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**Responding to Hybrid Warfare:
The Case of the Attempted Assassination
of Sergey Skripal**

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Abstract

The concept of hybrid warfare, parsimonious but poorly defined in terms of theory, failed to provide an operational framework for relevant research or policy purposes. With a more holistic approach to hybrid warfare, this thesis means to revitalize a decaying interest to this topic, prove its relevance, as well as provide a new, broad understanding of the phenomenon that is fit for practical purposes.

To study the means of state response to hybrid warfare through public policy, this dissertation adopted a case study approach. Ignoring the more ‘traditional’ hybrid scenarios, such as cyber attacks in the Baltics, this research focused on a more novel interpretation of a hybrid attack, such as the case of attempted assassination of Sergey Skripal. Cases of such unorthodox nature of hybrid warfare have the potential to unveil significant evidence base for both research and policy-making purposes in terms of prevention and reaction to hybrid scenarios.

With findings of the research focusing on the triangulation of theory with a real-world scenario, this dissertation lays foundation for the new understanding of hybrid warfare and, possibly, a more comprehensive theory of hybrid warfare in the future.

Keywords: hybrid warfare, response to hybrid warfare, public policy, evidence-based policymaking, UK public policy, securitization theory, Sergey Skripal, Alexandr Litvinenko.

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Acronyms

AWE	Atomic Weapons Establishment
CBRN	chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials
CCTV	closed-circuit television
EU	European Union
GRU	General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSCU	National Security Communications Unit
OPCW	Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
UK	The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
U.S.	United States of America

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I. Introduction

A few years ago, the theory of hybrid warfare became a hot commodity as the annexation of Crimea took place. Previously dominated by the U.S. military, this concept characterized unmarked soldiers/guerilla combatants that can orchestrate covert operations. Nevertheless, it did not have the conceptual depth to describe an array of coercive actions that followed the deployment of so-called 'green men' in the Crimean peninsula, such as disinformation, voting manipulations, naval provocations, and so forth. With all of them being loosely labeled as 'hybrid' threats, a fashionable term in academia, policy, and media, the concept of hybrid warfare retained only its face value, with the rest of its existing theoretical underpinnings becoming obsolete.

And although hybrid warfare threats continue to challenge states around the globe, the effort in studying this evasive phenomenon has eroded, leaving no comprehensive footprint in terms of theoretical or practical substance. The theory of hybrid warfare entered decay before it reached its maturity. This dissertation was intended to revitalize a discussion on hybrid warfare, as the concept itself did not lose its relevance. To prevent this research from becoming a simple theory-multiplication exercise, many of which exist in the field, this dissertation adopted a practical approach with the main research aim to study how states can respond to the hybrid warfare threats.

This research aim was facilitated through three research objectives. The first objective of the study required the introduction of a holistic approach to hybrid warfare and the making of an actionable definition. Considering that the scope of the masters dissertation would not allow for the production of a comprehensive theory of hybrid warfare, the goal was to analyse available scholarship and synthesize a definition that is usable for both theoretical and practical purposes.

The second objective of the dissertation relates to the analysis of state response to hybrid warfare through the means of public policy. Planned as a theoretical exercise, it was intended as a foundation for the third objective of the research, namely the study of the public policy response to a hybrid warfare event based on the case of the attempted assassination of Sergey Skripal. In this way, the research allowed for the triangulation of the theory and practice, as stipulated by the first research objective.

The choice of the case study was motivated by its unapparent hybrid character. As this research demonstrates, it is delusional to think that hybrid attacks come in one shape. The attempted assassination of Sergey Skripal, in its essence, was not a simple attempted murder, but a violation of the UK sovereignty, as well as an internationally punishable act of the use of chemical warfare. This case proves that, just like Clausewitz's "fog of war", hybrid warfare represents a challenge of blurring distinctions between truths and lies, as well as narratives exploiting the existing fissures in the society that can have long-term policy implications. Small attacks like this, which usually go unnoticed in the larger hybrid warfare debate, are key to understanding the challenges of such coercive methods on a relatively smaller scale that allows for comprehensive analysis.

II. Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation is structured around four main chapters. This section will briefly outline main themes in each part.

The first chapter offers the theoretical basis of the dissertation, which is facilitated by a comprehensive literature review in the area of hybrid warfare, and relevant literature covering public policy response measures. This part situates the understanding of the concept of hybrid warfare in the research and proposes a definition thereof, which is suggested both for the means of research and public policy. Then, the chosen methodology is outlined,

explaining the use of the case study and process tracing methods in this thesis. Aside from the primary case of the attempted assassination of Sergey Skripal in 2018, the research adopted a secondary case study of the assassination of Alexandr Litvinenko that took place in 2006 since it proved to be a useful baseline value for results triangulation.

Chapters two and three contain the process tracing of the primary case, with the relevant triangulation inputs based on the Litvinenko incident. In the second chapter, the research considers the immediate crisis response, which is related to public health and criminal investigation matters. This chapter tests two hypotheses that have the potential explanatory power for the organization of the UK public policy response: impact of the institutional learning on the response organization and the potential influence of the imperfect attack execution on the facilitated response. Based on the gathered data, the primary hypothesis that pertained to the institutional learning was confirmed.

The third chapter continues the process tracing efforts, focusing on diplomatic and political measures surrounding the international coverage of the crisis that situated the UK's response to the actions of the Russian Federation, the state actor that was determined to be responsible for the attack. This chapter tested two hypotheses that evaluated the impact of strategic communications and hard evidence on the UK public policy response to the Skripal incident. With evidence demonstrating mixed results, none of the hypotheses were conclusively confirmed; nevertheless, the data points to the larger explanatory power of the primary hypothesis that relates to the use of strategic communications.

With the first three chapters containing preliminary conclusions, the fourth chapter discusses the main research findings and triangulates them with the theoretical framework offered in the first chapter. This part also discusses room for theory development, such as a possible link with securitization theory.

All in all, this dissertation is meant to reopen the debate on hybrid warfare and detach it from some pre-existing stereotypes, such as actor-based visions of hybrid warfare which will be explored in chapter one. By suggesting a holistic definition of hybrid warfare, this research intends to expand the evidence base available for further studies, as well as make a range of theoretical remarks that can be useful for the creation of a comprehensive theory of hybrid warfare in the future.

Chapter 1. Literature review

Studying responses to hybrid warfare requires a thorough theoretical framework that will achieve several objectives: first, evaluate the available theory of hybrid warfare; second, synthesize an actionable definition; third, evaluate the existing literature on the strategies of tackling hybrid warfare.

The literature review will proceed as follows: it begins with the mapping of the existing field of knowledge surrounding hybrid warfare through the linguistics of the adjective ‘hybrid’ and the impact that it had on the existing theoretical debate. The research presents two camps of thought that have formed: the first one that views hybrid warfare as a mix of different strategies and tools, and the second one that perceives hybrid warfare as a ‘mutation’ of warfare.

Having situated the theoretical debates in the field, the dissertation proposes a definition of hybrid warfare and weighs its advantages and disadvantages. The research engages with the issues of actorhood, criminality, and plausible deniability to provide depth for the proposed definition and evaluate its usefulness for the purposes of theory and practice.

Having established the theoretical underpinnings of the term ‘hybrid warfare’ in the dissertation, the literature review proceeds to explore a connection between hybrid warfare and public policy. The research evaluates response strategies to hybrid threats that are offered in the literature and explores gaps and deficiencies thereof. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limited character of the discussion on the issue of hybrid warfare and the identification of areas that have to be targeted moving forward.

1.1. Defining hybrid warfare

To begin with the theory, one must consider that the issue with hybrid warfare is not the problematic definitions per se, but its inability to be useful

(Reichborn-Kjennerud and Cullen 2016). To identify systemic problems surrounding the term, this research used a sample of over 30 definitions of hybrid warfare that derived from publications in academia, military, policy, and mixtures thereof (e.g. research completed by military personnel, or publications of a think tank advising public policy) (see Appendix 1). This variety in the sample¹ allowed organizing the knowledge surrounding the issue of hybrid warfare and making a variety of logical inferences, which are useful for understanding both the nature of hybrid warfare and the traps that surround this term.

Understanding hybrid warfare begins with the word ‘hybrid’. As per the Oxford Dictionary, this word can have several definitions; but as an adjective, there are only two. First, ‘hybrid’ means ‘of mixed character; composed of different elements’, which points at the blending of various components (Oxford Dictionaries 2019:online). The second definition, ‘bred as a hybrid from different species or varieties’, suggests a botany-inspired meaning, which is synonymous with mutation (Oxford Dictionaries 2019:online). This difference between a mix and mutation is critical for understanding the existing debate on the question of hybrid warfare. Both definitions were used in the research on hybrid warfare, and, as a result, produced two different camps of thought within it.

The first camp understands ‘hybrid’ as a mix and defines “hybrid warfare” as simultaneous use of various strategies, tactics, and tools, such as conventional and unconventional warfare, sabotage, subversion, etc. (for example, see Hoffman 2010, Mosquera and Bachmann 2016, European Commission 2016, Herta 2017, Caliskan and Cramers 2018). To illustrate this, two definitions from the sample in Appendix A are presented:

¹ Most authors are in the list only once, with a notable exception of Frank G. Hoffman, who is likely to be the most cited and the most influential researcher in the area of hybrid warfare

any adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs a fused mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism, and criminal behavior in the battlespace to obtain their political objectives. (Hoffman 2010:443)

a conflict “in which states or non-state actors exploit all modes of war simultaneously by using advanced conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism, and disruptive technologies or criminality to destabilize an existing order, and which blurs distinct categories of warfare across the spectrum, from active combat to civilian support (Mosquera and Bachmann 2016: 66)

These two definitions are representative of the writings produced by the first camp of authors, which constitute a majority of the overall research on hybrid warfare. They view hybrid warfare as a tactic that can achieve synergy of different modes of warfare and maximize their impact. This, however, attracted a lot of criticism based on two pillars: simultaneity (how many components of warfare does it take to the activity to become “hybrid”) and exceptionality (how do you differentiate between asymmetrical and hybrid warfare) (see Galeotti 2016, Kofman and Rojansky 2015).

As a result, the given approach is problematic as it makes the determination of particular conflict as “hybrid” an arbitrary decision that is not based on a set of indicators or characteristics. The wording of the definitions themselves, which usually include long lists of modes of warfare that can be a part of the hybrid strategy, makes them difficult to use for any kind of follow-up action, whether it is data collection, research, or decision-making.

The second camp of thought in the theory of hybrid warfare, which views ‘hybrid’ as a mutation, has written extensively on the issues of simultaneity

and exceptionality. Radin, in particular, has noted that the term is fuzzy to the degree that it becomes unhelpful and does not properly raise the question of response (2015). This, however, is not to say that the second camp has evaded such issues (see, for example, Bond 2007, Huovinen 2011, Williamson 2009, Abbott 2016, NATO 2018, Naydenov 2018, UK Ministry of Defence 2016). Although the understanding of hybrid warfare as a completely unique kind of warfare that is beyond just being a sum of its components can be more inclusive and helpful to understanding the threat that such warfare represents, in the words of the second camp, everything can be hybrid warfare; it is what actors make of it. As captured in the discussion by Fleming:

There are not going to be clear threats and clear solutions...I don't see us ever getting back to that. And, the hybrid threats are fuzzy...but, basically what they're saying is: people that oppose us (one) aren't going to confront us head on, and (two) they are going to come at us asymmetrically -- as you would expect any enemy to do (2011:34)

This expresses the main idea of the second camp of researchers of hybrid warfare: there is no possibility to capture the boundaries of the term ‘hybrid warfare’ and make a concrete definition. Contrary to the expectations of realist scholars, hybrid warfare is not something palpable and/or tangible; it is a term that carries more psychological weight than physical substance:

Hybrid warfare is now used in a systematic, subtle, and refined way, backed by an official state discourse that denies it and supports it at the same time and to which the international community seems unable to respond (Polese et al. 2016: 365)

Unfortunately, this approach also has quite limited practical value; while it captures the “known unknown” character of hybrid warfare, it prevents the discussion from focusing on a greater theory; the authors get caught up in the

technicalities of the proposed definitions and thus impair their generalization power. As an example:

Multimodal, low-intensity, kinetic as well as non-kinetic threats to international peace and security include cyber war, asymmetric conflict scenarios, global terrorism, piracy, transnational organised crime, demographic challenges, resources security, retrenchment from globalisation and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction... have become known as hybrid threats (Bachmann 2015:78)

The same pitfall that befell the first camp is pervasive in the second: authors define hybrid threats by the already known types of warfare in order to compensate for the lack of parsimonious definition. The second camp, however, made a leap from understanding hybrid as a sum of different components to a realization of the multifocal and unpredictable character of hybrid warfare. It is exactly the second camp authors who are the source of consensus visible in the latest publications on hybrid warfare: the idea of hybrid warfare being subtle, vague, inclusive, and not fitting into the known categorizations of the forms of conflict.

As the discussion has shown, the attempts to tie the definition and overall understanding of hybrid warfare to particular known kinds of warfare or responsible actors are counterproductive in several ways. First of all, this raises questions as to what kinds and what combinations of methods and tactics can be considered hybrid. With “I-knew-it-all-along” effect, researchers fail to recognize that in the past, technologically advanced tools such as stealth aircraft could technically qualify under the ‘hybrid warfare’ umbrella; with time these tools have become part of the conventional warfare toolkit. Cyber tools, for instance, also have the potential to become conventional weapons – and they already are making the transition if one considers the extensive use of drones in on-the-ground military operations.

Second of all, tying theory to certain actors prevents the user from embracing the fluidity of hybrid warfare and the variety of actors that can launch such attacks. In the pool of existing literature, one can notice two recurrent actor-oriented visions of hybrid warfare: hybrid warfare as a tactic by non-state actors (for example, see Hoffman 2010, Bond 2007, Fleming 2011, Bachmann 2015), and hybrid warfare as a Russian strategy in its near abroad (for example, see Banasik 2016, Kofman and Rojansky 2015, Neville 2015, Chivvis 2017, Radin 2017). Although both non-state actors and Russian strategic outlooks are two main reference points for these authors, they are both not necessary elements for the warfare to become hybrid. By being bound to a particular actor, these visions of hybrid warfare make the users vulnerable to attacks originating from a different reference point.

Appendix 1, which represents the theoretical sample compiled for the purposes of this dissertation, among definitions, also details the actors used by authors in their research. And although, as the research suggests, the majority of the writing is based on the two models outlined in the previous paragraph that cover non-state actors and Russian involvement in its 'near abroad', there is still no generalizable theory of hybrid warfare even for these archetypes. This, indirectly, leads us to the idea that hybrid threats often have a unique character: they are country-specific and derive from the potential weak spots in the security environment (European Commission 2016). This relates to both target areas and actors that are capable of exploiting them. For example, in the case of Ukraine, hybrid warfare can be interpreted as a mix of conventional and unconventional means with an emphasis on information warfare. For the Baltics, hybrid warfare may imply manipulations of the energy trade by the supplier. For Afghanistan, hybrid warfare may mean the use of civilians as human shields by the non-state actors. Each new case unveils a new realm of possibilities for the use of hybrid tactics; in the same time, it makes general theorization of the term very difficult.

As a result, expressing the term ‘hybrid warfare’ through categories of types of conflict and actor, and in this way overly detalizing the term, negatively affects its practical value. So while hybrid warfare is often criticized to be extremely vague and inclusive, for the purpose of given research on the responses to hybrid warfare, vagueness is not a vice, but a virtue.

1.2. Proposed definition and its implications

After analyzing over 30 definitions of hybrid warfare and attempting to create one, which will outline the term with extreme preciseness, it became clear that such effort will not be useful; this phenomenon requires a different approach, namely, a broad concept that can be operationalized locally to account for actor-specific vulnerabilities targeted by this mode of war. Just like Clausewitz’s fog of war, hybrid warfare blurs the differences between what is known about conflict and what it actually is; how states are supposed to behave and how they actually do; and what tools one technically can use and what tools are actually used. Hybrid warfare is truly hybrid because it adapts to the target and exploits its weaknesses.

