

TERRITORIAL DEFENCE FACING THE CHALLENGE OF HYBRID WARFARE

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ABSTRACT

The course of present armed conflicts indicates the use of different instruments of power, whose major purpose is to gain control over the society and then exploit its resources. The nomenclature mentions *hybrid warfare* more and more frequently while seeking effective countermeasures against it. This topic is related to the creation of a new structure in the Polish Army – the Territorial Defence Force. The article presents the determinants conditioning the creation of the discussed formation and its assigned tasks. It analyses the expected objectives of the Territorial Defence Force as regards the adopted organisational structure, capability to perform its tasks and the established recruitment and training system. The article focuses in particular on countering tools of attack used in hybrid actions. The author refers to the course of events during modern asymmetric armed conflicts, for example in eastern Ukraine. Methods used by a potential enemy and the possible countermeasures exercised by the Territorial Defence Force are taken into consideration. The conclusions include an assessment of the importance of the new formation for Polish national security and defence.

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INTRODUCTION

The numerous armed conflicts within the last two decades give multiple examples of an allegedly new approach to warfare. The annexation of Crimea and war in eastern Ukraine, battle against ISIL or the Russian aggression in Georgia present different military scenarios, all of which feature multiple, coordinated instruments of power used against the opposing country.

The society is the primary focus of this new type of warfare. The aim is to cause chaos and anxiety within a country through multi-dimensional impact. The aggressor's armed forces may be used only in the final stage of a conflict and even then the use of the military is reduced to the absolute minimum. This new approach is often called *hybrid warfare*. Countering such aggression while relying solely on Armed Forces may prove insufficient. Therefore, following analytical and conceptual work, the Polish government decided to appoint a new branch of Armed Forces – the Territorial Defence Force (TDF, Polish: *Wojska Obrony Terytorialnej*), whose role is to counter hybrid tools of attack.

The purpose of this article is to discuss the determinants conditioning the creation of the Territorial Defence Force in Poland and to present a synthesis of tasks assigned to them. The author examines which of the projected capabilities may be useful and effective against potential aggression. He refers in particular to the course of events during the conflict in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea.

In their analysis, the authors try to answer the question which qualities of TDF may be effective in defence against hybrid warfare.

The research was based on materials and articles on different concepts of preparing and conducting war. In particular, a reference is made to the current Russian concepts and examples of their application, especially in Ukraine. Documents and publications related to the establishment of and tasks assigned to TDF were consulted to study the assumptions related to the organisation, equipment and training of the formation. The results of the summary of the research are presented in the conclusions.

HYBRID WARFARE – ORIGIN AND DEFINITION

The phenomenon of warfare has undergone serious transformation in the last few decades. Several significant directions of change can be pointed out:

- increasing number of internal conflicts;

- diversification of parties to conflicts, now including actors other than individual countries;
- considerable expansion of the forms of exerting impact on an opponent, including kinetic methods and non-military measures;
- participation of civilians in armed combat, less visible division between civilians and soldiers;
- armed conflicts on the verge of war and peace (operations below the threshold of war);
- the purpose of combat is no longer to capture land and total destruction of the opposing country is not a desired effect – quite the contrary.¹

The nature of current armed conflicts is investigated by politicians, journalists and newspaper columnists. The last years have certainly brought more than enough data. From the point of view of Poland, particular importance is attached to the origin and course of the events during the annexation of Crimea and war in eastern Ukraine, although operations of a similar nature were also conducted in Georgia (during the fighting in South Ossetia in 2008) or in battle against ISIL. Owing to the above examples, the term *hybrid warfare*, representing a new method of conducting military operations, has gained popularity.

Interestingly, the term is not new. This warfare strategy has existed before and its crucial elements have been used in the past in many armed conflicts (with varying intensity). The scope of the measures used and the expected results of exerting impact on the opposing country have been the subject of research conducted by many military theoreticians.

