

Combating destabilising forces in modern operations. Research report

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Abstract

OBJECTIVES: There are two goals of the paper. Firstly, to determine scientifically substantiated conditions for the functioning of destabilising forces. Secondly, to develop methods for countering them in contemporary operations within broad range of security issues.

METHODS: This paper reports the results of a study that employed expert survey methodology. Experts were asked about motivation, objectives and modus operandi of destabilising forces.

RESULTS: The paper puts forward a series of conclusions and proposals with the intention of inspiring critical evaluation and encouraging substantive polemics. The research findings point at the difficulty to specify the motives and objectives of destabilising forces. The respondents unanimously described tactic employed by the destabilising forces as “resembling guerrilla warfare”. They also pointed out that their innovativeness in combining it with increased activity in the available mass media. High effectiveness of combating destabilising forces will be predominantly achieved by deploying highly mobile small units.

CONCLUSIONS: The general conclusion derived from the analysis of the answers obtained from the experts in the field is that combating destabilising forces exceeds the capabilities of the regular armed forces. Therefore, to a certain extent, efforts to eliminate the threat from such an enemy must involve other, non-military actors. It will be particularly important to improve the interaction between all components, including national and international civil organisations.

Keywords: destabilising forces, military operations, scientific research, expert opinion

Introduction

The 21st century set new directions in the development of the art of war (Kozerawski 2011, Majchrzak 2015, Smith 2010). Confrontations between actors exhibiting comparable military potentials were replaced by operations perceived as non-war, and conducted away from the territories of the states involved. Despite the seemingly non-military nature of these operations – aimed at stabilising the situation in areas under the command of particular military contingents and at providing assistance to local authorities and security forces in ensuring law and order – the casualties among military personnel and the non-combatant population are not infrequent. There are, therefore, strong grounds for believing that among the actors in contemporary operations, there exist groups such as militants, rebels, insurgents, revolutionaries, guerrillas, terrorists and common criminals that may be collectively referred to as destabilising forces (Giustozzi 2009, Więcek 2011, 2014). These formations typically constitute organised movements seeking to take power, introduce their ideas and achieve benefits resulting from promoting destabilisation, through the use of various means, including violence directed against legitimate authorities, support forces or their adversaries in a given society.

In modern history, numerous examples of various types of destabilising activities have been seen (Polak and Więcek 2015, Wrzosek 2016). Wherever military operations result in chaos, injustice and lay bare the inefficiency of governments and their structures, there emerge groups that primarily capitalise on the destabilisation, and secondly, actively oppose the reinforcement of legal authorities and oppose the presence of forces that support the state authorities. Such formations target both the armed forces personnel as well as members of society or power structures, employing typical measures and forms of influence: terrorist attacks, abduction, extortion, delivering fire at staging or objective areas, attacks on convoys and patrols and ambushes and assaults on soldiers. Destabilisation forces strive to achieve their goals on any suitable planes, be it political, media, psychological, economic or, obviously, military.

Later in the article, the author will try to obtain a scientifically justified answer to the research problem expressed by the question: *what forms and methods of impacting on destabilising forces could result in cessation of attacks on the armed forces and the legal authorities' personnel during stabilisation missions as part of modern military operations?*

The scientific approach to the problem of destabilising forces

The aim of this paper is to investigate the problem of destabilising forces based on the results obtained from the 2010-2012 study, with particular attention to the results from the 2011 expert opinion survey. The latter was conducted among officers with relevant knowledge and experience on the subject in question. The respondents participating in the study were: an assistant professor in the Department of Peace Operations and Crisis Management of the National Defence University of Warsaw, the head of Armed Forces Operational Command Headquarters, a senior specialist in G-3 Operations Branch of the Land Forces Command, the deputy commander of the NATO PRT Bundeswehr in the ISAF operation, the Brigade Commander in the ISAF operation, the commander of the Polish brigade-level task force in the ISAF operation, the commander of the manoeuvre company in the ISAF operation and the chief of staff of brigade-level task force in the KFOR operation. The study was conducted on the basis of a questionnaire containing five questions that asked the respondents to express their personal views – the questions were as follows:

1. To what extent do legal provisions of rules of engagement in modern operations influence the conduct of military operations?
2. What are the likely reasons and what may be the aims of attacks of destabilising forces on military personnel and legitimate power?
3. What are the tactics employed by the destabilising forces?
4. To what extent do the tactics employed against the destabilising forces account for the specificity of the opponent's actions and the environment?
5. What are the predicted evolution directions of forms and methods for combating the destabilising forces in military operations?

