the new thesis and thus pool of characteristics, carrying on the cycle without end.¹⁴⁰ How this process occurs in the abstract, and specifically how it occurred within the timeline to be presented, will be explained in further detail in chapter five.

The literature review covered the works which defined the period between the end of the Cold War (1989-1991) and the start of the Global War on Terror (2001), and made it clear that a great deal of debate was had over how to interpret this surprising change to world politics. On one side, there were those who predicted an erosion of conventional military power.¹⁴¹ On the other side, there were those who believed that an apparent RMA would allow American technological supremacy and a new, network-centric operational framework, to tackle any problem it encountered, even unconventional ones.¹⁴²

The End of the Cold War

At this time, what unified major military theorists was a belief in some kind of "transformation" occurring, whether it be at the grand strategic, strategic, tactical levels or combination thereof. While few were so bold as Samuel Huntington in the expressing of the idea there now existed a worldwide "clash of civilizations"¹⁴³ or Francis Fukuyama with the idea that liberal democracy was the "end of history"¹⁴⁴, there was agreement that America's unipolar/hyperpower status meant the cessation of great power politics. Rather, conflict for the immediate future would be defined by asymmetry. The premise was the same, but proponents of RMA and their opponents came to different conclusions based simply on the perceived capabilities of a technological supremacy.¹⁴⁵ In this case we can see the emerging dialectical nature of the

¹⁴⁰ See Chapter 3, pages 44-48.

¹⁴¹ See Chapter 2, pages 17-21.

¹⁴² See Chapter 2, pages 15-17.

¹⁴³ See: Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*.

¹⁴⁴ See: Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

¹⁴⁵ Jeremy Black, *Military Strategy: A Global History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), 240-241.

intellectual climate: conventional and irregular wars are entirely different, to the point of being viewed as actually war or not actually war. For RMA theorists and their successors, it is conventional war that is the dominating feature of conflict and defining conceptual basis of modern conflict, while for 4GW, its like-minded theories and successors, it is the opposite.

Equally important to consider is that the intellectual development emerging from opposite points of absoluteness (on one side, the absolute claim that future war would be primarily conventional, and on the other side, the equally absolute, yet completely oppositional claim that future war would be primarily irregular), tended towards an eventual merger. This is not a fully chronological process, in that passage of time would be completely proportional to the level of synthesis between initially oppositional concepts. The intellectual process is far too complex for that to be the case. Yet, over time from two opposing concepts and their accompanying significant events, to another, one can find a general trend towards synthesis and the overall conceptual framework underlying the newly emerging concept. This is why “proto-syntheses” emerge, as well as the accumulation of merging conceptual aspects in certain ideas which still clearly lean towards one particular side of the oppositional spectrum. Thus, the historical development which serves as context for the literature of an era, demonstrates an intellectual milieu which has an intimate, noncausal relationship with its accompanying body of literature. The same can be said of significant events and experiences.

The defining events that were the end of the Cold War and the Gulf War, both occurring in 1991, added fuel to a fire already emerging within the military-defence community. This was the developing belief of many within the community that purely quantifiable methods for measuring military power were not accurate representations of reality. In early 1988, a debate raged between Joshua Epstein, John Mearsheimer, Barry Posen, Eliot Cohen, James Roche and Barry Watts¹⁴⁶ over how to accurately compare Soviet and American military power in Europe. This debate was built off of the ONA’s previous net assessments which had criticized the tendency within the US Department of Defence to exaggerate Soviet military capability, based simply on Soviet advantages in numbers. Also, by this time, the Committee on Long-Term Integrated Strategy (CILTS) had finished a detailed report indicating that greater American technological sophistication gave them a serious advantage over the Soviets. While each author disagreed on how exactly to compare Soviet and American military power, they all agreed that ratios at face value were irrelevant, and greater priority should be given to what specific technologies could achieve, as well as the effects of maneuver, firepower, organizational culture, doctrine and logistics.¹⁴⁷ This debate had serious consequences. As noted by Krepinevich and Watts, “Almost overnight the issue of *what* key military balances to assess became a genuine question to which there were no immediate or obvious answers”.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Joshua Epstein is a professor at New York University and Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution. John Mearsheimer is a noted theorist of international relations from the University of Chicago, considered the founder of Offensive Realism. Barry Posen is a professor at MIT and a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. At the time of this debate, Eliot Cohen worked at ONA under Andrew Marshall, and would later be Robert E. Osgood Professor of Strategic Studies at John Hopkins University. James Roche was a former member of Marshall’s inner circle at ONA and at the time was a senior executive for Northrop Grumman. Barry Watts was also a former member of the ONA inner circle and later director of the Northrop Grumman Analysis Center.

¹⁴⁷ Krepinevich and Watts, *The Last Warrior*, 175-189.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 193.

Before the Gulf War and fall of the Soviet Union, Marshall and Krepinevich were positing that there was some kind of military revolution occurring.¹⁴⁹ As already noted in the literature review, at this point came the first proponents of 4GW.¹⁵⁰ The important events of 1991 did not start the debate, but gave it a great amount of impetus. However, this debate would have little effect on policymaking during the 1990s, since the Clinton Administration mostly concerned itself with peacekeeping and limited responses to terrorism. The Administration viewed RMA as useless for the peacekeeping operations being conducted in Somalia and former Yugoslavia, as well as not concerned enough with “near-term” threats. Also, the more extreme proponents of RMA ran into problems with senior military officers. The majority of the US military leadership were supportive of the idea that technology could give America unprecedented conventional dominance but were skeptical about strategic or grand strategic changes which broke from the Powell Doctrine. In fact, many were of the belief that a military revolution had already occurred, and so the Gulf War was a demonstration of a perfect blueprint for victory in the new era.¹⁵¹ This is why it is important that one understands the combination of event and intellectual context combining together to force change; there was still an interregnum between 1991’s two significant events (the Gulf War and end of the Cold War) and the next to come (9/11).

Still, the development towards a merging of concepts was subtly occurring. A similar logic to Hoffman’s eventual formulation of hybrid warfare can be found in the Krepinevich’s foundational report on RMA, *The Military-Technical Revolution: A Preliminary Assessment*. Therein, Krepinevich argues that in response to growing US conventional dominance, adversaries will be forced to blur the lines between war and peace, so as both to attrition America and avoid a large-scale intervention within the battlespace. A “Streetfighter State” would achieve this by using a combination of Cold War-era technology and methods usually associated with insurgencies. This strategy would also include terrorism and subversion.¹⁵² This idea was not a singular phenomenon, as ‘Unrestricted’ Warfare involved the blurring of the lines between war and peace.¹⁵³ Moreover, the Tofflers had offered a system for the synergizing of the opposing forces of irregular-centric and conventional-centric frameworks.¹⁵⁴ However, it would be with ‘compound warfare’ and ‘three-block war’ that this emerging synthesis becomes the most apparent in hindsight.¹⁵⁵ ‘Compound warfare’ is essentially a precursor to hybrid warfare at the strategic level, while ‘three-block war’ was the same for the tactical level.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 193-197.

¹⁵⁰ See Chapter 2, pages 15-16.

¹⁵¹ Krepinevich and Watts, *The Last Warrior*, 213-219.

¹⁵² Krepinevich, *The Military-Technical Revolution*, 57.

¹⁵³ See Chapter 2, pages 18-19.

¹⁵⁴ See Chapter 2, page 17.

¹⁵⁵ See Chapter 2, pages 19-20.

9/11 and the Global War on Terror

The intellectual milieu was ready to be accelerated into its next evolutionary stage by a critical moment which would spark serious policymaking changes. That critical moment was the September 11 terrorist attacks, which led to the US-led Global War on Terror.¹⁵⁶ The discussion within military and defence circles quickly became radicalized since terrorists had achieved something thought extremely unlikely, if even possible. Terrorists, operating from across the globe, had struck at the economic and moral heart of America, causing hundreds of casualties and creating a perceived threat of identical attacks becoming a regular event if the enemy was not crushed soon. There was also a fear that terrorists could acquire nuclear weapons and other types of WMDs, further allowing supposedly irregular opponents to deal conventional, or even total, level damage to the West. So, alongside the perceived notion of some kind of military revolution occurring, there was a growing sense that irregular enemies were no longer limited to a specific geographic area, nor to irregular methods, meaning one could not simply counter them by opting out of irregular wars. There was also an ideological component to the grand strategic situation which was deemed critical: neo-conservatism saw the previous Clinton Administration's limited actions against international terrorism as too weak and not getting to the heart of the issue, instability, radicalism and authoritarianism in the states harboring terrorists. As a result, methods were deemed inadequate if they were limited too much geographically or in terms of conventional military resources or if they did not lead to democratization overseas. Thus, even an irregular and asymmetric conflict could be considered total in nature. Experts and officials still disagreed on whether conventional warfare in the form of a RMA transformed system could solve the dilemma, but there was no longer a definite distinction between conventional and irregular scenarios in the minds of most military thinkers.¹⁵⁷

Meanwhile, an internal debate within the US military was being waged. Most favoured conventional warfare akin to the 1991 Gulf War (only fighting conventional wars, wherein there would be a large buildup, followed by a long air campaign, and then short, decisive land campaign – championed by former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Colin Powell, who later served as Secretary of State in the George W. Bush Administration). A minority sought a “transformation” of the military much like an RMA (championed by Andrew Marshall, Director of the Office of Net Assessment, and later by Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld and CENTCOM Commander General Tommy Franks), and there was an even smaller minority who wanted to focus on Counterinsurgency (COIN) and irregular warfare in general (most prominent of these were US Army officers Major General David Petraeus and his protégé, Lt. Colonel John Nagl). The first group, saw the wisest response to changes in the international order to be to employ the U.S.’s

¹⁵⁶ For more information on the development of American military thought and policy during the Bush Presidency, see: John Bew, *The New Makers of Modern Strategy: From the Ancient World to the Digital Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023), 869-926; Woodward, *Bush at War*; Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004); and Bob Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007).

