

# TRENDS and CONFLICT PARADIGM 2030



This page intentionally left blank.

---

## Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Trends.....</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1. Population Development.....	3
2.2. Economy and energy supply.....	10
2.3. Political systems and the global order .....	18
<b>3. Conflict Paradigm .....</b>	<b>28</b>
3.1. Core statements of the trend descriptions .....	28
3.2. Actors on the battlefield .....	31
3.2.1. Regular adversaries.....	31
3.2.2. Irregular adversaries.....	31
3.2.3. Other actors .....	32
3.3. Security environment .....	34
3.4. Forms of armed conflict .....	39
3.4.1. Conventional/Subconventional combat .....	39
3.4.2. Symmetrical and asymmetrical conflicts.....	41
3.5 Concepts of domestic and external security .....	43
3.6 Contingencies of Comprehensive National Defence.....	44
3.6.1. Attacks in cyber-space.....	44
3.6.2 Direct threat to the civilian population.....	45
3.6.3 Violent popular unrest .....	46
3.6.4 Escalating violence against the state's authority.....	46
3.6.5 Separatist movements .....	47
3.6.6 Terrorism .....	47
3.6.7 Attacks on critical infrastructure.....	47
3.6.8 Attacks by organised, armed forces .....	48
3.6.9 Attack on Austria by a state's armed forces (war).....	49
3.7 International operations.....	50
3.8 Hybrid conflict.....	50
<b>4. Assessment summary.....</b>	<b>54</b>
Domestic conflict paradigm (graphically).....	57
Annex: Definitions.....	I
Images: .....	VI



## 1. Introduction

This document, entitled *Trends and conflict paradigm 2030*, is a declassified abstract from *Threat paradigm 2030*, itself a classified command and control document that was enacted by the Austrian Armed Forces' Chief of Defence Staff on 24 August 2018. Its structure follows the analytical method *address – evaluate – conclude* and includes the descriptive part 2 *Trends* and the evaluative part 3 *Conflict paradigm*.



Of the multitude of national and international trend analyses, these documents were primarily evaluated for their relevance to Austria and her armed forces:

- *Global Strategic Trends – Out to 2045* (UK Ministry of Defence)
- *Strategic Foresight Analysis Report 2017* (NATO)
- *Global Trends to 2030: Can the EU meet the challenges ahead?* (EU)

Statements made are reviewed continually and updated when necessary.

## 2. Trends

The results of trend analyses combine to create the conflict paradigm. Military strategic conclusions are then derived from the conflict paradigm and form the basis of concepts and descriptions of capabilities. Those concepts and descriptions are required for force development.

Trends described in this document refer to the space of time commencing in the year 2030. As future developments are dealt with, the underlying assumption is that those developments will be concluded by then and the respective circumstances will by then have materialised. They may, however, happen faster and thus yield their results earlier, either in a weaker form or even fully. What follows is a demand for action in terms of long-term force development, i.e. beyond the next decade<sup>1</sup>.

Trends fall into *three areas of effects* of global strategy:

- population development,
- economy and energy supply, and
- political systems and the global order.

The development of the future environment will be determined by:

- rapid change,
- insecurity, and
- complexity.

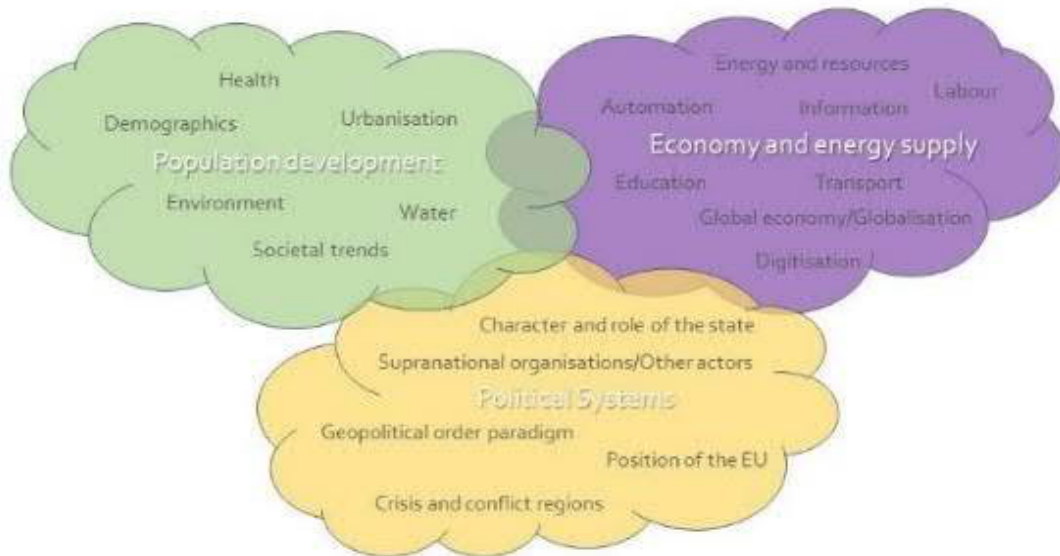
Results of **environmental developments**, **digitisation** and **inequality**<sup>2</sup> within and between states are key drivers and may reinforce or weaken trends.

The assignment of trends to the above-mentioned areas of effects is not to be understood as exclusive but follows the method of preponderance. Most trends also have effects on other strategic areas but are only described once.

---

<sup>1</sup> A ten-year period allows for far-reaching changes to armed forces, such as a different recruitment system, a new aircraft type or orientation towards a new threat. It is the minimum period unless wartime economy is implemented, which is an option during armed conflict.

<sup>2</sup> In terms of differences in the access to resources and wealth, and the implementation of human rights.



Classification of trends

There have always been unforeseeable events the effects of which amount to strategic shocks. It continues to be impossible to rule those out. While the effects of such *black-swan* phenomena may decisively accelerate or suppress trends and trigger new developments, they do not invalidate trend descriptions or ensuing long-term planning.<sup>3</sup>

## 2.1. Population Development



Trends in the area of effects *population development*:

<sup>3</sup> E.g. the October Revolution, the world wars (due to their duration and intensity and the ensuing political reordering), the collapse of the Soviet Union, and 9/11.



The global population will continue to grow over the next decades and reach up to 10 billion by mid-century as the average life expectancy will continue to grow, especially in developed countries, and birth rates continue to be high, especially in developing countries, while infant mortality is decreasing.

Due to low birth rates, there will be increasingly aging populations in highly developed and industrialised countries, which will decrease in numbers absent immigration. By contrast, young persons will very much increase in numbers in less developed regions (Near and Middle East, Central Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa). Differences in population development will thus increase further between regions and states.

Migration continues to be expected from less developed countries with high population growth to wealthier regions with likely better living conditions.

Heightening tensions are to be reckoned with between individual groups of populations if insufficiently controlled migration is felt to be a heavy strain on a target country's system of social welfare. If parallel societies are felt to be established or are indeed created on a religious and/or ethnic basis, tensions are exacerbated, posing a threat to the existing social and legal system.



In some parts of the planet, the results of climate change and ecological damage and the growth of the global population will massively impact water resources and, consequently, agricultural productivity. There will be consequences for drinking water and food supplies. Increased demand for industrial water will enhance competition for that resource between agriculture and other industries.

As demand will continue to rise for both food and consumer goods, an exacerbation of existing shortages is to be reckoned with. Regional shortages will increasingly affect hitherto unaffected regions. They may cause local, regional and transregional conflicts and trigger migration with regional or transregional effects.





While the direct results of climate change are unlikely to be as dramatic in Europe as in other parts of the world, water shortages may especially impact agriculture in southern Europe. Even in Austria, comprehensive and permanent supply security will not be able to be guaranteed with respect to drinking and industrial water without enhanced efforts being made.



Man is responsible for the pollution and destruction of natural livelihoods. For want of sustainability, industrialisation, agriculture, stock-breeding, fisheries, urbanisation and the mining of raw materials put excessive strain on the ecosystem of man and wildlife.

Although the significance and necessity of environmental protection have, especially in western countries, been recognised, economic profit will continue to take precedence over the protection of nature.

Further aggravation stems from the increasing number of weather phenomena that are due to climate change. Rising temperatures in moderate zones, the rising sea-level, heat waves, droughts, cyclones and floods are on an upward trend, impacting substantially man's resources, living environments, industries and agriculture. This may limit or eliminate the agricultural usability of certain regions, thereby depriving a great many people of their livelihoods.

Verifiably rising temperatures, attributed, by a majority, to the man-made strain on the environment and the ensuing greenhouse effect, lead to the rise of sea-levels due to melting polar ice caps. This may, already during the period under review, render entire coastal regions, including their population centres, uninhabitable.



The process of urbanisation will continue due to global – albeit regionally varying – population growth and social and economic developments. Small and medium-sized cities under one million inhabitants will especially be affected.

Challenges will be especially big in terms of organisation, infrastructure, basic supplies, transport, security, environmental protection and health hazards as well as social and societal developments. Most cities are on or very near to coasts and will be massively affected by the consequences of climate change (e.g. floods).