American military analysts are credited with coining the term and specifying the concept. It was a result of experience gathered by the United States Army when battling terrorism, mainly in Iraq and Afghanistan.² The concept of conducting military actions using diversified instruments of power: hard power (military, kinetic measures) but also intermediate and soft power (e.g. information, propaganda, diplomacy), aimed at achieving military and social (psychological) objectives, was a new theoretical approach. The doctrinal assumptions which were still being developed and analysed were at the same time already utilised in real conflicts.

The pioneer in the field of hybrid warfare theory is William J. Nemeth, who in 2002 drew attention to the military strategy devised by Chechen fighters in his

¹ Ł. Skoneczny, *Wojna hybrydowa – wyzwanie przyszłości? Wybrane zagadnienia*, "Przegląd Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego", 2015, Wydanie Specjalne: "Wojna hybrydowa", p. 39.

² *Ibidem*, p. 40.

study titled *Future war and Chechnya: A case for hybrid warfare*,³ which focuses on the course of the Chechen–Russian conflict. The author uses the term *hybrid* to describe military activities performed by partisans. Other military theoreticians have subsequently contributed to the development of this notion. Two concepts, formulated by people whose opinions on the matter seem to be the most representative, deserve our special attention. The first person is an American analyst and a former US Army officer, Frank G. Hoffman. He presented his reflections on the nature of modern armed conflicts in his study *Conflict in the 21st century: the rise of hybrid wars*.⁴ Russia has adopted a similar approach towards the nature of modern warfare. The views expressed by the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Russia, Gen. Valery Gerasimov are a significant example. Even though he does not use the term *hybrid war* when discussing the directions in which the current and future military actions may proceed, it is obvious that he refers to this particular notion. This approach is even more noteworthy due to the fact that the presented doctrine is apparently in line with the approach adopted by political and military decision-makers in Russia and has found recognition in practice, for example in the conflict in Ukraine.⁵

The opinions of the above mentioned people on hybrid warfare are not quite consistent with each other. Still, one might formulate a certain synthesis of conclusions on the nature of such a conflict type. Its basic feature results from the very essence of the term *hybrid* – hybrid warfare consists in simultaneous or consecutive armed activities: military (conventional and irregular, acts of terrorism, criminal activity) and non-military (political and economic measures, propaganda and information activities, including hostile actions in cyberspace).⁶ The initiators of such operations may include state or non-state actors. It is crucial for the aggressor to maintain all activities on the verge of war and peace, without using armed forces in the initial stage of conflict. As a result, special forces are to play a vital role by influencing the mental state of the society within the territory involved in a conflict, manipulating its spirit and using internal opposition to create groups questioning the legality of the government

³ W.J. Nemeth, *Future war and Chechnya: A case for hybrid warfare*, Monterey, California 2002, <https://calhoun.nps.edu/handle/10945/5865> (accessed: October 2018).

⁴ F.G. Hofman, *Conflict in the 21st century: the rise of hybrid wars*, Arlington 2007, http://www.potomac institute.org/images/stories/publications/potomac_hybridwar_0108.pdf, (accessed: October 2018).

⁵ Ł. Skoneczny, *Wojna...*, *op. cit.*, p. 43.; M. Wojnowski, *Mit „wojny hybrydowej”. Konflikt na terenie państwa ukraińskiego w świetle rosyjskiej myśli wojskowej XIX–XXI wieku*, “Przegląd Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego”, 2015, Wydanie Specjalne: “Wojna hybrydowa”, p. 28–29.