¹⁵⁷ William C. Martel, *Victory in War: Foundations of Modern Military Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 225-230. Also see: Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002), 7, 20, 30-39, 188, 278. For an in-depth explanation and critique of the political aspects of this intellectual climate, see Bacevich's *The Limits of Power* and *Washington Rules*.

comparative advantage: near-peer conventional wars that were domestically popular. The second group believed that irregular threats were not something that could be ignored, but shared fears of getting mired in nation-building, and so sought ways to defeat irregular opponents through conventional means. The last group thought it foolish and therefore unlikely for America's enemies to fight them in a manner in which they would surely be defeated (conventional warfare), and were skeptical of conventional methods for dealing with irregular threats, especially insurgencies. Therefore, they promoted counterinsurgency and other forms of stability operations.¹⁵⁸

Even before Operation Enduring Freedom - the American campaign to overthrow the Taliban in 2001 - the Bush Administration had already made it clear that they were using a grand strategic framework that drastically differed from that of the Gulf War a decade earlier. It was believed that in order to ensure international terrorism could no longer threaten the security and interests of the US, more would have to be done than simply defeating the terrorists and their state sponsors on the battlefield. The region from which they emerged would need to be transformed so that their like could never arise again. Transformed that is, into democracies, and so (it was believed) unlikely to harbor terrorism or ill will toward America. While conventional warfare could possibly be the means by which this new paradigm could be brought about, there was no mistake about the long, difficult and complex road ahead.¹⁵⁹ As attributed to the Administration:

“We will direct every resource at our command – every means of diplomacy, every tool of influence, and every necessary weapon of war – to the disruption and defeat of the global terror network.” Policymakers in the administration called this a “total war on terrorism”. From the earliest planning stages, the Bush administration presented the attacks against the Taliban and al-Qaeda as the beginning of a long-term war against terrorism and the states that sponsor it. The duration of U.S. strategy was evident when President Bush told Congress, “This war will not be like the war against Iraq a decade ago, with its decisive liberation of territory and its swift conclusion. It will not look like the air war above Kosovo two years ago, where no ground troops were used and not a single American was lost in combat. He emphasized that the U.S. “...Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have seen.”¹⁶⁰

In hindsight then, it should not be surprising that Operation Enduring Freedom, witnessed what many considered fusions of conventional and irregular warfare. First, the enemy were a terrorist organization, government, military and militia all at once, while America's allies, the Northern Alliance, had similar characteristics. The Taliban also fought alongside Al Qaeda, which while an international terrorist organization, fought on the ground in both a conventional and irregular manner. As for the American strategy, it involved their sophisticated air power and special forces

¹⁵⁸ See Kaplan, *The Insurgents*.

¹⁵⁹ Martel, *Victory in War*, 230-231. Also see: Woodward, *Bush at War*, 62, 96, 99, 106-108, 121, 135-137, 228, 257-259, 268, 276, 282-286, 321-322.

¹⁶⁰ Martel, *Victory in War*, 231. Also see: Woodward, *Bush at War*, 108. For original source, see: <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>

working alongside the Northern Alliance, with the latter forming the backbone of the ground forces. The quick conventional victory which was achieved against the Taliban made many within the US defence and military community believe this fusion of traditional ground capability and advanced air power alongside special forces could be an indicator on the trend which was developing in modern warfare. Still, it was acknowledged from the start that America would have to use its military power to rebuild and reshape Afghanistan to fit their grand strategic interests.¹⁶¹ In fact, the American government claimed the battlespace was more akin to a “guerrilla struggle” than conventional warfare.¹⁶² Therefore, the atmosphere was witnessing a fusion of ideas and systems, even if the people involved were not completely aware of it. There was even a concept created from these experiences which would influence debates to come, called “the Afghan Model”, so named by Stephen Biddle. The idea was essentially to combine special forces, local ground troops and air power in a fused campaign.¹⁶³

Similarly, even with a far more conventional campaign in Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, there was not to be simply a replaying of events in 1991. Instead of a lengthy build up and air campaign followed by a short ground action, the intent was to apply the concepts developed in a 1996 study titled *Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance*,¹⁶⁴ which argued that a fast-paced, overwhelming integrated air-ground campaign could destroy the enemy’s will, leading to a sweeping aside of enemy forces on the path to Baghdad. Coalition forces were meant to move at an incredible pace, constantly adapting and keeping the enemy off-balance, rather than following a massive “chessboard”-like progression. With the enemy’s rear areas and morale devastated, coalition forces could from the outset seize and then maintain the initiative. Most importantly was the emphasis on minimizing American casualties and there was even a desire to avoid both civilian deaths as well as hatred from the local population. It was hoped that the Iraqi population would lose faith in the Hussein regime, and in the best scenario, even rise up to overthrow the enemy and support US ground forces.¹⁶⁵ There was also the intention of using far less troops and vehicles in the prosecution of the campaign, compared to the Gulf War of 1991. Originally, the Pentagon had planned for a several-month long build up of half a million men and several thousand vehicles (tanks, aircraft, artillery, logistical equipment, etc.). The Bush Administration felt that a prolonged campaign (even wherein actual fighting time was short, such as in the Gulf War) would decrease deterrence. So, the Pentagon and CENTCOM decided to use around 400,000 ground troops (with only 100,000 spearheading the invasion), compared to the initial plan for 500,000 and around 700,000 during the Gulf War. Speed and the shock of overwhelming firepower, it was believed, would make up for the difference by devastating the Iraqis psychologically.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶¹ Martel, *Victory in War*, 232-242.

¹⁶² Ibid, 236.

¹⁶³ See: Stephen D. Biddle, “Allies, Airpower, and Modern Warfare: The Afghan Model in Afghanistan and Iraq”, *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Winter, 2005/2006), 161-176; Gerard Laborie, “The Afghan Model More Than 10 Years Later”, *ASPJ Africa and Francophonie* (3rd Quarter, 2013), 49-51.

¹⁶⁴ Harlan K. Ullman and James P. Wade, *Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance* (Grandview Heights: Legare Street Press, 2022).

¹⁶⁵ Martel, *Victory in War*, 248-251.

¹⁶⁶ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 24-26, 35-44, 53-64, 75-84, 96-103, 120-124, 133-138, 170-174, 231-236, 260-269, 322-332.

Moreover, it was recognized by the American leadership that ground operations in Iraq would involve uniformed soldiers, irregular combatants and even radical aspects of the civilian population. Also important to note is the 2002 creation of the Office for Force Transformation by US secretary of defence Donald Rumsfeld, which, along with the publication of Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*, which emphasized “Full-Spectrum Operations”, “Network-Centric Warfare” and “Effects-Based Operations/Effects-Based Approach to Operations (EBAO) in both doctrine as well as plans for future restructuring of the armed forces (the army especially).¹⁶⁷ There was also serious debate about whether to apply these concepts or the “Afghan Model” to Iraq, with emphasis on the former being chosen, but the latter still applied in Iraqi Kurdistan.¹⁶⁸

Then, with the unwanted stability operations occurring in the aftermath of the conventional campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as a truly global war on terror, came the 2005 US National Defence Strategy. This document, written by Donald Rumsfeld, heavily influenced Hoffman, and one can see why. It categorizes threats against US interests as falling into one of three categories: conventional, irregular, or “catastrophic” (the use of WMDs). The truly interesting aspect of this document is that it mentions the fact that future adversaries may combine two or even all of these elements together to be more effective in combating the US.¹⁶⁹ Fridman states that this is simply a continuation of RMA theory on the conventional side, and 4GW on the irregular side, and thus not the foundational text for hybrid warfare which Hoffman thought it was.¹⁷⁰ However, this is simply not the case. To not just emphasize the importance of irregular warfare, but separate it from conventional warfare, was a departure from RMA as it existed under the George W. Bush Administration: that is, tackling irregular threats through conventional means. As for 4GW, this document is far removed from this school of thought and is better explained as the merging of radical extremes over time. This shift toward irregular warfare, and subsequent merging of ideas, is further demonstrated by the collected essays found in *Rethinking the Principles of War*.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ Jordan, Kiras, Lonsdale, Speller, Tuck and Walton, *Understanding Modern Warfare*, 137-140. For network-centric warfare, see: William A. Owens, “The Emerging U.S. System-of-Systems”, Strategic Forum: Institute for National Strategic Studies (February, 1996); and David S. Alberts, John Garstka, and Frederick P. Stein, *Network Centric Warfare: The Face of Battle in the 21st Century* (Washington, D.C.: National Defence University Press, 1999). For EBAO, see: David A. Deptula, *Effects-Based Operations: Change in the Nature of Warfare* (Aerospace Education Foundation, February, 2001), especially pages 3-7, where Deptula distinguishes between what he calls Parallel vs Sequential Warfare, the latter being layered targeting of enemy capabilities in a step-by-step process (you defeat the first, you can move on to the second, then third, etc.) and the former being instead the targeting of key objectives which simultaneously affects the entire political-military system.