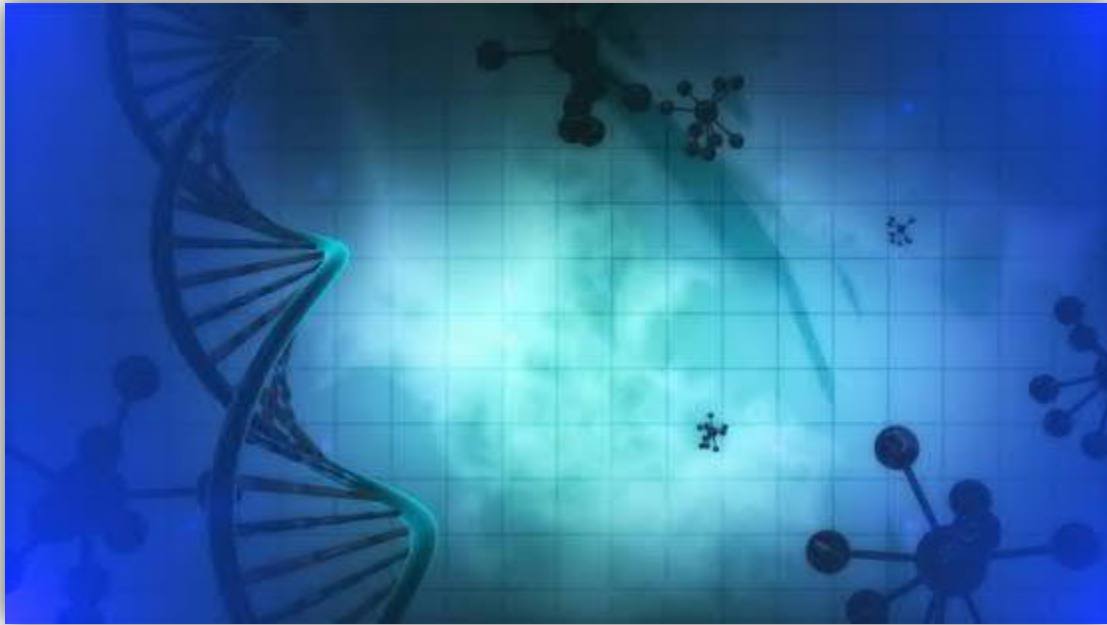
The number of megacities, accommodating over 10 million people each, will rise beyond 35 by 2025. There are currently approx. 20 of them, with classification varying (five of them are located in Europe, with three of them located in the EU).



Improvements will continue to be made in the areas of health and medicine. While life will likely become longer and more productive, developed countries' affluent societies will, however, see an increase in non-communicable diseases (e.g. obesity) due to increasingly lacking exercise in conjunction with bad or wrong nutrition. Bacterial resistance to medication will increase, leading to the recurrence of already minimised or defeated diseases. Those trends are unlikely to be reversed, and welfare systems<sup>4</sup> are likely to be adversely impacted.

---

<sup>4</sup> The health system is viewed as a part of the welfare system. Increasing numbers of elderly persons requiring costly care will likely generate another strain.



Progress in biogenetics, computing and sensors will open up new possibilities for situational awareness, health monitoring, improving individual performance and resilience, and controlling human moods (e.g. anxieties).



Strong migrant flows will lead to the coexistence of different societies and cultures, substantially contribute to increasing scepticism towards "others", and possibly overstrain the resident population's tolerance.

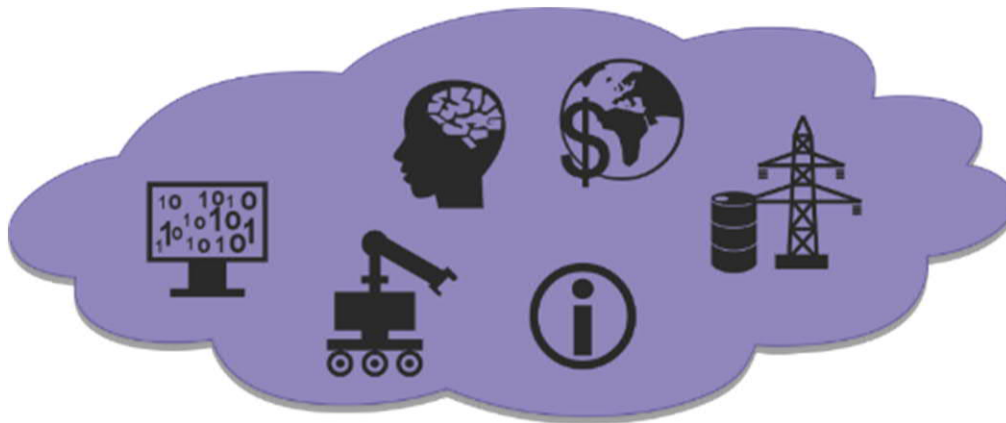
In conjunction with social and economic malcontentedness among the resident population itself, that development may reinforce ethnic, religious, sexual, political and social discrimination and exclusion.

In that process, the two significant social phenomena of polarisation and fragmentation will increasingly affect western civilisation, substantially contributing to the groundwork for radicalisation and extremism, including for their most extreme manifestation, which is terrorism.



Criminal organisations, acting globally, will increasingly engage in human, drug and arms trafficking, human smuggling and cybercrime. They will have the ability to take control of whole urban quarters, rendering lawful authorities' control impossible either temporarily or even permanently. Violent confrontations of rival groups continue to be likely, with the degree of violence possibly rising to higher levels of escalation.

## 2.2. Economy and energy supply



Trends in the area of effects *economy and energy*.



Digitisation is generally seen as one of the biggest drivers of the change process which human life is currently undergoing. Although the rapid speed of developments makes it impossible to foresee the extent to which ICT will have pervaded the whole world by 2030, these observation-based developments can be described:

About seven or eight technological cycles are expected to happen by 2030. Breakthroughs, such as in quantum computing, may bring added dynamics. By 2020 alone, more than seven billion people are expected to have access to the Internet.

By that time, 50 billion devices will have joined the Internet of things<sup>5</sup>. A strong increase is happening in the use of robots and drones in many areas of the social, economic and military spheres. Enormous quantities of data are used for new applications, using cloud technologies and new algorithms. The blockchain technology, with its cryptocurrency application, increasingly possesses the potential of superseding traditional banking in payment transactions. Already today computers do not only defeat well-qualified human beings in chess and poker but see and hear better, perform better controlling and, in certain areas, take decisions that are better because their success rate is better.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The CEO of the Austrian branch of Infineon, the leading manufacturer of semiconductors, said in a speech in September 2017 that only 1% of what was possible in interconnecting devices had been achieved yet and 50bn devices would be interconnected via the Internet by 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Examples: driving assistants (distance warning, automatic parking) and autonomous cars, IBM's Watson system for controlling (replacing entire departments), and forecast analytics in stock trading.



Those developments will generate wholly new job descriptions, raise the importance of some, and render others redundant.



New materials, processing and manufacturing technologies, energy systems and developments in information and communication technologies will open up new possibilities to enhance speed and efficiency in the increasingly automated sphere of transport. The role of autonomous systems will be of special significance.

Progress in technologies as well as advancements in the merging of the real and virtual worlds will also influence human behaviour in the areas of sensory perception, physical performance and the controlling of emotions (e.g. anxiety).

Technological achievements will render consumer products and services more adequate, more (and more readily) available and faster, respectively. While systems are becoming less error-prone as the factor of human failure is decreasing, they are at the same time becoming more vulnerable to, and more easily manipulable by, cyber attacks. Advancements in digital interconnectedness and information technology will substantially and comprehensively improve efficiency and precision. Also thanks to short times for transportation, complex and costly stockpiling and transloading will thus be further reduced.

Robots and autonomous systems will be able to discharge more and more complex tasks, supporting many aspects of everyday life and even rendering human labour redundant, or almost redundant, in some areas. Some future interaction between man and machine will be characterised by the latter's teamwork capability, performing entrusted tasks autonomously, and thus contributing on an equal footing to the team's mission accomplishment.



Human beings should and will, however, continue to exercise command and control over the entire team and its mixed membership of human beings and machines.

More flexibility will be required in the job market, with work contracts being concluded for ever shorter periods of time and wages failing to be foreseeable with



certainty. Western Europe's economies will still more shift away from traditional manual labour to knowledge-based labour.<sup>7</sup> Difficulties primarily await persons with no, little or obsolete qualifications. Technological progress calls for skills unrepresented in today's curricula. Lines of conflict are arising between those unable or unwilling to work and those who must shoulder the social burdens.

All of the above factors possess the potential of triggering social tensions or unrest.

---

<sup>7</sup> This trend, albeit to varying degrees, exists globally.



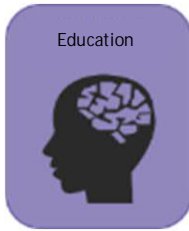
Revolutionary progress in how data are gathered, saved and analysed as well as in computing performance will make phenomena and developments better and more precisely calculable and foreseeable.

Due to increasing interconnectedness and the concomitant dependence of all of life's aspects upon the Internet, this network of sensors is becoming a huge data gatherer. The inclusion of ever more devices into the Internet of things will call not only for further developing the communication infrastructure but also for better protection against misuse.

Even more efficient will be the influence exerted on societal developments by ad-hoc networks in cyber-space, necessitating improved surveillance.



Digitisation creates almost unlimited possibilities for distributing information, disseminating purposely false information, and presenting fake realities. It is becoming more and more challenging to check information for reliability.



While demand for education will rise globally, education itself will foreseeably change. Rapid developments in ICT and the role of the Internet will substantially reshape education and increasingly render obsolete traditional forms and methods of education. Education will become even more globalised and international, blurring boundaries between online and offline learning. Gathering, dealing with, and using huge amounts of data will be key to the education of the future, including the ability to check data and sources for integrity.



Meeting ever-changing requirements of job markets will present the educational sector with yet another substantial challenge as it will have to adapt to those requirements with increasing swiftness. General learning will gradually be superseded by individual, personalised learning.

Given the increasing performance of tasks by computerised systems, the future focus of education will be on those skills and capabilities that continue to be irreplaceably human and, hence, unable to be displayed by machines.



While official currencies still dominate currently, alternative currencies and cashless transactions are certain to increase in importance, and so are cyber currencies, so substantial amounts of transactions will happen outside of governmental and societal control and options will be broadened for the use of illegal funds and for crime in general. States' influence will thus decrease on the financial system and financial flows compared with options currently available to them in the contexts of taxation and financial control.

The increased vulnerability of the international economic and financial system and its enhanced proneness to crises due to growing globalisation and interconnect-edness will increase the dependence of states and big corporations on the capital market. The capital market itself, in its unregulated form, will increasingly be exploited by speculators and less and less under the influence of states or blocs.

At the same time, nation states will increasingly be dependent on multinational companies, which do not necessarily abide by nation states' rules.

The exploitation of developing countries' resources will continue unmitigated. The increasing automation and completion of entire work processes by autonomous and semi-autonomous systems will make it possible for mass production to revert from low-wage countries to where those products are chiefly sold, thereby further destabilising the fragile situation prevalent in developing countries.





