

## The Changing Game: The permeation of hybrid warfare into the gray zone

Warfare is one of a variety of tools in a state's arsenal to achieve their aims, like all other aspects of human existence warfare is subject to change and evolution. Historically, the conduct and waging of war is something left to military commanders while the support of the war effort comes from the politicians and the populus. But in recent years this has changed, this trend starts around the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and a term was coined in 2007 which describes hybrid warfare. This was a new way of thinking about war, and it describes the full range of means of warfare including: conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts like indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal disorder. This new term gained interest and once again came to the forefront following Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, especially with the employment of "little green men," this prominence has continued with escalation to conventional conflict between Russia and Ukraine in 2022. Knowing that war is an evolving political tool, how has the nature of warfare changed and beyond that how has hybrid warfare changed since its 2007 definition? From that definition how do we see hybrid warfare being carried out and what implications does this carry for small states and for junior military leaders? First of all, the way war is done has changed, as Gerasimov points out in his 2013 article "wars are no longer declared." This suggests a transition of war into the so called "gray zone," a sort of limbo that is neither war nor peace. That means hybrid warfare has also pushed into the gray zone, so rather than being a tactical or operational concept that Hoffman's 2007 definition implies we are seeing a rise of hybrid strategies which align with the 1999 concept of unrestricted warfare from Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui. This hybrid strategy is a grand strategic extrapolation of Hoffman's idea and it takes all the possible domains for state power and weaponizes them, this includes: the economy, natural resources, corporations, the

information space, cyberspace, diplomacy, the military (conventional and irregular forces), criminal organizations, and intelligence organizations. This whole government approach to waging a “non-war” allows smaller states to confront larger powers through subtle means, avoiding a direct conflict they know they will lose. But for junior officers this means the modern battlespace is a more complex environment, as pointed out by Charles Krulak in *The Strategic Corporal* tactical decisions now have strategic implications. As such junior leaders require a more holistic understanding of today’s battlefields and must not only be able to extrapolate the implications of their “small” decisions on any type of operation but also understand the wide variety factors, all part and parcel to the avenues of state power, affecting their area of responsibility. Through a synthesis of literature and expert opinions on hybrid warfare many important questions can be answered. These range from the straightforward, like what is hybrid warfare and how has it changed to more nebulous questions like how do we better prepare junior leaders for the modern battle space, how and why do states adopt hybrid strategies and what does the shift of warfare into the gray zone mean for small states and militaries?