As a result, this dissertation adopted the overall approach of the second camp of thought: unlike just a mixture of different modes and tactics of war-making, the idea of ‘mutation’ is better suited to capture the character of hybrid as a war in peacetime, attacks without the declaration of open hostilities. Taking this into consideration, **the dissertation proposes the following definition of hybrid warfare: it is a strategy of a subtle employment of a variety of coercive tools by external actors for political purposes, the intensity of which remains below the threshold of declaration of war.**

It is clear that the proposed definition is very broad and can thus be considered problematic as it is unspecific: e.g. it does not quantify ‘subtle’ nor explains what does ‘foreign actor’ means. Same applies to the legal concept of “war declaration”: while a violation of the sovereignty per se may be a ground for the declaration of war, it requires political will to proclaim one. It is

impossible to measure the intensity of the coercive actions that will trigger formal war as it will be unique for each given case. As a result, one must remember that this definition is proposed only as a broad guidance to the nature of hybrid warfare and it must be specified based on the locality, where the definition is employed. In the current state of hybrid warfare theory, it is the only viable way to provide practical scope for the definition to address a wide range of actions that can fall under the 'hybrid' umbrella.

Two components of the definition must be highlighted as they engage the underrated features of the hybrid warfare: its subtlety, which here relates to the plausible deniability of the hybrid attacks, and its low-intensity character, which in this case engages the issue of criminality.

Both elements are crucial for the execution of the key component of the definition: keeping the hybrid attack under the threshold of declaration of war. They distance the actor who is executing the strategy from the actual deed and the responsibility for it (in the case of plausible deniability) or make it a problem of target's law enforcement (in the case of criminality). This is why in some cases hybrid warfare is called "grey zone warfare", due to a simple fact that it targets the areas which are not covered by the international humanitarian law (Herta 2017). As a result, the undertaken actions stay below the threshold of war and restrict the response options of the targeted state.

The issue of criminality, in particular, is of great interest. While it appeared at the very inception of the theory of hybrid warfare in Hoffman's writing (see Hoffman 2007a, 2010, 2012), it has not received much attention since, despite its extreme importance for understanding the nature of such threats. According to Hoffman, criminality sustains hybrid activity and assists in creating long-standing disruptions in the society (2007a). As a result, hybrid warfare carries a significant psychological burden; by creating long-standing disruptions in the society (Hoffman 2007a), it overwhelms the opponent to the point that it is ready to adjust its behaviour (Fleming 2011).

Criminal acts in hybrid warfare, essentially, are subtle violations of the state's sovereignty in the time of peace. As opposed to conventional warfare, where law enforcement matters would be on the periphery of the fighting, in hybrid warfare, they are the focus of the action. Criminality provides strategic depth for the attack: instead of targeting the vulnerabilities of the target overtly, it means to commit the intended action and conceal its origins, as well as cause repercussions for the reputation and authority of the targeted state's public administration.

The seeming law enforcement character of the hybrid warfare clashes with socially constructed traditional peace versus war delineation (Dayspring, 2015). It can be correlated with the notion of "unpeace" rather than "war" (Malksoo 2018). 'Unpeace' is a term coined by L. Kello, the director of the Centre for Technology and Global Affairs at Oxford, which means "mid-spectrum rivalry lying below the physically destructive threshold of interstate violence, but whose harmful effects far surpass the tolerable level of peacetime competition." (Allison 2018:online). Unlike negative peace, this term captures the ongoing hostilities, which are nevertheless insufficient for the start of the full-fledged conventional war.

To illustrate this phenomenon, one could reference another term that recently started to be used in the connotation with hybrid threats: namely, lawfare. This tool allows the malicious use of the legal framework to achieve strategic objectives. The types of lawfare can include the creation of protracted conflicts, delegitimization of the targeted actors, support for the status quo that can be unfavourable for the targeted actor, and so forth (Mosquera and Bachmann 2016). For instance, one could think of the Russian Federation protecting the interests of the Russian population abroad by using means such as annexation, the use of civilians as human shields in the Middle East, or even the creation of artificial islands in the South China Sea. All of these actions are lawfare: they exploit the vulnerabilities of the legal frameworks of

the specific countries and the international community as a whole. Lawfare blurs the delineation between the original purpose of the law and its actual design, which can be manipulated with.

Considering the aforementioned challenges of plausible deniability and criminality (and its offspring, lawfare), the term ‘hybrid warfare’ cannot be pinpointed more precisely for the purpose of general theory-making. It cannot be done due to a simple notion that every kind of new tactics and tool can render the existing definition useless: and the existing multi-sentence definitions that describe every kind of known warfare technique by now (see, for example, Herta 2017, Banasik 2016, Kofman and Rojansky 2015, Huovinen 2011, Neag 2016) will be not more useful than a two-line definition proposed in this dissertation.

Thus, although the proposed definition of the hybrid warfare can be criticized on the grounds of vagueness, its simplicity and inclusiveness are exactly what can make it usable for the means of both theory and practice. For the purpose of theory, this definition is an exact representation of the challenge of hybrid warfare, which is built on known unknowns and unknown unknowns. It is also suitable for customization based on the specifics of the case that is being dealt with. In this way, the researcher can develop a set of characteristics and indicators for data collection that will drive the research and analyze hybrid threats originating in a particular region or from a particular type of actor.

The same applies in practice: by developing country-specific characteristics and indicators it will be possible to develop relevant response measures. Hybrid challenges are unique for each given actor and the situation it navigates, and thus, each actor should be able to deem their own relevant challenges ‘hybrid’ and work towards the establishment of the response tools. Securitization of particular challenges the country faces under the ‘hybrid’ umbrella can ease the incorporation of safeguards in the state system, such early warning mechanisms, evaluation and monitoring tools, and facilitate the

allocation of budget, and so on. All in all, the proposed definition is just a foundation that can provide a user-friendly foundation for the use of the term “hybrid warfare”.

1.3. Tackling hybrid warfare: public policy dimension

The idea of the state taking primary responsibility for the organization of the response to hybrid warfare is not new. The scope of publications noted in Appendix 1 reveal an overwhelming consensus of the authors on the purpose of the use of hybrid warfare – namely, political aims of such actions (see, for example Bond 2007, Hoffman 2010, Hoffman 2012, Mosquera and Bachmann 2016, Chivvis 2017, Omand 2018). Countering such actions, as a result, is a task of the target state’s public policy.

As per the so-called gold standard definition of Thomas Dye, public policy is “anything a government chooses to do or not to do” (1972:2); another example of a very vague but relevant definition that is operationalized locally. When thinking about the proposed definition of hybrid warfare and its suggested use in public policy, it is clear that with country-specific vulnerabilities, states will treat hybrid warfare differently. Public policy in Afghanistan, for example, is likely to view hybrid warfare through the lens of lawfare used by the Taliban rather than the cyberattack concerns that would be more relevant for Baltic countries, and thus embed relevant safeguards in their systems to monitor or prevent such instances.

But while publications on the broad understanding of theory and particular cases of hybrid warfare are numerous, the mechanisms for tackling such threats on the public policy level – or any other levels for that matter, are greatly underrepresented in the existing literature. Due to the nature of hybrid warfare, it is likely that a number of public policy documents are classified to prevent the access of the adversary to the matters of defence planning. But even so, the available literature is scarce and fragmented, and often spirals

down to the discussion of the ethics of the hybrid actions and accusations over immoral behaviour of the states in the international system (almost like realism never existed). Instead of working out ways to counter hybrid threats, authors deriving from public policy develop concepts, such as “Kremlin playbook” that shift the blame of the state being unprepared to counter a particular action to the actor, who is an evil mastermind that uses “unfair” tactics (see Jopling 2018). Hybrid warfare, however, only utilizes the already available vulnerabilities and the failure to recognize and address them only perpetuates the problem.

This denial has been recently called out by Dr Malksoo as “ontological insecurity”, fear of not knowing how to navigate the world (2018). Capturing the problematic nature of hybrid warfare, which was discussed earlier, this term partly explains why there is so little written on the matter of response to hybrid threats: the uncertainty and ambiguity of hybrid warfare incapacitate the research. With generalization being extremely problematic in hybrid warfare, the states have to take the responsibility for the evaluation of their specific vulnerabilities and the development of the appropriate response mechanisms, which requires significant manpower and budget to execute and regularly update such analysis. Thus, the states often attempt to work out uniform public policy approaches that deal with the main challenges of hybrid warfare, such as simultaneity, plausible deniability, as well as psychological pressure that comes with all of these.

The examples of such policies include, but are not restricted to strategic planning (including defence-related budgeting), strategic communications and media, as well as societal cohesion. Addressing these general areas help build the resilience of the society to the threats of hybrid character, which seems to be the central topic of the response-centred publications on hybrid warfare.

Considering a very small scope of the existing literature on the responses to hybrid warfare, there seems not to be a record of the literature of a lessons-

learned character or materials focusing on the immediate policy responses when hybrid attacks are taking place. The majority of the contributions that can relate to responses to hybrid warfare address the ad hoc activity that can be undertaken to minimize the damages, but not to counter the ongoing attack. Thus, the following paragraphs will address the ideas that are outlined in the literature but also identify gaps that are not yet filled by the available materials.

The issue of strategic planning is, by far, the most well-developed response strategy that is offered in the literature, especially when looking at the documents that derive from public policy. EU- and NATO-related literature often refers to the expertise of a range of Centers of Excellence and task forces that handle particular issues and can be a valuable resource and primary conduits for strategic planning (e.g. EU Hybrid Fusion Cell, EU East StratCom Task Force, NATO Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, NATO Joint Intelligence and Security Division, and so forth) (Jopling 2018).

This approach, however, can be challenged due to the fact that hybrid warfare is usually country-specific, and some authors, such as Giegerich, rightfully note that country specialization on defence matters results in degrading the collective capability through uncoordinated spending cuts (2012). So while cooperation is a deterrent for outside forces, it often can act as a false safety net for the countries that are part of communities such as the EU or NATO: states feel protected against common threats and they stop devoting enough attention to their specific vulnerabilities.

In “Hybrid War and Its Countermeasures” Johnson posits that states must develop consistent practices of self-evaluation and audit (2018). This means that public policy must take into consideration alternative ripping lines in the society, such as lack of respect for minority rights or voting system vulnerabilities that can be exploited by foreign forces using hybrid methods.

This, however, again is an ad hoc strategy that is unlikely to bring quick returns if utilized during active hybrid attacks.

To accommodate the new modality of war, defence planning and budgeting must reorient itself away from the threat-based assessments. Hybrid challenges require a more sustainable strategy that will prepare the actor to navigate a fluid hostile environment. So-called capability-based planning should be utilized to enhance the competencies and capabilities of the actor that then can be tailored to the emerging threat (Zrnić 2008). In other words, organizational learning and adaptation can do much more for the defensive capability of the state against hybrid threats. Rich institutional capacity, which connects military and civilian bodies, as well as strategic human resource management are two prerequisites for successful understanding and countering hybrid threats.

Institutional capacity-building, however, is impossible without effective communication, both on the interagency level and in public outreach. The critical character of communication in the condition of hybrid warfare is addressed by a variety of authors (see, for example, Naydenov 2018, CASIS 2018, Jopling 2018, European Commission 2016). All these authors highlight the need for the establishment of strategic communications practices. In this research, strategic communication is understood as “purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfil its mission” (Hallahan et al. 2007:3), which relates to the ability of the organization to both establish and challenge narratives to further the organizational objectives. It is notable, though, that although the issue of strategic communications is cross-cutting in the literature on the response to hybrid warfare, there is little instrumental information on how this should be achieved.

As put by Weiss and Pomerantsev, the media space now is predominantly occupied by PR professionals, rather than journalists (2014). This has significant implications for the sensitivity of the field to propaganda, which,

unlike dry facts, is bound to yield more engagement from the readers and, thus, more revenue. The solutions, offered in the literature, include the creation of a common benchmarking system for disinformation (Weiss and Pomerantsev 2014), cooperation within the journalist community and think tanks to counter fake news, as well as the introduction of fact-checking mechanisms such as BBC Reality Check (Jopling 2018). The proposed techniques, however, disregard the fact that ‘fake news’ stories live even after they were debunked and continue to be spread by some part of the society, who chose to believe them. None of the processed materials addressed the governmental communication channels and strategies that enhance the visibility of the official information channels.

The authority and positive image of the government are crucial for maintaining cohesion in the society, especially in the conditions of hybrid warfare. Since hybrid challenges can be psychologically overwhelming for the government and society as a whole, it is crucial to maintain a degree of visibility and stability in the country. As noted by Banasik, conquering minds of the targeted society is the first step to victory, and the spirit of the nation greatly influences the odds of the target withstanding the hybrid attack (2016).

Such narratives of the need to maintain societal resilience, unlike the topic of strategic communication, are addressed much more in the existing literature, but mostly on the level of prevention. As noted by Jopling, the ability of the society to defy hybrid threats depends on the extent of domestic grievances and the ability of the government to timely address them (2018). The literature, however, remains silent on the issue of post-hoc management of hybrid attacks that target societal problems. As proven by the experience of Ukraine, such hybrid challenges can have long-term implications for the unity of the population and feed the narratives that exploit existing divisions in the society. So aside from setting up international teams and fact-checking tools, it is very important to focus on the education policies of the actors to ensure that

it develops critical thinking and factual orientation to build the resilience of the society to false information (Jopling 2018).

1.4. Moving forward

This inability to face hybrid warfare post-hoc is descriptive of all literature surrounding hybrid warfare. It seems that deterrence and defence are the only two options that exist in the literature. When the authors look at cases of hybrid attacks that have already taken place, they refuse to make suggestions as to how to deal with the situation, but rather try to make inferences and learn lessons “how not to”. While this is not wrong per se, this does pose a significant question of the quality of the debate that surrounds hybrid warfare. The literature on the response is, essentially, the literature on the preparation for war and it offers little added value for states that were affected by hybrid challenges.

The lopsided debate on the issue of hybrid warfare is even more visible when considering a single outsider publication, written in 2007 by Colonel M. Bond of United States Army Reserve, which considered hybrid warfare as an *offensive* strategy for U.S. involvement in failed states. With a sharp contrast to the rest of the literature, which regards hybrid warfare reactively, rather than proactively, this publication furthered an idea which was never followed up by any other author. This means that either the whole idea was scrapped – which is unlikely considering the spreading hybrid attacks throughout the world, or the whole idea of using hybrid methods was regarded as immoral, as some literature on hybrid warfare suggests – just as it was outlined earlier in the chapter. There is also the off-chance of this idea entering the classified level of the debate, but that would seem strange as no follow-up discussions on the matter emerged in academia.

This publication, however, is an interesting finding, which once again proves the ‘snowflake’ character (read: lacking resilience) of the existing debate on

hybrid warfare. Viewed, as if realism and category of anarchy did not dominate the international relations for a good half a century, it raises the question of “good” and “bad” instead of taking a critical and proactive stance. Thus, the overall debate on hybrid warfare calls for more practice-oriented research, which can feed new information in the discussion that ended up in a self-sustaining loop.

1.5. Research methodology

The theory of hybrid warfare, although ubiquitous, is often ill-suited for large-n analysis: due to the versatility of the types of offensive action under the hybrid umbrella, it is difficult or even impossible to collect large amounts of data on a variety of uniform cases. In the case of studying responses to hybrid warfare such data collection would be even more difficult, as this area of study is only emerging. As a result, this research relies on a comprehensive study of a process tracing single case of response to hybrid warfare to provide comprehensive analysis of the case study, which then can be used in further theory-building work.