The continuing growth of the global population and the quest for wealth lead to an increasing demand for energy and production resources. Foreseeably, fossil fuels such as crude oil and coal will in coming decades continue to be among the chief energy sources, with renewable energy sources and nuclear energy continuing to gain in importance.

Although new and more efficient technologies will lead, as a tendency, to a slight decrease in the use of energy in Europe, fossil fuels will continue to be the principal sources of energy. Access to resources such as crude oil, natural gas and coal will thus continue to be of vital significance to Austria and Europe as a whole.



The dependence of new technologies on raw materials such as precious metals and rare earths will enhance the demand for added access, as well as the competition for production markets.

Global population growth and increasing demands in an ever more technologised and globalised world will increase the demand for energy in developing countries as well and thereby widen the gap, with regard to energy, between demand and supply, only to be exacerbated further by the uneven distribution of resources and the effects that the massive exploitation of resources has upon the environment and the anthroposphere.

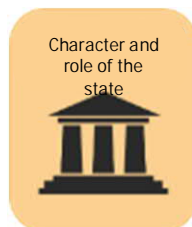
The EU and its member states will continue to be vulnerable as they depend on external energy and maritime lines of communication are hard to secure.

Even though technological innovations will make it possible for new substances and materials to be discovered or developed, the secure access to, and availability of, energy will in coming decades continue to be among the chief challenges confronting us.

### 2.3. Political systems and the global order



Trends in the *area of effects* of political systems and the global order



States, in their current structures, will in coming decades continue to be the key inter-state as well as intra-state actors. A heightened demand for security, the ensuing increasing costs, society's complexity and the concomitant specialisation lead to formerly classical services of the state, such as the assurance of security, being increasingly outsourced to non-state actors. The state's monopoly of coercive power is thus being surrendered.



In the areas of critical infrastructure and basic services, civilian actors<sup>8</sup> will increasingly assume tasks traditionally discharged by the state.

Corruption will continue to be concomitant with societal differences and, hence, one of the causes of conflict. Technological developments will substantially contribute to both its concealment and its suppression. Society's increasing interconnectedness will render the protection of individual privacy ever more difficult, with citizens demanding more vehemently that it be better protected by the state and by service providers.

The increasing significance of digital media across their entire breadth<sup>9</sup> enhances access to virtual communities. Within these, malcontentedness with politics and its problem-solving capacity can be acted out more due to the de-facto uncontrollability of those communities. In conjunction with new ideological and social ideas, this will increasingly lessen the relevance of people's real-life environments and nationalities to their identities.

---

<sup>8</sup> Corporations which are not state-controlled but discharge those sovereign tasks of the state in the field of security that are entrusted to them.

<sup>9</sup> Information/entertainment/social communication.



Besides nation states, cross-regional organisations shape international relations. Those include international organisations – foremost the UN –, supranational and multinational organisations, and actors which are neither nation states nor international organisations but can, by virtue of their power potentials and relevancy, act similarly to states.

The United Nations (UN) will continue to be the most comprehensive and significant international organisation. It may be able to improve its internal structure with a view to more efficiently conducting future operations in the contexts of international conflict resolution and humanitarian assistance. It will continue to be tied to the power political interests of the Security Council's permanent members, failing to be anywhere near what would be a government of the world.



NATO will continue to make it possible for the United States to exert decisive influence over Europe. The Alliance can shape politics by countering, or complementing, a forceful and independent security and defence policy of the European Union.

The supranational and multinational organisations, created for geographical reasons or specific, and chiefly economic, sectors of politics, are unlikely to assume the roles of states.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> The African Union (AU) is an example of an organisation by reason of geography while BRICS states are an example of an organisation based on shared economic interests.



Finally, those increasingly significant non-state actors deserve consideration that are able, in the pursuit of their goals, to act in a fashion that renders them relevant to international power politics. They come in two categories:

- those that pursue humanitarian, environmentalist or economic goals (powerful NGO's, multinational companies)
- and those that aim to change national or societal structures based on their separatist and/or other ideologies (e.g. Hezbollah, Daesh).



The latter category also uses force in the pursuit of its political goals, from civil disobedience via violent protests and terrorist attacks to overt or covert armed combat. This is aggravated by increasing arms trade, enhancing those actors' effectiveness quantitatively and qualitatively. Their effectiveness and security political significance will also be increased by the heightened vulnerability of western societies with their highly developed but sensitive infrastructures and dynamically and progressively developing new and ever more effective opportunities in the realms of communication and information.



The economic area known as the European Union (EU) as well as its single currency will continue to play a substantial role in the global economy, albeit challenged by the development of Asia and, particularly, China.

With a view to positively influencing democratic and security-related developments, the EU will offer countries that wish to join a serious perspective tied to conditions. It is not to be ruled out that dissatisfied members might exit the EU, with Brexit's consequences for the UK, especially for its economy, playing a key role.

The likely enhancing orientation of the U.S. towards the Asia-Pacific region will increasingly require the EU to counter independently the security-related challenges emanating from its neighbourhood, and to aim to shape the same.

The described trends will lead to the following challenges and possible developments for the EU:



Heightened potentials for conflict and the reorientation of the geostrategic interests of the U.S. towards the Asia-Pacific region will require EU member countries to increase their defence efforts and expenditures and to restructure national budgets accordingly (welfare – education – security) in view of high sovereign debts.

Crisis and conflict regions



If the EU desires increasingly to perform the role of an actor that substantially shapes the security political landscape, it will need to deepen its members' cooperation in this field.

It will be difficult to agree a common, comprehensively shared and independent security and defence policy that also considers NATO's development.



The EU will continue to take Russia seriously as a regional power, its demographically and economically weakened position notwithstanding, and as an economic partner from whom to buy (chiefly energy) and to whom to sell.

Binational or regional security and defence cooperation that can facilitate joint capabilities development and armaments procurement as well as the shaping of security-related areas of interest will increasingly be undertaken in Europe, especially if the EU itself is unsuccessful therein. This will very likely lead to defence political integration at different speeds, possibly catalysing or initiating a European Union of two speeds in this field.

Unless the described challenges are overcome, there will continue to be the danger that the EU might be reduced again to being a merely economic community.

An assessment of developments in the EU's neighbourhood through the lens of Austria's interests leads to the realisation that the western Balkans, the Middle East and the Africa region are of paramount importance.

Security politically, the western Balkans continues to be a fragile postwar region, there being the opportunity of improving intraregional relations and thereby facilitating the path towards the European Union. There might, however, be unfavourable developments, possibly influenced or controlled from outside, that imply the risk of the region relapsing into at least partial instability. Nationalist actors, continuing intrastate and bilateral conflicts, increased Islamist tendencies, unfinished statehood and structural economic and social issues are characteristic of the fragile situation of the western Balkans, especially of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Kosovo. Russia's active pursuit of her interests in those countries of the western Balkans that belong to orthodox Christianity poses a challenge to the predominant role, long played by the EU and NATO, of the paramount external factors of consolidation in the postwar western Balkans. Clearly, Turkey and Saudi Arabia are making efforts in support of conservative Muslim tendencies with a view to exerting their influence upon the politics of those countries in the western Balkans with significant Muslim demographics.



The Middle East will continue to be at the focus of international crises and conflicts. The principal causes are the absence of a regional peaceful order, which would have to be created by the countries concerned, and the absence of a coordinated and internationally recognised strategy of crisis resolution. With mediation and de-escalation mechanisms non-existent, conflicts are of an increasingly sectarian nature, and expansive ethnic cleansing is happening. The resulting economic and educational decline renders it impossible for the local population to trust in their own future and the possibility of reconstruction. As an end does not currently appear in sight to the existing downward spiral respecting the region's development, the resulting refugee problem will be aggravated further.



Demographic trends lead to a continuing crisis in Africa, especially in the Sahel region, and likely mass migration, with security-related consequences having to be reckoned with for other regions including Europe.

A possible loss of the credibility of the related EU policies or a formal end to its enlargement policy may aggravate existing potentials for conflict as well as nationalist and Islamist tendencies. At the same time, problems that are due to migration from Europe's neighbourhood, which may not yet be past their peak, will only be able to be resolved sustainably through actively shaping the regions of origin security-politically as well as economically.



The United States of America will continue to be the only actor capable of globally deploying the instruments of its might. There will continue to be a tendency towards – especially – military reluctance<sup>11</sup>, with the U.S. abandoning its role as the hegemon of a unipolar global order and placing the focus of its interventions on its primary economic interests. It will continue to possess the capability to operate globally yet it is likely, in the foreseeable future, to continue to be unwilling to put that capability to permanent, global and sustainable use. Also the



second-tier states China, Russia and India are able independently to pursue their respective power-political interests outside of their immediate neighbourhoods yet will likely continue to be unable to be the United States' peers as its geopolitical adversaries, or to restore a bipolar global order.<sup>12</sup>

Given, especially, its position as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and nuclear great power, Russia will continue to have to be taken seriously as a regional power that is capable of occasionally exerting transregional influence. Although the country's economic and demographic problems as well as its armed forces' technological shortfalls will persist, it will continue to be willing – and also

---

<sup>11</sup> caused by the danger of overstretching, its overseas deployments around the turn of the millennium, and the ensuing decline in public support for those.

<sup>12</sup> It is worth noting that there is not necessarily a direct connection between the size of a given actor's defence expenditure and a change to its strategy but increased expenditure may well only serve necessary measures of modernisation. Defence expenditure must therefore always be seen in the context of an actor's overall strategy and need not in and of itself be indicative of strategic change..

able, due to the reluctance of potential competitors – to pursue its immediate security interests outside of its borders by means of its military assets.

India stands out as its population size will overtake China's and its military expenditure is already on a par with Russia's.<sup>13</sup> It is, however, held back both by domestic issues and, primarily, by its proximity to China and its continuing conflict with Pakistan, thus finding its transregional leeway limited.