¹⁶⁸ Biddle, “Allies, Airpower, and Modern Warfare”, 166-175; Laborie, “The Afghan Model More Than 10 Years Later”, 51-53.

¹⁶⁹ Donald Rumsfeld, *The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: March, 2005).

¹⁷⁰ Fridman, *Russian Hybrid Warfare*, 28.

¹⁷¹ See Chapter 2, page 20.

Hoffman's 'Hybrid Warfare'

It was from this milieu of ideas responding to the doctrine and events of the post-Cold War and post-9/11 environment came the first form of hybrid warfare, as articulated by Hoffman. However, it can be emphasized that this early version was clearly an expansion upon “compound warfare” and “three-block war”, while also merging earlier competing concepts into a more unified whole and thus providing a simpler framework for explaining events that had been confusing American military and civilian leadership. This becomes more apparent when one looks at Hoffman’s eagerness to examine the 2006 Lebanon War along the lines of his hybrid warfare theories. Moving beyond pure theory, as in his earlier formulations, Hoffman focuses on largely tactical and operational phenomena, spending many pages giving in-depth analysis of how hybridization occurs within the urban battlefield and in the employment of Hezbollah ground forces.¹⁷² This is not only in contrast to this earlier abstract, theoretical approach, but also later versions of hybrid warfare that almost always include or even focus on strategic-operational aspects of a given conflict or campaign.

These developments provided the backdrop for Hoffman’s longer and more in-depth examination of hybrid warfare in his 2007 work, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*. Hoffman began by building off of the 2005 US National Defence Strategy (NDS), which moved away from earlier doctrinal emphasis on the RMA and instead noted the importance of irregular, criminal and transnational threats to American interests.¹⁷³ Hoffman then criticizes the current American military and analyst thinking by beginning their works with a false dilemma: a supposed rise of irregular warfare and thus decline of conventional warfare, the result of some abstract transformation occurring. Rather, for Hoffman, it was recent responses to American and other Western-style domination of the conventional battlespace that forced their enemies to resort to other measures, but irregular methods or even a separation of modes of conflict were no longer the most efficient strategy for attacking such conventional domination. Instead, blurring the lines between irregular and conventional, legal and illegal, state and nonstate, had become the most efficient. Thus, the modern world opened up the full range of military capabilities to combatants typically constrained within purely irregular means of achieving victory in a vastly asymmetric environment. Hoffman then criticizes the 2006 Quadrennial Defence Review for understanding the enemies of the US to be campaign-based and sophisticated opponents, but not taking the logic to its conclusion with the inevitable emergence of hybrid warfare. Lastly, Hoffman argues that the Marine Corps, with their culture and history tied both to conventional and irregular warfare, should lead the battle to diagnose and combat this issue.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Frank G. Hoffman, “Lessons from Lebanon: Hezbollah and Hybrid Wars”, *Foreign Policy Research Institute* (August 2, 2006).

¹⁷³ See: Rumsfeld, *The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*. A brief explanation of this document and its connection to Hoffman’s initial formulation of hybrid warfare can be found in Fridman, *Russian Hybrid Warfare*, 27-29.

¹⁷⁴ Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century*, 7-14. Also, as with the point made about Unrestricted Warfare, it should be noted that Hoffman was from the Marine Corps, so he is heavily biased in favour of that branch and their particular military culture. For original source, see: Donald Rumsfeld, *Quadrennial Defence Review Report* (Washington, D.C.: Pentagon, February 6, 2006).

The onset of the 2010s saw some theorists join Andrew Bacevich in a trend towards disillusionment with the whole idea that any war could be won by the West if only the right strategy was found. For example, Gian Gentile, in his book, *Wrong Turn*, decried the supposed obsession with COIN theories in the US military and civilian leadership. According to Gentile, Malaya, the classic example of a correct COIN conflict, was won with traditional use of firepower than a revolutionary small wars doctrine.¹⁷⁵ He also argues that Vietnam saw little success with COIN, and that the war was largely unwinnable.¹⁷⁶ The same is then stated in terms of Iraq and Afghanistan, with Gentile arguing that COIN and other like-minded ideas simply served the purpose of American leadership justifying mission creep to themselves.¹⁷⁷ As a result, Gentile believes that the real lesson of choosing the right wars is being lost by the West.¹⁷⁸ While Gentile was looking at COIN specifically, and did not address hybrid warfare, we can see this as part of an overall pattern of several authors pushing back against the dominant theme in the intellectual conflict, except in a more radical fashion. This why we see several publications to that effect from Bacevich, Stoker and Strachan during this time, each of which involve the building from previous concepts either stated by themselves or others, expanded to include both hybrid warfare and the perceived intellectual domination of irregular war promoters that supposedly birthed it.¹⁷⁹

Thus, we can see simultaneously a growing separation in the radical sections of the competing sides of the intellectual debate, but also in the middle a merging of concepts slowly occurring over the years. At first, conventional war enthusiasts were the dominant force, but then this switched to those promoting irregular warfare, while increasing numbers of concepts incorporated ideas from both sides of the earlier climate. Then, the winds of change came once again. Towards the second half of the two decade-long Global War on Terror, a shift in strategic and grand strategic thinking occurred, thanks to events in the area of international relations: it appeared that both Russia and China were catching up to America, and as a result, became more aggressive in their designs for recognition as great powers and a regional sphere of influence. During the 2010s, there appeared a definite shift in attitude within American military and defence thought, reflecting the attitudes of both popular imagination and policymaking (while in turn further influencing these groups themselves), toward a return to great power politics.¹⁸⁰

However, the current military-cultural regime (that is, those promoting irregular warfare, having overtaken those promoting conventional warfare) was not ready to give up its hold on power, especially since America and much of the West were still embroiled in both Afghanistan and the Global War on Terror. The irregular warfare enthusiasts had gone from insurgents to brief rulers of the system, and so after decades of fighting against the supposed organizational predisposition towards near-peer, conventional conflict in America, were not ready to give up all they had gained. Thus, an internal struggle ensued for control over the future direction of American

¹⁷⁵ Gian Gentile, *Wrong Turn: America's Deadly Embrace of Counterinsurgency* (New York: The NewPress, 2013), 35-58.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 59-84.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 85-135.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 137-141. Bacevich posited that America should be very cautious about getting into any kind of war, especially one that is non-conventional, because they are likely to result in 'mission creep' and are unlikely to be popular. Gentile makes a similar argument.

¹⁷⁹ See Chapter 2, pages 6-7, 14-15.

¹⁸⁰ Black, *Military Strategy: A Global History*, 241-243.

military doctrine and theoretical underpinnings.¹⁸¹ It should not be a surprise, then, that the ruling Obama Administration, seemed to vacillate between emphasizing a return to great power politics (examples include the increased alarm at the aggression and apparent military modernization of Russia, and the so-called “pivot to Asia” in order to contain the rise of China) and victoriously concluding the War on Terror (examples include the assassination of Osama Bin Laden and the “surge” in Afghanistan).¹⁸² This led to what one at first glance may interpret as confusion in how to articulate doctrine or predict future operations, but with context from the earlier years as provided above, can understand for what it truly was: a slow, contested, synthesis into a unified system between previously competing ideas, however ambiguous and muddled it was at the beginning (as is so often the case before an institutional concept or culture can be fully articulated through a systematic doctrine). RMA, transformation and similar terminology had lost its previous popularity in the defence and military community by 2009, and the Office for Force Transformation had been shut down since 2006. However, they were not necessarily abandoned, but toned down and many of their core precepts made subsets to new concepts; for example, in step with trends also shown by India and Russia at the time, the mid-2000s to early 2010s saw doctrine and future structure planning focus on capability in all battlefield environments, while also improving capability in newer areas of war and conflict such as the cyber and space domains.¹⁸³

The same mentality existed within the military and government community of the United States, as the 2010s have seen an increased emphasis on “flexibility”; that is, creating and maintaining a military prepared to fight and win in almost any theatre or strategic environment. Whether this means a hybridization of the armed forces and the situation being deployed into, or simply a readiness to attempt conventional or counterinsurgency warfare depending upon what is required, varies with the source being addressed. However, what is clear is that there is a widespread rejection that one unified theory of war can be used to form doctrine in order to prepare for future conflicts. Moreover, this same majority views “complexity” as being a key characteristic of both the conflicts of the 2010s and 2020s, as well as those to come in the next decade, if not more. There is also some recognition that even if the United States has struggled with irregular warfare in terms of its record and strategic culture, fighting complex wars or at least projecting power into complex scenarios is very much a part of the American military and grand strategic tradition. In October 2011, the US Army Doctrine Publication 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, published by the Headquarters of the Department of the Army, stated that “[T]he diverse and dynamic combination of regular forces, irregular forces, terrorist forces, criminal elements, or a combination of these forces and elements all unified to achieve mutually benefitting effects”.¹⁸⁴

The pendulum-like nature of US doctrine formulation during his period had the nation’s leadership stating that America was done with large-scale counterinsurgency and nation-building for the immediate future: in 2011 Secretary of Defence Robert Gates essentially declared any future large land power engagement in Asia, the Middle East or Africa insane; in 2012 the Defence

¹⁸¹ Kaplan, *The Insurgents*, 348-365.