⁶ Ł. Skoneczny, *Wojna...*, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

of the attacked country (including armed groups with separatist aspirations). National minorities present within the territory of a conflict may be a useful tool in such attempts. Moreover, the aggressor's special groups may even resort to extreme measures, for example acts of terror or support of criminal activity. This type of activity is accompanied by strong impact on the society and government of the attacked country in cyberspace and the media (propaganda and disinformation). All this should result in increasing confusion and disintegration within administrative structures of the attacked country. This stage – covert actions – bear great significance, considering that the attacked country may not even be aware of any hostile acts. A surprise effect is desirable at this point. In such circumstances, unambiguous identification of the aggressor seems difficult. These conditions, combined with the aggressor's additional political activity targeted at discrediting the government of the attacked country, will result in complex and vague international relations, especially with reference to the interpretation of principles and provisions of law as well as applicable treaties and agreements.⁷

In their actions, the aggressor will utilise state-of-the-art technology even on the lowest organisational levels. At the same time, the opponent's diversion, intelligence and special squads will be given autonomy, the opportunity to act on their own initiative and independence in decision making. It should be emphasised that despite such opportunities and while using various, sometimes contradictory, methods of exerting impact, the forces should be managed by one command centre to reach synergy.⁸

In the above hybrid warfare scenarios, the use of conventional military forces may be reduced to the final stage of conflict, i.e. annexation of a territory. As can be observed in the Crimean example, detachments engaged in the actions were not even drawn into battle. The optimal outcome for the aggressor would be to achieve their objectives without using military forces. The aggressor may

⁷ Ł. Skoneczny, *Wojna...*, *op. cit.*, p. 45–48; M. Wojnowski, *Mit...*, *op. cit.*, p. 28–29; A. Krzak, *Wojny przyszłości po rosyjsku – wojna hybrydowa, informacyjna i psychologiczna na tle konfliktu Ukraińskiego*, "Przegląd Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego", 2018, no. 18, p. 25–28.; M. Kuczyński, *Ocena hybrydowych zagrożeń granicy państwa w aspekcie wykorzystania Wojsk Obrony Terytorialnej*, "Obronność – Zeszyty Naukowe Wydziału Zarządzania i Dowodzenia Akademii Sztuki Wojennej", 2017, no. 2 (22), p. 97–105.

⁸ W. Lewicki, *Wojna hybrydowa na Ukrainie. Nowa jakość prowadzenia wojny.*, [in:] B. Pacek, J.A. Grochocka (eds), *Wojna hybrydowa na Ukrainie. Wnioski i rekomendacje dla Europy i Świata*, Piotrków Trybunalski 2017, p. 15–16.

use the need to protect national minorities or to provide humanitarian aid as an excuse to engage regular army.⁹

HYBRID WARFARE AS A CHALLENGE FOR ARMED FORCES

Hybrid warfare is thus characterised by a wide use of various methods of exerting impact on the enemy, many of which are non-military in nature. Fighting effectively in the above mentioned conditions poses a great challenge for regular armed forces. The first issue is the legal basis conditioning the use of military in such a conflict.¹⁰ The aggressor will conduct operations below the threshold of war, without actually declaring war. From a formal point of view, a situation resembling an internal crisis will occur. The country should, therefore, have legal tools to enable the use of armed forces to ensure public order during peacetime. What is more, it should take into account the possibility of using the military potential to fight off armed groups conducting irregular, partisan or terrorist activities. Another issue to be addressed is the capability of operational forces to ensure effective response measures. Owing to their structure, equipment and training, operational forces are used mainly for tactical operations against coherent enemy detachments. Fighting against an asymmetrical opponent, groups conducting diversion and irregular operations (especially in the rear area – the source of resources) will necessitate the use of special tactics. Engaging in protective and anti-partisan operations will cause operational forces, aiming to protect all threatened directions of action, to disperse. This may have a negative impact on the implementation of the basic objectives by the defending country if the conflict escalates and the aggressor resorts to military operations using regular armed forces.

THE FORMATION OF TDF IN POLAND, ITS PREDICTED CAPABILITIES AND USE IN HYBRID WARFARE

Facing an opponent who makes use of coordinated hybrid tools is a great challenge. Owing to the large scope of the used methods of exerting impact and their wide application throughout the country's structure, defence against such actions may require the involvement of many institutions.