The elicited answers served as the foundation for the report, which included a number of conclusions regarding operation and neutralisation of destabilising forces. Nevertheless, to no extent do the obtained research results exhaust the subject or explicitly close the discussion on the functioning and combating such formations. The original intention was for them to constitute a voice in a scientific discussion in the field. This particular approach was adopted on the grounds that in recent years, a number of valuable Polish and English scientific and non-scientific studies regarding the problem of destabilising forces have been published (German Army Office 2010, Marszałek 2014, Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej 2013, Więcek 2010, Wysocki, Więcek and Ochalski 2017).

Furthermore, numerous reports emerged from commanders and press, which, despite the semantic discrepancies, refer to a considerable extent to countering and combating such groups. Due to the fact that the presented study was conducted at the turn of the second decade of the 21st century, it was impossible to account for the events that occurred after 2014 in Ukraine. The great significance of the Ukrainian conflict as the field for scientific exploration results from the opportunity that it offered for an ongoing examination of the functioning of the hostile *self-defence* forces (as they have come to be referred to) against the Ukrainian armed forces, which covers the field of destabilising forces.

Expert opinion on rules of engagement

Experts have unanimously shown that the principles of using force are a key pillar of modern operations. Owing to the fact that one of the key rules of their conduct is legality, all hostilities performed by military formations, including the conduct of combat operations consisting in the physical elimination of destabilising forces, must be lawful. The respondents overall clearly emphasised the increasing tendency to perceive contemporary operations not as warfare, but as peace enforcement in the war zone. In principle, the essence of conducting operations other than war is not to physically eliminate the opponent, but to gain favour with the society and stabilise the situation. Nonetheless, in numerous instances, the employment of weapons becomes a necessity, which is why the rules of engagement are considered to be a measure to protect soldiers against potential legal consequences resulting from employing illegitimate violence, information materials for soldiers defining the limits of the implementation of specific combat ventures. Regarding the limitations resulting from excessively restrictive rules of the use of force, the respondents shared the conviction that at the stage of action planning, these principles should be considered from the perspective of their impact on improving the security, rather than as a tool legitimating sophisticated forms of armed violence. In the interviewees' opinion, the responsibility for verifying the validity of the force engagement rules lies with the politicians and top military authorities, since the use of force should follow from legal acts proposed at the highest levels of administration. It is vital that any circumstances for force engagement be set out clearly and explicitly – beyond misinterpretation – in order not to leave the executor unsure of his own actions. Therefore, the understanding for the application of these principles in combat ought to

be instilled in training in the said thematic scope and would be implemented prior to deployment in the zone of hostilities; this is not always the case according to the expert respondents.

What can be inferred from the answers obtained from the experts is that the rules for employing force are subject to various interpretations, depending on the level of activities and the level of command. This opinion is further exemplified by the account of the commander of the manoeuvre company, who indicated that extensive restrictions on the rules of engagement resulted not from the sheer complexity of respecting them, but from the excessive questioning of any use of weapon by the Military Police, notwithstanding the situations in which soldiers fired warning shots. The fact in question exerted a negative effect on the morale and (in certain cases) led to the conviction that the use of weapons is a necessary evil. Furthermore, the rules of engagement are constantly and closely monitored by enemy analysts. The awareness of legal restrictions imposed on the Allied forces has been fuelling the ongoing evolution of the destabilising tactics. An example of the aforementioned is the increase in the number of instances of fire delivered from residential areas, which frequently constitute the typical *modus operandi* of the destabilising enemy forces, predominantly due to the extremely difficult circumstances for counteraction.

One of the experts recalled an instance of a skirmish in which he personally participated. The fire at Allied forces from anti-tank weapons was delivered from the edge of a village. The soldiers did not respond with fire as they were aware of the threat to the civilian population. It was not until the enemy soldiers changed guard at the fire position that the circumstances allowed the helicopter crew to eliminate the threat.