The aim of this section is three-fold: first, address methodological choice of a case study and the process tracing methodology; second, outline strategies that compensate potential weaknesses of such research design; third, present specific information about the research process and the techniques used.

Process tracing is an increasingly popular method in social sciences that is intended to uncover causal mechanisms behind a particular phenomenon (Trampusch and Palier 2016); in this case, the policy response to the hybrid attack: an attempted assassination of Sergey Skripal. The Skripal case was chosen based on several criteria: the proven hybrid nature of the incident (peacetime hostilities subtly executed by a foreign actor), the existence of a public policy reaction, as well as its manageable scope.

This research adopted a so-called explaining-outcome process tracing, per the Beach and Pedersen typology, which aims to provide a minimally sufficient explanation of the outcome of the public policy measures (2016). To allow for the comprehensive analysis of the case and taking into the consideration the limited scope of the dissertation, the adoption of a single case study design was inevitable. The chosen method required an appropriate amount of room to discover and follow causal mechanisms that relate to the organization of the public policy response.

Considering that the outcome-explanation process tracing is essentially case centric and when deployed in a single case study design can cause potential deficiencies in the generalization power of the findings, the research triangulated the analysis with the comparable case of the assassination of Alexandr Litvinenko. The inclusion of the materials on the Litvinenko case has achieved two aims: first, it presented a baseline for the assessment of the United Kingdom's response to an incident similar to Skripal's; second, it allowed for more generalization of the findings in the final part of the dissertation.

Having addressed the foundations of the methodology applied in the research, it is now time to introduce specific information about data gathering and analysis techniques applied to the process tracing method. The research was based on the process tracing guidance offered by Punton and Welle (2015) and Ricks and Liu (2018).

First of all, the chosen case study was split into two fragments to account for two distinct response types: first, the immediate crisis response that included investigative and public health components; second, political and diplomatic response measures that followed the attempted assassination. This distinction was made considering the hybrid nature of the incident, which posed dangers both to the population of the UK as it could potentially get exposed to a

chemical weapon, and the UK as a state entity whose sovereignty was violated with an act of aggression by a foreign state actor.

The research process was executed separately for both components based on a range of uniform procedures. The research consisted of the following stages: timeline identification and evidence collection, analysis of the available materials, identification of hypotheses, and evaluation of the hypotheses.

In the first stage, timeline identification and materials collection was based on the online search of the items in different search engines. The search was based on a series of requests, such as “skripal”, “skripal poisoning”, “nerve agent”, “salisbury”, “amesbury”, “skripal sanctions”, and so forth; the searches were executed using a custom time range week by week in the dates immediately following the incidents in Salisbury and Amesbury and month by month starting with October 2018, when the coverage of the incident had diminished considerably.

All items in the timeline were cross-checked to avoid inaccuracies or misrepresentation. The findings were then analyzed to reveal main trends which were then used for the hypothesis-building to reveal potential causal mechanisms that explain the organization of the public policy response. The hypotheses were vetted based on Van Evera’s broad “good theory” criteria (1997: 17-21) and the availability and relative strength of the evidence.

In both immediate and political/diplomatic response analysis, two hypotheses were constructed, which represented a primary and a rival (counterfactual or alternative) explanation. Both were then evaluated based on the evidence needed to conduct process tracing tests (see table 1), building on the approach laid out in Ricks and Liu 2018 and Collier 2011.

Table 1. Hypothesis table

Evidence type	Evidence needed to test hypothesis x
---------------	--------------------------------------

Straw-in-the-wind	Supports the overall relevance of the hypothesis; failing the test weakens the hypothesis
Hoops	Support the relevance of the hypothesis, failing the test rejects the hypothesis altogether
Smoking gun	Confirms the hypothesis; failing the tests slightly weakens it
Doubly decisive	Confirms the hypothesis and eliminates all others; failing eliminates the hypothesis

Each chapter presents a relevant timeline of the events and the table, analogous to table 1 that outlines the evidence required to perform the process tracing tests in regards to both primary and rival hypothesis. In the course of the hypotheses evaluation, the case study is narrated on the need-to-know basis to allow for the easier understanding of the argument and supporting evidence.

The supporting evidence includes both primary and secondary sources, all of which were cross checked to avoid confusion or use of fake data, which can be the case when dealing with hybrid warfare. The process tracing tests refer to the quality of data underpinning particular inferences and identify gaps in evidence when they are present.

All in all, the undertaken methodology represents a classic process tracing effort aimed at the outcome explanation, with a slight modification that related to the introduction of a second case study (murder of Alexandr Litvinenko) that was used to triangulate main observations in the Skripal case to make room for more generalization in the evaluation of the findings.

Chapter 2. Immediate crisis response

This chapter evaluates the immediate public policy response in regards to the attempted assassination of Sergey Skripal. The relevant UK public policy measures include crisis containment, domestic investigation, and mitigation of public health concerns. Having applied process tracing methodology to the case, the research tested causal mechanisms that had the most explanatory power potential: the first hypothesis exploring institutional learning facilitating the established response procedures and the second hypothesis focusing on the deficiencies of the attack that simplified the organization of the response.

With the analysis confirming that the institutional learning had been the main driver of the public policy response in the given case, the chapter is presenting the analytical processes behind the undertaken empirical tests and is presenting the process tracing findings.

As per the chosen methodology, one should first consider a timeline of the major events and developments regarding the attempted assassination of Sergey Skripal and the implications that it had for the public policy reaction that took place. Provided the fact that no relevant official timeline exists, the timeline below is a result of a comprehensive scan of the existing sources reporting the events of the attack and response.

March 4, 2018

16:15: emergency services call about two unconscious individuals on a public bench in the centre of Salisbury (BBC News 2018a)

17:10: individuals are taken to the Salisbury District Hospital (Harding et al. 2018a)

The police sealed off the scene and began collecting evidence (Harding et al. 2018a), and public venues visited by Skripals are shut down “as a precaution” (Khan 2018)

March 5, 2018

11:00: The Salisbury District Hospital declared a major incident involving up to 10 casualties, the A&E department is closed (Kitching 2018)

March 6, 2018

The case is overtaken by the counterterrorism police (Harding et al, 2018b); however, it is not declared as a terrorist attack (Staunton 2018)

March 7, 2018

Police shares that the nerve agent was used in the Skripals' poisoning (Bond 2018)

Public Health England shares a statement on the public health action and advice following the Salisbury incident (GOV.UK 2018a)

March 8, 2018

Information shared that Det. Sgt. Nick Bailey, who was involved in the Skripal investigation, was hospitalized "earlier in the week" in a serious condition (Hudson 2018)

March 9, 2018

Home Secretary Statement on the incident in Salisbury: reiteration of the events, information on ongoing emergency response, and a request for information from the public (GOV.UK 2018b)

About 180 military personnel deployed to Salisbury for tests and decontamination (Dearden 2018a)

March 20, 2018

Application for court ruling to allow fresh blood samples from Skripals to be taken to facilitate OPCW inquiry in the matter (as Skripals are unconscious and in no position to give consent) (EWCOP 6 2018)

March 21, 2018

OPCW begins work in Salisbury (Morris 2018a)

March 22, 2018

The court ruled in favour of OPCW access to fresh blood tests on Skripals (EWCOP 6 2018)

March 27, 2018

Salisbury businesses are offered compensation from an approved £1m government fund (BBC News 2018b)

April 5, 2018

Yuliia Skripal released from the hospital (Smith-Spark 2018)

May 8, 2018

The decontamination is allowed to start on all Salisbury sites, except for Skripal's home (Heffer 2018)

May 18, 2018

Skripal discharged from the hospital (Masters 2018)

May 21, 2018

Decontamination complete in Maltings shopping centre in Salisbury (GOV.UK 2018c)

June 30, 2018

Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley ill in Amesbury (BBC News 2018c)

July 2, 2018

"Major incident" declared by Wiltshire police (MacAskill 2018)

July 3, 2018

Police announced that the couple was exposed to a nerve agent (MacAskill 2018)

July 9, 2018

Dawn Sturgess dies (BBC News 2018c)

July 11, 2017

Police recovered a bottle containing the nerve agent and invited OPCW to participate in an investigation to conduct tests on the found substance (Dearden 2018b)

July 20, 2018

Charlie Rowley discharged from the hospital (BBC News 2018c)

March 1, 2019

Salisbury declared safe after decontamination (BBC News 2019a)

Based on the timeline, it is visible that the crisis has evolved in two main stages: stage one, Skripal assassination attempt and related investigation and crisis mitigation; stage two, the poisoning of Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley and related response efforts. This two-stage incident represents an act of hybrid warfare that was both a direct violation of the UK's sovereignty and internationally respected chemical weapons provisions, and a danger to the population of the United Kingdom that was exposed to the military grade nerve agent.

The death of the British citizen Dawn Sturgess that was caused by the said substance is proof of the high risk that the incident represented. It may be argued that this death is not in any case an indicator of the effective investigation, cleanup, and containment efforts. But while the loss of human life is a great tragedy, the actions of the British public health, police, and other personnel involved deserve a commendation and have by all means prevented bigger loss.

The collected sources strongly implied two causal mechanisms that can explain successful organization of the immediate crisis response surrounding the nerve agent crisis in Salisbury in 2018 that are explored in the following paragraphs.

The primary hypothesis argues that institutional learning was the primary driver in the organization of the UK public policy response to the immediate risks following the attempted assassination of Sergey and Yuliia Skripal. This hypothesis emerged upon the evaluation of the performance of UK institutions in a similar case, which was often referred to in a number of Skripal-relevant publications: a lethal poisoning with radioactive polonium of Alexandr Litvinenko, an exiled Russian KGB officer, that took place in 2006 (House of Commons 2016). The comparison of the two cases revealed that in the Skripal case, the response was more efficient due to the faster pace of the

investigation, more effective interagency cooperation, and the improved public health procedures.

The organization of the public policy response in the UK can also be understood via a rival hypothesis that argues that the imperfect execution of the attack made the crisis easier to handle. The sources made it possible to establish that the attack suffered from a number of systemic problems, such as the careless disposal of the nerve agent, which led to collateral damage; the comprehensive CCTV coverage of the movements of the assailants that allowed the identification of the persons involved, and above all, the recovery of the main target of the attack, which derived from the improper use of the nerve agent.

It is worth noting that this causal mechanism derived from both Western and Russian rhetoric in regards to the case that reiterated on numerous occasions that the attack was handled incompetently (Rainsford 2018). While this argument was used by Moscow to deny the state involvement, based on the premise that Russian intelligence officers are professional and would not allow such mistakes, the discussion on the origin of attack is largely irrelevant for the purpose of this research; and is only used to establish a common consensus on the flawed execution of the attack

To determine which of the hypotheses has the biggest explanatory power for the outcome of the crisis, the process tracing method was applied. Both hypotheses were dissected based on the type of needed evidence (table 2). This was then followed by the creation of a causal graph for each of the hypotheses and the detailed evaluation of the available evidence based on the standard process tracing tests.

Table 2. Evidence needed to evaluate the proposed hypotheses

Tests	Primary Hypothesis: Institutional learning was the primary driver of the UK public policy response to the immediate risks following the attempted assassination of Sergey and Yuliia Skripal	Rival hypothesis: the UK public policy was able to tackle risks following the attempted assassination of Sergey and Yuliia Skripal due to the flawed attack execution
Straw-in-the-wind	Institutional learning matters for the public policy	The quality of attack execution affects the required response
Hoops	The UK facilitates institutional learning in public policy	The attack was not executed properly
Smoking Gun	The UK institutions were affected by the similar assassination plot (Litvinenko) and adjusted accordingly	It was known to the UK authorities that the attack did not succeed/did not go according to plan
Doubly decisive	Institutional learning is present in the system AND is sufficient to respond to crises of comparable scale.	Imperfect attack execution was present in Skripal case AND was sufficient to enable the organization of the UK public policy response

Both hypotheses are first evaluated based on the available evidence in the straw-in-the-wind, hoops, and smoking gun categories, as these tests are meant to strengthen/weaken the hypotheses. Then the hypotheses are tried against a test for doubly decisive evidence that has the power to confirm one hypothesis and reject all others to conclude this stage of research.

2.1. Institutional learning hypothesis

Figure A. Causal link in the hypothesis



The first hypothesis is built on the premise that institutional learning is a foundation stone for the ability of UK institutions to respond to the crisis following the attempted assassination of Sergey Skripal. First and foremost, for the hypothesis to stand, it is vital to determine that institutional learning is a critical element of successful public policy, and thus find straw-in-the-wind type of evidence.

Drawing on the materials on evidence-based public policy-making, it is fairly easy to establish the importance of institutional learning. As written by Bennett and Howlett, “trial and error” are a fundamental way of policy change (1992). This is especially relevant for the field of security: while in some other fields public policy expertise can be endlessly gathered, but not used in any sort of constructive way, the matters of national security usually require constant development and innovation. It is clear that the Skripal case has triggered a variety of security concerns of the United Kingdom, such as chemical warfare, hybrid attacks, the hostility of the Russian Federation, weapon trafficking, and so forth. These issues were highlighted, in particular, in the latest UK Security Strategy (UK Government 2015). As a result, it is

much anticipated that the institutions will be actively seeking to adjust to contemporary threats and challenges.

While the straw-in-the-wind evidence is quite self-explanatory, the hoops evidence for the hypothesis requires confirming the fact that UK public policy gathers and adopts relevant lessons to facilitate the institutional learning. Such evidence can be found when looking into the case that was widely referenced in the coverage of the Skripal's attempted assassination: the death of Alexandr Litvinenko, who was poisoned with polonium 210.

It must be noted that in the case of Litvinenko, at first, there was little to no political will in the UK to lead a holistic response (Lain 2016). Still, a few "lessons learned" appeared in the public domain in the aftermath of the investigation. All of these contributions related to public health risk assessment and crisis communication (see Becker 2007, Rubin et al. 2007, Maguire 2010, Rubin et al. 2011, Miller et al. 2012, Rubin et al. 2012). These publications studied how the Litvinenko incident affected risk perception in public, as well as evaluated the performance of staff involved in the investigative process. Considering that the majority of the researchers involved in the aforementioned publications had been practitioners in various public organizations in the UK, this is direct proof of the institutional learning in the UK public policy.

But as UK-Russia relations plummeted due to the Russian violations of rule-based order in Ukraine and Syria, Litvinenko case was reopened within a public inquiry in 2016, which pointed to a possibility that the assassination may have been authorized at the highest level in Russia. The public rhetoric went as far as to mention the Litvinenko case in the House of Commons Defence Committee report on Russia in a connotation of "Russian disregard for UK sovereignty" (2016). In the course of the inquiry, a variety of previously unavailable documents were released in the public domain. They facilitated further institutional learning in a wide range of public institutions

that were involved in the investigation, medical treatment, public health protection, and so forth.

The report on the public inquiry provides both hoop and smoking gun evidence in favour of the primary hypothesis. Making a full evaluation of the smoking gun evidence, however, requires a comparison of the actions of public institutions that were tasked with the immediate crisis mitigation in the Litvinenko and Skripal cases.

Based on the materials of the report by the House of Commons, the following seven findings were identified in regards to the performance of public institutions involved in the Litvinenko case:

1. The medics were unable to determine the cause of Litvinenko's illness for 21 days. The correct cause of the illness was determined only a few hours before Litvinenko died on November 23, 2006 (House of Commons 2016:33-39).
2. Although the idea of radioactive poisoning was considered, Litvinenko was only initially tested for gamma radiation, which was not present, as he was poisoned by the substance emitting alpha radiation (House of Commons 2016:33-39).
3. The Porton Down facility, which initially identified polonium in Litvinenko's urine sample, dismissed the reading as faulty due to the belief that the contamination present was an anomaly deriving from the container where a body fluid was stored (House of Commons 2016:33-39).
4. The scientific information on the post-mortem investigation and other related medical tests was not in the public domain up until the final report of the inquiry was produced (House of Commons 2016:45)
5. There was a several week time gap between the contamination of numerous sites in London with polonium 210 and the beginning of the

investigative/decontaminating process. The additional tests showed that Litvinenko ingested polonium on two occasions, but the first dose was not lethal; and it is believed that both occurrences took place in October 2006, increasing the time span for the possible exposure of the public to the radioactive substance (House of Commons 2016).