China is shaping its regional environment, by means of its increasing economic and military presence, with such confidence that heightened confrontation with the U.S. is likely in the Asia-Pacific region, especially due to that region continuing to be of priority significance to the economic development of the U.S. and key allies of the U.S. being located there. China's economic ascent to being a great power is also reflected in its defence expenditure. The combined defence and armaments expenditure of the U.S. and China will amount to almost 50% of the global figure. Given China's ability to pursue long-term strategies, its strategic orientation will increasingly be global in nature and it is therefore likely to continue to establish new commercial and military bases outside of its own region.

China's global leeway is, however, limited by domestic challenges, such as substantial parts of its population moving from the agricultural sector into the industrial and services sectors, large numbers of migrant workers, its dependence on permanent economic growth, and the maintenance of the Han demographic's preeminence.

To summarise, the multipolar global order is likely to be preserved. If the U.S., as the hegemonic power, continues to be reluctant to shape that global order, the ensuing vacuum will increasingly be filled by other states with regard to regional conflicts.

---

<sup>13</sup> Depending on which study is being referenced, India is seen either already ahead of, or still behind, Russia, with the increase in India's expenditure outpacing Russia's, so India's is likely to overtake Russia's, not least because of the economic potentials involved.

### 3. Conflict Paradigm

In this chapter, causes and characteristics of future violent conflicts are derived from the trends described above. Those conflicts may necessitate operations of the Austrian Armed Forces.

#### 3.1. Core statements of the trend descriptions

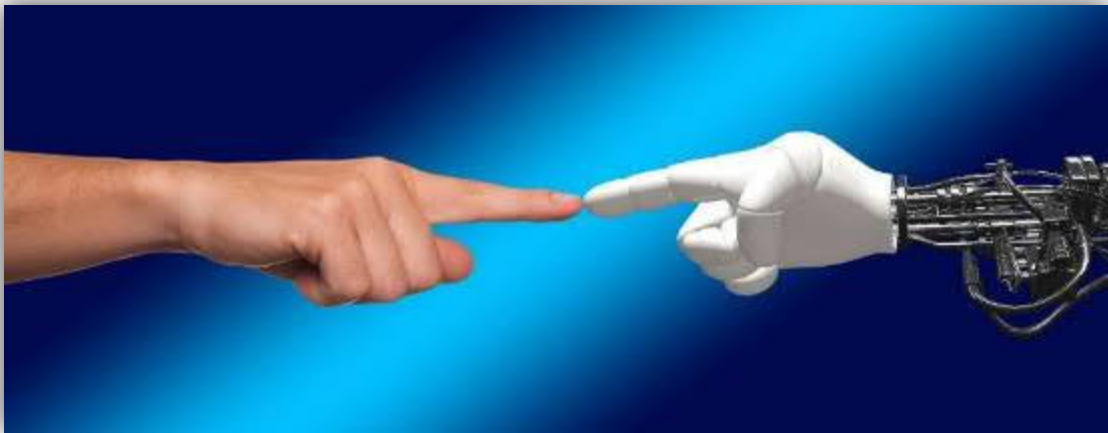
1. Demographics	10. Education
2. Water	11. Global economy/Globalisation
3. Impact on the environment	12. Energy and resources
4. Urbanisation	13. Identity and role of the state
5. Health	14. Supranational organisations & other actors
6. Social developments	15. Position of the EU
7. Digitisation	16. Crises and conflict regions
8. Automation, transport, and labour	17. Geopolitical order paradigm
9. Information	

List of described trends

1. There will continue to be a strong growth of the global population, with **demographic developments** and migration varying greatly across regions. Tensions and unrest will begin or grow due to a sense of foreign inundation.
2. **Water** will increasingly be in short supply and, hence, increasingly fought for, exacerbating migration.
3. The consequences of **climate change**, impacting the environment, will become even more dramatic for resource supplies, natural livelihoods and the impetus underlying migration.
4. **Urbanisation** will continue, thereby posing added great challenges to both states and societies. In future conflicts, urban areas will play a key role for armed forces.
5. The opportunities and lifestyles of affluent societies will put increasing pressure upon **health services**, with ethical boundaries being transgressed and needing to be redrawn.
6. Social tensions, disenchantment with politics and ethnic conflicts will further polarise and fracture **societies**, rendering them more susceptible to radicalisation and extremism. Concomitantly, or independently, organised crime may directly turn against the state, denying it its sovereign rights over parts of its territory.
7. Especially due to ever increasing interconnectedness, **digitisation** will impact and accelerate all processes of change. Increasing interconnectedness and



automation will render the state, its institutions and services as well as citizens' privacy more vulnerable to cyber attacks.



8. Ever increasing **automation** will push man into alternate areas of activity, shaking up job markets. Autonomous systems will increasingly be used, both inside and outside the sphere that is controlled by the state's monopolised sovereignty and the rule of law, thereby increasing the danger posed by illegitimate forces exercising control over societies.
9. Ever improving ways of supplying and forwarding **information** will render the key tool of political power that is information even more powerful. It will become easier for state-run as well as private providers and actors to bias and control public opinion through the use of social and other media that are quick and easy to access.
10. It will be a key task of **education** to impart the ability to deal with, and also verify, huge amounts of data and to work in teams, besides promoting individual skills. For both individual and societal development, education will thus continue to be a high-value asset.
11. **Globalisation** will make itself felt even more intensely, be it as enriching or threatening, heightening regional differences. As the financial system and the economy will be further globalised while states possess only limited leverage, developed countries will become even more susceptible to crises.
12. It will continue to be a key challenge to maintain the availability of, and unhindered access to, **energy and resources**, also considering the consequences of climate change.
13. The **state** will continue to maintain its principal position in international politics while having its position vis-à-vis society weakened.
14. **Other international actors**, possessing or gaining tools of power similar to those of states, may increase in number or significance, up to and including the possession of military might.

15. The **position of the European Union** is of crucial security political significance to Austria and may develop in one of two diametrically opposed directions, i.e. either being strengthened or disintegrating as a political union. There will continue to be the danger that Europe might face increased renationalisation and a reduction of the EU to the status of a purely economic community, ceasing to share values and purposes.
16. The development of the western Balkans, the Middle East and northern and sub-Saharan Africa, as **crisis and conflict regions**, will be crucially significant to Austria and the European Union at large.
17. Owing to the hegemonic power's reluctance, the **geopolitical order paradigm** will continue to be multipolar, there being the possibility for sufficiently powerful states to bring their influence to bear upon regional conflicts.



## 3.2. Actors on the battlefield

### 3.2.1. *Regular adversaries*

Here we find militarily organised and armed forces and formations which owe their legitimacy to sovereign states, typically deploying available assets from strategic, land, maritime, air, special operations, cyber, information and other forces in a coordinated and synchronised fashion.

Depending on projectable – chiefly offensive – power, the following categories exist:

- global or regional power
- local power
- regime forces



### 3.2.2. *Irregular adversaries*

As distinguished from the formations described above, these do not enjoy the legitimacy of sovereign states and wage armed conflicts in various forms of organisation and to various ends. Noncombatants under international humanitarian law, they are typically short of available forces and assets, thus having to act in a chiefly subconventional manner.



They come in the following categories:

- organised crime<sup>14</sup>
- ideological radicals<sup>15</sup>
- separatists<sup>16</sup>
- militias<sup>17</sup>
- rebels<sup>18</sup>

### 3.2.3. Other actors

In a conflict, there are also groups that require consideration in an operation but are not to be viewed or treated as adversaries because they do not belong to either regular or irregular forces:

- civilian population
- state organisations
- non-state organisations
- businesses

---

<sup>14</sup> Only if a threat to state sovereignty. Otherwise, organised crime requires consideration as one of the *other actors*.

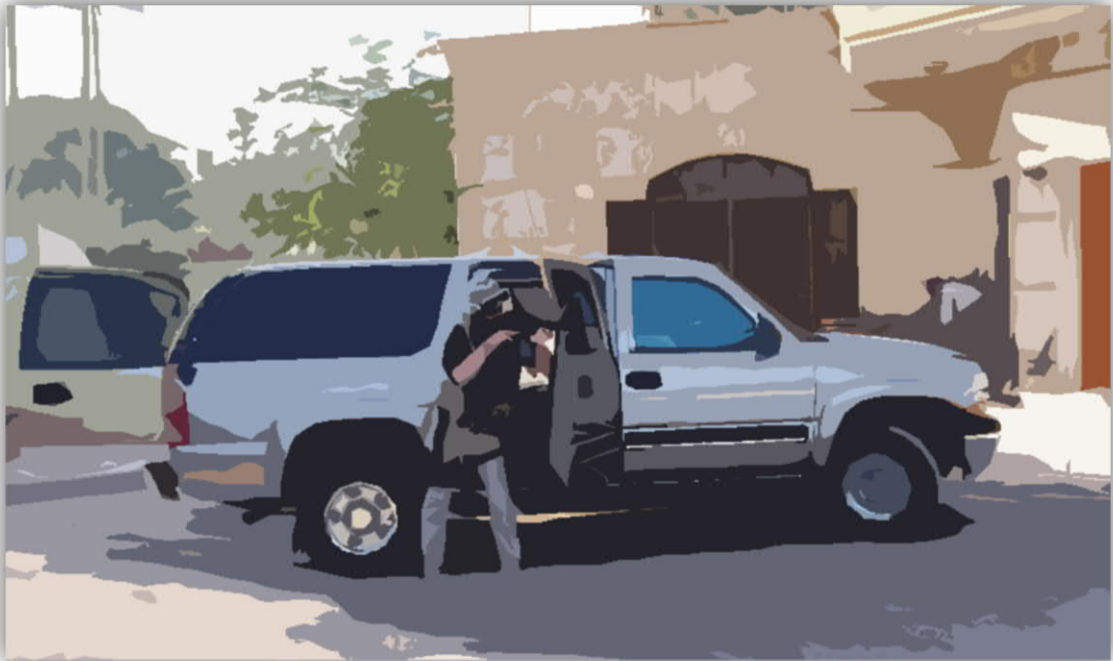
<sup>15</sup> Forces radicalised, in the pursuit of their respective ideologies, to a point where they violently operate against state and/or society.

<sup>16</sup> Seeking the separation, by force if need be, of a part of the national territory.

