Chapter 19
Asymmetrical Warfare and Modern Digital Media: An Old Concept Changed by New Technology?

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1. Introduction
Asymmetry, asymmetrical warfare, conflicts, approaches and threats appear continually within contemporary military, defence and security analyses. But the understanding of these is not identical at all. Therefore could be said that that asymmetric security challenges, threatening technologically developed and traditionally dominating states, are in some areas relatively new phenomena. In an asymmetrical way, weaker sides have moved to implement their own will and interests as well as change the balance of power in the post-Cold War period, a time when globalisation is not only changing political, economic, cultural and social spheres, but the security environment and national security system activities as well. This asymmetry is very often perceived and associated with attacks against an enemy’s weaker sides, using covert warfare, military force in counterinsurgency, information operations and cyberwarfare, weapons of mass destruction. Nevertheless, contemporary asymmetrical warfare is particularly connected with insurgency and terrorism, as well as with a new geopolitical world order after the end of the Cold War, when the state monopoly on security and especially military and also moral matters, seems to have ended. In other words, the restoration of security threats that traditional security systems are not able to cope with, such as new security actors – privatisation of war and violence, and a new world order, where it exists just one superpower, but the struggle for the influence and power is as before very important strategic issue.

In short, the asymmetry consists of warfare and threats that go beyond the opponent’s or antagonist’s expectations and beyond what its security mechanism is prepared

for. Although the asymmetrical warfare discussion, within the American and Western perspective, of course, has been deepening, especially since the Cold War, the concept itself is not new. On the contrary, it is very old and goes to the very roots of warfare. But the truth is that the actors, methods and means, as well as the effects, have changed dramatically. Technological development and a changing security environment have altered the asymmetric principles of armed conflict, which are as old as warfare itself. In this sense I am especially referring to the role and significance of information/communication technology as a key infrastructural base for digital media. The question is how digital media like the internet and other electronic broadcasting systems affect asymmetrical warfare (above all, its public presence, organisational culture, etc.) and conversely, how effective digital media are when used by “asymmetric warriors”.

Concerning the role of media in modern asymmetric warfare, at least two issues should be pointed out. The first issue is the impact of media on the affected public, while the second one focuses on the digital media interactivity and organisational changes of asymmetric warriors. Apart from different forms of the influencing of perceptions (propaganda, psychological and information operations) the question of the morality should be also pointed out. As the case of the Iraqi rebellion demonstrates, with the use of the internet and other digital media, the war becomes completely cluttered by an overdose of bits of information, sometimes conflicting, sometimes reliable. The (digital) media contexts are practically uncensored and the images of violence enter our every day life. To the consumer of this information, it seems that in modern wars everything is allowed and the former taboos on discriminate violence, as well as moral values are just a matter of history.

As I already mentioned, the main thesis, exposed in this chapter, refers digital media influencing the contemporary asymmetrical warfare. Therefore I am going to present the recent asymmetrical warfare definitions and concepts, as well as strategic and analytical framework. To reach scientific objectiveness, different points of view within different countries also have to be considered. But for the analysing asymmetrical warfare the pure definitions are certainly not enough. Regarding that fact I will include characteristics of asymmetrical warfare. Last but not least is empirical part where I will discuss the digital media usage by Iraqi rebellions 2003–2006, which should verify the thesis, the recent asymmetrical warfare has a long (conceptual) tradition, but on the other hand its presence in publics has been completely changed by modern mass media.