6. In the course of the monitoring for polonium 210 traces in London, in cooperation with Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), the UK adopted a system of sequential testing to both decontaminate the affected premises and preserve evidence for the investigation (House of Commons 2016, p. 110)

7. Metropolitan Police reported obstructive actions when attempting to cooperate with Russian authorities (House of Commons 2016, p. 236).

Building on the findings from the Litvinenko report, a few comments must be made to fully understand the implications of the actions of public institutions that facilitated immediate crisis response in the Litvinenko's case.

First and foremost, the pace of identification of the cause of Litvinenko's illness was extremely problematic. It is understood that even if the cause of illness would be identified earlier, Litvinenko would still not survive, as he had already ingested a lethal amount of alpha radiation. But this knowledge was critical for the mitigation of public health-related risks. If polonium 210 was to resurface and cause wider collateral damage, medical professionals would not be prepared to tackle such a crisis and would have neither an understanding of the causes of the illness nor a developed treatment protocol. The three-week delay in the identification of the cause behind Litvinenko's sickness also had major implications for investigative processes. Polonium 210 has a high rate of radioactive decay and can be easily deteriorated by external influences, such as cleaning. As a result, alpha radiation, emitted by polonium 210, was substantially harder to detect as time progressed, posing significant difficulties for the investigation and decontamination.

Second of all, UK authorities have encountered difficulties on the side of the Russian Federation, which was partly involved in the initial investigation due to the need of the UK to conduct investigative measures on the Russian soil (inspect vehicles for traces of polonium 210 and obtain statements from the suspects). The lack of cooperation from the Russian side prevented UK access to the suspects and other case evidence.

Third, the Litvinenko case has become a precedent for the involvement of international organizations, such as AWE, for the purposes of the investigation to assist in the development of the decontamination procedures and to act as a legitimate third party providing independent scientific expertise of the substance involved in the assassination.

Last, but not the least, it is important to note that the information on the case was scant up until the inquiry, which meant that the expertise gained in the Litvinenko case was inaccessible in case of a similar accident. Only after the UK-Russia relations have taken a hit, the information eventually went public and the authorities at the highest level started referring to the case again, almost 10 years after it had taken place.

Despite the lack of the broad report on the Skripal investigation due to the fact that it is still ongoing, the collected sources provide a few important findings based on the actions of immediate crisis mitigation and the involved actors and drawing comparisons to the Litvinenko case.

1. The substance used in the attempted assassination was identified as a nerve agent in less than three days after the attack has taken place (Bond 2018)
2. Hospital staff and police almost immediately involved a scientific facility Porton Down, which identified the type of substance used (Griffin 2018)
3. Public venues, which were believed to be contaminated, were sealed almost immediately (Khan 2018)

4. The publications on the treatment of persons affected by a nerve agent started appearing shortly after the incident, referencing the Skripal case and other known uses of nerve agents (see Chai et al. 2018, Vale et al. 2018, Constazi et al. 2018).
5. The UK authorities involved OPCW early on, with the organization acting as an independent party, which performed tests and assisted in the development of the decontamination protocols (EWCOP 6 2018)
6. The UK refused all offers of the Russian Federation to cooperate on the investigation.

Comparing the Litvinenko and Skripal cases, it is evident that although the type of substance used in the Skripal case was even more extravagant than in Litvinenko's case, the response was organized in a much shorter time frame. It is also worth noting that unlike in Litvinenko's case, Skripal and his daughter were unconscious and were not able to assist with the investigation.

Nevertheless, the authorities were able to identify the substance, seal off affected locations, and pursue the search for the suspects.

In the Skripal case, one can note, the authorities failed to locate the source of the substance used and when the bottle containing the nerve agent appeared, it brought collateral damage in the form of two British citizens, who were affected; one did not survive. This, however, was almost unavoidable as the substance is extremely difficult to detect. Public Health England shared advice in regards to the precautionary actions that could be performed by those who suspect their personal belongings could have been contaminated (GOV.UK 2018a). This guidance was updated throughout the crisis; for example, in the aftermath of the incident with Charlie Rowley and Dawn Sturgess, the local authorities issued a guideline concerning litter-picking: "if you didn't drop it, don't pick it up" (BBC News 2019b).

In general, the outreach to the public in regards to the incident was amplified through the means of electronic communication, which was not so widely used at the time of Litvinenko poisoning, when a majority of communication was conducted through the phone (Rubin et al. 2007). At the same time, it is worth noting that crisis communication in the Skripal case also suffered from a variety of flaws.

First, there was a considerable time gap between the identification of the substance used and the precautionary health advice issued by Public Health England. Taking in the consideration that initially Yuliia and Sergey Skripal were believed to suffer from a fentanyl overdose, a much more trivial but no less dangerous substance², it could be expected that the public should have been advised on precautionary actions in regards to fentanyl (Morris 2018c).

Due to the lack of official information, the Internet quickly filled with alternative versions of the reality and prevented the public from understanding a coherent picture of the events. It is notable that the publications of Wiltshire Police, a police unit responsible for the Salisbury Community, have very low quality: e.g. publications lack time references and do not contain comprehensive information that would be made available in press releases for media (see Wiltshire Police 2018). The majority of the statements of the investigation (first by Wiltshire police, and then the counterterrorism unit) were spread through the news outlets, without relevant publications/reposts on the official websites of the agency. For research, this has become one of the major impediments in the construction of the timeline of the crisis that can be found at the beginning of the chapter. For an average citizen, this would result in uncertainty and anxiety in regards to the events of the Skripal attempted assassination and the implications that it could have for the wider public.

² Fentanyl, a synthetic drug, can be ingested internally or absorbed through the skin, and exposure to an equivalent amount as 5 to 7 grains of table salt can result in a possible death (Scottish Police Federation 2017).

The situation was aggravated with the fact that the government has issued a variety of so-called “D-notices” – advisory notices that deem particular issues confidential – in regards to the Skripal case (Global Research 2018). While all notices issued concerned the identities and personal data of particular persons directly or indirectly involved in the investigation, the presence of such guidelines also produced a variety of conspiracy theories, such as British authorities being responsible for the assassination attempt.

So while the cooperation with media and the use of electronic means of communication are easier ways to perform public outreach, in the conditions of hybrid attacks like in the Skripal case, it is important to maintain official channels of communication, as it was done in the Litvinenko case (Croft et al. 2008).

Nevertheless, upon the comparison of two cases, it is apparent that UK authorities have been better prepared to tackle the Skripal investigation than in the case of Litvinenko. It is likely that after the system encountered the case of Litvinenko, where the medical professionals were not considering exotic causes of illness, such as acute radiation syndrome, the paradigm has shifted and in the case of Skripal the diagnosis was more prompt. Due to the ability to define the underlying cause of the illness in a shorter timeframe, the public health risks were significantly decreased.

One could argue, that in the case of Skripal, the authorities failed to save Dawn Sturgess, whose death could have been prevented had the investigation located the bottle with a nerve agent earlier. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the substance, it was impossible to find out whether the assailants exhausted the supply, safely disposed of the rest, or abandoned it elsewhere. It is still impressive that the partner of Dawn Sturgess, Charlie Rowley, survived the exposure and thanks to other decontamination actions, no other collateral damage followed.

All in all, the smoking gun test gives conclusive proof that the institutional learning is present in the UK public policy. Had it been absent in the system, the procedures in the immediate response to cases that involve a covert use of chemical and radioactive substances would not have changed over time. Thus, the primary hypothesis stands through the three initial process tracing tests. Now, the rival hypothesis will be considered against the same test types to affirm its relevance.

2.2. Flawed attack execution hypothesis

Figure B. Causal link in the hypothesis



The rival hypothesis was designed based on the premise expressed in the gathered data that the organization of the assassination of Sergey Skripal suffered from systemic flaws, which allowed the UK to facilitate the response and avoid a variety of problems.

First of all, for the straw-in-the-wind evidence, one must prove that the quality of attack execution affects the required response. Conflicts and terrorist activity worldwide have caused a heightened security situation. With increased surveillance mechanisms, successful attack organization has become more complex, especially when it involves a group plot from abroad, not a domestic lone wolf with a knife. A variety of cases demonstrate that deficiencies in the attack design allow either completely foiling the attack or successfully responding to it. Such examples include the "shoe bomber" case of Richard Reid, where the attack failed due to a wet bomb fuse (Jager 2018), the tape

recording of the killing of Jamal Khashoggi, which set off an investigation (Oguz et al. 2018) and so forth.

While the connection between faulty attacks and a more successful response is obvious and allows the evidence to pass the straw-in-the-wind test, the hoop evidence requires proving that Skripal assassination attempt in particular was imperfect and contained a variety of flaws. This is possible through an assessment of the evidence surrounding the basic components of the attack: preparation, execution, and team withdrawal.

Phase one, preparation, was performed crudely in the case of the Skripal assassination attempt. The assailants were not planted in the society beforehand so that they could integrate and make the move inconspicuously; on the contrary, the scenario was a crude “hit-and-run”. For example, in an assassination of Ivan Mamchur in 2016, which was in the spotlight in the international media due to the assassin coming out with the story of the preparation for the murder, the killer settled in a Ukrainian town, where the target lived, about a month before the murder (Schwartz 2019). In the Skripal case, the suspects came to Salisbury a day before the attack for the initial reconnaissance and then returned on the following day when they allegedly applied the nerve agent to the door handle of Skripal’s house (Morris 2018b). This was done in the broad daylight and, with suspects being caught on numerous CCTV cameras around the town, the authorities were able to track down the identities of the assailants.

Moreover, the traces of the nerve agent were subsequently found in the hotel room where the suspects stayed, thus making a hard link between the two Russian citizens and the events in Salisbury (Harding 2018). Unlike a variety of mysterious deaths of Russian citizens residing in UK, which are suspected to have been murders/assassinations but were never proven as such³, the

³ For example, the cases of the suicide of Boris Berezovsky, Putin’s foe or the death of Alexandr Perepelichnyy, a whistleblower of theft in Russia State Treasury (Blake et al. 2017)

assassination attempt on Skripal and his daughter was made in broad daylight. In this case, it was immediately apparent that Skripal's illness was not self-induced nor derived from natural causes.

The second component of the attack, its execution, was also problematic. Due to the external influences, such as environmental effects or the victim simply washing away the applied substance, the nerve agent that was transferred on the victim became less potent, allowing the target to survive (Kaszeta 2018). The full strength of the nerve agent was demonstrated when it resurfaced a month later, causing the death of Dawn Sturgess, when she applied the substance directly to her wrists from a perfume bottle that her partner, Charlie Rowley, picked up in a charity bin (Cockburn 2018). Thus, a very costly operation did not yield a death of the intended target, but the death of a person that had no connection to the case.

The literature also revealed that the collateral damage is one of the concerns in regards to the assailants' exit strategy. First, the suspects did not effectively dispose of the substance, most likely due to the fear of contaminating themselves. Second, the suspects went public with their own version of reality, when they went on Russian television and told a story of being two businessmen who went on a leisure trip to Salisbury to "visit a famous cathedral" (Morris 2018: online). And third, the assailants were using fake identities that were later revealed by the Bellingcat, an online investigative journalism unit, which proved that these two men are not businessmen, but GRU (Russian intelligence directorate) officers (Bellingcat 2019).

All of this constitutes sufficient evidence for the hoop test that was intended to prove that the attempted assassination on Sergey Skripal did contain numerous flaws. With this information at hand, it is time to present the findings of the smoking gun test that answers the question whether the UK authorities had an understanding that the attempted assassination of Sergey Skripal was executed with a variety of flaws.

The sources strongly suggest that the UK did not possess knowledge of the intended attack. At least three elements of the story point confirm this finding. First, the personnel involved in the crisis initially believed that they were dealing with an opioid-related incident (Morris 2018c). Second, while the political rhetoric blaming Russia for the incident appeared early on, less than three days after the incident, the investigation did not confirm the Russian footprint up until mid-July 2018, almost four months after the incident, at which point the suspects were long gone from the UK jurisdiction (Neuman 2018, Simpson 2018). Third and foremost, the death of Dawn Sturgess would have been prevented if the investigation had a full picture of the events that took place in Salisbury in March 2018. These three elements make the likelihood of the UK possessing relevant timely intelligence on the case minimal.

To augment the existing picture and account for other possibilities, it is useful to think of a contrafactual argument: the attack was intended not to kill a target but just act as a demonstration of power and the ability to smuggle illegal deadly substances, and, potentially, serve as a cautionary tale to anyone threatening the Russian regime. But while this assessment has the right to exist, it does not change anything in terms of response that was required of the UK authorities. They did not have a moral ground or an evidence base to assume that the attack was sloppy and that there was no intention of greater damage.

Further than that, considering the character of the substance used in the attempted assassination, the flawed execution of the attack actually would reinforce the need for a holistic response, as the nerve agent could have been spread in more locations and pose significant risks for the public health (OPCW 2018g). So while due to the peculiarities of the attack execution, the UK authorities were able to identify the suspects and possible origins of the attack, there was no guarantee that the substance would be contained.

As a result, the rival hypothesis fails the smoking gun. It does not eliminate the hypothesis altogether but significantly weakens it. The doubly decisive test, however, has the power to confirm either the primary or the rival hypothesis and eliminate the other one; and its findings are presented in the conclusion.

2.3. Doubly decisive test

To pass the doubly decisive test, the evidence has to answer two questions: for the primary hypothesis, whether the institutional learning was present AND sufficient for the organization of the immediate public policy response to the attempted assassination of Sergey Skripal; and for the rival hypothesis, whether the flawed execution of the attack was present AND sufficient to enable the UK authorities to respond to the given crisis.

The primary hypothesis performed strongly in the first three tests, which identified the presence of institutional learning in UK public policy and suggested specific examples based on the evaluation of the immediate response in the Litvinenko and Skripal cases. To reiterate, with the expertise accumulated during the Litvinenko investigation, the procedures in the case of Skripal were much more efficient in the vast majority of cases. Crisis communication, however, suffered from a variety of problems and demonstrated the need for further reform in UK institutions.

Despite the need for more transparent coverage of the event and more timely public health advice, the authorities managed to curb the risks associated with the potential exposure of the public to the nerve agent and facilitate the recovery of the majority of the persons affected – with the notable exception of Dawn Sturgess, who did not survive the direct exposure to the nerve agent.

It must also be noted that the scope of crisis response in the Skripal case also included governmental financial assistance to Salisbury. This town suffered a dramatic blow to its tourism industry and related local businesses directly or

indirectly affected by the events (BBC News 2018b). As a result, the community was ensured support through the time period that was needed to pursue the investigation and decontaminate the town, which was declared safe in March 2019 (BBC News 2019a).

But before the final conclusion is made, it is important to consider the rival hypothesis. Via three initial tests it was established that the attack suffered from a variety of flaws, which nevertheless had little influence over the scope of actions that UK authorities had to conduct in relation to the crisis, as with high likelihood they did not possess relevant and timely intelligence.

It is likely that if the assailants had organized a more coordinated attack, involving several targets on the UK soil and a more secretive attack strategy, the UK would have had a much harder time mitigating the crisis. But even in the original case, the incident was surrounded with several uncertainties: what substance was used in the attack, where did the substance originate, who was responsible for the attempted assassination, whether there were additional attacks planned, etc. These uncertainties persisted throughout the investigation and some of them are still likely to constitute a challenge for the ongoing investigation, as the facts began pointing to a third assailant involved in the attempted assassination (Bellingcat 2019).