<sup>17</sup> Armed forces that fight with covert state support without respecting rules.

<sup>18</sup> Armed forces that forcibly pursue a new political orientation of the state.

- media of any kind
- private military enterprises



### 3.3. Security environment

The state, with its organisations and security forces, continues to be a principal actor in the security context.

Due to weak statehood and/or societal anarchy, the EU's security environment includes conflict regions with

- terrorism
- rebellions
- insurgencies
- organised crime
- conventional warfare

For each type, legitimacy is usually sought from one or more radical ideologies, and it comes with a permanent fight for resources and critical infrastructure.

Fluctuating rebel alliances, confrontations on the battlefield and the presence of regular armed forces as well as private security companies lead to both modern weapon systems and tactical knowledge being proliferated on a permanent basis.

Boundaries are increasingly vanishing between regular and irregular actors. It happens that irregular fighters are awarded the legitimacy of regular units, and that national armed forces are reduced or restructured in their capabilities or even substantially changed to act like irregular fighters while militias act like regular military units.

Austria has to reckon particularly with the threat of a conventional military operation at the tactical level. An adversary will use conventional military assets and procedures in conjunction with other methods of exercising power in order to achieve its strategic objectives. Also forces of unclear affiliation are likely to be employed on Austrian territory, which cannot only use their basically subversive and subconventional operational procedures but are also capable of conventional tactical combat.

There is little likelihood of there being a classic, i.e. chiefly conventional, military confrontation of the kind expected during the Cold War, with direct military consequences for Austria, between European states. It will not, however, be possible in the long run to rule out conventional warfare, given what military potentials already exist or are currently being created, and the future developments that may ensue.

Violent conflicts will be dominated by subconventional or non-conventional threats, with military assets being used to a considerable, partial or no extent at all, by state or non-state actors. Those will be direct threats to the population and its livelihoods (resources, infrastructure, environment). Those threats will, over the medium term, be more likely to be posed, to the European Union in particular, than the threat of conventional wars between states and may easily be of a magnitude beyond the scope of law enforcement.



Due to the likely intent and capacities of future adversaries, yet another threat is thus posed to the state's sovereignty in its totality.

Should social unrest or a situation not dissimilar from civil war, with the concomitant loss of the state's monopoly of force, threaten to arise, a joint operation of law enforcement and armed forces will be necessary in order to restore order and security if the duration, intensity and expanse of the situation so demand. Security forces may confront violent, extremely dangerous irregular forces acting in a military-style manner.

There may be an accumulation of unforeseeable events and disasters, such as reactor accidents, transregional power outages and terrorist attacks, with direct or indirect consequences for the situation of domestic security and/or supplies, thereby assuming a hitherto unknown extent given society's vulnerability due to its reliance on high technology. This is further exacerbated by what potentials adversaries possess to create effects in the pursuit of their purposes.

Offensive operations in and from cyber-space and in the information environment are an already tested method of combat and will increase in significance to the considerations of potential adversaries as well as those attacked by them.

As an expression of politically/religiously motivated extremism, chiefly through terrorism, the threat emanating from chemical, biological or nuclear agents will have to be reckoned with. The use of chemical agents by cornered regimes will, furthermore, be unable to be ruled out.

As a result of the above as well as the likely increased number of meteorologically induced disasters, armed forces will more often need to be relied upon for humanitarian operations and may thus be available for other tasks to an increasingly limited extent.

The increasing number of NGO's will require consideration as substantial actors. They can support the state in areas where it pushes its limits. They also pursue highly various interests of their own, however, which may run counter to those of the state or the decisions of its respective institutions.

If considering itself a direct adversary, the most violent form of organised crime may be equivalent to militant irregular forces in both organisation and orientation. In a violent conflict, it may use state-of-the-art weapon systems and combat assets and operate those in a professional fashion.

Approaches to threat resolution will chiefly be found in prevention and international cooperation. Reliance on armed forces for stability and law enforcement operations (including for militarily demanding ones) as well as for humanitarian operations may become necessary, including abroad.



If the EU finds itself compelled, in the context of its security policy, to become more active in those countries vital to its energy supplies as well as to coping with migration, it may also be required, besides its political and diplomatic efforts, to intervene militarily. On Europe's part, this purpose can only be served sufficiently in a multinational fashion, however. Regular forces that possess conventional military capabilities will confront the multinational forces but it will also be regular forces that make themselves available as allies and partners for the requisite cooperation. Other armed actors that may either be adversaries or potential allies and partners include irregular forces such as separatists and/or rebels from various political, economic, religious and ethnic backgrounds and with highly various levels of extremist action.



Governmental and non-governmental organisations that may operate domestically and in the area of operations also require consideration. Those have to be included, by way of a comprehensive approach, into joint coordinated mission accomplishment in the best possible fashion.

Local infrastructure will likely not be functional or severely damaged in an operation aiming to restore or strengthen the state's order structures in the Near and Middle East or the Africa region. Public attitudes may be extreme in any sense due to information operations that have occurred (propaganda, agitation). Winning hearts and minds will be key to sustained mission accomplishment.



The EU will continue to have to confront piracy in order to secure maritime supply routes. Irregular forces will be the principal adversaries, operating as organised crime's or a political actor's armed arm.

Energy and communication facilities will increase in significance and will therefore increasingly become high-value targets for groups pursuing terrorist lines of action.

The consequences of increasing strains on the environment may necessitate enhanced protective measures, cause more losses or restrict freedom of action in an area of operations, and thus jeopardise mission accomplishment.

Technical progress will improve the capabilities of non-lethal assets and autonomous and semi-autonomous systems as well as the precision of weapon systems, thereby influencing the manner in which military conflicts are waged.<sup>19</sup>

Armed forces will increasingly rely upon interconnected airborne, seaborne and vehicle-borne systems which operate, autonomously in part, with IT and AI support. The bulk of weapon systems will not be operational unless the computers by which they are controlled and their – usually cloud-based – networks function properly.

---

<sup>19</sup> as well as, generally, the use of military assets outside of wars.

The capacities of command and control systems, particularly in support of decision-making processes, will become even more crucial, with human intelligence being supported, and even replaced in some areas, by artificial one.

More than ever before, multinational armed forces will only be able to cooperate efficiently if appropriately high standards are met in the IT sector.



If the non-military environment is to be included effectively, common digital platforms will need to be made available. More than ever, it will be of paramount importance to be able to deal with information properly and effectively and to command the skills necessary to operate militarily in urban areas.

### 3.4. Forms of armed conflict

Forms of armed conflict<sup>20</sup> are defined according to the forces that are employed, the rules that are abided by, and how the rules and forces match up.

#### 3.4.1. Conventional/Subconventional combat

##### Conventional Combat

Conventional combat/the conventional type of combat is that mode of combat<sup>21</sup> that employs conventional assets<sup>22</sup>, uses conventional ("classical") military procedures, and abides by the norms of international humanitarian law, such as uniformity of distinctive emblems, open carriage of weapons, no forbidden means or actions, and protection of wounded personnel, prisoners and civilians. Such is also the definition of *regular* combat.



While conventional combat is chiefly waged by regular forces, irregular ones may employ the conventional type of combat if they possess the requisite assets and capabilities or wish to be recognised as a regular party to a conflict in the pursuit of their strategic (e.g. separatist) goal.

The conventional type of combat is, in principle, waged by way of offensive or defensive procedures. Military activities whose priority is not combat come in the form of stabilising or facilitating procedures.

---

<sup>20</sup> See Annex for definition.

<sup>21</sup> The mode of combat is defined by the assets employed *and* the procedures used.

<sup>22</sup> See the *UN Register of Conventional Arms*.

### Subconventional combat

Subconventional combat/the subconventional type of combat is that mode of combat that chiefly employs light weapons, assets and explosives, which are usually available without limitation to regular and irregular forces alike.<sup>23</sup>



Also assets and methods banned under pertinent law may be used.

Subconventional combat may be waged by irregular forces, and it may be waged by regular forces as well. It comes as

- covert combat of regular forces or
- subversive combat of irregular forces.

Covert combat, i.e. the subconventional combat of regular forces, is waged if the desired effect cannot be attained by way of conventional procedures alone. It is chiefly employed by specially trained special (operations) forces if missions are to be accomplished surprisingly, with no collateral damage, in difficult terrain or in the face of a superior enemy. While those forces usually abide by the norms of international humanitarian law, they usually employ non-conventional procedures.

---

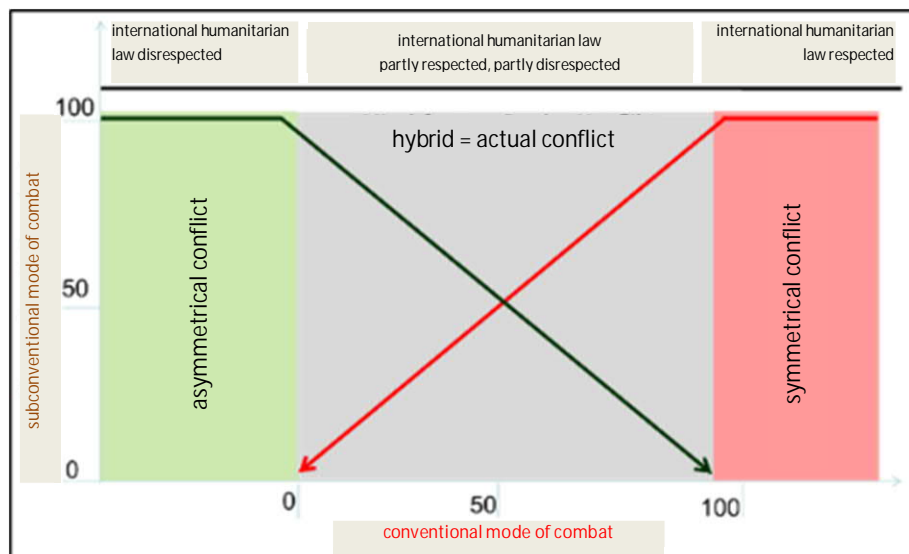
<sup>23</sup> *Small arms & light weapons* according to the *UN Register of Conventional Arms*: *Small arms*: sidearms, repeaters, submachine guns, assault rifles, light machine guns. *Light weapons*: heavy machine guns, rifle grenade launchers, portable antitank weapons, recoilless rifles, portable antitank guided missiles, rocket launchers and mortars up to 75mm. Crew-served weapons are *light* unless the crew are in excess of two soldiers.