In Poland, the country border is protected by a number of governmental and non-governmental authorities, including the Border Guard, the Police, Inter-

⁹ M. Wojnowski, *Mit...*, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

¹⁰ B. Pacek, P. Pacek, *Specyfika wojny hybrydowej na Ukrainie*, [in:] B. Pacek, J. A. Grochocka (eds), *Wojna hybrydowa na Ukrainie. Wnioski i rekomendacje dla Europy i świata*, Piotrków Trybunalski 2017, p. 63–64.

nal Security Agency and Foreign Intelligence Agency. Nonetheless, the above mentioned institutions are law enforcement or intelligence agencies and do not have the necessary means to counter military threats. Hence, if a potential crisis situation intensifies and evolves into a military conflict, only armed forces have the ability to protect the territory of the country.¹¹

The structure of the Polish Army is currently divided into five branches:

- Land Forces;
- Air Force;
- Navy;
- Special Forces;
- Territorial Defence Force.

The last branch was established as a separate branch of the Armed Forces in Poland in 2017 and is the newest unit. The appointment of the Territorial Defence Force is one of the actions undertaken to create an additional buffer of deterring and protecting capacity. The causes of the appointment of the new structure in the Polish Armed Forces include the following:

- intensifying Russian policy of expansion, in particular towards the neighbouring countries of Poland;
- new developments in the field of military operations, application of hybrid warfare assumptions during the annexation of Crimea and war in eastern Ukraine, tactics asymmetry;
- unstable consistency and unity levels among the NATO and EU members as well as varying readiness to undertake joint deterring and protective actions, especially considering the disagreement as to the proper conduct during a military crisis below the threshold of war resembling an (apparent) internal problem of a country due to the use of multi-dimensional operations by an aggressor;¹²
- the Polish Armed Forces based on a professional army – well-prepared but quite small, with limited means of response to operations below the threshold of war and a small trained reserve.

The Territorial Defence Force functions within the country's military system, complements the capabilities of other Armed Forces and ensures new areas of operation. The key purposes of establishing the formation are as follows:

- increasing the country's defence capabilities: professional army equipped with modern weapons and gear, with high offensive and manoeuvring capabilities,

¹¹ M. Kuczyński, *Ocena...*, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

¹² M. Grzegorzółka, *Wojska Obrony Terytorialnej – wczoraj, dziś i jutro*, "Warszawski Instytut Inicjatyw Strategicznych", https://www.wiis.org.pl/images/publikacje/WOT---wczoraj_dzis_i_jutro.pdf (accessed: October 2018).

holds the core military capabilities of the Armed Forces. Still, maintaining the unit generates high costs, which accounts for its small size. Accordingly, the increasing number of operational units must entail a proportionally larger budget for the National Defence department. The alternative for establishing expensive operational units is the creation of a light infantry formation, equipped with light weapons and conducting military operations based on tactics different than those used by the operational forces. The creation of the Territorial Defence Force enables increasing the country's military capabilities at a relatively low expense;

- complementing the abilities of operational forces: performance of protective and defence tasks aimed at ensuring room for manoeuvre for operational forces, especially in the rear area, and at obtaining information about the terrain and enemy on their behalf. In the above scope, the Territorial Defence Force should complement (yet not substitute) the existing capabilities of the remaining branches of the Armed Forces;
- boosting the emergency response capabilities: by maintaining forces and measures in a state of constant readiness to counter crisis military situations and to support the state administration in fighting off non-military threats;
- providing support for the society and building up patriotic and pro-defence attitudes: by constant presence in all regions of the country, cooperation with local communities, readiness to provide support in crisis situations and enhancing the country's collective defence.¹³

Taking into consideration the projected capabilities of the Territorial Defence Force in Poland,¹⁴ we can analyse the potential utility of the formation for countering measures used in hybrid warfare. Particularly owing to the fact that one of its purposes is tackling new methods of conducting military operations. It seems reasonable to draw a link between the above considerations and the events which took place during the initiation and escalation of the conflict in Ukraine (both in the case of the annexation of Crimea and fights in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts). A potential aggressor may use similar measures against Poland or other countries on the eastern edge of NATO territory.

