I want to thank the organisers for two things: first for choosing Hybrid Warfare as the general topic of this event. I believe that it is of the utmost importance for us, as top military figures and leaders of the Land Forces of our nations (obviously, not me) to develop both a common understanding of the threat we are called to encounter and of the capacities and capabilities we are required to possess in order to do so. Second, for inviting me to share my thoughts with you on this issue and to contribute to the dialogue that will follow.

Hybrid is not something new in the war domain. According to the international literature, it is another gift of the ancient Greeks to the world, as the first example of hybrid warfare can be traced back to the siege of Troy, in the form of the Trojan horse. Since then, elements of hybrid warfare can be identified in almost every war that took place. Why is that? Because its description is so vague that any action other than military that runs against a nation's interests can be seen as an element of a hybrid attack.

Some examples. It is now proved that the little green men that appeared in Crimea, were engaged in one of the phases of hybrid warfare. Another example. A Head of State recently stated that his country is under attack, referring to the ongoing currency crisis. Is it so? And if yes, is it hybrid? Another country expelled two foreign diplomats and barred the entry of two others, as a result of their actions that undermined national security. Has this country launched hybrid warfare against the former? Switching to another region, a number of top
scientists of a country in the Middle East, directly linked to the nuclear program of
the said country were murdered. At the same time, demonstrations against the
government escalating to riots and clashes with the security forces took place in
various cities, as a result of the dire economic situation. Are we witnessing the
opening chapters of hybrid warfare? Terrorist attacks in almost all Europe. Are
they part of a bigger, hybrid plan?

There can be no definite answer to any of these questions. And this is
because of the very nature of hybrid warfare which is to be covert and to offer
plausible deniability to the attacker. I will offer you two definitions of Hybrid
warfare. According to a widely accepted definition by a recognized academic,
(Frank Hoffman), hybrid warfare is a fusion of war forms that blurs regular and
irregular warfare, incorporating, and I quote, “a full range of different modes of
warfare including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations,
terrorist acts including indiscriminate violence and coercion and criminal
disorder”. NATO on the other hand, uses the expression “a wide range of overt
and covert military, paramilitary and civilian measures employed in a highly
integrated design”. The vagueness of both definitions allows for anything that
disturbs normality to be regarded, examined and possibly classified as a sign of
hybrid attack in progress. Yet, a different reading is that there is not a standard
definition even in NATO. This leads to a valid question: how to agree on the
actions to address a threat when there is no agreement on which shape it can
get?

Here is the heart of the problem. The nature of hybrid is to create
ambiguity regarding the identity of the attacker and his objectives. As Clausewitz
might have described it, to promote a massive “fog of war” and ambiguous
“center of gravity” for its adversaries, while ensuring minimum “friction factor”.
The “highly integrated design” of NATO’s definition will not be apparent. Actions
may look irrelevant, random or seemingly unconnected to each other. It has also
to be mentioned that the actions integrated into a hybrid attack are usually
wrapped in a façade of legality. When enough tiles of the puzzle are in place for
the victim of the aggressor to get an understanding of the whole picture or to
identify patterns and hidden connections, it may be too late. There is a certain
word in Russian, a word that is also a strategy: “Maskirovka”, or “deception” in English.

As Sir Winston Churchill so aptly put it, “However absorbed a commander may be in the elaboration of his own thoughts, it is sometimes necessary to take the enemy into account.” In other words, “The enemy has a vote too.” And the enemy, faced with the relentless reality of the inferiority of its pure military capabilities against those of its adversary, that is us by the way, chose to twist our strengths, our principles and values such as adhering to the rule of law, separation of powers, tolerance and diversity and turn them into vulnerabilities. Operating under the threshold of war, adopting and distorting our words, he victimizes himself, while at the same time engages in an effort to divide us. Acknowledging that our strength derives from our unity, that cohesion that is the center of gravity for both the EU and NATO, he seeks to attack it, isolating and alienating one nation from the other, one part of the society from the rest. Then everything is easy. “Divide and conquer”.

Gentlemen,

Make no mistake. This strategy is not adopted only by our big, eastern neighbour. Hybrid warfare is not a Russian novelty, although General Gerasimov offered a definition that underlines their belief that in the contemporary conflicts, the non-military means could be far more effective than the military ones. His definition, as expressed in his famous "Gerasimov doctrine", is actually a theory of non-linear war, combining military, technological, information, diplomatic, economic, cultural and other tactics for the purpose of achieving strategic goals. We have seen hybrid at play by non-state actors as well. Whoever studied Sun Tzu is familiar with the following quote: “to fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting.” Of course, this is the best case scenario; in real life, fighting will occur sooner or later. It is more likely than not that this is the type of warfare we will encounter in the foreseeable future. Consequently, we have to adapt accordingly. The best way to do this effectively is to understand the strategy of the adversary.
I identify three areas where adaptation and change is required for the Land Forces, in order to contribute effectively to tackling hybrid strategies:

- First of all, deep understanding of the adversary’s *modus operandi*. There is an absolute need to understand what to expect and to gradually build and expand our knowledge base. This can be achieved by the exchange of experiences, lessons learned and best practices. For this purpose, enhanced, deepened and frank international cooperation is needed. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. And in the international environment, our nations form a chain, whether it is called the European Union, or NATO. The recently inaugurated, almost one year ago, Helsinki Center of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats is a perfect example of such a forum for cooperation. It aims to provide a single location dedicated to furthering a common understanding of hybrid threats and promoting the development of comprehensive, whole-of-government response at national levels and of coordinated response at EU and NATO levels in countering hybrid threats. In any case, cooperation in the form of information exchange has to be encouraged, if not imposed to those who still fight turf wars. What is at stake is far more important than personal ambitions and agendas. At the same time, the institutional tendency to over-classify everything and keep them secret needs to be suppressed.

Together with understanding the adversary, it is equally crucial to educate ourselves, at all levels, on what to expect and how to react. In this context, EU military capabilities to counter hybrid threats will be exercised during the 2018 Parallel and Coordinated Exercise with NATO (PACE18). Based on the PACE18 hybrid scenario, EU Military Staff and NATO International Military Staff will have EU-NATO Scenario Based informal discussions to ensure complementarity in countering hybrid threats, where the requirements overlap, based on the principle of inclusiveness, while respecting each organisation’s decision-making autonomy and data protection rules.

- Second, we need to ensure early warning and situational awareness. I believe that timely identification of a hybrid attack in its opening stages is of paramount importance. There will be no warning, no indicators will alert us of an imminent attack. The attack itself may be the only warning we will get. Thus, we need to be vigilant, to quickly analyze and assess incidents and
correctly classify them as hybrid-related or dismiss them. Since an effective hybrid strategy is based upon a whole-of-government approach and the mobilization of a large number of civilian and military actors, the same logic applies to the counter strategy. At the national level, there should be a single, intergovernmental, civil-military center operating 24/7/365, collecting and analyzing reports of incidents that could be hybrid-related. Depending on the assessment, reports would be distributed to all concerned stakeholders domestically and internationally. At this stage, my previous recommendation about international cooperation and understanding the adversary’s *modus operandi* becomes even more relevant. Minimizing false alarms will not only reduce international embarrassment and operational fatigue but it will also increase credibility. Crying wolf at every occasion will only lead to paranoia and mistrust and to the undermining of institutions, something that is also an objective of a hybrid strategy.

Third, pushing back. Here, the military establishment should be called to play a leading role, since the result of a nation’s actions or inactions will have a direct impact on its national security. I have to remind you that the brilliant hybrid action of the Trojan horse resulted in the seizure and destruction of Troy and the annihilation of its brave citizens. This was the objective of the Trojan horse trick, an objective served very well. Purely military objectives were achieved with the conclusion of this successful Hybrid tactic. And this tactic was conceived, planned and executed by the Armed Forces. The Armed Forces are usually the most well-prepared and ready to deploy forces a nation has. I envisage a special role for the Land Forces, as most of the adversary’s hybrid operations are likely to take place on the ground. The breadth of the use of the Armed Forces within the borders of a given nation is usually limited by the Constitution. This limitation does not exclude them from engaging in support of the security forces that are expected to be stretched thin, or of civilian actors, state or non-state alike, that lack sufficient means and capabilities to perform their task. The Land Forces need to prepare for a different kind of operations. It is extremely doubtful that large tank battles are foreseen in any hybrid strategy. What are more likely to encounter is extensive and violent clashes and riots that would resemble or lead to urban warfare, possibly in multiple locations or cities simultaneously. To
counter this, highly mobile quick reaction units are of essence. It is also highly probable that critical infrastructures will become a target in the attempt to spread chaos. Their number and the geographical dispersal make it extremely difficult if not impossible for security forces to defend them against such a scenario. Private security forces will also prove to be inadequately prepared or equipped for that task. I therefore imagine that these scenarios have to be taken into account as a possible Land Forces engagement.

Gentlemen,

It is my personal belief that the resilience of our nations should be our first line of defence, together with the ability of our societies to withstand and to repel any attack, kinetic or otherwise, physical or digital alike. Our societies should have the ability to stand for their values, to believe in their leadership, to trust one another. As I have said before, the adversary seeks to exploit weaknesses. We should deny them to him. Building resilience is, together with anything else, an area where we should focus on. The Land Forces, the Armed Forces in general, could and should have a role as well, being the connecting glue and the defenders of the society. As important as hybrid may be, let us not forget that it relies to a great extend to military power to achieve its objectives. It had never been a stand-alone power issue. Therefore, we also need to have credible military power to tackle it.

Let us all remember that the political objective of any warfare, hybrid or otherwise, is to produce real-life, tangible results. Results that can be reversed only through another war. Credible deterrence, both in the form of us being able to defend ourselves against both hybrid and conventional attacks and absorb strikes but also in the form of us being capable to forcefully strike back, will ensure that potential aggressors will think hard before they move. This is the definition of deterrence after all.

Thank you.

Edited by Captain (Hellenic Navy) Vasileios Loukovitis