Subversive combat, i.e. the subconventional combat of irregular forces, is chiefly waged by terrorists, separatists, rebels and elements of organised crime. They do not usually abide by the norms of international humanitarian law, either in order to compensate for the asymmetry that exists in relation to regular forces or because they, on principle, do not respect those norms. Regular forces never fight subversively.

### 3.4.2. Symmetrical and asymmetrical conflicts

According to the ratio that exists between the employed conventional and subconventional modes of combat, conflicts are commonly classified as being symmetrical or asymmetrical.

Most conflicts include both modes of combat. The two extremes of purely symmetrical or asymmetrical conflicts are hardly to be found in reality. Depending on the ratio that exists between the two modes, conflicts should thus be called *chiefly symmetrical* or *chiefly asymmetrical*, referring mainly to the use of regular and irregular military forces and assets as instruments of power. Other instruments of power, such as politics, the economy, society and information, tend to be underreflected therein.



Forms of conflict

#### Symmetrical conflicts

Usually, the parties to symmetrical conflicts are state actors possessing regular armed forces similar in, inter alia, doctrine, organisation and assets and, hence, able to pursue similar goals at all echelons of command.

**Dissymmetrical conflicts** constitute a subform of symmetrical conflicts in that the parties, while employing similar modes of combat regarding how they deal with international humanitarian law, differ considerably in terms of the capabilities that their forces and assets possess.

## Asymmetrical conflicts

In asymmetrical conflicts, one party's forces are inferior in terms of doctrine, organisation and assets and are therefore unable to wage combat conventionally (symmetrically) as their superior adversary does. This weakness is supposed to be compensated for through the systematic exploitation of vulnerabilities of the chiefly conventionally fighting adversary, who is subject to legal limitations to the use of force. To this end, subconventional combat is waged, which may include the use of banned assets or the exploitation of ethnic sensitivities as well as activities in the information environment for the purpose of, for instance, weakening a coalition's cohesion or undermining the population's trust in regular armed forces.



This makes it an operational or tactical goal to damage, in a highly visible fashion, important or vital facilities, or the protection that those are afforded. The intent always is to enforce one's own will upon one's adversary. This is not, however, pursued in open conventional military confrontation but by weakening societal cohesion and the support society affords, and thus definitely exhausting the adversary and breaking its resistance.

Hence, not only the intensity of armed confrontation but also, and primarily, time is of the essence in asymmetrical conflicts.

### 3.5 Concepts of domestic and external security

As evidenced by conflicts in recent years, it is primarily state actors that employ their various instruments of power to enforce their interests.

Those instruments of power are:

Military	M
(Foreign) Politics	P
Economy	E
Civil Power	C
Information	I

There is an increasing trend towards concealing one's own involvement, such as by employing irregular forces. Also non-state actors may, however, independently use the very kinds of instruments states do in order to accomplish their goals.

The determination whether the perceived actor operates, geographically, from inside or outside the state is therefore an insufficient basis on which to determine which institution is to be responsible for coping with the threat as the non-state actor may have its basis and conduct its operation, be it independently or on another state's behalf, either domestically or abroad.

The traditional concepts of domestic and external security, based on the aggressor's geographical provenance, are therefore obsolete when it comes to determining whether military defence is required.

The above determination is solely guided by the assessment as to whether or not the perceived threat possesses the potential to curtail the state's sovereignty. Only the assessment of the adversary's potential and line of action can form the basis on which to decide whether or not the employment of military assets is necessary in order to defend against that threat, triggering a military defence<sup>24</sup> contingency.

---

<sup>24</sup> Article 9a of the Federal Constitutional Law stipulates military defence as the employment of the military in the context of Comprehensive National Defence. What is relevant is not the adversary's provenance in terms of foreign armed forces but solely the determination that it is necessary to employ the military (or *military assets* as per the commentary on the Federal Constitutional Law) in order to defend against a threat and prevent a loss of sovereignty.

### 3.6 Contingencies of Comprehensive National Defence

The following contingencies of the whole-of-nation Comprehensive National Defence are based on the analysis of future confrontational actors and the likely security environment, including possible forcible<sup>25</sup> conflicts and the possible requirement for the use of military assets.<sup>26</sup>

It needs to be borne in mind that most contingencies are described in their escalating forms and do not always automatically constitute a threat to sovereignty. Depending on how and to what extent they materialise, most described threats will not always need to be countered with military assets. Neither will the employment of military assets cause the cessation of measures involving the use of force by non-military authorities in the context of the state's crisis and disaster management but will need to be viewed as yet another option for defending against threats, with the political leadership having to determine whether or not it is necessary to adopt the same.

#### 3.6.1. Attacks in cyber-space

This contingency is due to the heightened vulnerability of the state, its institutions and its services as well as the privacy of its citizens as a result of the increasing interconnectedness and automation prevalent in everyday life.

Cyber-space is the field with which advancing digitisation presents criminal and



state-controlled elements alike to perform their activities in. When attacks perpetrated via the cyber-space curtail the state's freedom of action, such as by putting

---

<sup>25</sup> Force may be used physically through the use of assets and/or forces that cause damage directly, or it may be used indirectly via the cyber-space. Whether the attacker is based and supported domestically or abroad is irrelevant to immediate defence against threats or the mitigation of damage.

<sup>26</sup> The list of contingencies is not in the order of priority in terms of likelihood, frequency, extent of damage, etc.



the population into an unmanageable threat situation, the state must be able to consider, prepare and take countermeasures both physically and in cyber-space that go beyond protecting the state's own institutions and may require the use of any means at its disposal, including of military assets and powers.

Regarding the state's response, a fully appropriate mechanism of escalation that includes swift decision-making processes must be prepared and held available.

### 3.6.2 *Direct threat to the civilian population*

One of the state's permanent core tasks is to defend against or minimise threats to the population's integrity and basic supplies. This task includes all kinds of possible disaster situations as well as measures that must be taken in a public health emergency due to an epidemic outbreak.

Disasters vary in causes and consequences, occurring as a result of

- acts of nature (natural disasters),
- human/technical failure<sup>27</sup>, and
- attacks<sup>28</sup>.

Oftentimes, damage cannot be prevented from being caused, which is particularly true for acts of nature and for incidents originating abroad. Sustained critical infrastructure outages will lead to supply shortages.

The state as such is put into question if it is not, or not sufficiently, able to perform the above core task of its, giving rise to the population taking alternate measures that may breach the state's own monopoly of force.

Measures must therefore be prepared for appropriately defending against those threats as well as for coping with the consequences they may entail.

---

<sup>27</sup> e.g. nuclear reactor accidents abroad, chemical factory accidents releasing hazardous chemicals.

<sup>28</sup> Also WMDs (weapons of mass destruction) or WMEs (weapons of mass effect) may be used (e.g. a release of biological agents, use of nuclear weapons or *dirty bombs*, or a wilful overload of the power grid).



### *3.6.3 Violent popular unrest*

Domestic tensions due to social, economic, political, ethnic or religious conflicts may cause unrest of extraordinary proportions. Malcontentedness may violently erupt against the state or a part of the population, thus pose a threat to public order and security, and ultimately cause the state partially or totally to lose its authority.

The state must counter social radicalisation and extremism and also maintain a potential to exercise force in order to restore law, order and security should it be impossible to avoid escalation.

### *3.6.4 Escalating violence against the state's authority*

In case of violent rioting, with multiple, coordinated violent actions against the state's authority, the state has to use its instruments in a focussed fashion in order to restore law and order as swiftly as possible.

The more convincingly and credibly the state's preparedness can be demonstrated, the more likely will radical and extremist elements be prevented from becoming active in Austria.

### 3.6.5 *Separatist movements*

During the period of time under discussion, contingencies due to an intended separation of parts of Austria's national territory will not need to be reckoned with. Activities of various ethnic groups and/or organised crime in urban areas, or in areas that are hard to access, may, however, hamper public order, which may in turn lead to the creation of no-go areas. Such a limitation of sovereignty must be ended, which may necessitate the use of appropriate force.

### 3.6.6 *Terrorism*

This violent form of extremist action manifests itself in the form of high-profile attacks, aiming to spread radical ideas through a likely high media presence and the demonstrated powerlessness of the attacked system.

Such action against the state and/or its population may have various radical ideological (political, ethnic, religious) roots. Radicalisation and the recruitment of perpetrators may happen domestically or abroad.

The entire state's protective role is thus called for, and so is the credible demonstration, preventively as well as responsively, that the effect desired by the terrorists is unattainable.

### 3.6.7 *Attacks on critical infrastructure*

A developed society's critical infrastructure, especially pertaining to energy, information, traffic and finance, as well as those of the state's institutions that are indispensable to the functioning of our democracy, constitute apt attack targets for goal accomplishment in almost all other contingencies.



As attacks that succeed in causing sustained interruption or destruction may have far-reaching and unforeseeable consequences for providing supplies to, and the

integrity of, the population as well as for the functioning of the state, those institutions must be provided sufficient protection. This requires appropriate preparation and coordination on the part of the various service providers as well as the combination of those measures in the form of one dedicated component of emergency preparedness.

### *3.6.8 Attacks by organised, armed forces*

States or state-like actors may attempt, by way of armed groups with all the characteristics of conventional armed forces barring membership of regular forces, to destabilise the state by attacking its institutions or agencies and/or by occupying areas or critical infrastructure. Those groups would likely be deployed in conjunction with other forms of exercising power, and the creation of a corresponding narrative would be greatly significant.



It is therefore indispensable for there to be an all-of-nation approach to fighting those groups, with the armed forces being assigned a key role from the outset due to the likely potential for an escalating confrontation.