Experts have expressed a strong agreement advocating that the force engagement rules should be subject to continuous updates, taking into account the enemy tactics observed in hostile actions, instead of being thoughtlessly replicated in subsequent changes of military contingents. They are widely regarded as exerting an absolutely fundamental impact on the safety of troops and the range of available means of reaction at the disposal of Allied forces, thus directly affecting the ability to react and employ preventive measures. One of the respondents indicated that among Polish soldiers, the case of the village of Nangar Khel is seen as the primary source of impact on their observance of rules of engagement. In that high-profile case, the soldiers were allegedly involved in retaliatory fire with the village. According to the expert, “since Nangar Khel, every soldier analyses whether they are eligible to respond with fire, or they are obliged to

be fired at prior to returning fire. This hesitation may eventually result in risking the life or limb of these or other soldiers, or even lead to certain paradoxes: during one of the contingents in Afghanistan, one of the bases was approached by “insurgents” every single day delivering more or less direct fire from an anti-tank grenade launcher. After a few days, it was resolved that a sniper should be placed on the guard tower. However, having located the shooter, the soldier was refused the clearance to open fire. This case in point clearly shows how the fear of legal responsibility affects the decision-making process – in this case, the best decision (from the point of view of the superior) was the lack of one.”

The experts strongly emphasised the fact that modern operations cover an extensive spectrum of tasks executed by the armed forces, which may include classic military operations, as well as peace-support or nation-building operations. It is for this reason that correctly defined rules for force engagement, derived from proper threat assessment and analysis of existing operational conditions coupled with the active participation of legal advisors, are critical to their execution. A continuous assessment of the operation progress should also ensure a proper reactive response in the face of changing operating conditions.

The experts point out that the rules of engagement have a crucial impact on the conduct of operations, and incorrectly defined or applied, they can become a serious obstacle for the successful accomplishment of missions. Typically, the constraint of absolute respect for the law narrows down the spectrum of the use of force, thus necessitating the search for alternative solutions (ways of acting). In many cases, the consequence of the above is the use of such combat systems and improved methods of operation that minimise the risk of mistakes.

The force engagement rules also have a direct impact on the morale of the troops. During intense, prolonged operations, personnel fatigue may occur. The soldiers experience stress resulting from the hardships of service, the danger involved in the performed tasks, as well as from the sheer fact of being away from the family and relatives. Giving prominence to the law (including the rules of engagement) allows balance to be maintained, and offers a moral interpretation and legitimisation of the undertaken actions. In the event of any deviation, the consequences may be fatal to the troops morale and, consequently, to their safety. In order to maintain high discipline and efficiency in crisis management operations, the principles of force engagement must, therefore, be strictly observed and applied.

The survey results also emphasised that the implementation of rules that enforce the use of insufficient force in response to an actual situation affects top tactical level commanders, inasmuch as they are left with limited possibilities to react to dangers or may react inadequately to a situation of danger.

The motives and objectives of destabilising forces attacks on military personnel and legitimate authority representatives

According to the experts, it was impossible to give an unambiguous answer to what these motives and objectives are. This is due to the fact that the motivation behind the attacks and their objectives stem from the circumstance of an extremely complex state of affairs in the contemporary crisis response operation zones.

The opinions voiced by the respondents concerned many spheres of destabilising forces activity. The experts acknowledge that the grounds for attempts to influence the forces of the Alliance and the legitimate power may be extremely different, ranging from the ideological to the economical (Table 1).

Table 1. Expert opinion on the motivation behind destabilising forces attacks on military personnel and legitimate authorities

Motivation for attack	Number of expert opinions
1. Fight for influence	5
2. Protection of illegal activities of criminal groups and local leaders	5
3. Involving international forces in the struggle between competing local groups of influence	2
4. Forcing Alliance forces out of the country	2
5. Ideological war - worldview diversity	5
6. Financial – financial reward for successful assault	3
7. Pragmatic – state destabilisation favours the exercise of informal power and boosts profits from illegal activity	6
8. Tribal – disapproval for the performance of government functions by representatives of other communities	2
9. Fight in the name of religious values	3

Source: own study.

In the eyes of the respondents, the answer to given questions should be substantiated by a deep understanding of the warfare strategy employed by transnational terrorist organisations. This strategy may be approached from different perspectives, such as the philosophical or political; however, such conflicts originate in the clash of civilisations. Referring to the operational aspects of hostilities, the basic cause of the attacks indicated by the respondents was said to be the destruction of the Alliance forces and, subsequently, incurring losses with a view to tempering the political support for the future deployment of their own troops by the countries involved in missions. According to the respondents, these activities could often target the perception and attitudes, being to a greater extent focused on generating a negative media image, rather than the physical destruction of soldiers up to a point where fighting (activities) would be impossible to perform. It can be inferred that destabilising forces are aware of the inability to defeat the opponent in an open confrontation and strive to influence the Allied forces indirectly.