¹⁸² Black, *Military Strategy: A Global History*, 243-245.

¹⁸³ Jordan, Kiras, Lonsdale, Speller, Tuck and Walton, *Understanding Modern Warfare*, 140-141.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 135. For original document, see: Headquarters of the Department of the Army, *US Army Doctrine Publication 3-0: Unified Land Operations* (Washington: Department of the Army, 2011).

Strategic Guidance stated that the US would no longer be able of adequate size required for extended and resource-taxing stability operations; in 2013 Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Admiral James Winnefeld stated that the American people did not desire future wars to be long, isolated from allies and the international community, or fought for reasons not viewed as essential to American security; and lastly, in 2014, President Obama declared that large-scale land power stability operations overseas were a thing of the past.¹⁸⁵ However, this mentality did not last long. The proponents of irregular warfare did not simply roll over and die. In fact, it was evolving alongside the school of conventional warfare. For example, similar to contemporary arguments made by David Petraeus and H.R. McMaster, the US Army 2014 Operating Concept, titled “Win a Complex World”, stated that the US would need to be prepared to fight in any kind of strategic or tactical environment. The modern soldier, therefore, was to be capable in any type of fighting, thus conventional, irregular and anything in between. Along with the unpredictable and “complex” nature of 21st century international conflict, the strange manner in which US forces conducted most of their operations overseas was noted: that is, they were a combination of preparation for large-scale conflict, conventional or irregular *and* limited activities involving nearly every aspect of military means simultaneously.¹⁸⁶

This occurred in conjunction with the resurgence and updating of the concept of hybrid warfare after the 2014 invasion of Ukraine by Russia, resulting in the annexation of Crimea and beginning of the war in the Donbass. Immediately, a rift emerged between those who saw Russian actions as a new, creative application of the original hybrid warfare as formulated by Mattis and Hoffman, and those who saw an expansion of hybridization occurring beyond military strategy and into the political domain. Thus, terms such as “political war” emerged and began to be discussed in detail. It is not a coincidence that only a year later, US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), would submit a white paper introducing the concept of “grey zone” into the hybrid warfare literature.¹⁸⁷ While Galeotti would later repudiate his earlier views, at the time he made important contributions to the overall discussion. First, he argued that “true hybrid war” was, in the case of Russia, a subset of a larger “political war”.¹⁸⁸ Galeotti argued that Russia had embraced a new way of war that accepted the blurring of the lines between peace and war, as well as traditional distinctions between military and non-military phenomena. Galeotti named this the “Gerasimov Doctrine”, after Russia’s Chief of the General Staff, Valery Gerasimov.¹⁸⁹ Since then, Galeotti has further emphasized his initial warnings about reading too much into this Russian concept and its ongoing development.¹⁹⁰ Ofer Fridman and Oscar Johnson also believe that the popularity of applying terms such as “hybrid warfare” and “grey zone” to the Annexation of Crimea, War in the Donbass, and Russian policy in general, led to an incorrect analysis of Russian

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 138-139.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 141.

¹⁸⁷ See: United States Special Operations Command, *White Paper: The Gray Zone*.

¹⁸⁸ Those familiar with the adage from Clausewitz that “war is a continuation of politics by other means” may be confused here, as they may state that all wars are by definition political. This term here however is referring to the concept which emerged on both sides during the Cold War, also known as “Active Measures”, which essentially was how to manipulate information during a proxy war. For an in-depth history and analysis of this concept, see: Thomas Rid, *Active Measures: The Secret History of Disinformation and Political Warfare* (New York: Picador, 2020).

¹⁸⁹ Mark Galeotti, “The ‘Gerasimov Doctrine’ and Russian Non-Linear Warfare”, *In Moscow’s Shadows*, July 6, 2014.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. Also see: “I’m Sorry for Creating the ‘Gerasimov Doctrine’”, *Foreign Policy*, March 5, 2018.

beliefs, creating a chaotic environment for conceptual development, as these terms began to be applied to any form of interstate aggression.¹⁹¹

However, given the historical development as already laid out, it becomes apparent that simple paranoia and misinterpretations are not the only factors at play in the expansion of hybrid warfare's characteristics. Moreover, it was not the main factor; that must be identified as the intellectual milieu that set it up for transformation once the crises in Eastern Europe in 2014 came along to spark it. As already noted, the development of hybrid warfare did not remain static with Hoffman and Mattis, but was quickly added to by several authors.

While seemingly in line with the works of Hoffman, it can be seen how the doctrinal developments of the mid-2000s within the US were affecting hybrid warfare. While Fridman argues this was due to the nature of NATO, as it was an alliance and thus predisposed to consider the "bigger picture",¹⁹² one cannot deny the trends that already been occurring for some time at that point. For Fridman, the main issue is the increased concerns of NATO coinciding with those of the US and the Balkans, as well as, of course, increased aggression from Russia that appeared to escape the traditional interpretation.¹⁹³ However, even if one takes this at face value, it would be simpler to acknowledge these factors as political impetus for the application of an intellectual milieu prepared for just this occasion for over a decade. Such a transformation of hybrid warfare from a constrained strategic-downward concept to a more open, strategic-upward one did not occur suddenly, definitively and because it was unconsciously wished by the policymakers, analysts and military officers of the time. Instead, it was a slow development over time that finally reached its apex with the Crimean Crisis and the subsequent belief that hybrid warfare could explain it, and then many other things troubling American and NATO thinkers.

Since those pivotal events in 2014, American hybrid warfare literature has exploded in popularity. It began with American, NATO and Balkan confusion over how to interpret Russian actions and its subsequent success both in seizing Crimea and causing war in the Donbass against Russian separatists. The first, and critical point, to come up in NATO discussion of the events was the admission that special forces, economic action, large-scale deception, ambiguity, complexity, legal manipulation and other such non-military phenomena, would and did play prominently in Russian operations in Ukraine. It was only afterwards that the term hybrid warfare began being applied to this established reality, mainly in the spring and summer of 2014.¹⁹⁴

From 2014 to 2016, much of the emerging literature on hybrid warfare as it related to Russia and its actions in Ukraine came from Balkan authors. In short, these focused on expanding and reformulating the original concepts of hybrid warfare to fit within the new international and military context that was perceived to exist due to the supposed reemergence of Russia in great power politics and their supposedly new methods of warfighting. As noted by both Fridman and Michael Kofman, since 2015 and especially since 2016, the hybrid warfare and "grey zone" literature developed a system of identifying a key aspect of Russian geopolitical activity, then realizing that as a result it needed to be incorporated into the new hybrid warfare framework. For

¹⁹¹ Johnson, *The Russian Understanding of War*, 9-17.

¹⁹² Ibid, 104.

¹⁹³ Ibid, 105-125.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 108-109.

example, this occurred with Russian emphasis on “information warfare”, “cyber warfare” “lawfare” and “political warfare”, or at least the West’s perception that these were critical to these Russian policies.¹⁹⁵ At this time, and ever since, Fridman concludes that the popularity and further conceptual expansion of hybrid warfare and accompanying terminology (grey zone, hybrid threat, political warfare, etc.) were spurred on by the perceived threat of a resurgent Russia and belief that Russia had a new, unique strategy for taking advantage of all their elements of national power and the transforming effects of the 21st century.¹⁹⁶

Also, it has been noted by Gregory F. Treverton, who was then serving as Chair of the US National Intelligence Council (NIC), from 2012 to 2015, the American defence and intelligence communities were extremely concerned with a rise in cyber threats. The majority of these came from Russia, but many also of course came from China, North Korea and individual hackers. This got policymakers thinking that interstate threats were more than simply military or diplomatic in nature.¹⁹⁷ Then came the unprecedented Russian interference in the 2016 US Presidential Election, which according to Treverton, alarmed him and his colleagues, confirming their suspicions that cyber warfare was a new and devastating form of conflict. Treverton then started thinking of geopolitical contests as indeed conflicts, where both sides employed a “whole of government approach”.¹⁹⁸ This is why Treverton associates cyber with hybrid warfare, and describes both as “war by other means”.¹⁹⁹ The development of cyber warfare and its popularity amongst both theorists and policymakers did not explode after 2014, but rather saw a surge from an already increasing forcefulness that traces back to the early 2000s. Cyber warfare too had been viewed first as a subset of wars (i.e. the information domain and/or sabotage), but then evolved to be considered something grand strategic in nature. Where 2014 matters most as point of paradigm shift, is the merging of cyber and hybrid warfare into one by many theorists. Before 2014, it was rare, if even considered, but afterwards it became more popular to view the two being somehow in tandem.²⁰⁰ So, it can be seen how the expansion of conceptualizations surrounding hybrid warfare was slowly occurring, being influenced by, but not dependent upon, significant events such as the 2014 Ukrainian crisis. Moreover, this is yet another example of the merging of concepts: both hybrid warfare and cyber warfare had transcended purely military affairs, allowing them to accommodate the other within their larger frameworks.

Lastly, it should be briefly noted that Eastern Europe was not the only subject to be swept up in the application of hybrid warfare to the seemingly new geopolitical realities. In December 2014, an article appeared in *Small Wars Journal*, written by Scott Jasper, and Scott Moreland, who both worked at the Naval Postgraduate School at the time, titled “The Islamic State is a Hybrid Threat: Why Does That Matter”. This article resulted in several extensive comments from readers

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 114-118. Also see: Michael Kofman, “Russian Hybrid Warfare and Other Dark Arts”, *War on the Rocks*, (March 11, 2016).

