Abstract:

This study explores hybrid warfare as a strategic choice for states under geopolitical pressure. This form of warfare, often covert and non-military, is not a new concept; history's prominent military theorists have long advocated for achieving political objectives through subversion and coercion rather than overt conflict. While not new, technology and a changing geopolitical landscape are making these tactics more prevalent, and the very nature of open democratic societies can make them vulnerable to hybrid attacks.

Russia's strategic challenges, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, exemplify the conditions that stimulate the application of hybrid warfare. The loss of control over critical geographical invasion points, combined with Western encroachment on its borders, has led to Russia employing hybrid warfare in an attempt to regain strategic influence over former Soviet territories. The Baltics have responded by implementing whole-of-society defence, a strategy that encourages integrated comprehensive societal participation for national defence.

This research aims to understand and explore these opposing strategic dynamics. This study is guided by two key research questions: first, what is the role of hybrid warfare in grand strategy and how effective is it in accomplishing strategic goals? Secondly, is whole-of-society defence a viable response to hybrid conflict?

Using comparative case studies, the research examines Russia's application of these tactics in Georgia and the Baltics, and the corresponding effectiveness of the whole-of-society defence strategy employed by the Baltic states in curtailing such hybrid attacks. This research contributes to the understanding of evolving warfare strategies and suggests potential responses to non-traditional threats, a pressing need in today's global security landscape.

Key Words: hybrid warfare, whole-of-society defence, grand strategy, Russia, near abroad, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Georgia, Gerasimov, Primakov, NATO, EU, post-Soviet