The advanced combat systems and modern technologies employed by NATO forces exhibit considerable efficiency in protecting soldiers during the execution of tasks; however, virtually any loss in such activities will be negatively perceived by the public opinion of a given nation. Crisis response operations are still approached from the standpoint of stabilisation measures. It appears, though, that the paradigm prevailing in European public opinion is war in defence of the homeland, which essentially deviates from the contemporary, dynamic, complicated and asymmetric confrontation of expeditionary forces.

Respondents pointed out that the targets of attacks tend to be both logistic convoys (relatively easy to surprise and more vulnerable to attack) and bases from which the army, foot patrols and vehicles operate. The attacks primarily strike light APCs (Armoured Personnel Carriers), police or local armed forces' vehicles with the key aim of achieving a psychological advantage. Furthermore, elements of state infrastructure, police stations and administration premises are the objects of attacks intended to threaten and intimidate. Objects of attacks may also include schools, health centres and any installations crucial to the functioning of the local population and built (funded) by the Alliance. Attacks, the experts claim, may also serve to discredit the NATO authorities and forces (Table 2).

Table 2. Expert opinions on the objectives of destabilising forces attacks on the Allied army and legitimate authorities

Attack objectives		Number of expert opinions
1.	Elimination of representatives of local authorities and security forces	6
2.	Disorganisation of convoys with supplies for the Allied forces and humanitarian aid	3
3.	Harassment of NATO troops	3
4.	Gaining fame and publicity among the destabilising forces	2
5.	Demonstration of strength towards the local population	4
6.	Intimidation of international forces, authorities and society	6
7.	Emphasising the weakness of the international community	3
8.	Destabilisation	3
9.	Discrediting the authorities as unable to provide security for citizens	6
10.	Producing damage to the forces of the Alliance	5
11.	Discouraging NATO forces from continuing missions	6
12.	Mental fatigue and breaking the will to fight of Allied troops	1
14.	Decreasing the activity of Allied forces	1
15.	Intimidation and subjugation of the society to force their cooperation with destabilisation forces	5
16.	Financial benefits	2

Source: own study.

A separate and yet vitally important area in which the enemy actively performs is the media. Being aware of the immense power of information in the globalised world, the enemy promptly reacts to changes in this environment. In the contemporary reality, propaganda or dissemination of false ratings, descriptions and comments on the Internet is equally effective as explosions of roadside mines. The major outcomes of such activities are a decline in public support in countries participating in crisis response operations and the reduced morale of troops.

Asked to indicate other sources of the underlying motivation of the destabilisation forces' activity, the experts pointed to the destabilising actors' motivation to return to the state that existed before the operation started. According to the respondents, the attacks on institutions and people holding secondary and key positions in the structures of legitimate authority intensify with time. They intend to discourage politicians from holding various functions in the government and local government structures. Attacks also target civilians in order to intimidate them and undermine their sense of security, and secondly, to demonstrate the weakness and helplessness of authorities. In the interview,

one of the experts recalled the example of a state official who officially served as head of the district and unofficially remained an informal leader of a criminal group involved in illegal activities. This “multi-functionality” of the state official directly influenced *the law and order* in the district, perhaps, as expressed by the respondent, due to the prior elimination of all criminal competition for influence in the said area.

The experts also stressed that in certain circumstances, destabilising forces may strive to maintain the chaos as the condition that stimulates profits from criminal activities, or conducive to conducting illegal businesses that bring substantial financial benefits. Furthermore, many of the fighters claiming to be Taliban eventually turned out to be mercenaries and common criminals. According to the survey, in many cases, the targets of the destabilisation forces are lucrative objects and premises that bring their owners fortune, or invite the opportunity for extortion. Otherwise, destabilising missions serve to deepen chaos in the country.

Expert opinion on the tactics employed by the destabilising forces

The answers elicited in the questionnaire indicate that the tactics of destabilising forces are constantly evolving and becoming increasingly efficient and effective. The respondents unanimously described this tactic as “resembling guerrilla warfare” but pointing out that its innovativeness consists in combining it with increased activity in the available mass media. The experts perceive the media as an effective tool for the destabilising forces and a highly dangerous area of influence on the Allied forces.