¹⁹⁶ Fridman, *Russian Hybrid Warfare*, 118-125.

¹⁹⁷ Weissmann, Nilsson, Palmertz and Thunholm, *Hybrid Warfare*, 37-40.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 40-43.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 43.

²⁰⁰ For the history and evolution of cyber warfare, see: Fred Kaplan, *Dark Territory: The Secret History of Cyber War*, Reprint Edition (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017).

of the journal, so therefore garnered at least some interest from the community at the time.²⁰¹ In October 2015, an article was published for the *Institut für Strategie-Politik-und Wirtschaftsberatung* (ISPSW) titled “The New Colour of War – Hybrid Warfare and Partnerships” by Ralph D. Thiele, who is German but has worked with NATO throughout his military and civilian career, and is extensively read in the US.²⁰² This article argues that there were two types of hybrid warfare occurring at the time: a “Russian model” and an “ISIS model”.²⁰³ In subsequent years, hybrid warfare has also been applied to China several times over.²⁰⁴ It is within this context that can be witnessed a return to “militarization” of hybridization concepts, as the focus is more on how the all-encompassing nature of these threats can be operationalized in a specific battlespace, such as a future war with China in Taiwan or the South China Sea. This becomes apparent when examining recent doctrinal developments, as the previous concepts of complexity have been taken to their apex, with the operationalization of great power politics being emphasized, while also maintaining the idea that the US Armed Forces can fight anywhere, anytime and under any circumstances. This became one of many applications to the concept of “integrated deterrence”.²⁰⁵ Therefore, through this long development of such ideas concerning or related to hybrid warfare and its associated concepts, while the framework did indeed expand over time, it also followed a pattern of synthesis, inclusion and small rollbacks based on previous ideas, especially those critical or even diametrically opposed to their core theses.

Before moving on, it is important to reiterate that this section has not been concerned with “cause” and “effect”, but rather periods defined by certain intellectual stimulus, which each event and thought pattern both influences and is influenced by. Therefore, this timeline has not been demonstrating the Iraq and Lebanon Wars caused Hoffman and Mattis to create their first version of hybrid warfare, or vice versa, or any other such example, but rather to say they are all sums of the process and collection of thought and action which were essential to the time. Moreover, they were adaptations and progressions of earlier processes and combinations.

This process was largely dialectical in nature, as every time there was a pure expression of an idea, the thesis, which gave rise to a pure expression of the opposing viewpoint, the anti-thesis. The conflict between these two ideas resulted in the creation of a unification in some way between the two, the synthesis, which in turn became the new thesis, starting the cycle over again. RMA and those like it purely expressed conventional warfare dominance, and so produced COIN supporters, the pure expression of irregular warfare dominance. Born from these two, taking pieces of each while adapting in its own way, was the proto-synthesis of Compound Warfare and Three Block War. This evolved into the earliest versions of hybrid warfare. Also, all of these concepts were influenced by and in turn influenced the events from the 1990s to the early 2000s. The new

²⁰¹ Scott Jasper and Scott Moreland, “The Islamic State is a Hybrid Threat: Why Does That Matter”, *Small Wars Journal*, December 2, 2014.

²⁰² Ralph D. Thiele, “The New Colour of War – Hybrid Warfare and Partnerships”, *ISPSW*, No. 383 (October 2015), 12.

²⁰³ *Ibid*, 1-2.

²⁰⁴ See: Mark Thomas, “The Chinese Roots of Hybrid Warfare”, *CEPA* (August 10, 2022); Bill Gertz, *Deceiving the Sky: Inside Communist China's Drive for Global Supremacy* (New York: Encounter Books, 2019); and Michael Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China's Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2015).

²⁰⁵ Donald Stoker, *Purpose and Power: US Grand Strategy from the Revolutionary Era to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024), 686-690.

thesis, hybrid warfare, produced the incorporation of previous ideas, i.e. complexity and hybridization, into the majority of the discussion, necessitating an anti-thesis in hybrid warfare being promoted as a subset of irregular warfare. Then came the shift back to great power competition and most importantly, the 2014 Russian invasion of Ukraine, forcing a synthesis by having hybrid warfare being applied in newly strategic-grand strategic framework. This radical interpretation gave the new minority spot to the equally radical idea that hybrid war either does not exist or is normal to conflict, giving birth to the state that exists today: the synthesis that is viewing hybrid warfare as the operational actualization of a complex/hybrid geopolitical environment. The theoretical analysis to be given later on, especially that concerning dialectics, will further demonstrate this point, while also providing a framework for understanding this data along such lines.

Chapter 5: Analysis

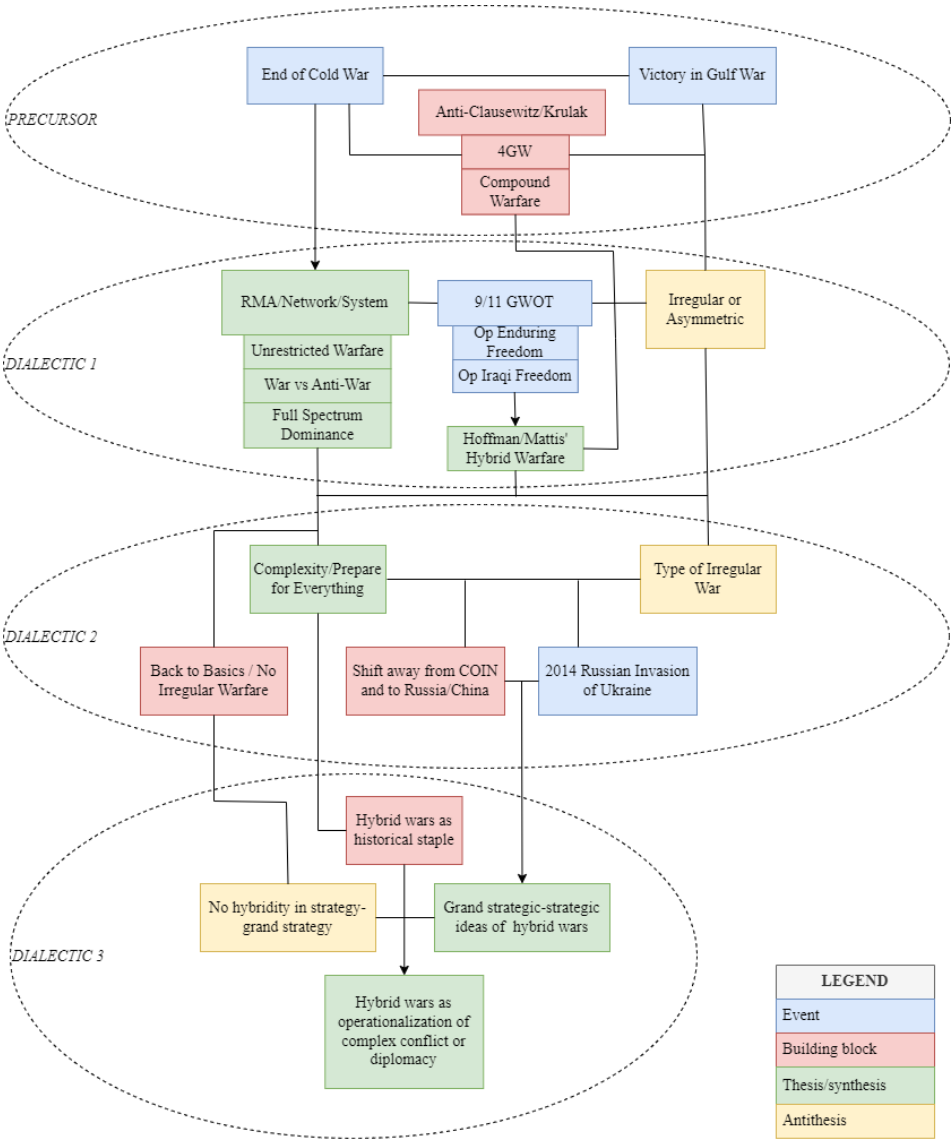


Diagram 2: Dialectical Framework for the Classification of Hybrid Warfare

With dialectics having been determined as the only method which satisfies all of the criteria being used, and the history of hybrid warfare as it relates to American military theory since 1991 being laid out, the two can be combined in the form of a dialectical analysis. Already in the previous chapter, the dialectical nature of the information was demonstrated, but done so informally. This chapter will build on this by providing a formal dialectical framework, using the categories of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis, as well as building blocks and significant events which are also influential to the ideas being discussed. A building block is an idea which represents in the uncompleted nature of the transition from one of these three categories to another. A significant event is not an idea, but rather something that occurred in the world which influenced the development of the ideas in question. Referring to Diagram 2 above, note how ideas, building blocks and events have been organized into four chronological, dialectical groups: a precursor, then dialectics 1, 2 and 3. Each group and their respective phenomena will now be explained.