The unique character of the attack and the extravagant substance used, as well as the amplified risk of wider public health damage (when Sturgess and Rowley got affected by the nerve agent almost four months after the Skripals got ill) posed sufficient danger. Thus, although the scope of the attack was smaller than it could have been, a flawed attack execution alone does not possess sufficient explanatory power to account for the UK's success in tackling the immediate risks following the attempted assassination of Sergey Skripal. This means that the rival hypothesis does not pass a doubly decisive test.

The institutional learning, however, turned out to be an essential tool used to situate the relevant investigation and public health safety procedures and ensure their efficiency. Without the Litvinenko case, the authorities would be much less prepared to tackle a crisis of a comparable scale. The Litvinenko case cured a so-called “failure of imagination” in the UK; before, the use of such rare, expensive, and illegal substances for the purpose of an assassination of a single person would highly likely constitute a black swan event. But with relevant experience, the immediate response and the overall course of investigation in the Skripal case succeeded.

Returning to the question, whether the response would be as successful, if the attack had several vectors and was better organized, the answer would likely be “no”. This, in particular, relates to the problematic crisis communication in the United Kingdom. In the case of chaos caused by a series of assassinations and/or contamination of several locations throughout the country, it is likely that the citizens would be under/misinformed and more collateral damage would follow.

Additionally, it is also likely that only a few facilities throughout the country possess state-of-the-art equipment comparable to Porton Down’s, and in the case of a bigger emergency, UK would have difficulty screening the evidence. In the case of Litvinenko, for example, the investigation had to involve overseas laboratories (House of Commons 2016). But in the current situation, the likelihood of wide use of nerve agents remains low due to the high cost of such operations and a military escalation that would inevitably follow such an act.

The primary hypothesis, consequently, passes the doubly decisive test that supports the finding that institutional learning was present and sufficient to guarantee a successful response to the immediate risks surrounding the attempted assassination of Sergey Skripal. This finding, however, is only viable when considering the crises of comparable character and scope.

Chapter 3. Political and diplomatic response measures

Aside from the immediate risks that followed the use of the military grade nerve agent on the U.K. soil, such as potential danger for the public health, the incident manifested itself as a the use of chemical warfare by a foreign state, a gross violation of international law (Lewis 2018). It is now a well-known fact that the United Kingdom pronounced the Russian Federation as a state to be responsible for the incident and thus invoked a variety of response mechanisms to the incident in Salisbury. Nevertheless, criminality and plausible deniability surrounding this hybrid attack distanced the Russian Federation from the responsibility and restricted the retaliatory measures available to Great Britain.

This chapter is considering the UK public policy political and diplomatic response to the incident in Salisbury and then in Amesbury. The applied methodology revealed two causal mechanisms that had the explanatory power to trace the response and evaluate its impact, with the primary hypothesis exploring the role of strategic communications and the rival hypothesis assessing the role of the hard evidence for the organization of the response. It must be highlighted that although both hypotheses withstood the initial three tests, both failed to provide doubly decisive evidence.

One may argue that the hypotheses would be unable to display conclusive doubly decisive evidence due to the fact they are not mutually exclusive. This notion would be valid if the research case study constituted a traditional-type confrontation, where it is easier to differentiate between the hard evidence and strategic communications; but in the conditions of hybrid attack scenario is it critical to understand that there are cases where strategic communication campaign can succeed without hard evidence – for example, when dealing with disinformation and systemic dissemination of false narratives. As a result, the research differentiates between the two and makes an assessment of both

elements separately to evaluate their influence on the organization of the response.

As a consequence, this chapter is two-pronged: first, it lays out the process tracing of the performance of UK high-level public policy in regards to the incident in Salisbury and its further development in Amesbury. Second, in the course of the evaluation of the doubly decisive evidence, it also elaborates on the deficiencies of the UK performance and sets the stage for the final thoughts offered in the conclusion of the research.

Process tracing of the complex political and diplomatic environment in the conditions of the hybrid attack requires a thorough timeline of the events. This timeline is broader than the one in chapter 2 due to the need to account for the events on both sides of the UK-Russian high-level actions surrounding the incidents in Salisbury and Amesbury.

March 4, 2018

The attempted assassination of Sergey Skripal and his daughter, Yulia Skripal, took place (Reuters 2019)

March 6, 2018

The Russian government denied any involvement in the incident and expressed concern with the ongoing “demonization of Russia” in the media (Embassy of the Russian Federation to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 2018)

March 12, 2018

Theresa May suggested a high likelihood of the responsibility of the Russian government and demanded explanations for the incident (Asthana et al., 2018)
The Russian government issued an immediate response to the statement, deeming it a provocation (RT International, 2018b)

March 13, 2018

Former director of FSB argues that the operation may have been executed by British intelligence (RT International, 2018a)

March 14, 2018

The Prime Minister of Britain, Theresa May, announced the expulsion of 23 Russian diplomats and outlined other retaliatory measures (Shirbon and Pitas 2018)

The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations expressed confidence in Russian responsibility and warned that the consequences will follow if further use of chemical weapons occurs (Hjelmgaard and Stanglin 2018)

March 17, 2018

Russia suspended the operations of British Council in the Russian Federation and withdrew the permission to open a British Consulate General in St. Petersburg (TASS 2018b)

March 18, 2018

Boris Johnson, Britain's Foreign Secretary accused Russia of stockpiling a military-grade nerve agent used in the Salisbury incident (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2018b)

The Russian Embassy in London shared that they were denied consular access to Skripals (TASS 2018a)

March 19, 2018

OPCW technical assistance visit (pre-deployment phase) (OPCW 2018b)

March 21, 2018

OPCW technical assistance visit (full deployment phase), mission duration: 21-23 March, 2018 (OPCW 2018b)

March 26, 2018

More than 20 state allies of Great Britain announced expulsions of over a hundred Russian diplomats (Borger et al. 2018)

March 30, 2018

Russia commenced mirror diplomatic actions, expelling 59 diplomats originating from 23 countries (Reuters 2018a)

April 12, 2018

OPCW released a report following an incident in Salisbury, confirming the identity of the substance used in the attempted assassination (OPCW, 2018a)

May 4, 2018

OPCW reported that it is unable to estimate the amount of the substance used in Salisbury on March 4 or pinpoint its origin (OPCW 2018c)

June 29, 2018

Russian Foreign Minister claimed that the UK exterminated case evidence and made political gains from the incident (Lister 2018)

June 30, 2018

Dawn Sturgess and Charlie Rowley ill in Amesbury (BBC News 2018c)

July 8, 2018

UK Home Secretary: no intention to apply new sanctions on the Russian Federation (BBC News 2018g)

July 9, 2018

Dawn Sturgess died (BBC News 2018e)

July 13, 2018

OPCW received a request for technical assistance from the UK government (OPCW 2018d)

August 8, 2018

The United States imposed sanctions on the Russian Federation's import of sensitive technology (Borger 2018)

September 4, 2018

OPCW issued a report in regards to the incident in Amesbury, confirming the use of the same type of substance in both Salisbury and Amesbury (OPCW 2018f)

September 5, 2018

The Crown Prosecution Service issued a statement sharing that the European Arrest Warrant had been obtained for the two suspects in Salisbury incident (The Crown Prosecution Service 2018)

September 6, 2018

The UK authorities claim that the suspects are GRU operatives (Pierce 2018)

September 13, 2018

RT released a video interview with Salisbury suspects who claim to be innocent tourists (RT International 2018c)

September 14, 2018

Investigative journalism unit Bellingcat released a report tying Salisbury suspects to the Russian intelligence agencies (Bell 2018)

January 21, 2019

EU sanctioned four individuals in connection with Salisbury incident (New York Times 2019)

Russia dismissed the sanctions as “groundless” (New York Times 2019)

March 3, 2019

Russian Embassy in London published a report “Salisbury: Unanswered Questions” (Embassy of the Russian Federation to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland 2019)

May 17, 2019

BBC commissioned a film inspired by the events in Salisbury (BBC News 2019c)

Based on the timeline, one should draw attention to several significant points emerging from the sources. Firstly, the response had uneven intensity: the majority of the punitive measures were applied post-Salisbury, with only a few additional elements post-Amesbury, although the majority of the key evidence was publicized only after both attacks took place. Secondly, the position of the Russian Federation was stable throughout all events, with an active disinformation campaign in the background. Thirdly, a variety of third parties participated in the process; aside from the international actors like OPCW and EU, this mostly relates to the media, such as Bellingcat (independent investigative journalism unit) and RT (Russian media outlet supported by the

Russian government). Both Bellingcat and RT actively contributed to the reporting of the incident and its aftermath, providing the sides with the narratives in support of their positions, which were often used as evidence on their own.

These key observations emerging from the gathered sources led the research to the need to evaluate the value of strategic communications and hard evidence to the organization of the response to the use of the nerve agent on the territory of the UK.

The primary hypothesis argues that strategic communications were instrumental for the organization of the response. This is based on the fact that the majority of international attention to the incident, as well as the use relevant punitive measures, were taking place before the UK publicly made a link between the perpetrators and the Russian intelligence agency GRU. Considering that relevant political and diplomatic measures were taken before the key evidence was gathered, a question emerged whether a systemic strategic communication campaign had the potential to make up for the missing bits of evidence and manifest itself as a primary tool of the battle in the conditions of hybrid warfare.

The rival hypothesis argues that hard evidence was vital to the construction of the response to the attempted assassination of Sergei Skripal. This proposition is built on a fact that, from the onset of the investigation, the UK policy-makers were setting up transparent evidence gathering and analysis practices with the technical assistance of OPCW, and then used this evidence to build a case of the use of the chemical weapon on the territory of the UK. This resulted in the UK attaining sufficient proof to secure the support of the international community for punitive measures against the Russian Federation.

Both hypotheses were dissected based on the type of evidence needed for the four process tracing tests to confirm/disconfirm the hypotheses and to evaluate

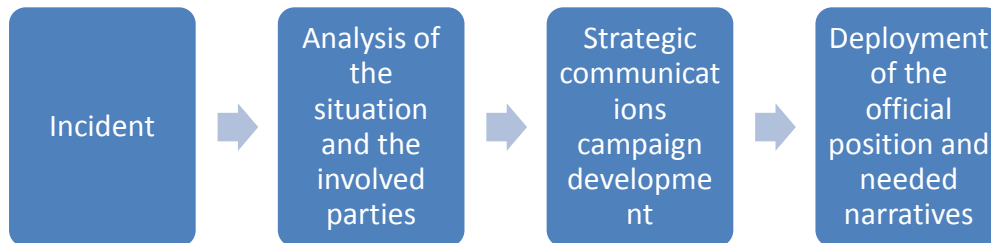
their explanatory power (table 3). In a similar fashion to chapter 2, both hypotheses were first considered against the first three tests: straw-in-the-wind, hoops, and smoking gun to ensure their overall validity. Both were then tried against a doubly decisive test to evaluate their overall explanatory power.

Table 3. Evidence needed to evaluate the proposed hypothesis

Tests	Primary hypothesis: Strategic communications were instrumental for the organization of a public policy response to the attempted assassination of Sergey Skripal	Rival hypothesis: Hard evidence was instrumental for the organization of a public policy response to the attempted assassination of Sergey Skripal
Straw-in-the-wind	Strategic communications are important for public policy	Presence of hard evidence influences the array of response mechanisms
Hoops	The UK facilitates strategic communications in public policy	The incident produced a range of hard evidence
Smoking gun	There was an explicit use of strategic communication techniques in the organization of the response to the incident	Hard evidence was used to facilitate the response to the incident
Doubly decisive	Strategic communications were present AND sufficient to organize the response	Hard evidence was present AND sufficient to organize the response

3.1. Strategic communications hypothesis

Figure C. Causal link in the hypothesis



The evaluation of the primary hypothesis begins with the straw-in-the-wind evidence that confirms the premise that strategic communication is important for public policy. While this term is still prevalent in the private sector, the examples of such campaigns in public policy are numerous and pertain to a variety of issues, such as gender equality, HIV/AIDS, countering violent extremism etc (Hallahan et al. 2007). There is a record of strategic communication campaigns in the United Kingdom as well, which opens the hypothesis to the hoop evidence test.

Although the scholarly record on these activities is scarce, the government structure in the UK has proof of relevant efforts. The UK Government Communication Service, in particular, is the main liaison for all communication-related professionals working for the government, and is tasked with development and delivery of communication-related products, including strategic communications. The organization delivers training, guidelines, experience sharing tools, as well as capacity-building of the communication departments (The Government Communication Service 2018). While the given activity mostly relates to the day-to-day domestic issues, the UK public policy also sustained large successful strategic communication campaigns, including the action on battling hybrid warfare.

The most well-known example is the United Kingdom initiating and hosting the Coalition Communications Cell in London, which was tasked with thwarting Daesh propaganda (Chugg 2017). Daesh's heavy reliance on digital propaganda and online communication channels facilitated a construction of the image of the organization as a powerful state-like actor, which allowed it to conduct large-scale recruitment, organize activity on the ground, find operatives abroad, as well as lead a systemic campaign on discrediting the opponents of the movement (Svetoka and Reynolds 2016). The UK managed to organize a coalition-wide platform for a coordinated strategic communications campaign to "speak as one voice against Daesh" (GOV.UK n.d.). These actions were instrumental to both defeat the movement and prevent its legacy-building. The Communications Cell is credited with the destruction of the "jihadi cool" narratives, as well as with the lowering of the overall credibility of the information that Daesh was spreading (Chugg 2017).

Having confirmed both the existence of strategic communications in UK public policy and having reiterated the importance of the strategic communications in the conditions of hybrid attack, the hypothesis withstands both straw-in-the-wind and hoops tests.

Now, the research will review smoking gun evidence in favour of the presence of the coordinated strategic communications in regards to the incidents in Salisbury and Amesbury. When doing so, it is important to keep in mind the sensitive character of the incident, which is still in a phase of the ongoing investigation, as well as a matter of a full-scale international confrontation. This means that the materials that are available for older cases, such as Litvinenko murder, although may exist for the internal use in the government, are not yet available for the public. Thus, the smoking gun evidence had to be pieced together from a variety of sources, which often present only indirect evidence.

As a result, the findings of this test will be presented as follows: first, the research will consider the evidence of the existence of the strategic communications units that were handling the incident; second, the evidence of the larger strategic communications campaign, locating the Skripal-related campaign within strategic communications targeted at the larger rhetoric on the actions of the Russian Federation abroad.

The gathered data demonstrated that the incident in Salisbury was handled by two main communications teams: the Wiltshire Council team at a local level, and, most likely, the National Security Communications Unit (NSCU), at the state level, which will be addressed further.

The Wiltshire Council team, sourced by the relevant local authorities, was working on the three-tier response: communication to the government, communication to the public, and PR-related tasks, e.g. the restoration of the brand of Salisbury as it suffered enormous damage to its tourism potential and local business climate after the poisoning had taken place (Waddington 2018). While this communications team was clearly targeted at the local level, this evidence points to the establishment of the systematic communications effort in the government surrounding the incident.

At the state level, the strategic communications are likely to have been managed through the National Security Council and its offshoot National Security Communications Unit (NSCU) that was created in the UK in the beginning of 2018. The National Security Capability Review that was published in March of 2018 made explicit references to the expanding capabilities of the NSCU and its importance for UK defence (Cabinet Office 2018). Although at the moment of the research there is no conclusive record of the publications of the NSCU team on the events in Salisbury and the communication strategy that was used, it is extremely likely that the team was participating in the campaign surrounding the Salisbury incident based on several reasons.

First of all, the NSCU acts as a liaison between the National Security Council and the Government Communications Service, with the mandate of the organization centring on battling anti-Western propaganda and fake news (Cabinet Office 2018). This makes this agency especially relevant when considering that the Skripal case simultaneously presented national security risks and spurred a new wave of anti-Western propaganda; the local council team would be insufficient for the scope of tasks and the number of stakeholders involved in the incident.