The respondents underlined that the choice of tactics by destabilising forces is dictated by the disproportion in the available manpower, weapons and the level of training. Considering these setbacks, the destabilising forces resolve not to become engaged in open clashes, where their chances for survival and success are considerably diminished. The survey showed that direct attacks are rare and aim to show the strength and alleged capabilities of the enemy of the Alliance forces. Destabilising forces tend to manifest a distinct preference for the “hit and run” tactics, also in the literal sense. The examples of attacks on the Alliance forces presented by the respondent would typically involve a swift attack followed by a sudden disappearance of the attackers. Apparently, such

tactics are possible owing to the natural features found in the area of the hostilities, such as the caves and underground tunnels. This confirms the thesis that certain features of terrain in the area, combined with proper knowledge, in many cases, support the activities of destabilising forces. The described tactics are notable for their unconventionality, suddenness, high dynamics and surprise and their essence consists in not defeating the opponent, but rather instilling in their minds incessant uncertainty and psychological tension, stemming from the persistent fear for their life and health. One of the respondents remarked that such tactics combined with restrictions imposed by the rules of engagement have a highly destructive impact on soldiers' morale. Destabilising forces have learnt to take advantage of the drawbacks of the tight tactics of the Alliance army, which the respondents referred to as "harassment:" the enemy typically delivers fire at military bases or executes sudden attacks on the premises of authorities and state offices. Despite specialised protection systems against them, suicide attacks are still regarded as one of the more frequent and extremely dangerous forms of attack.

The destabilising forces operate in built-up areas, which allow them to capitalise on the numerous restrictions imposed on NATO soldiers with regards to the rules of engagement. Experts have pointed out that destabilising forces are the "hosts" in the area, and, therefore, may rely on the support of local communities, willing to assist their quick removal from the warzone or provide shelter upon accomplishing their mission. The experts indicated that the enemy attacks typically took place in circumstances that seemingly minimised the threat from Allied forces, which further intensified their impact. The tactics of destabilising forces are notable for their efficiency. In many cases, the attacks are aimed at achieving the expected goals not through direct impact, but as a result of secondary consequences of their activities. Indeed, destabilising forces are constantly present in areas where the activity of Allied troops and representatives of the authorities is sporadic. The intended psychological effect on the communities is achieved. An effective and destructive impact on the emerging local armed forces instils the image of their helplessness and incapability for even self-defence, thus undermining their readiness to protect the population. Finally, the experts agreed that provisional explosive devices are the most lethal method employed by destabilising forces to exert influence on Allied troops (Table 3).

Table 3. Expert opinion regarding *modus operandi* of destabilisation forces

Modus operandi		Number of expert opinions
1.	Improvised explosive devices	8
2.	Abduction	3
3.	Suicide attacks	7
4.	Intimidation of authorities' representatives	3
5.	Booby traps	3
6.	Fire on military bases	8
7.	Ambush	8
8.	Fire from moving vehicles	1
9.	Attacks using various measures	3
10.	Large attacks on local security force bases	2
11.	Dissemination of disinformation	3
12.	Observation	1
13.	Sniper fire	3
14.	Direct attack	2
15.	Attacks on aircraft (using RPG)	2

Source: Own study.

Expert opinions on the tactics for combating destabilising forces

In response to questions concerning the tactics of NATO forces against destabilising forces, respondents indicated that it fully accounts for the terrain conditions and the operation environment. In addition, it was reported that the missions executed by NATO forces take into consideration the enemy tactics. What is more, these activities should be aimed at ensuring the security and stability of civilians and countering negative phenomena, such as bribery or banditry. Typically, the tactics against the destabilising forces, however, are directed against entities (people, villages), and not mechanisms occurring in the areas of operation. According to the experts, we may currently observe the process of continuous adaptation of weapons and equipment to the conditions prevailing in the area of crisis response operations. A proper consideration for the actions of the enemy and the environment in which the destabilising forces operate is a key element in planning future activities. Based on intelligence data about the area of potential impact (in terms of the lie of the land and actions of enemy forces in a given area) and risk analysis in relation to the planned effect, the commander makes a decision on completing the undertaken mission, or applies to his superiors for additional support with a view to minimising the risk involved in the mission. The above process is carried out on a regular basis; nevertheless, it is by no means smooth. The problem is

in the rotation of troops, which usually coincides with the greatest tactical efficiency of response forces. In the opinion of the respondents, the information and details on the *modus operandi* were not properly passed to the subsequent contingent in many cases.