Precursor

In identifying the starting point of the process and the original concept which sparked it, we have to know its creative end. That is, what need underpins its first emergence and its defining core identity. As Hegel notes concerning the abstract nature of anything in their original, unified and thus “ideal” form:

The True is the whole. But the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development. Of the Absolute it must be said that it is essentially a *result*, that only in the *end* is it what it truly is; and that precisely in this consists its nature, viz. to be actual, subject, the spontaneous becoming of itself...The beginning, the principle, or the Absolute, as at first immediately enunciated, is only the universal.²⁰⁶

Given this premise, hybrid warfare originally emerged in order to satisfy the conflict between competing ideas on interpreting the post-Cold War military and geopolitical environment, both in terms of the development of perceived national security threats to America and a conceptual milieu to deeply reexamine the doctrinal basis of American warfare. The fundamental nature and end of hybrid warfare’s original and thus “absolute” form, was to be a synthesis, a compromise between those schools which overly promoted either conventional or irregular warfare. Moreover, as noted during the historical development section, the thinking of the time and events occurring during the late 1990s and early-to-mid 2000s, created an intellectual environment that emphasized hybridity without having the terminology to explain it. More importantly, this intellectual space and development was looking at issues that were strategic-downward; the question was not how states could manipulate the grey areas between war and peace, thus fundamentally altering the highest level of analysis, but rather seemingly new methods being used by and against regional insurgents, as well as international terrorism. The enemy was easily identifiable, but the aspects of conflict

²⁰⁶ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 11.

with them, were apparently becoming more blurred and so the conventional-irregular divide that has defined earlier debates was no longer as usable.

This genesis of an idea became self-sustaining, due to its inherent *purposive activity*, as explained by Hegel:

Reason is *purposive activity*...in the sense in which Aristotle, too, defines Nature as purposive activity, purpose is what is immediate and *at rest*, the unmoved which is also *self-moving*, and as such is Subject. Its power to move, taken abstractly, is *being-for-self* or pure negativity. The result is the same as the beginning, only because the *beginning* is the *purpose*...²⁰⁷

Thus, there was a continual process of fluidity and development that came naturally from the criticism, integration and adaptation of ideas. Firstly, this occurred within themselves as they were scrutinized in agonizing detail through purely theoretical analysis. Secondly, it occurred in the application and response to both geopolitical events and shifts in culture, doctrine, policy, etc. These were the driving forces that ensured further expansion of the hybrid warfare concept over time. Therefore, in each case, the branches of transformation are the dialectical relation with both the intellectual milieu and the external geopolitical events.

Feelings about hybrid warfare, are a reflection and microcosm of the dialectical opposition between the cultures of the US Army and US defence community: conventional vs irregular, bottom-up vs top-down, uniqueness of the military profession vs totalization of conflict, etc. This is theorists associated with the Marine Corps (members of their “epistemic community”) were the first to suggest hybrid warfare: they have always been a cultural and theoretical merging of the Army and special forces and defence community, with a tradition of fighting and thinking about both conventional as well as irregular wars. Hybrid warfare first emerged as a middle path between the two groups fighting against each other within the US military and defence community: those who thought conventional war was the future and those who thought it'd be irregular war. Hybrid war was a way to get these two groups to essentially reunite. However, as time went on, hybrid warfare evolved into its own centre of debate, with people being more in line with the conventional focus and those being more in line with the irregular focus. So instead of solving the debate, it just gave it a new area to fight over. The debate was never going to end. It could only be *transformed*.

Dialectic 1

A theoretical framework tied to the evidence can be expressed in the diagram provided in Diagram 2 above. It shows what has been demonstrated through evidence and theory. First, that the end of the Cold War and decisive victory in the Gulf War both created a geopolitical and intellectual climate out of which the dialectical conflicts leading to hybrid warfare emerged. The end of the Cold War gave birth to RMA, Network-Centric Warfare, War vs Anti-War, and eventually Full Spectrum Dominance, and in the Gulf War they saw proof of the effectiveness of

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 12.

their theories. This event also led to certain theorists proclaiming an end to the “Clausewitzian” model of war, and some, such as Krulak, arguing for new systems of command, training, etc. which emphasized the complex nature of current and future conflicts. Out of this milieu, building on pieces of the latter concepts, came a directly oppositional stance to RMA and other similar ideas. This anti-thesis to RMA’s thesis was those who promote counterinsurgency/asymmetric warfare/irregular warfare. These theorists argued that new versions of conventional warfare were not the all-encompassing system they thought themselves to be, but rather mostly irrelevant, because the Gulf War proved America’s enemies could not defeat them conventionally, and so will forgo such strategies in the future. Also, they stated that such conventional methods were useless in irregular scenarios. The synthesis of these two was, of course, Hoffman and Mattis’ original formulation of hybrid warfare, but it built off a “proto” synthesis in the form of 4GW and Compound Warfare. These concepts held pieces of what would become hybrid warfare, and pieces of both sides of the conflict, but still had not evolved into the whole formula that is hybrid warfare.

Note the timings of the phenomena involved. During the 90s you have a dominant stream of thought in the form of the thesis, that is a “conventional” dominant mindset (the supposed “revolution” occurring is that technological advances allow for near-perfect precision, meaning no force, conventional or irregular, can defeat a technologically sophisticated military): Harry Summers’ *On Strategy II* (1992); Alvin Toffler’s *War and Anti-War* (1993); William Owens’ “The Emerging U.S. System-of-Systems” (1996); Harlan Ullman and James Wade’s *Shock and Awe* (also 1996); Douglas MacGregor’s, *Breaking the Phalanx* (1997); Richard Simpkin’s *Race to the Swift* (1998); David Alberts, John Garstka Frederick Stein’s *Network Centric Warfare* (1999); Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui’s *Unrestricted Warfare* (also 1999); Robert Leonhard’s *The Principles of War for the Information Age* (2000); David Deptula’s *Effects-Based Operations* (2001); William Owens and Ed Offley’s *Lifting the Fog of War* (also 2001); and Andrew Krepinevich’s *The Military-Technical Revolution* (2002 – though it was based on research he did throughout the late 1990s).²⁰⁸

During this time, there was an emerging opposition building off of those who emphasize increased complexity at the tactical or operational level: Charles Krulak’s “The Strategic Corporal” (1999), based off a speech from 1997, Thomas Huber’s *Compound Warfare* (2002), based off his 1997 article, and the beginnings of 4GW theory with William Lind’s “The Changing

²⁰⁸ Harry G. Summers Jr., *On Strategy II: A Critical Analysis of the Gulf War* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1992); Alvin Toffler, *War and Anti-War: Survival at the Dawn of the 21st Century* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993); William A. Owens, “The Emerging U.S. System-of-Systems”, Strategic Forum: Institute for National Strategic Studies (February, 1996); Harlan K. Ullman and James P. Wade, *Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance* (Grandview Heights: Legare Street Press, 2022); Douglas A. MacGregor, *Breaking the Phalanx: A New Design for Landpower in the 21st Century* (Westport: Praeger, 1997); Richard Simpkin, *Race to the Swift: Thoughts on Twenty-First Century Warfare* (Sterling: Potomac Books, 1998); David S. Alberts, John Garstka, and Frederick P. Stein, *Network Centric Warfare: The Face of Battle in the 21st Century* (Washington, D.C.: National Defence University Press, 1999); Qiao Liang; Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare* (Brattleboro: Echo Point Books and Media, 2015); David A. Deptula, *Effects-Based Operations: Change in the Nature of Warfare* (Aerospace Education Foundation, February, 2001); William A. Owens and Ed Offley, *Lifting the Fog of War* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001); Andrew Krepinevich, *The Military-Technical Revolution: A Preliminary Assessment* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2002).

Face of War” (1989).²⁰⁹ This opposition also included those who believed the post-Cold War environment represented a different kind of transformation (one away from conventional warfare and toward irregular warfare): Martin Van Creveld’s *The Transformation of War* (1991) and *On Future War* (also 1991). In line with Van Creveld’s thesis that the nation state would lose its primary status in international relations were works such as Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* (1991) and Robert Kaplan’s *The Coming Anarchy* (2000), which built off his 1994 original of the same name.²¹⁰

However, this antithesis is not made coherent or powerful until the important events of 9/11, the start of the Global War on Terror (2001), then Operations Enduring Freedom (2001) and Iraqi Freedom (2003). The apparent failure of the RMA model in tackling these problems led a full antithesis to form, giving birth to a strong subculture of theorists who emphasized COIN, asymmetric warfare and irregular warfare in general. It is not a coincidence then, that in 2005, a synthesis emerged between these two competing schools of thought, in the form of the earliest version of hybrid warfare, espoused by those associated with a traditionally “synthetic” organization like the USMC. It is around this time that we get a slew of major works concerning irregular warfare, such as John Nagl’s *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (2002); Max Boot’s *The Savage Wars of Peace* (2002); Roger Barnett’s *Asymmetrical Warfare* (2003); Thomas Hammes’ *The Sling and the Stone* (2004); and *Rethinking the Principles of War*, edited by Anthony McIvor (2005).²¹¹

Then, in and after 2005, the hybrid warfare literature emerges: James Mattis and Frank Hoffman’s “Future Warfare” (2005); Hoffman’s “Lessons from Lebanon” (2006); Steven Williams’ *From Fourth Generation Warfare to Hybrid War*; Hoffman’s *Conflict in the 21st Century* (also in 2007); Greg Grant’s “Hybrid Wars”; Margaret Bond’s *Hybrid War* (2009); Daniel Lasica’s *Strategic Implications of Hybrid War* (also 2009); Hoffman’s “Hybrid Threats” and “Hybrid vs Compound Warfare (both 2009); Larry Jordan’s “Hybrid War” (also 2009); Sean McWilliams’ *Hybrid War beyond Lebanon* (also 2009); David Johnson’s “Military Capabilities for Hybrid War” (2010); Department of the Army’s *TC 7-100* (also 2010); the GAO’s *Hybrid Warfare* (also 2010); and Peter Mansoor and Williamson Murray’s *Hybrid Warfare* (2012).²¹²

²⁰⁹ Charles C. Krulak, “The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War”, *Marines Magazine* (Air University 1999). For the original speech, see: <https://www.c-span.org/video/?92628-1/marine-corps-future#>; Thomas M. Huber, *Compound Warfare: That Fatal Knot* (Fort Leavenworth: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 2002); Thomas M. Huber, “Napoleon in Spain and Naples: Fortified Compound Warfare”, in *C610: The Evolution of Modern Warfare, Term I Syllabus/Book of Readings* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1997); “The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation”, *Marine Corps Gazette* (October, 1989).