¹³ Dowództwo Wojsk Obrony Terytorialnej, *Wojska Obrony Terytorialnej w operacji /DD-3.40/*, Warszawa 2018, p. 13; A. Michalak, *Cele, zadania, struktura i funkcje wojsk obrony terytorialnej w XXI wieku*, "Bezpieczeństwo. Teoria i Praktyka", 2017, no. 3., p. 28–30.

¹⁴ Dowództwo Wojsk Obrony Terytorialnej, *Wojska...*, *op. cit.*, p. 17; M. Klisz, *Utworzenie Wojsk Obrony Terytorialnej jako odpowiedź na nowe zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa państwa*, "Bezpieczeństwo. Teoria i Praktyka", 2017, no. 3, p. 71.

‘LOCAL FORCES’

The basic feature of the newly established branch of the Armed Forces is its territorial character. This means that the detachments under the Territorial Defence Force are assigned to a particular region in accordance with the administrative division.¹⁵ As a rule, one light infantry company is present in each district.¹⁶ Soldiers who serve in such units should come from the regions in which they are stationed. The purpose of this is to ensure attachment to the ‘little homeland’ and commitment to its protection. At the same time, TDF detachments are the first forces to arrive at a particular location and remain in constant readiness to respond to any threats.¹⁷ One significant aspect is that soldiers who come from a certain region already know the characteristics of the local landscape and can use it to their advantage. In such cases, the operation of enemy military groups focused on diversion or separatist activities will be less effective.¹⁸ By placing military forces and measures in a state of constant readiness in each region of the country and ensuring prompt response, the defender limits negative surprise effects caused by the enemy’s actions. The Territorial Defence Force will be able to join the fights earlier than operational forces and its potential and capabilities as regards countering aggressors’ forces are much more extensive than those attributed to police institutions.

ALWAYS CLOSE TO THE SOCIETY

The fundamental aspect characterising the Polish Territorial Defence Force is maintaining good relations with local communities and authorities. This is the essence of the formation’s official mission: “defence and support for local communities”. TDF cannot function independently from the society. People must be aware that the new branch of the Armed Forces is aimed in particular on supporting the local community. As a consequence, the society should also help TDF by providing resources and building the region’s security together. A significant part of the formation’s capability is based on cooperation with

¹⁵ Dowództwo Wojsk Obrony Terytorialnej, *Wojska...*, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

¹⁶ G. Kwaśniak, *Wojska Obrony Terytorialnej – stan aktualny i perspektywy*, “OKO.press”, https://oko.press/images/2016/09/WOT_PERSPEKTYWY.pdf, (accessed: October 2018); R. Surdacki, *Kompanie OT dostosują się do terenu*, “Defence24”, <https://www.defence24.pl/kompanie-ot-dostosuja-sie-do-terenu> (accessed: October 2018).

¹⁷ *Terytorialsi*, <https://terytorialsi.wp.mil.pl> (accessed: October 2018).

¹⁸ Cf. Gen. Wiesław Kukula o *Wojskach Obrony Terytorialnej*, “YouTube”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vy5MBtup82k> (accessed: October 2018).

local people.¹⁹ What is more, TDF soldiers come from regions to which they are deployed and are a part of the communities they live in. They belong to different social and professional groups. This means that they also have the knowledge of the problems, changes and threats arising within these groups. In consequence, TDF may perform duties complementary to counterintelligence and investigation institutions, collecting information about suspicious or potentially dangerous events (or circumstances) directly from the local community (HUMINT). The above capabilities should to a great extent prevent opponents from executing covert preparatory actions or building resource bases to be able to attack below the threshold of war.