Second of all, the NSCU is the only obvious actor in the institutional structure of the UK government that could have had the capacity to handle the high-level profile and scope of the case. Starting with an open message from the Prime Minister, Theresa May, who after less than ten days openly accused the Russian Federation to be at fault in the Skripal case, the UK transmitted a very cohesive and stable position throughout the UK government publications, communications to the allies and international organizations. Without it, it is highly likely that the case would be regarded as a purely internal issue of the UK.

This position, however, echoed the existing patterns of the strategic communications surrounding the larger picture of the aggressive foreign policy of the Russian Federation, which Russia repeatedly claimed to be a so-called demonization of Russia on the international arena (RT International 2018d). The case of Litvinenko, in particular, became an important reference point in the initial stage of the response surrounding the Skripal incident (Chatham House 2018). It is highly likely that had the Skripal incident happened in isolation, without a record of violations of international law by the Russian Federation, the UK would have a much harder time securing international support, especially in the early days after the incident. This reference to the international law violations by the Russian Federation in Syria and Ukraine persisted throughout the incident in Amesbury as well (e.g. see

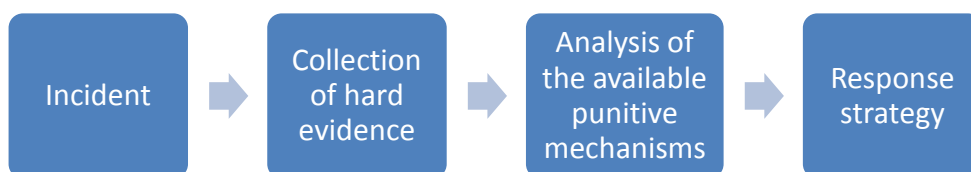
Bamberger 2018, Home Office 2018). Thus, the evidence clearly points to a presence of the systemic strategic communication campaign that surrounds the activity of Russian Federation abroad, which provided the context the UK needed to secure international support for the relevant punitive measures.

All in all, the smoking gun evidence proves that the UK demonstrated an institutional capacity and the experience needed to conduct a strategic communications campaign in the aftermath of the incident in Salisbury and Amesbury, as well as position it within the greater campaign aimed at discrediting the aggressive foreign policy of the Russian Federation. Nevertheless, it should be highlighted that this evidence does not imply that the execution of such a campaign was effective. This will be discussed in greater detail during the doubly decisive test of the hypothesis.

Since the strategic communications are but one of the tools to combat hybrid warfare, it is now time to consider a rival hypothesis that has the potential to explain the UK response to the incident in Salisbury, namely the collection of hard evidence and its instrumentality for the construction of the case against the Russian Federation.

3.2. Hard evidence hypothesis

Figure D. Causal link in the hypothesis



The rival hypothesis touches upon the notion that plausible deniability of hybrid warfare can be overcome when the target is in possession of the hard proof linking the sender of the attack to its execution. This section is tracing

how the UK facilitated the use of hard evidence in the process of the response to the attempted assassination of Sergey Skripal.

There is ample straw-in-the-wind evidence confirming the importance of hard evidence for the choice of appropriate punitive measures. This can be proved by a multitude of court proceedings, which dealt with offences in any kind. In the public policy area there is also plenty of data on the evidence driving a response to the incident, e.g. the presence of Soviet missiles on Cuba in 1962, the North Korean nuclear program etc. In all these cases, found proof was instrumental for the authorization of the relevant response.

The same relates to the hybrid attacks, which are of direct interest to this research. Although collection of evidence in such conditions often constitutes a difficult endeavour, there are case studies that prove that when the appropriate indications are found, they enable a legitimate response. A recent example of such action includes the UN Maritime Tribunal order to free Ukrainian sailors, who were unlawfully captured by the Russian navy (Case concerning the detention of three Ukrainian naval vessels (Ukraine v. Russian Federation) 2019). Without the needed evidence, the court would not have been able to make an appropriate judgement in the conditions of the disinformation campaign surrounding the incident. As a result, the evidence is a critical component of the construction of the response strategy and it is instrumental for the choice of appropriate retaliatory measures.

Now the research will present hoops evidence in favour of the rival hypothesis, namely the availability of hard evidence in the Skripal case. Such gathered proof must be differentiated into two groups: first, evidence that describes the nature of the incident (use of a chemical weapon) and second, the evidence of state actor responsibility, which was attributed to the Russian Federation.

The overall evidence-gathering launched by the UK was impressive in its scope: it was reported that over 100 detectives were working on the ground, more than 250 were deployed to analyze the CCTV footage (which also included specially trained “super recognizers” police unit) (Nicholls 2018, Morris 2018d; Ramon, Bobak, and White 2019). These efforts were also complemented with two OPCW technical assistance missions aimed at decontamination-related evidence searching, as well as the analysis of the found substances to provide independent expertise of the case.

The nature of the incident as a chemical warfare emergency was publicized within 72 hours after the attempted assassination, but relevant investigative and precautionary measures began almost immediately after Skripal and his daughter were found unconscious. As it was comprehensively addressed in chapter 2, the authorities facilitated evidence gathering and in the course of the initial investigation contacted Porton Down to perform analysis of the traces of the found substance. Identification of the nerve agent as a weapon used in the attempted assassination immediately implied a violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

While the identification of the emergency was very conclusive, the initial evidence of the participation of the state actor was not so robust. Although UK authorities claimed that the found nerve agent is of a specific type developed by Russia, this assessment, in fact, could be challenged (and was – see Ramsay and Robertshaw 2019). In short, although this particular generation of the substance, the so-called “binary nerve agents” that consist of two ingredients that acquire nerve agent characteristics only when mixed, was initially developed in the Soviet Union, their design was no secret and a variety of labs around the world had access to the blueprints of the synthesis process for scientific reasons (Vale et al. 2018, Cotton 2018).

Nevertheless, participation of some state actor was extremely likely due to the high rarity of the used substance, its price, and its highly deadly character,

which required expertise and special training to synthesize and use a substance of such high purity (Vale et al. 2018). Considering that the high purity of the substance prevented the investigation from pinpointing the point of its origin, it is possible that the initial judgement on the responsibility of the Russian Federation derived from the intelligence obtained by the UK. The government did not share the reasoning behind the accusations of the Russian Federation in the initial phase of the response, aside from the information that Russia had the capability to produce the nerve agent used in the attempted assassination.

This, however, must not impede the performance of the hypothesis in a hoop test, as the UK still managed to recover almost 1500 pieces of evidence in the two months following the Salisbury incident; this being just the hard evidence from the affected areas and not taking into account other types of proof, such as intelligence, CCTV recordings, flight data etc. Post-Amesbury, the briefings of the gathered evidence were offered to the UN General Assembly members (Pierce 2018). So despite the difficulties in recovering specific pieces of evidence, the UK demonstrated a very thorough and systemic effort to recover proof, which is sufficient for the hypothesis to pass the hoops test.

Now the research will consider the smoking gun evidence in regards to the claim that the UK used hard evidence to situate the public policy response to the incidents in Salisbury and Amesbury. In this case, the gathered data had to answer two questions: first, what evidence did the UK have behind the claims of Russian responsibility in the use of the chemical weapon on the territory of the UK; second, what impact did the general evidence have in the overall response strategy.

While the incident in Salisbury implied the participation of the state actor, as it was covered in chapter 2, the fast attribution of the responsibility to the Russian Federation posed questions to the evidence base that the UK possessed. The publicized evidence behind such claims was extremely limited and consisted mostly of the indirect proof of Russia possessing the capability

to produce the used nerve agent as well as a record of lab tests with the substance. It is thus extremely likely that the direct evidence incriminating Russia was of high confidentiality and its publication could inevitably endanger the source of such information and alert the responsible party as to the insecure channels of communication.

Considering the time lag the UK needed to recover evidence, it is understandable that the initial response was framed by using the available circumstantial evidence of the international law violations of Russian Federation, as well as inferences based on the cases of assassinations on the UK soil that implicate Russian hand – such as the case of Litvinenko or deaths of other individuals covered in a headline-making investigation by BuzzFeed News “From Russia with blood” (Blake et al. 2017), or simply making connections to the Putin’s opportunity to boost his domestic support in presidential elections in Russia. Altogether, these claims have little to do with “hard facts” or direct evidence of Russian participation in the attack.

Only after a few months after the Salisbury attack had taken place, namely in September 2018, the UK authorities published a new string of evidence linking the attack to the two Russian individuals, who allegedly were GRU officers. But while the CCTV images recording the movements of the suspects in Salisbury were plentiful, the government did not make public additional proof for the claim of the GRU connection. This information, on the other hand, was made available by a third party, an independent investigative journalism unit, Bellingcat, which published a series of materials identifying the suspects and proving that they were GRU officers (Bellingcat 2019). It is unclear, whether the UK government has been in contact with Bellingcat or in any way provided the material/sources for the investigation that was led in the Skripal case. Nevertheless, the sources published by Bellingcat produced conclusive background proof for the claims of the UK government and legitimized the narratives of the Russian responsibility.

It is evident, however, that while the UK did not publicize the findings that directly incriminated Russia, the UK readily distributed briefings of evidence to the interested state actors (Pierce 2018). Such proof was sufficient for the UK allies to support the punitive measures directed at the Russian Federation, including expulsions of diplomatic personnel and trade sanctions.

All in all, the smoking gun test demonstrates mixed results: while the circumstantial evidence of the responsibility of the Russian Federation was plentiful, the UK publicized only a very small fraction of the proof of the Russian responsibility to the larger audience. It is extremely likely that the state allies of the UK received a more detailed version of the evidence, but due to the confidentiality of this key information, it is impossible to assess the quantity and quality of the evidence. Nevertheless, the reaction of the international community proves that the evidence of Russian responsibility in the Skripal case was sufficient to apply punitive measures.

One may argue that this case was a mere pretext for the West to punish Russia for its aggressive foreign policy. This is a definite possibility; however, one needs to carefully evaluate the measures that were undertaken by the states. Diplomatic expulsions, in particular, were publicized as a discharge of Russian intelligence operatives acting under the guise of diplomatic personnel (Marcus 2018). The destruction of the known intelligence structures has high potential costs: the activation of previously unregistered sleeper agents and a switch to new communication channels; all of this makes the activity of the Russian intelligence harder to monitor. Thus, considering the risks and costs associated with such measures, the countries knowingly undertook actions that could potentially harm them in the long run.

Thus, all things considered, the hypothesis passes the smoking gun test and confirms that the hard evidence played an important part in the organization of the response measures following the attempted assassination of Sergey Skripal, as it was sufficient to trigger a response of the international

community. This, however, does not mean that the evidence on its own would have the potential to result in the authorization of a comprehensive response, which will be explored in the next section.

3.3. Doubly decisive test

The validity of both hypotheses was confirmed as both passed the three initial process tracing tests, with both demonstrating weaker performance in the evaluation of the smoking gun evidence. To conclude the evaluation, the hypotheses will stand the last test for doubly decisive evidence that has the potential to make a final evaluation of the explanatory power of both arguments.

In this situation, however, neither of the hypotheses fully passes the doubly decisive test. This result, however, is explained by different reasons: while strategic communications were present in the response to the incident in Salisbury and then Amesbury, they were not sufficient due to a range of flaws in the process. And while the hard evidence became an instrumental part of the organization of the response, it was not sufficient as a standalone tool.

Now the research will offer evidence to illustrate the points made. This proof must be split into two groups: first, the evidence of the flaws in the strategic communications campaign led by the UK; second, proof of the insufficient weight of evidence to underpin a comprehensive and legitimate public policy response in the UK.

First of all, although the government has the capacity of strategic communication units, the Skripal case suffered from a lack of credible information coverage of the incident by the authorities. Coupled with the lack of guidance in regards to the immediate risks following the use of the chemical weapon on the UK soil, which was investigated in chapter 2, the authorities failed to provide a systematic outlook into the events that occurred in Salisbury and in Amesbury. The few bits of information that are available on

the government websites are often undated, broad, and do not have added value in terms of the substance. The campaign could have benefitted from a single point of contact either in the Wiltshire Council or in the central government, which could have led regular press conferences and shared press releases to the media.

Print and online media, in fact, became a dominant source of information about the case. It is striking that the governmental portals failed to keep track of the information spread by the media, even when officials provided needed data to the press. As a result, various media outlets could knowingly or unknowingly misrepresent the given data, use faulty information or manipulate credible sources (Rogers 2019). This, for example, could be illustrated by a series of articles from the major outlets, such as the Guardian, sharing that the UK was preparing an extradition request for the two suspects identified as perpetrators (Hopkins et al. 2018); this, in fact, was untrue as the UK authorities have identified such mechanism inefficient⁴ and obtained the European Arrest Warrant instead (New Europe 2018). This is but one example of the confusion created in the information field surrounding the incident due to the lack of the government point of contact.

This lack of the government leading position in the reporting of the incident constituted a favourable environment for the spread of Russian propaganda. As per the research of The Atlantic Council's DFRLab, the vast majority of the social media reporting was executed by the Russian sources such as Sputnik and RT, which are well known for their disinformation capability (Baroian 2018). Per another research conducted in Kings College London, in the first four weeks after the incident, Russian outlets managed to create more than 130 different narratives in the publications relevant to the Skripal case, all of them aimed at discrediting the claims that Russia is indeed responsible for

⁴ The Russian Federation Constitution forbids extradition of Russian nationals and such attempts have failed in the past (e.g. in Litvinenko case). (House of Commons 2016)

the attempted assassination (Ramsay and Robertshaw, 2019). These narratives quickly saturated the information field and they continue to dominate the reporting of the incidents in Salisbury and Amesbury.

Here is where the second hypothesis fits in – had the UK government publicized the full evidence of the responsibility of the Russian Federation, would it be sufficient for the organization of the response? This question is two-fold: first, the research must address the UK capability to collect a full array of the needed evidence; and second, the potential of such evidence to be sufficient to organize a credible response that would not be sidelined by the Russian disinformation efforts.

To begin with the evidence collection, it is critical to understand that the Skripal incident is not just an attempted assassination by a state actor; it is a violation of the UK sovereignty and the use of the chemical weapon on its soil (Henrici 2018). Gathering conclusive proof of the Russian responsibility at the bare minimum would require evidence of Russian government facilities stockpiling the nerve agent used in Salisbury AND a record of the government agencies authorizing the use of such substance. OPCW was not successful in tracing the origin of the substance and thus provided no assessment as to the possibility of Russian responsibility. In addition, the OPCW expressed confidence that Russia is a strategic partner committed to upholding the principles of the non-use of chemical weapons (OPCW 2019). And even if the OPCW investigatory mission in Russia would take place, its mandate never included a deliberate search for the non-compliance on the territory of any state actors; such a mission would only inspect the facilities that the Russian Federation is willing to demonstrate (Hart 2018).

Moreover, the nature of the used substance per se is a challenge of its own when it comes to evidence gathering. The binary character of the nerve agent assumes that it exists as two separate substances which attain nerve agent qualities only when mixed. With the two components deriving from

organophosphates used in the agriculture industry, these substances individually are not required to be declared by the state as chemical weapons (Chai et al. 2018). As a result, while state responsibility was extremely likely, the character of the used substance offers only very limited possibility to collect relevant hard evidence.

In the unlikely scenario of the UK obtaining the needed evidence to prove both the existence of the relevant nerve agent stockpiles and the state authorization to use them abroad, the hybrid nature of the incident allows for the use of plausible deniability: the accused side could refute parts of the evidence by claiming they are fabricated, use the wild card and say that the incident happened by the initiative of a few self-starters in GRU who were not coordinated by the higher state authorities, etc. And if the evidence was full and comprehensive, the UK would need to find legal instruments to take action against the responsible party and to enforce whichever decision is made by the relevant court of law, if such will be made after a lengthy and potentially very problematic process (Paradis 2018). And even then, such decisions can be challenged on the grounds of court purview, fabricated evidence, etc.