²¹⁰ Martin Van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: Free Press, 1991); Martin Van Creveld, *On Future War* (London: Brassey’s, 1991); Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations: And the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011); Robert D. Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post Cold War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000); Robert D. Kaplan, “The Coming Anarchy”, *The Atlantic*, 1994.

²¹¹ John Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005); Roger W. Barnett, *Asymmetrical Warfare: Today’s Challenge to U.S. Military Power* (Washington: Brassey’s, 2003); Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2014); Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century* (Minneapolis: Zenith Press, 2004); Anthony D. McIvor, *Rethinking the Principles of War* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2005).

²¹² James N. Mattis and Frank G. Hoffman, “Future Warfare: The Rise of Hybrid Wars”, *Proceedings*, Vol. 131/11/1, 233 (November 2005); Frank G. Hoffman, “Lessons from Lebanon: Hezbollah and Hybrid Wars”, *Foreign Policy Research Institute* (August 2, 2006); Frank G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*

What is the overall dialectical process, then? The “spirit” of the change, so to speak? It is confronting the post-Cold War world. At first, there was confusion about the nature of this world: what enemies would be fought, what territory would be fought over, etc. So, we get sweeping insights into the very nature of warfare: those who say it will be conventional, and those who say it will be irregular. This sets the stage for 9/11, which seemed to many to answer those questions: finally, there was a framing device for dealing with the post-Cold War world. Now there was a strategic and grand strategic prism through which the debates could be actualized in major combat operations. As a result, there appeared to be no resolution, no clear “winner” so to speak. This continued tension created the impetus for a synthesis to emerge to deal with the seemingly unique problems posed by the GWOT. That is why one phase bleeds into the next, why there is a self-sustaining spirit of change that transforms tension between epistemic communities into a whole new one, in the form of hybrid warfare.

Dialectic 2

This early version of hybrid warfare, the synthesis, became the new thesis, spawning a new conflict between those who argued for considering the world to be simply complex and thus the US should prepare for all forms of conflict (thesis), and those who came to see hybrid warfare as a new form of irregular warfare (antithesis). Then came the geopolitical shift away from the War on Terror and the counterinsurgencies involved with it, towards China and Russia in a supposed return to great power politics, as well as the 2014 Russian invasion of Ukraine. These events and their accompanying intellectual climate resulted in a new synthesis, a strategic-grand strategic interpretation of hybrid warfare. Meanwhile, what would be become the new antithesis was building from earlier concepts spawned from the successors to RMA, and slowly grew from a fringe to a powerful minority: those who denied the importance or sometimes even existence of irregular warfare. Later, alongside those who viewed hybrid warfare as nothing new, but rather a historical staple, joined forces to become an oppositional force to those applying hybrid warfare to just about everything in the geopolitical climate post-2014. As opposed to viewing strategy and

(Arlington: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007); Steven Williamson, *From Fourth Generation Warfare to Hybrid War* (Carlisle: US Army War College, 2007); Greg Grant, “Hybrid Wars”, *Government Executive*, May 1, 2008; Margaret Bond, *Hybrid War: A New Paradigm for Stability Operations in Failing States* (Carlisle: US Army War College, 2009); Frank G. Hoffman, “Hybrid Threats: Reconceptualizing the Evolving Character of Modern Conflict”, *Strategic Forum* (No. 240. April 2009); Frank Hoffman, “Hybrid vs. compound war”, *Armed Forces Journal* (October 1, 2009); Daniel Lasica, *Strategic Implications of Hybrid War: A Theory of Victory* (Fort Leavenworth: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2009); Larry Jordan, “Hybrid War: Is the U.S. Army Ready for the Face of 21st-Century Warfare?”, Master’s thesis, Fort Leavenworth: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2009; Sean McWilliams, *Hybrid War beyond Lebanon: Lessons from the South African Campaign 1976-1989* (Fort Leavenworth: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2009); David E. Johnson, “Military Capabilities for Hybrid War: Insights from the Israel Defense Forces in Lebanon and Gaza”, *RAND*, 2010; Headquarters, Department of the Army, *TC 7-100: Hybrid Threat* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, November 2010); Government of Accountability Office, *Hybrid Warfare: Briefing to the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives* (Washington: United States Government Accountability Office, September 10, 2010); Peter R. Mansoor.; Williamson Murray, *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

grand strategy as realms of hybridity and complexity, a different type of conflict or even war, these theorists argued for a clear distinction between war and peace, between strategy-operations and grand strategy.

Again, when one considers the timings involved, it becomes clear an antithesis was emerging. Certain works called for the US to be prepared for a complex international environment, such as the Department of the Army's *US Army Doctrine Publication 3-0* and Michael O'Hanlon's *The Future of Warfare* (2015).²¹³ Also, there were those who disregarded non-conventional war entirely, such as Andrew Bacevich's *The Limits of Power* (2009); Gian Gentile's *Wrong Turn* (2013); and Hew Strachan's *The Direction of War* (also 2013).²¹⁴ Also, there were those who viewed hybrid warfare as just a form of irregular warfare (just as the previous group mentioned did, with the difference between they believed in the value of studying irregular warfare) such as Seth Jones' *Waging Insurgent Warfare* (2016).²¹⁵ These theorists also viewed hybridity as something natural to warfare and recurrent throughout history, rather anything revolutionary or profound.

Again, we have to address the overall theme that transforms tension relationships into the genesis of something new. In this case, it is the supposed return of great power politics, brought about by both the 2014 Russian invasion of Ukraine and the American shift in emphasis away from counterinsurgency and towards both Russia as well as China. Hybrid warfare had to be adapted to this climate that emphasizes grand strategic and power politic concerns. Also, hybrid warfare was originally meant to solve the problems of a world that de-emphasizes the great power politics of the Cold War, focusing instead on non-state actors or smaller state actors. Therefore, there was a gap in the literature which apparently left a great power politic action unexplainable. What was available thanks to the intellectual milieu was hybrid warfare. Therefore, it was itself transformed to fit the grand strategic paradigm. Naturally, this great of a shift resulted in a reactive backlash which emphasized traditional great power politics, as well as a return to near-peer conventional warfare.

Dialectic 3

Finally, the synthesis of the view that hybrid warfare is a form of irregular conflicts and the view that the military-geopolitical environment is "complex", resulted in a new understanding of hybrid warfare which was ready for the 2014 invasion of Ukraine to give it impetus. This new thesis being that hybrid warfare could explain these apparently non-conventional, complex world events which seemed to blur the lines between war and peace. With those promoting hybrid warfare

²¹³ Headquarters of the Department of the Army, *US Army Doctrine Publication 3-0: Unified Land Operations* (Washington: Department of the Army, 2011); Michael O'Hanlon, *The Future of Land Warfare* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015).

²¹⁴ Andrew J. Bacevich Jr., *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2009); Gian Gentile, *Wrong Turn: America's Deadly Embrace of Counterinsurgency* (New York: The New Press, 2013); Hew Strachan, *The Direction of War: Contemporary Strategy in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013);

²¹⁵ Seth G. Jones, *Waging Insurgent Warfare: Lessons from the Vietcong to the Islamic State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

as a historical staple expanding the scope of classification beyond the modern age, the intellectual milieu was primed to push forward a grand strategic formulation of hybridity. However, this naturally gave birth to an antithesis, set up by those who denied the existence of hybrid warfare, and sometimes even irregular warfare. These two combined to form the synthesis of the operationalization of hybrid warfare within a complex geopolitical environment, which is where the development of hybrid warfare stands today.

Therefore, we can see the synthesis-thesis in the following works in the timeline: Galeotti's "The 'Gerasimov Doctrine' and Russian Non-Linear Warfare" (2014); Scott Jasper and Scott Moreland's "The Islamic State is a Hybrid Threat" (also 2014); USSOCOM's *White Paper: The Gray Zone* (2015); Rod Thornton's "The Changing Nature of Modern Warfare" (also 2015); Ralph Thiele's "The New Colour of War" (also 2015); and Michael Kofman's "Russian Hybrid Warfare and Other Dark Arts" (2016); Mitchell Orenstein's *The Lands In Between* (2019); Anthony Cordesman's "The Strategic Threat from Iranian Hybrid Warfare in the Gulf" (also 2019); and Jacob Helberg's *The Wires of War* (2021).²¹⁶ Then, around 2018, we start to see a reaction to this emerging "hype" surrounding hybrid warfare and the "grey zone". Building off of those who considered hybrid warfare to be a historical staple, the following works called for caution in being ahistorical, culturally narrow minded and/or incoherent in labelling every seemingly new phenomena as "hybrid warfare": Ofer Fridman's *Russian "Hybrid Warfare"* (2018); Mark Galeotti's "I'm Sorry for Creating the 'Gerasimov Doctrine'" (also 2018); Frank Hoffman's "Examining Complex Forms of Conflict" (also 2018); Stephen Biddle's *Nonstate Warfare* (2021); and Mark Galeotti's *The Weaponization of Everything* (2022).²¹⁷ Lastly, the synthesis between the two, hybridity as the operationalization of a complex international environment, is an ongoing literary development as of writing this analysis: notable within this emerging viewpoint is the concept of "integrated deterrence".²¹⁸ We will have to wait for more literature to come out before a substantive investigation into this form of hybrid warfare can be conducted, let alone examinations into how the dialectical process will further.