### 3.6.9 *Attack on Austria by a state's armed forces (war)*

The classical form of international conflict cannot be ruled out for good, with Austria's geographical location on some of Europe's key lines of communication being of particular strategic interest.



As long as an international military confrontation that also involves Austria cannot definitely be ruled out, augmentability will continue to have to be maintained for coping with that kind of contingency.

### 3.7 International operations

International operations are no contingencies of military defence, in its strict sense, for the maintenance or restoration of Austria's sovereignty.

The European Union's direct and indirect environment will continue to show no signs of being able to improve its security-based stability in a significant fashion without support from outside.

If the EU desires to stabilise the conflict and crisis regions relevant to its security, this will continue to require the use of national forces external to those regions.

Such operations will continue to have to be multinational in nature if Austria is to be able to cope with what they require. They thus necessitate a great measure of interoperability, both with other armed forces and with the civilian environment in the respective areas of operations.

Those operations will even increase in significance as they indispensably demonstrate, to like-minded states or communities of values, the solidarity that underlies pronounced and credible contributions to a common security policy.



### 3.8 Hybrid conflict

The image of war that used to be regulated clearly by international law has been superseded, for European armed forces, by a broad spectrum of oftentimes unforeseeable forms of the use of force in the grey area between war and peace. Also the general public has been aware of the concept of hybrid conflict, if not already

before, then certainly since Russia's intervention in the Crimean peninsula and the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

In a hybrid conflict, an actor uses some or all instruments of power it possesses below the threshold of armed conflict in order to accomplish its strategic goal, and it may or may not employ its armed forces. Those various instruments of power may be used concurrently and/or successively. When it comes to the attribution and purpose of the use of force, the aggressor's covert line of action is constituent to a hybrid conflict. As long as possible, the aggressor attempts to conceal, play down and deny its actions and establish *faits accomplis*.

These areas of power are used in a hybrid conflict:

- **(foreign) politics**, e.g. using diplomacy to isolate, blackmail or influence allies or coalitions,
- **economy**, e.g. exploiting one's monopoly in energy supplies, influencing capital markets and/or flows, or through monetary policies,
- **non-military authorities**, e.g. by exploiting the corruption and blackmailability of state institutions such as law-enforcement and the judiciary,
- **information**, e.g. by controlling media or disseminating propaganda or fake news,
- **military**, e.g. through conventional attacks, or non-conventionally (chiefly by irregular forces) through attacks and terrorism.

Those areas of power are not necessarily used at the same time but variably combined and coordinated in the pursuit of the respective goal.

States or state-like entities are the principal actors in those conflicts as they possess the various instruments of power as well as the ability to employ them. State-like actors are organisations that are not states under international law but possess multiple instruments of power commonly available only to states, e.g. extremist organisations that pursue political agendas and, by way of interconnectedness, possess the requisite resources, or even potent corporations that are unafraid, in the pursuit of their interests, to wage violent conflicts with states.



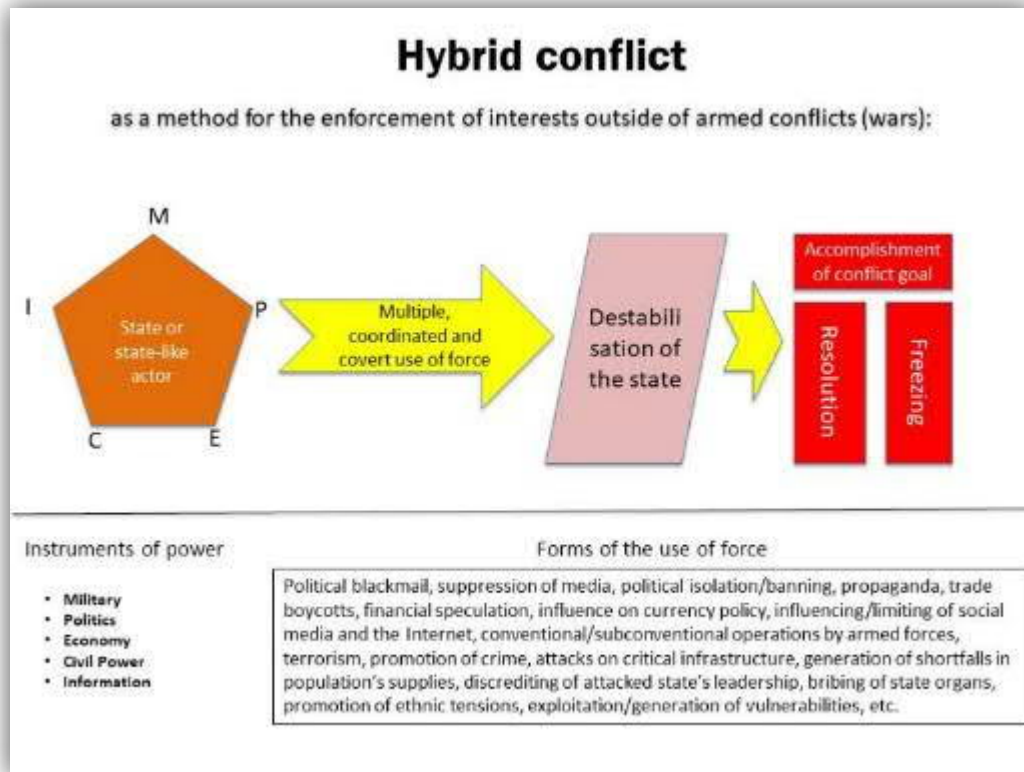
An attacker's every act may, at no notice, impact directly its adversary's weaknesses/vulnerabilities or create the conditions for impacting those later. Direct physical force may come, separately or as a combination, in the forms of conventional or subconventional combat, terrorism, or violently acting groups of the population such as organised crime, with pertinent national and international law pushing its limits in cyber-space and beyond.

Hybrid conflicts are essentially characterised by highly concealed actions insusceptible to attribution, possibly using various grades of escalating force and/or long periods with no perceived activity. Grades of escalation may not always be used in ascending order but include phases of deescalation or preparatory actions for violent acts that are then not perpetrated. Oftentimes, activities are not perceived to be phased in a predominantly coordinated fashion.

Destabilising the adversary facilitates the enforcement of the aggressor's interests substantially and is key to the accomplishment of the aggressor's strategic goal.

A definite end to the conflict is not necessarily aimed for as the aggressor may ultimately also achieve its goal by creating a situation that permanently curtails its adversary's freedom of action, so freezing the conflict may well be the pursued goal.





#### 4. Assessment summary

Austria will have to reckon with a possible international conflict primarily in the form of a hybrid conflict. With respect to potential damage and likelihood, this is the threat with the greatest risk during the period under review.

The aggressor will always use conventional force by organised forces, as part of its strategy, threateningly, covertly, or overtly.

In the context of its hybrid line of action, the aggressor will aim to hide its possible technological and material inferiority or to avoid the threat of a political condemnation of overt military aggression through deception, concealment, disinformation, and the establishment of *faits accomplis*.

Adversaries pursuing hybrid lines of action use long calm phases for the expansion of their power bases, strengthening of their coalitions, and weakening of their targets' economic clout, political cohesion and freedom of action. By way of covert or overt information campaigns, they aim to appear scarcely threatening only to establish *faits accomplis* at a surprising moment of their choosing, avoiding overt military confrontation if possible.

A latent threat is posed to the societal model of western democracies by the possibility for long-term strategies to be pursued, in a consistent fashion, on the basis of semidemocratic decision-making processes that enable planning horizons of decades rather than a few years.



Besides subconventional and subversive lines of action, also the use of conventional forces and assets will always have to be reckoned with and countered accordingly.

The defensive employment of armed forces, as the strongest use of force, need not necessarily happen towards the end of a conflict. While the use of a defending state's armed forces is its *ultimate* means of exercising power, it is, hence, not its *last*.

Trend analyses also show a growing potential for non-international conflicts. Perceived threats stem from increased societal polarisation and fragmentation with the potential to entail radicalisation and the preparedness to use force against the state or other groups of the population.



Those causes of conflict with their potential for spiralling violence are not limited to lesser developed regions outside the EU with weaker economic performance.

Religious, ethnic, social and political unrest has begun to be perceptible in the liberal societies of industrialised nations and will increasingly pose a specific threat to their security.

The role of urban areas as primary sites of conflict will become yet more prevalent. They will be the focus of any use of instruments of power, such as organised crime and gangs in neighbourhoods beyond the control of law enforcement, attacks on critical infrastructure to jeopardise livelihoods, information and disinformation campaigns to undermine the readiness to fight including for the state's or the EU's shared goals, and the covert or overt employment of military forces.

The controlling role in a hybrid conflict is, as shown by analysis, likely to be played by a foreign actor aiming to hide its responsibility and intent as much as possible. Force may also be used in forms, however, that are employed domestically, by an organised group, in a manner unindicative of an adversary with a hybrid line of action.

The phenomenon of the hybrid conflict necessitates a whole-of-nation approach to the analysis of, and defence against, threats as it is the extreme form of the systematic use of force, besides conventional war, against the state and its population.