As a result, it is extremely unlikely that the full array of the needed hard evidence would be present and sufficient for the organization of the response. Of course, retaliatory measures, such as sanctions, would not require such comprehensive proof, but the hypothesis still does not have enough explanatory power to pass the doubly decisive test.

The primary hypothesis had a larger explanatory power and had it not been for a range of flaws in the UK practices of the strategic communications, it could have potentially provided a conclusive framework. The UK could have used the unique character of the substance to raise awareness on the issue of plausible deniability and increase the social resilience to the hostile narratives spread by Russia. More than a year after the incident in Salisbury, the UK

government did not demonstrate an upsurge in the related activity; on the contrary, it decayed over time. With Russia publishing a report, “Salisbury: Unanswered Questions”, a year after the incident in Salisbury, which presented some relevant critiques of the UK government response strategies, mixed with hardcore disinformation, the response of the UK government was scarce (Embassy of the Russian Federation to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland 2019). The officials did not attempt to provide any coherent reaction in any way. And with the coming dramatization of the incident in a movie ordered by BBC, this case is likely to become a work of art, rather than a sobering reality of UK vulnerability to hybrid warfare.

It is obvious, of course, that the efficient use of both hard evidence and strategic communications techniques would be beneficial for the organization of the response. Such dissection of the response elements as undertaken in this chapter, however, is extremely beneficial for understanding the intricacies of using public policy mechanisms when dealing with hybrid warfare. In this case, the inability of the hypotheses to pass the doubly decisive test must not be perceived as a weakness of the arguments; rather, it is a reasonable explanation why the high-profile political and diplomatic measures in response to the incidents in Salisbury and Amesbury did not yield significant results. This also allows making a range of observations and recommendations that are outlined in the concluding part of the research.

Chapter 4. Final discussion and concluding remarks

4.1. Fulfilling the aim and objectives of the research

Considering that each chapter offered preliminary conclusions based on the analysis of gathered sources, this part of the dissertation transposes the available theoretical framework on real-world scenarios (the Skripal and Litvinenko cases) that were presented as empirical evidence and makes a range of recommendations. To begin the discussion, this section will engage directly with the research aim and objectives set for the given research.

To reiterate the main aim of the research, this dissertation studied how states can respond to the hybrid warfare threats. Considering the very low quality of the existing frameworks and theories, as it was explored in the literature review, one of the main objectives of this research was to approach the concept of hybrid warfare with an open mind to lay ground for a more holistic understanding of this concept. This dissertation does not attempt to create a new theory of hybrid warfare; on the contrary, it demonstrates that some concepts of security studies can be operationalized without a full-fledged theory.

It is possible that the vision of hybrid warfare presented in this dissertation will prompt opponents to say that here everything can be hybrid warfare. But this, essentially, was a purpose of the given research: to expand an understanding of the concept from unmarked military formations secretly deployed by a foreign entity, such as in the case of the annexation of Crimea, to more novel interpretations. This can include many things: disinformation, lawfare, cyber action, energy manipulations and so forth. And as long as these coercive actions are subtly employed by external parties for political purposes, and remain below the threshold of a declaration of war (according to the definition proposed in this dissertation), they will indeed all fit under the 'hybrid' umbrella. Foreign-sponsored gang action or separatist movements,

election manipulations or cyber attacks, they all can be classified as hybrid action for the purposes of both research and public policy.

Instead of letting hybrid warfare be a buzzword that is widely used but is not substance-laden, this research demonstrated that it can be useful. Having suggested a definition of hybrid warfare that can be operationalized locally by researchers and policy-makers, this thesis opened the floor to a wider understanding of hybrid warfare that can also engage with a much larger evidence base of a variety of different cases, which can contribute to better informed policy-making.

Thus, building on the second objective of the given dissertation, which involved an analysis of the available research on the means of public policy to respond to hybrid warfare, this dissertation has demonstrated that the holistic understanding of hybrid warfare must be also transcendent in public policy action. A scan of the available public policy-related materials on the issue of hybrid warfare has revealed that the majority of the sources focus on long-term resilience-building measures rather than on crisis response when a state becomes directly affected by a hybrid scenario. While proactive measures – such as education policy that targets the development of critical thinking – are extremely useful long-term, they lack effectiveness in the direct aftermath of a hybrid attack.

The array of the discussed policy options is also quite limited. The tunnel vision of hybrid warfare that persists in the field makes states especially susceptible to more novel hybrid scenarios. Existing interpretations of hybrid warfare, as stated earlier, suffer from a lack of imagination, which is reinforced by the fact that the circle of authors who write on the issue of hybrid warfare is quite small, even when including academia, military, and public policy sources. As a result, these authors reference each other and

enforce a narrow understanding of hybrid warfare in all interconnected fields, including public policy.

Thus, this thesis adopted a wider understanding of hybrid warfare that would take the debate away from a very rigid framework of hybrid warfare. By fulfilling the third objective of the dissertation, the study of the public policy response to a hybrid warfare event based on the case of the attempted assassination of Sergey Skripal, the research considered a novel interpretation of the concept and operationalized it based on a real-world scenario. Such criminal acts as assassinations authorized by a foreign government are usually completely overlooked in hybrid warfare-related research due to their criminal nature – which are then a matter of law enforcement, and not international law. This notion, however, changes completely when considering the means of assassination – in the case of Skripal, a chemical weapon prohibited by the OPCW convention. The use of such a substance posed risks not only to the target of the assassination, but to public health in general. And in addition to health risks, the use of the nerve agent in the UK posed a security threat relating to state sovereignty and transborder movement control. Despite all these threats, the hybrid nature of this case was not immediately apparent and thus became of interest to the given research.

While the case-specific conclusions will be presented separately in the following sections, the overall value of the undertaken empirical research is in its unorthodox nature. By failing to recognize the hybrid-induced character of novel cases, both researchers and policy-makers are missing out on a variety of relevant case studies that could shed light on hybrid warfare and relevant response strategies. As long as research will be driven by tunnel vision and not the empirical evidence, hybrid warfare will remain a fuzzy and underrated concept of security studies, one that is unusable in both research and policy. As this dissertation is trying to demonstrate, hybrid warfare comes in all

shapes and sizes and it is vital to be agile and consider all possible developments.

4.2. Discussion of case findings

As previously highlighted, a thorough lack of writing on the issue of responses to hybrid warfare results in a very scarce array of policy options available for states that became directly affected by this security threat. This can partly stem from the methodological challenges to conducting relevant research: as described earlier in the dissertation, large-n projects in the field of hybrid warfare are often impossible due to the highly specific nature of threats in each situation. Nonetheless, it is striking that even small-n studies exploring the responses to a hybrid scenario are largely absent or limited by justifications of why a particular case qualifies under the hybrid umbrella, and do not make practical recommendations.

As a result, a small-n study on the response to hybrid warfare based on the Skripal case – triangulated with the Litvinenko case to account for the deficiencies of a single-case design – was meant to spark interest in public policy-oriented hybrid warfare research. The employment of a process tracing methodology allowed making a detailed assessment of the public policy measures in regards to both Skripal and Litvinenko cases and producing a range of general and case-specific findings and recommendations that derived from the undertaken study.

Before the findings are outlined, it is extremely important to consider a few challenges that have had an impact on the conducted research. Above all, this includes the outlined small-n nature of the research, which involved two cases that shared the same set of parties (the UK and the Russian Federation) and an attack type (assassinations executed by a foreign government). Obviously, this uniform set of cases allowed conducting a thorough investigation of the public

policy response, with the Litvinenko case acting as a baseline for process tracing of the Skripal case; but it also made the generalization power of the research more limited. As a result, the findings of this study are relevant for both research and policy-making purposes, but must not be perceived as a standalone theory of hybrid warfare. While this dissertation can become a foundation stone for one, it is largely beyond the scope of a masters thesis.

Now the narrative will move onto the presentation of case-specific findings that will be evaluated by using transposition of theory discussed in the earlier stages of this research to the causal links established in the gathered data. The findings are grouped around several themes: response success, strategic communications, and reactive and proactive policy measures. This is then followed by an overall conclusion.

4.3. Response success

Based on the conducted process tracing, it is apparent that the public policy response to the Skripal case demonstrated a departure from the practices used in the Litvinenko's case. Often criticized as fully inadequate, the response to the Litvinenko murder has been extremely restricted and focused on the preservation of existing benign relations between the two countries (Chatham House 2018). It must be noted that even the results of the public inquiry in 2016, 10 years after the incident, which manifested the responsibility of Russian Federation for the poisoning, failed to be transmitted on a wide scale and never caused further repercussions. In the case of Skripal, the narrative of Russian responsibility navigated the coverage surrounding the incident from the earliest stage, long before key supporting evidence was presented. Having taken place in the conditions of wide international discontent with the aggressive foreign policy of the Russian Federation, the response was much more vocal and included international sanctions and coordinated expulsions of Russian diplomats from over 20 countries.

But although the communications on the incidents did demonstrate a departure – with the Skripal case attracting much larger international attention, in the larger picture, the response in both incidents had quite limited impact. The Russian Federation continues to maintain plausible deniability, promoting its own version of the events and undermining relevant Western narratives surrounding the incidents. ‘Narrative’ here is used deliberately, as the Western communications are not backed up by hard evidence. Chances of recovering such proof for the responsibility of the Russian government are extremely slim. To reiterate, it would need to explicitly connect both the assassination attempt AND the used substance to an authorization issued by the Russian government; as explored in chapter 3, the existence of such evidence is unlikely.

Obtaining relevant proof is even harder when considering the international status of the party allegedly responsible for the hybrid attack. Although Russia is often referenced as a former superpower, reflecting its changed status since the Cold War era, it is undeniable that this state still maintains considerable influence in international relations. The largest country on Earth, it possesses significant mineral deposits and human capital, and leads an active foreign policy, which is augmented by its permanent membership in the UN Security Council (UNSC). Contrary to a smaller state, which could potentially be deterred, Russia is one of the powers that are vital for the UN-led global order and thus is not easily threatened. Even though the UK is also a permanent member of the UNSC, the existing global order does not possess legal mechanisms that can overrule another permanent member in cases of the use of veto power. And even considering punitive measures outside the UN framework, acting against a global power, which also possesses the benefit of plausible deniability in the incident, becomes extremely difficult.

This global power status of the Russian Federation, as a result, is one of the major reasons why it can succeed in hybrid warfare scenarios. Considering

that this status persisted throughout both the Litvinenko and Skripal cases, it is not surprising that the response success in both instances was extremely limited. But as such small-scale hybrid actions proved to be effective against the UK, it is even more beneficial to dissect what can be done to increase state resilience to such scenarios. It must be highlighted, however, that this research in no way attributes all instances of the use of hybrid warfare solely to the Russian Federation. As explored in the theoretical part of the dissertation, not all hybrid action is Russian and not all Russia-led warfare is hybrid. This UK-Russia stalemate and the UK's inability to pursue legal action against the Russian Federation can transcend to any other set of global powers involved in a comparable scenario. As a result, it is unreasonable to build Russian-bound theories of hybrid warfare, which are essentially an example of the tunnel vision of this phenomenon, which was discussed on various stages of this research.

Aside from the empirical data demonstrating that the UK was not ready to tackle hybrid actions emanating from a world power, it was not ready, likewise, to react to the crisis led by a state actor per se. As explored in the theoretical part of the dissertation, the ongoing debates are often fixated on the idea of hybrid warfare being a tool of non-state actors. Although this claim was challenged by a variety of authors, especially in the aftermath of the annexation of Crimea, this idea is still ever present in the writing. Hoffman, one of the most popular and most cited authors in the theory of hybrid warfare – and one of the proponents of the non-state hypothesis – still influences the field and thus perpetuates this limited vision. Breaking free from such actor-based theorisations will contribute to a more elegant and effective conceptualization of the matter. In the practical dimension, this is critical for the making of the appropriate policy options that are targeted at confronting a state in the conditions of negative peace.

All in all, the chosen case studies reflected the conceptual weaknesses of the hybrid warfare theory that, consequently, have influenced the readiness of public policy to tackle such scenarios. Moving forward, it is important to recognize that hybrid threats are not constrained to fragile environments and non-state actors, as well as keep in mind the difficulty of organizing an appropriate response when the attack is beyond the threshold of a formal war declaration, as it constrains the affected party in the relevant response mechanisms.

4.4. Strategic communications

Considering that hybrid warfare takes place in the grey zone, which is unregulated by major international agreements, communication of a particular event having a hybrid character is essential for the response organization. Strategic communications were a significant focus of this dissertation as they proved to be one of the key elements of the UK response strategy to the Skripal incident. Despite process tracing demonstrating mixed results for the success of the UK use of strategic communications, the data suggested that they could have had higher effectiveness, especially targeting the issue of plausible deniability of the attacking party.

This argument can be supported by a comparison of relevant government efforts in the Litvinenko and Skripal incidents. When the earlier incident took place, the atmosphere of rapprochement between the UK and Russia stifled any conclusive retaliatory actions. In the Skripal case, however, the political situation was entirely different. The record of international law violations by Russian Federation, as well as Russia's active use of propaganda and disinformation techniques have become a challenge for international security. Thus, relevant response measures fit with the the larger strategy of the UK and its allies to discredit the actions of the Russian Federation abroad, which was also expressed in a larger strategic communications campaign. This campaign,

in particular, involved the use of the Litvinenko case. At the time of the attack on Skripal, it had already resurfaced as a matter of a high-level public investigation by the House of Commons, which expressed confidence in the responsibility of the Russian Federation government for the murder of Alexandr Litvinenko.

In other words, the Skripal case has become the final act of the ongoing securitization campaign that was a reaction to the aggressive foreign policy of the Russian Federation. Having experienced an attack by a chemical weapon, the UK authorities recognized that the respective threat from the side of the Russian Federation is now of direct concern to the state. This move to securitize the attempted assassination was essential considering the hybrid nature of the attack – its criminality could have led to the matter remaining solely a domestic concern.

The plausible deniability of the attacking party also motivated the UK's need to use strategic communications. As the process tracing has demonstrated, there is low likelihood of the UK having access to the hard evidence that proves the involvement of the Russian Federation government in the incident; even if it has access to such intelligence, it would be difficult to make use of it without endangering the sources of such highly sensitive information. As a result, the UK is unable to take legal actions in the organizations like OPCW and has a very limited range of available policy options. Based on the process tracing findings, the lack of such proof was mitigated by the active use of strategic communications that resulted in the securitization of the incident and caused international retaliatory measures against the Russian Federation.

This process of securitization is of direct relevance to the constructivist hybrid warfare perspective manifested in this research. Considering that the dissertation promotes the holistic and inclusive approach to hybrid warfare, it essentially employs the idea of actors – such as researchers or policy-makers –

naming particular security concerns as examples of hybrid warfare, and thus using a speech act, which is an essential element of the securitization theory (Baktir 2014).

Such a speech act did exist in the Skripal case – when Theresa May, then Prime Minister of the UK suggested that there was a high likelihood of the responsibility of the Russian government for the attack just a few days after the incident had taken place. But this speech act was not supported by publicly available evidence of Russian involvement – up until a third party, investigative journalism unit Bellingcat, published a chain of materials on the attack, months after it took place. As a result, although this utterance was indeed a government position on the need to launch a variety of retaliatory issues against Russia, without an appropriate evidence base emanating from the government, this narrative remained just a speech act.