Nonetheless, despite the ongoing nature of this dialectic, there are some essential points that can still be made. Given the thesis was an idea that this grand strategic version of hybrid

²¹⁶ Mark Galeotti, "The 'Gerasimov Doctrine' and Russian Non-Linear Warfare", *In Moscow's Shadows*, July 6, 2014; Scott Jasper and Scott Moreland, "The Islamic State is a Hybrid Threat: Why Does That Matter", *Small Wars Journal*, December 2, 2014; United States Special Operations Command, *White Paper: The Gray Zone* (USSOCOM, September 9, 2015); Rod Thornton, "The Changing Nature of Modern Warfare: Responding to Russian Information Warfare", *The RUSI Journal*, Vol. 160, No. 4 (2015); Ralph D. Thiele, "The New Colour of War – Hybrid Warfare and Partnerships", *ISPSW*, No. 383 (October 2015); Michael Kofman, "Russian Hybrid Warfare and Other Dark Arts", *War on the Rocks*, (March 11, 2016); Mitchell A. Orenstein, *The Lands In Between: Russia vs. the West and the New Politics of Hybrid War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Anthony H. Cordesman, "The Strategic Threat from Iranian Hybrid Warfare in the Gulf", *CSIS*, June 13, 2019; Jacob Helberg, *The Wires of War: Technology and the Global Struggle for Power* (New York: Avid Reader Press, 2021).

²¹⁷ Ofer Fridman, *Russian "Hybrid Warfare": Its Resurgence and Politicization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Mark Galeotti, "I'm Sorry for Creating the 'Gerasimov Doctrine'", *Foreign Policy* (March 5, 2018); Frank G. Hoffman, "Examining Complex Forms of Conflict: Gray Zone and Hybrid Challenges", *PRISM*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (November, 2018), 31-47; Stephen Biddle, *Nonstate Warfare: The Military Methods of Guerrillas, Warlords and Militias* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021); Mark Galeotti, *The Weaponization of Everything: A Field Guide to the New Way of War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022);

²¹⁸ Stoker, *Purpose and Power*, 686-690.

warfare was in some way revolutionary, it was only natural that there be a response to it which stated the opposite: hybrid wars have not only happened before, but in fact are quite common. This was then added to by those who said that the current identification of Russian strategy with hybrid warfare was a historical and contemporary misunderstanding of Russian policy. One follows from the other. These would then be synthesized together through the theme of tackling the apparent complexity of the strategic and grand strategic phenomena occurring in the 2010s and 2020s. Therefore, the idea that hybridity is the strategic and/or operational actualization of an increased complexity within the geopolitical system, comes about, as this is clearly a combination of the previous two positions.

Implications

Through an analysis of the data, it has been determined that the development of hybrid warfare followed four phases: a precursor period, then three dialectics. The precursor included the important events of the end of the Cold War and US victory during the Gulf War, as well as the following building blocks: the anti-Clausewitzian school, Three Block War, 4GW, and Compound Warfare. Together, these phenomena birthed the first thesis, which were the proponents of RMA and its associated schools of thought, which then birthed the first antithesis, the proponents of irregular/asymmetric warfare. These two conflicted with one another until three other important events forced their synthesis: 9/11, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The resulting synthesis between the two was Hoffman's original formulation of hybrid warfare. This ushered in the second dialectic by creating a new thesis, the idea that contemporary geopolitics is complex, so militaries must be flexible and prepared for any kind of conflict. This spawned an antithesis, which sought to limit hybrid warfare to the realm of irregular warfare alone. During this time, it appeared that great power politics were becoming increasingly competitive, exemplified by Russia's seizure of Crimea in 2014. These phenomena led to the two conflicting ideas combining to form the next synthesis and thus the third dialectic: a grand strategic understanding of hybrid warfare. Meanwhile, building from those who stated hybrid warfare either did not exist or was merely a historical staple, an antithesis formed which declared grand strategy to not have hybridity as a core element. These were combined to form the final synthesis, the idea that hybridity exists as the operationalization of a complex geopolitical environment.

Through these dialectical periods, the situation was fluid and based on interrelationships, rather than a direct, deterministic line of cause and effect. In each case, the intellectual milieu created something new, but there was always a continuation of concepts from before. Naturally, there was also the elimination of concepts too. It was and is a process of creative destruction. An invisible hand of self-sustaining idea formation, adaptation and development. Such is the nature of dialectics. While it is impossible to say where this process will go in the coming years, it can be assured that the transformation of hybrid warfare and its associated intellectual phenomena will continue indefinitely.

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1. Citing anybody else's work.
2. Addressing the reader directly.

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Chapter 6: Conclusion

Having examined in-depth the relevant material for a dialectical framing of American thought on hybrid warfare and military theory from 1991 to the present, we can return to the original research questions and note what answers were discovered.

1. What, if any, are the major schools of thought concerning both the nature and importance of hybrid warfare?

In answering this question through theories of classification, it was determined through dialectical analysis that there are not necessarily schools of thought, but rather central premises which idea definition of hybrid warfare was based in, connecting back to a particular school of thought in American military theory as a whole, simultaneously reacting to and influencing geopolitical events.

2. Why is there so little agreement amongst theorists when it comes to hybrid warfare?

It was determined that the dialectical nature of ideas in general, and American military theory since 1991, relied on a self-sustaining generation of ideas, based on conflict and creative destruction. Therefore, the key to understanding this subject is realizing that there will always be major disagreements and in fact, tracking them allows one to better interpret the data. This means that, unfortunately, where hybrid warfare and America are concerned, the perfect doctrine, or at least a unified understanding of one, is simply beyond reach. Also, this means that theorists who tend towards reductionism should be wary, because the perfect classification likely does not exist. Or at the very least, in order to have it, one must limit the analysis to a snapshot in time, rather than a full grasp of the system of phenomena. This may be difficult for many theorists to accept, as humans have a tendency to desire complete answers, and this is especially true for social scientists. They, in particular, dream of finding a “quantifiable” or mathematically expressible solution to problems of theory and history. Perhaps they are too ambitious, and there is room yet for more “artistic” methods, to fill the gaps?

Why, then, has this system of classification eluded scholars, resulting in incorrect interpretations of the development of hybrid warfare, as laid out in Chapter 2? The apparent ambiguity surrounding the identifying of schools of thought comes from the misinterpretation of the data due to oversimplification or failure to realize the usefulness of both dialectics and a holistic approach. Also, the natural tendency to view the data in a largely causal matter obscures classification, because the expected pattern through a mainly “timeline” form of intellectual development does not provide a clear picture. It is only with the addition of other methods does the whole picture reveal itself. When all of these pieces are put together, it provides a cohesive dialectical framework for the interpretation both of recent developments in American thought on hybrid warfare and conflict in general.

Arguably the most important consequence of this realization is that any perfect classification of hybrid warfare and American military theory/culture is not only difficult, but

impossible, given its dialectical nature. This is because the very understanding of the subject requires viewing it in an “oppositional” manner, and the rise of any coherent unification in conceptualization will inevitably result in the opposite forming to oppose it, with their merging also being inevitable, so one cannot even hope to support one over the other. This has serious ramifications for the development of doctrine concerning hybrid warfare, as America or NATO may wish to do. Any attempt to find a perfect understanding of hybrid warfare for use in the battles of the future, or even training during “peacetime”, is doomed to fail and thus futile. Instead, a more complex understanding of doctrine should be considered; after all, if the geopolitical situation is deemed fluid, should not also how the U.S. military considers matters of preparing for, or conducting war? An extension of this could entail the return of dialectical thinking, not just for academia, but also the training and education of military officers. In the spirit of Mission Command, one may also wish to expand this even further, including it in the training and education of NCOs (non-commissioned officers), or even NCMs (non-commissioned members).

In all, it is hoped by the author that this work will provide the basis for further debate in the field of American military history, American military theory, hybrid warfare, and war studies in general. There is much work to be done to fill the gaps which could not be covered in this short study: namely, examining in-depth the claims that hybrid warfare and American military culture can be traced back farther than the end of the Cold War. Also, America is but one cultural tradition, both in terms of the overall study of war, as well as Western views on conflict, and the whole, international viewpoints concerning hybrid warfare. The next step perhaps would be a similar analysis involving the Baltic ideas on hybrid warfare, as they have had a strong tradition in this field that has developed since Russia’s 2014 invasion of Ukraine. In any case, this stands as an important stepping stone for furthering our knowledge of some of the most interesting and contested subjects in war studies today.

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