Information flow should also be carried out in the opposite direction, i.e. from TDF soldiers to the local community. This should be put into practice especially when an enemy is using propaganda, manipulation or false news (e.g. through the media, the internet or by distributing falsified information to create an atmosphere of confusion and ambiguity). In such cases, TDF may become a source of reliable knowledge about the current situation.²⁰ For this reason, the formation's reputation among the society should be impeccable so that it can become a trustworthy source of information in times of uncertainty.

COOPERATION WITH OPERATIONAL FORCES

As proved by the example of the fights in eastern Ukraine, it was difficult for regular detachments launching operations against the separatist forces to enter the area of conflict and assume a battle formation. Among other reasons, the defender lacked reliable information about the location, potential and preparation for battle of the enemy forces.²¹ In conclusion, the duties of the Territorial Defence Force include protection when introducing operational forces to a particular region of responsibility.²² Cooperation established between the two formations should lead to an exchange of crucial information on the terrain conditions and characteristics within the area of operations as well as on the location and type of resources used by the enemy. As regards the collection

¹⁹ *Terytorialsi*, *op. cit.*; P. Glińska, M. Kowalska-Sendek, *WOT – misja, struktura, szkolenie*, "Polska Zbrojna", <http://www.polska-zbrojna.pl/home/articleshow/22674?t=WOT-misja-struktura-szkolenie> (accessed: October 2018).

²⁰ Centrum Doktryn i Szkolenia SZ, *Zasady użycia Wojsk Obrony Terytorialnej /DT-3.40.1/ (projekt studyjny)*, Bydgoszcz 2016, p. 11–12; M. Kuczyński, *Ocena...*, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

²¹ B. Pacek, P. Pacek, *Specyfika...*, *op. cit.*, p. 64–65.

²² Centrum Doktryn i Szkolenia SZ, *Zasady...*, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

of critical battlefield information, TDF will complement operational forces' intelligence capabilities throughout the entire conflict.

Moreover, the scope of TDF's duties includes anti-diversion activities.²³ The formation can protect key infrastructure elements, patrol selected areas and perform other preventive actions.²⁴

CONCLUSIONS

The Territorial Defence Force in Poland does not replace operational forces. It has been established as a separate branch of the Armed Forces and has received certain freedom in carrying out its tasks.

The operation of TDF is based on close cooperation with local communities. The formation is in a state of constant readiness to support local governments and communities in addressing both non-military and military threats. In return, local communities, institutions and authorities are expected to cooperate in terms of the collection (exchange) of information on potential hostile activities. TDF soldiers come from local societies and constitute them, it is therefore expected that they should be aware of any significant problems and threats. When the initiation of irregular operations becomes necessary, local communities will be the key resource base for the operation of the Territorial Defence Force.

It is predicted that building social trust in the new branch of the Armed Forces should enable countering enemy propaganda and false, destructive information disseminated among local communities and institutions. As regard hybrid tools of attack, one of the most important duties assigned to the Territorial Defence Force is care about the integrity of the Polish society.

TDF's mission is to defend and support local communities. It is the basic objective of the formation's operation. Owing to this hierarchy of objectives, TDF becomes a tool in battle against hybrid opponents. The essence of the discussed warfare type is, after all, to exert destructive influence on the society in the attacked country. Consequently, the long-term effect of the above mentioned forces may be to engage society in maintaining a state of security on the regional level.

²³ *Struktura i zadania*, [in:] *Obrona terytorialna*, "Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej", <http://www.mon.gov.pl/obrona-terytorialna/pytania-i-odpowiedzi/struktura-i-zadania-j2016-12-28/> (accessed: October 2018).

²⁴ M. Kuczyński, *Ocena...*, *op. cit.*, p. 108; A. Michalak, *Cele...*, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

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