This had significant consequences on the development of the situation and the strength of the UK's strategic communications. In the absence of hard proof, Russia maintained plausible deniability and launched dozens of disinformation narratives. They, essentially, securitized persecution of the Russian Federation abroad and, as some researchers note, this could have contributed to the climb in approval rates of President Putin before his re-election (Baroian 2018). With the Russian narratives challenging the UK position and dominating the information field surrounding the incident, and with the UK having little proof to situate follow-up actions, the intensity of the UK efforts began to erode, both in terms of substantial retaliatory measures and in terms of strategic communications.

This can be confirmed when considering the timeline of the incident. Process tracing revealed that the majority of case-related response measures were taken in the aftermath of the event in Salisbury; after the incident of Amesbury, the response was much more restrained. Gathered data also points

out that the interest in the Skripal case in the UK government heavily deteriorated over the past months. The Russian Federation, however, continues to revisit the events in Salisbury and Amesbury and the relevant actions of the UK government. The publication of the Russian embassy in London that commemorated one year after the events in Salisbury, for example, is an excellent indicator of the continuing work. While this material contained a number of distorted facts, it also included a range of valid criticisms directed at the UK government, such as its reluctance to demonstrate proof of life for Sergey Skripal (Embassy of the Russian Federation to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland 2019). With no reaction from the UK government, these questions are now permeating the coverage of the incident and undermining the Western perspective on the matter.

This is the exact reflection of the argument expressed in the theoretical framework of the research that relates to the heavy use of PR techniques in the media space pertaining to the use of hybrid warfare. Intended to create multiple versions of the reality and sway readers to the distorted narratives, such techniques can have a long-term effect on societal cohesion and trust in the government. While exact consequences in the Skripal case will unravel only over time, it is clear that maintaining a cohesive strategic communications policy is crucial for the successful situation of the response. With the UK losing control over the narratives covering the incident, the continuation of a relevant response strategy becomes problematic; and the effects on the cohesion of the wider society are yet to be seen.

4.5. Reactive and proactive response measures

Incurring both material and psychological damage, the effects of hybrid warfare are often longstanding and irreparable. The scarce theoretical framework relating to the response to hybrid warfare has a tendency to engage with long-term planning rather than offering guidance to the crisis

management in the societies that become affected by hybrid threats. This section will evaluate some key response mechanisms that were invoked in the Litvinenko and Skripal incidents and triangulate them with the relevant theoretical frameworks.

First of all, it is vital to reiterate that the typology of response measures includes proactive and reactive actions, which deal with ad hoc and post hoc crisis management, respectively. Considering that the two cases chosen for the research had similar characteristics and were spread in time, the process tracing allowed tracking both types of response measures – reactive in the direct aftermath of both cases and proactive in between.

The undertaken process tracing tests revealed a primary role of institutional learning in the organization of the response to the main focus of the dissertation, the Skripal incident. The public policy reaction to this case demonstrated a departure from the practices used in the Litvinenko case, especially in terms of immediate crisis response. This was a result of a range of proactive measures that involved institutional capacity-building and training. For example, there is a record of specific chemical warfare related training led for the law enforcement units, as well as developed guidance materials and checklists (Scottish police Federation 2017, Home Office 2019, GOV.UK 2019).

Such long-term measures, however, require appropriate planning and budget allocation. As the data on the Litvinenko case showed, the UK had much lower relevant agency capacity to lead immediate crisis response in 2006 than in 2018. Better preparedness to crises of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear nature, however, relates to the direct security needs of the state. Expenditures for less obvious potential targets for hybrid warfare, such as voting procedures or societal cohesion, can be much more difficult to justify and sustain as the returns on the investment would be much less obvious.

This is evident when considering the lack of UK reactive response measures to the disinformation narratives spread by Russia in the aftermath of the Skripal incident. Even when needed as a reactive measure – which implies a short-term need for appropriate budget and human resources – they proved to be a low-priority task for the authorities. Despite having an appropriate institutional structure domestically and support mechanisms in EU and NATO, the UK public policy establishment demonstrated an extremely low interest in responding to communications by the Russian Federation.

It is possible that the UK did not set up procedures to react to the Russian narratives in an attempt to dismiss them by default. In the conditions of hybrid warfare, however, this policy option is extremely unproductive as it allows the opponent to tailor its narratives to the actions of the target and produce a more convincing alternative version of the events. With the majority of such disinformation spread in the English language and on popular social media, these alternative narratives constitute up to 80% of the overall information field surrounding the incident (Barojan 2018). As a result, the UK failure to respond to such controversy can have long-term implications on the public government approval rates, as well as general distrust for the Western narratives which now constitute a derided minority in the incident coverage.

Such a tendency to ignore the power of disinformation can prove extremely dangerous when considering the further implications of the algorithm-based online media, which can potentially create echo chambers for people who are more prone to consuming ‘alternative’ narratives. With the rising concerns on ‘deepfake’ materials (e.g. artificially generated fake videos), it is extremely important to take both reactive and proactive measures, directly debunking fake content, as well as educating the audience on the features and implications of such materials.

The empirical data proves the argument that, unlike in conventional warfare, where you need to know your enemy, in hybrid warfare it is more important to be aware of oneself and one's vulnerabilities. This requires timely monitoring and evaluation procedures, as well as introduction of early warning mechanisms. Above all, however, it requires political will to sustain such efforts over time. As the Skripal case proves, this can be difficult even in the context of well-developed public institutions that are capable of institutional learning.

4.6. Concluding remarks

Having evaluated the performance of this dissertation in terms of the set aim and objectives and having discussed major case-specific findings, it is vital to reiterate the main purpose of this research and discuss possible developments of the chosen topic. This dissertation was born in response to a decaying interest to the theory of hybrid warfare. In its short life span of less than 20 years, this concept was born, strengthened and discarded before it had reached theoretical maturity and offered any practical value. Used mostly descriptively, hybrid warfare is a frequent guest in different security-related materials; nevertheless, it does not carry much meaning.

Having adopted a holistic understanding of the concept of hybrid warfare, this research focused on its practical value and used case study design to gather data that can be further used in an attempt to create a more comprehensive and, more importantly, usable theory of hybrid warfare.

Looking back at the whole research behind this dissertation, it is valid to say that it has barely scratched the surface of the topic potential. Hybrid warfare has room for growth, especially when considering unravelled connections with securitization theory. This, however, is beyond the scope of the thesis and will be followed up separately.

With the Skripal case still being a matter of the open investigation, obviously there is a chance that new evidence will make some facts used in this research obsolete, which is a valid risk when dealing with hybrid warfare incidents. The value of this research, however, is not only in the gathered factual data, it is rather in the desire to dissect and operationalize the concept of hybrid warfare. While this thesis is only the beginning in terms of the case data that has to be gathered before the proposed understanding of 'hybrid warfare' becomes a valid theory, it is already operational and can be used for both research and public policy purposes.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1. Sample of definitions of the concept of hybrid warfare

Code	Author	Affiliation	Definition	Main Refenced Authors	Main Themes
1-2017	Herta	academia	"hybrid warfare is an aggregate of blended strategies (facilitated by globalization and revolution in communications and internet, also triggering the instantaneity of attacks) employed by some military actors, which perceive themselves in an asymmetric conflict with an opponent, in an attempt to keep up with the uneven conditions" (138)	Hoffman	types of wars, non-state activity, Russian foreign policy

2- 2016	Banasi k	academia, military	Hybrid war defined as a combination of conventional methods and irregular formations, asymmetric tactics, and terrorism with actions of a criminal nature, is a unique form of planned and synchronized impact on the opposite side through military and non-military instruments (157-158)	Hoffman, Messner, Nemeth	Russian interests abroad
4- 2018	Hussai n	journalism	"Hybrid warfare is a military strategy that employs a blend of kinetic operations and subversive efforts to destabilise an adversary. It may also be defined as a non-linear or non-traditional war" (1)		Pakistan, root causes of hybrid tactics
5- 2015	Kofma n and Rojans ky	policy, research	"a variety of tools, ranging from conventional to irregular combat		hybrid as Russian strategy for its

			operations, sponsorship of political protests, economic coercion, and a powerful information campaign" (1)		neighbourhood
6-2010	Hoffman	military and policy	“any adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs a fused mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism, and criminal behavior in the battlespace to obtain their political objectives.” (443)		new wars, non-state actors, historical cases; naval warfare
7-2015	Neville	military and academia	"s a combination of economic, social, cyber, military, media, and political means that are used to achieve a particular goal; (1);“a doctrine utilizing all the instruments of		Russia, historical cases

			power to compensate for military weakness by developing alternatives to and surrogates for military power to corrode...societies.” (5)		
8-2018	CASIS	policy, academia	"a combination of conventional and unconventional methods employed to destabilize states. This includes more modern tactics such as cyber attacks and information warfare, used in collaboration with more conventional military tactics" (2)	NATO	Canada-Russian relations, NATO
9-2018	NATO	policy	“the use of asymmetrical tactics to probe for and exploit weaknesses via non-military means (such as political, informational, and		kinetic operations

			<p>economic intimidation and manipulation) [that] are backed by the threat of conventional and unconventional military means. In NATO's context, "hybrid warfare" entails a campaign against an Ally or the Alliance by means that are not expected to trigger Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, which enshrines the principle of collective defence" (1)</p>		
10-2018	Nayde nov	academia	<p>"hybrid warfare is "first and foremost about perceptions and understanding of the real situation. If leaders and society of any given country under hybrid attack are</p>		<p>Russia, NATO; corruption and organized crime</p>

			unable to comprehend they are under such a threat, then defeat is only a matter of time" (87)		
11-2012	Hoffman	military, academia	"Any adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs a fused mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism and criminal behavior in the battle space to obtain their political objectives"(2)	Nemeth	Hybrid vs compound war
12-2016	Mosquera and Bachmann	policy and academia	"Hybrid War describes a conflict "in which states or non-state actors exploit all modes of war simultaneously by using advanced conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism, and disruptive technologies or criminality to destabilize an		lawfare, Russia, Daesh

			existing order”, and which blurs “distinct categories of warfare across the spectrum, from active combat to civilian support”(66)		
13-2016	UK Ministry of Defence	policy	"Hybrid warfare can be characterised as a comprehensive strategy based on a broad, complex, adaptive and often highly integrated combination of conventional and unconventional means. It uses overt and covert activities, which can include military, paramilitary, irregular and civilian actors, targeted to achieve (geo) political and strategic objectives. Hybrid warfare is directed at an adversary's		Russia, NATO

			<p>vulnerabilities, focussed on complicating decision making and conducted across the full spectrum (which can encompass diplomatic, political, information, military, economic, financial, intelligence and legal activity) whilst creating ambiguity and deniability. Hybrid strategies can be applied by both state and non-state actors"(4)</p>		
14-2009	Williamson	military, academia	<p>"hybrid threat as one that can “incorporate a full range of different modes of warfare including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including indiscriminate</p>	Hoffman	4th generation war, blended warfare

			<p>violence and coercion, and criminal disorder. Hybrid war can be conducted by states, a variety of non-state actors, or a combination of the two"(22)</p>		
15-2015	Dayspring	military, academia	<p>"the term has been used to loosely describe a variety of forms of war without examining the nature of the aggressor state. There are three principal considerations that determine the 'hybridity' of warfare: 1) the nature of the aggressor state, 2) the presence of requisite conditions, and 3) the primacy and combination of other-than-conventional</p>	Mearsheimer (offensive real)	Russia

			military forms of warfare"(26)		
16-2016	Abbott	academia	"a form of warfare that includes a range of multi-modal activities that can be conducted by state or non-state actors" (3)	Hoffman	Russia, NATO
17-2007	Bond	military, academia	"Hybrid war envisions employment of a comprehensive and highly-nuanced variety of military activities, resources, programs, and applications, tailored to maximize a non-violent, persuasive use of economic and political influence to reform hostile governments, movements, or trends in politically, socially, and	Hoffman	non-state actors, failed states, United States

			economically unstable conditions, characteristic of failing and failed states" (4)		
18-2016	EUCO MM	policy	"the mixture of coercive and subversive activity, conventional and unconventional methods (i.e. diplomatic, military, economic, technological), which can be used in a coordinated manner by state or non-state actors to achieve specific objectives while remaining below the threshold of formally declared warfare" (2)		EU

19-2011	Huovinen	military, academia	<p>"a cocktail of conventional military capabilities, insurgencies, terrorism, guerrilla warfare, organized crime, cyber warfare and advanced military technology. This kind of warfare may also include violations of international laws of war, and will often also include non-state actors and organizations, supported by states with dubious agendas. All these ingredients may be blended together with an equivocal number of ingredients affecting the outcome at the same time" (3)</p>	<p>compound warfare, historical cases, non-state actors</p>
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20-2011	Fleming	military, academia	"an adversary, state or non-state that adaptively and rapidly incorporates diverse and dynamic combinations of conventional, irregular, terrorist and criminal capabilities, as well as non-military means, simultaneously across the spectrum of conflict as a unified force to obtain its objectives" (2-3)	non-state actors. Hezbollah
21-2007	Hoffman	military, academia	"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"	maritime warfare, non-state actors, Hezbollah

			(8)		
23-2018	Omand	policy	"Intimidation, propagandistic narratives and dirty tricks or 'active measures'" (6)		UK, EU, Skripal, Russian activity
25-2016	Polese et al	academia	"Hybrid warfare is now used in a systematic, subtle, and refined way, backed by an official state discourse that denies it and supports it at the same time and to which the international community seems unable to respond" (365)		post-Soviet studies
27-2007	Hoffman	military, academia	"The term 'hybrid' captures both their [lethal systems] organization and their means. States will employ terrorism as an		Marine Corps, naval operations, small wars

			operational method, and nonstate actors will gain and use statelike conventional capabilities. States will shift their conventional to irregular formations and adopt new tactics, as Iran appears to be doing. We will face major states capable of supporting covert and indirect means of attack, as well as groups with state-like capability"(59)		
28-2018	Caliskan and Cramers	academia	"a combination of military and non-military tools to achieve policy goals" (25)	Hoffman	media narratives and definitions
29-2015	Bachmann	academia, military	"Multimodal, low-intensity, kinetic as well as non-kinetic threats to international peace and security include		Russia, non-state actors, Middle East

			<p>cyber war, asymmetric conflict scenarios, global terrorism, piracy, transnational organised crime, demographic challenges, resources security, retrenchment from globalisation and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction... have become known as hybrid threats"(78)</p>		
31- 2016	Neag	academia, military	<p>"the use of a very comprehensive and nuanced variety of military activities, resources, programs and applications, dimensioned in such a way that they lead to a non-violent, persuasive maximization of the political and economic influence to reform the</p>		<p>assymetri c warfare</p>

			governments or hostile movements, as well as the reversal of the trend of the conditions of instability in the political, social and economic areas, characteristic to the collapsed or failed states" (18)		
34-2017	Chivvis	academia, policy	"multiple instruments of power and influence, with an emphasis on nonmilitary tools, to pursue ... national interests"(1)		Russia, United States
35-2017	Radin	academia, policy	"covert or deniable activities, supported by conventional or nuclear forces, to influence the domestic politics of target countries"(vii)		Russia
38-2009	Freier	academia	"nettlesome “high-low” combinations of capabilities and methods—i.e., violent “irregular”	Hoffman	United States

			forces that possess advanced military capabilities or “regulars” who skillfully combine conventional and unconventional warfare" (81)		
39-2016	Reichborn-Kjennerud and Cullen	academia and policy	"creative and adaptive use of all instruments of power" (4)		
40-2018	Malksoo	academia	"a particular mode of waging war, combining conventional and unconventional, coercive and non-coercive means, capabilities, tactics and formations in a centrally organised and orchestrated manner" (377)		Ontological insecurity, EU, NATO
41-2015	Praks	academia, policy	"the employment of, in a coordinated way, a mixture of military and non-		EU, NATO, Russia

			military components to achieve political ends" (2)		
42-2017	Hickman et al.	academia, military, policy	"multiple and synchronised threats that aim to target state vulnerabilities at different levels of intensity over time" (4)		EU, NATO