With regard to the specificity of the tactics followed in combat against destabilising forces, the specialists stated that the Allied forces should be a step ahead of the hostile forces. What allows the Allied forces to maintain the advantage is, in the opinion of the experts, the intelligence and technological advantages. It was indicated that there should be an increase in the use of helicopters and unmanned reconnaissance means. The increase in the involvement of special forces was also pointed out. Simultaneously, according to specialists, the effort of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) should increase, which should win the favour of communities inhabiting the areas of activity of manoeuvre forces.

The experts also referred to specific examples, such as the ongoing progress in adjustment of forces and resources to the requirements of the battlefield. Modern APCs are capable of operation in difficult terrain, while providing the crew with solid protection against small-calibre fire and, to a certain extent, against explosive charges. The comments in the survey also highlighted the two-dimensional, *i.e.* air-land, operational character of hostilities against destabilising forces. A clear tendency was observed in the implementation of two-level combat groups (so as to achieve synergy between land and air echelons), the relatively common use of air support, unmanned reconnaissance technologies, and satellite imaging. The above aspects heavily contribute to obtaining an information advantage, the use of which, however, requires the special forces to be employed. Nevertheless, according to the respondents, such effective operational mechanisms in many a case were not implemented due to the lack of reliable and timely information.

Part of the battlefield tactics of the Allied troops was to strive to maintain the fire contact in the event of confrontation with the destabilising forces, which was primarily aimed at preventing the enemy escaping. The hostilities were followed by pursuits, also involving helicopters. According to the respondents, Allied troops should exhibit great patience in the acquisition and taking advantage of information in all possible areas of military activity. Physical elimination should be the last resort, while it is equally important that all combat operations be lawful. As an example, one of the experts pointed out the situation from his own experience in Afghanistan. It concerned the decision to eliminate a group of fighters planting roadside mines. The event took place at night.

The reconnaissance pinpointed a group of individuals who had left a vehicle and were digging along the road, presumably installing explosive charges. Faced with doubts, the command resolved not to open fire but to follow the vehicle once it began to leave the place of the assumed load placement. At the checkpoint, it turned out that the detainees were women and children travelling by bus, whose driver was forced to change the wheel.

It was widely reported that in order to improve the tactics against destabilising forces, the time spent on the mission would have to be extended; however, it would surely occur at the expense of the psychophysical conditions of soldiers. At the initial stages of their mission, the military personnel of subsequent contingents tend to make the same mistakes made by their predecessors, which is taken advantage of by the enemy, who typically shows much initiative in the early days of the contingents. Admittedly, reconnaissance is carried out in the period preceding the arrival of new troops to the area of operations; however, it is the logistics and not the combat-related issues that are in the scope of its primary interest.

The experts predict that in the future, the effectiveness of combating destabilising forces will be predominantly achieved through the deployment of light, manoeuvre sub-units of special forces and infantry transported on helicopters, whose primary strength will be a fast response to intelligence data, and thus making use of the information advantage. According to the respondents, these forces must be capable of engaging pinpointed targets of critical importance to the enemy. Successful execution of attacks on such key elements of the entire system of enemy forces tends to produce tangible results, while eliminating the risk-taking that could and would be likely to lead to unnecessary casualties, and consequently to undermining the positive spirit of their own troops. That is why the Allied forces focus on eliminating the key leaders of the enemy side. According to the respondents, however, such actions ought to be integrated with non-combat projects.

Expert predictions on the evolution directions of ways and methods of combating destabilising forces in military operations

The respondents remarked the predictions posed in the heading of this section would vary, depending on the operational level of activity under consideration. The top operational levels are where the final result of the operation is established, the achievement of which will consist of a number of minor tactical successes. Combating destabilising forces goes beyond a simple military intervention, it is integrated with other auxiliary activities, such as rebuilding, increasing security, reinforcement of local authority structures and reconstruction of security forces. These tasks cannot possibly be performed by the armed forces themselves, hence, in the future, such activities are expected to involve state institutions and selected ministries more actively.

