

Proposal for a EuroDefense Working Group
HYBRID WARFARE: Challenges and Responsibilities for European Common Security
and Defence

Detlef Puhl - Bonn, 3.4.2019

1. „Hybrid Warfare“ is a fairly recent term used to describe challenges to our security and prosperity in this twenty-first century, based on a dynamic strategic environment supported by rapidly growing technological means. It's a hybrid term in itself and needs clarification. We need to understand what it involves; we need to make sure that different perceptions of its meaning, which will always exist, are compatible; and we need to recognize that this process of clarification is highly political in nature with deep impact on a variety of levels of decision-making, from strategic to operational and tactic levels, including public and private actors, big and small.
2. What in 2013 became to be known as the „Gerasimov Doctrine“ was the analysis by the Russian military leader of societal uprising in Arab countries („Arab Spring“) and in Ukraine. And it was linked to the development of modern disruptive technologies, i.e. non-military means, used to achieve political and strategic goals - hence the term „hybrid warfare“. While hybrid threats in conflict situations are not new, it took NATO and the EU, as well as its nations time to develop strategies to counter most recent threats of hybrid warfare of which neither awareness nor political recognition are always clearly given. And it will always take time in the future.
3. Related to the term and to its political context, three lines of thought need to be explored in particular:
 - a) where is the development of disruptive technologies going, and how fast? Who is driving this development, and in whose interest?
 - b) which are the strategic and military implications? On the kinds of capacities needed and to be procured and funded? On the kind of training and education needed? On the nature of military command and control?
 - c) which is the political and ethical impact on our democratic systems? On political control of armed forces and parliamentary oversight? On international law? On the value of human control in regard to AI, etc.?
4. If it is time to act, for Europe, for NATO, for our nations - who is to act? If the given technological revolution must be orchestrated - by whom? Responsibilities need to be redefined. Orchestration in authoritarian states like Russia or China is not a problem, not a legal, not a political, not an ethical problem. But in democratic nations? In countering hybrid warfare, there is more at stake than „prepare - deter - defend“, as NATO is called to do. What exactly the impact may be will depend on the dynamics of technological innovation and on the appropriate adaptation of our civil societies, in respect of democratic values and human dignity.
5. Ambitious forecasts on the enormous dynamics of technological innovation will be difficult to make. And so will be prospects for societal and political adaptation. It will be all the more important to come to a shared understanding of what is at stake.