According to experts, there is a high probability that we may observe further growth in the importance of technological support in combat, as well as avoiding direct confrontation with enemy forces in favour of cutting them off from financial sources, elimination of enemy leaders and destroying logistics facilities (*e.g.* neutralisation of weapons and ammunition stocks). In terms of combat operations, it was pointed out that key importance will be most likely ascribed to the execution of high precision strikes out carried out by specialist task forces using cutting-edge equipment, which will fully exploit the effect of information advantage.

In the future, the best results should be ensured by forces that will be able to make an immediate reaction and carry out precise strikes, which will, furthermore, generate the least possible side effects in the operational environment of the hostilities. Since combating destabilising forces is rather incidental than regular in character, the reaction time becomes the decisive success factor. Therefore, the role of special forces, air assault forces and air forces is bound to increase. It is not the quantity but the quality that ought to be prioritised with respect to building the structures of subsequent missions. Simultaneously, regardless of what label we put on the international forces, they will usually be perceived by the local population as occupants. Therefore, in the future, conflict situations should be mitigated immediately after their occurrence in order not to provoke further tensions by the apparent demonstration of power.

Probably, in the future, we could witness an increase in the surveillance of the battle environment and advances in pre-emptive capabilities of armed forces, as well as

intelligence missions and special tasks. Experts agreed that it is necessary to gradually delegate the responsibility for combating destabilising forces to local authorities and security forces. The tasks assigned to ground forces should focus on spreading the favourable image of the international forces to build trust among local communities. The primary objectives of special forces will include typical combat missions, consisting in physical elimination of pinpointed targets. It seems that the tactics of gaining control over specific areas (objects) and gradually increasing the involvement outward may prove an effective measure to exercising control over large occupied areas. However, for the control to be successful, it is vital that the responsibility for maintaining security is gradually transferred to local forces, thus increasing their independence. It is recommended that the necessary hostilities be carried out selectively to harass and combat the destabilising forces, simultaneously striving to avoid casualties among the civilian population.

Hostilities must not be the dominating operation in the reconstruction of states. According to experts, the Allied forces need to channel their efforts into humanitarian help, training national security forces and supporting legal authorities. The values such as pure intentions, respect for cultural differences and real respect for people, will be instrumental to gaining the public support for the presence of Allied forces and their projects.

The surveyed experts strongly emphasised the need to shift the centre of gravity towards non-military missions in the future. In brief, these undertakings can be summarised in six points: 1. Cut off destabilising forces from sources of financing. 2. Cut off destabilising forces from sources of supply. 3. Raise the standards of living of the local population (owning nothing - they risk little). 4. Propose alternative crops to replace drug farms. 5. Develop projects showing prosperity. 6. Create leaders among the local population.

Summary and conclusion

The central theme of the undertaken study on destabilising forces was to obtain a scientifically justified answer to the research problem expressed by the question: *what forms and methods of impacting on destabilising forces could result in cessation of attacks on the armed forces and the legal authorities' personnel during the stabilisation missions as part of modern military operations?* It would seem that the optimal solution should produce

the best results with the least amount of effort. The experts indicate, however, that combating destabilising forces is both immensely time-consuming as well as requires huge investment of efforts and resources. It is, therefore, critical to exploit the information advantage and utilise the capabilities of special forces, including the pre-emptive strike. Nevertheless, the prerequisite for achieving the abovementioned objectives is to obtain support from communities inhabiting the areas of operation for these missions.

The general conclusion derived from the analysis of the answers obtained from the experts in the field is that combating destabilising forces exceeds the capabilities of the regular armed forces. Even thoroughly prepared, military formations designated to perform such missions are highly unlikely to possess sufficient competence to integrate police, security, training and administrative activities in areas released from the grip of destabilising forces. Therefore, to a certain extent, efforts to eliminate the threat from such an enemy must involve other, non-military actors. It will be particularly important to improve the interaction between all components, including national and international civil organisations. All the formulated requirements place high demands on the contemporary and future educational systems – the providers of well-trained personnel prepared for the needs of the armed forces and the state administration. The deployed staff must show necessary competence not only in terms of understanding the assumptions of contemporary warfare, but above all in proper interpretation of the significance of cultural, religious and ideological differences. This importance is further elevated when considering the fact that in order to achieve success in countering destabilisation forces, the exercise of military power must give way to the involvement of political and non-governmental actors, or may require the mobilisation of significant financial resources for reconstruction projects.

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