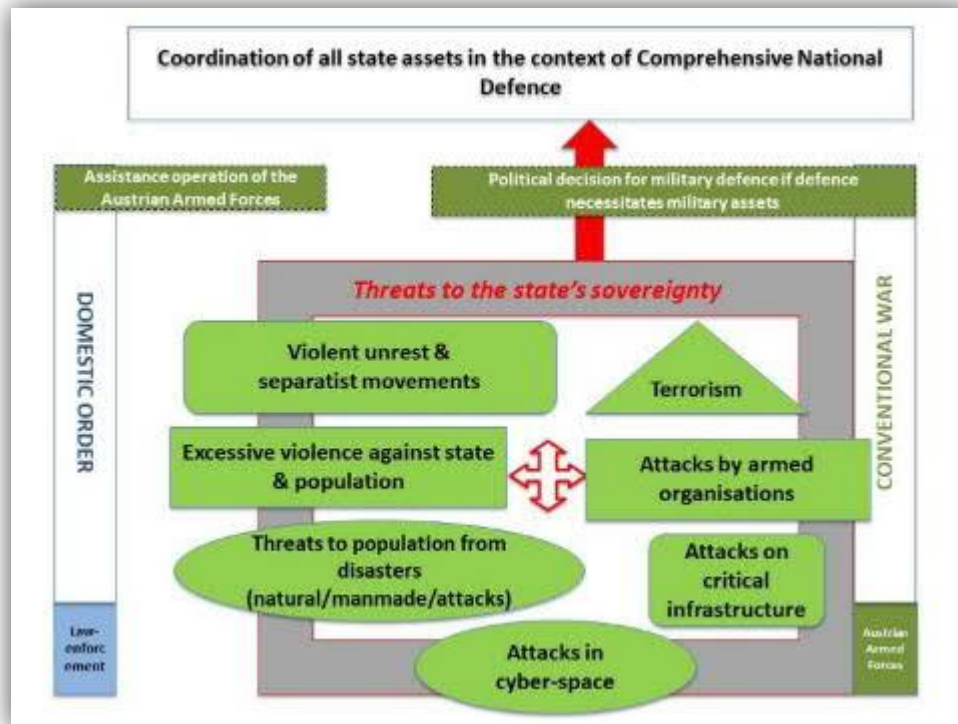
Provided it can cope with a future confrontation with an actor pursuing a hybrid line of action, the state can rightly be considered to be sufficiently capable of living up to the most likely challenges of the Comprehensive National Defence of the future.

For Austria, primarily conventional confrontations currently continue to be of little likelihood. They cannot, however, be ruled out over the long term given European potentials for the use of force and possible developments of renationalisation.

### Domestic conflict paradigm (graphically)

This graphical conflict paradigm shows that the state will face multiple threats to its sovereignty and population that necessitate a whole-of-nation approach. The use of military assets must always be considered, prepared, and ordered when necessary.

The hybrid conflict, while without mention, may encompass all or some contingencies included in *Threats to the state's sovereignty*.



Future conflict paradigm

Sketch explained:

- Threats refer to contingencies (see 3.6).
- The use of forces for international operations is not included as it does not directly serve military defence against threats to national sovereignty.
- There must thus be a national defence strategy that is clearly focussed on an external actor and includes all means of power.



*Annex: Definitions***THREAT**

exists if an actor, by way of its power potential (politics/information/economy/ military/law-enforcement/judiciary)<sup>29</sup>, natural causes or other uncontrollable events may generate a situation or development that creates a danger with the potential of adversely impacting the population or parts thereof.

Explanation:

*Danger* is defined as in the Military Lexicon.

*Danger* is the possibility, locally or temporally, for a person or object to encounter a threat. If the danger materialises, damage may ensue.

Source: Austrian Armed Forces term *military personal protection*, Military Lexicon, as of July 2018

*TERMINOLOGICAL CLUSTER: CONFLICT/ARMED CONFLICT/WAR/COMBAT*

**CONFLICT**

(sociologically)

A conflict (from Latin *confligere*: to meet/fight, past participle: *conflictum*) exists if interests, goals or values of persons, social groups, organisations or states are or appear incompatible.

Explanation: A conflict occurs between two or more persons or parties to the conflict (*who*) exhibiting conflict behaviour (*how*) over at least one conflict cause (*what*).

**ARMED CONFLICT**

exists if the parties to the conflict use armed force against each other to a major extent and for a sustained period of time.

Definition of *armed conflict* according to international law: A confrontation of the military forces of states (international armed conflict) or, within a state, of military forces, paramilitary organisations and/or insurgents (non-international armed conflict). The distinction between international and non-international armed conflicts is significant as humanitarian international law is fully applicable to international armed conflicts only.

Legally, an armed conflict exists as early as when hostilities have not yet occurred but military or paramilitary forces at least possess regionally limited power (e.g.

---

<sup>29</sup> See definition of *instruments of power*.

warlords with irregular fighters) and threaten to exercise that power, such as for militarily occupying a country.

A war (international conflict) or civil war (non-international conflict) exists if hostilities occur. In case of a minor extent, a war-like or civil war-like situation may be referred to. For oftentimes political reasons, there is no clear or always stringent distinction between *armed conflict*, *war* and *war-like situation*.

## WAR

is combat between two or more states, using armed force.

Explanation: This follows the narrow definition by Henry Wheaton, Franz von Liszt and universally applicable international law.

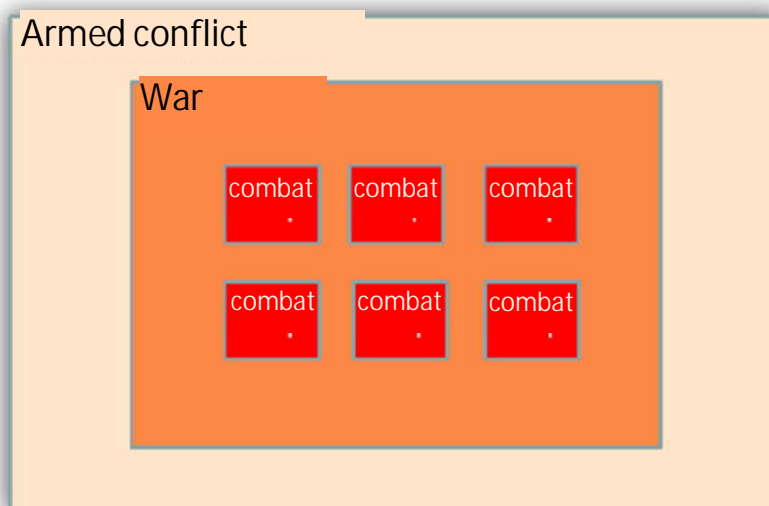
## COMBAT

is the confrontation of adversarial forces using weapons and/or other means to accomplish their goals.

Conceptual order of the above terminological cluster:

An armed conflict, in terms of the mode wherein a conflict is waged, is the entirety of a forcible confrontation between states or state-like actors due to incompatible interests pursued by them, with even the mere utterance of a threat that force may be used constituting an armed conflict. War is the implementation of the use of force by military or paramilitary forces against each other and determines the mode wherein a conflict is waged. In the context of war, combat is waged in the form of individual forcible actions for the accomplishment of military goals.

This sketch explains how the various terms relate to one another:



Conceptual model (armed conflict – war – combat)



## BATTLE

is the entirety of all combat actions that cohere in terms of space and time and is generally waged in the form of combined-arms combat.

## BATTLE PARADIGM

is the sum total of the forms of a possible or existing employment of – usually military – forces and assets for the purpose of combat actions in accordance with command and control principles, operational principles and the organisation of the employed forces.

## HYBRID

Heterogeneous, of dual provenance, mixed; *hence the following definitions containing the term hybrid:*

For *hybrid conflict* see the definition of *armed conflict*, i.e. the entirety of a conflict, with *hybrid* referring to the use of at least two instruments of power<sup>30</sup> and international humanitarian law also applying to the use of force outside war.

## HYBRID WAR

is not, strictly speaking, in line with the above definitions as the term *war* solely refers to the use of force, to which international humanitarian law applies, by armed and uniformly commanded military or paramilitary forces and, hence, does not refer to the other instruments of power employed as force is used.

*Hybrid war* has, however, come to be in common use synonymously with *hybrid conflict*.

## HYBRID CONFLICT

is a form of conflict wherein the aggressor employs some or all of the instruments of power it possesses as a state or state-like actor in order to accomplish its strategic interests.

There is long-term coordination of those various instruments. They are, in part, employed covertly while overt armed conflict is avoided.

In the pursuit of its goals, the aggressor may exploit, or even generate, the threats and crises facing the state or state-like actor it targets.

Explanation: This form of conflict differs from armed conflict/war in that there is no open confrontation of regular armed forces.

It is the aggressor's intent to prevent the conflict from constituting armed conflict/war.

---

<sup>30</sup> See definition.

## INSTRUMENTS OF POWER

The instruments of power are the key areas of effect, i.e. shaping policies, by means of which a state or state-like actor wages a conflict, including with the use of force, in order to accomplish its strategic interests.

There are five areas:

- M – *Military*  
use of regular and irregular forces operating militarily;
- P – *Politics*  
especially using diplomacy to shape foreign relations in order to seek allies/isolate the adversary;
- E – *Economy*  
use of economic policies, e.g. tariffs, export/import restrictions, currency policies;
- C – *Civil power*  
using/influencing law-enforcement and the judiciary;
- I – *Information*  
influencing or even controlling media, shaping/focussing information and communication for/on specific target groups

Note: While intelligence, with its various services and forms, is indispensable to decision-making in all five areas, it only becomes effective in conjunction with one of the five instruments of power and is, hence, not itself an instrument of power.

## CRISIS

is the culmination of a problematic development, directly concerns and threatens the existence or peaceful living together of human beings, and is impossible for a given organisational entity to cope with without interference with existing processes.

## RESILIENCE

is a given system's, community's or society's ability to cope, in a timely and effective fashion, with the consequences of threats it faces, deal with those consequences, adapt to them, and recover from them, including by maintaining and restoring its key basic structures and functions.

## TREND

is [...] a movement or process of change.

Explanation: Trends exist in highly various areas of life such as in economics, politics, and consumer commerce. They thus require different categorisations and cognitive concepts: They must be viewed in their respective contexts and systems of reference in order to be meaningful.

Other apt definitions:

- a (general) development in a certain direction
- a (tendency of a) development that has been observed over a certain period of time and lends itself to statistical recording

*Images:*

All images via PIXABAY, except:

S. 21 Mahmoud Bali\_/ VOA

S. 23: NATO

S. 31 U.S. Department of Defense

S.32 James Dale via Wikipedia

S. 35 U.S. Air Force

S. 36 Austrian Armed Forces / Winkler

S. 37 NATO

S. 39 U.S. Army

S. 40 Elizabeth Arrot / VoA

S.43 Belizian via Wikipedia

Sketches from Strategic Planning Directorate.

*Trends and conflict paradigm 2030* is the abridged edition of the command and control document *Threat paradigm 2030* of the Defence Staff of the Austrian Armed Forces and presents analyses of long-term trends relevant to security policy as well as assessments of their consequences for the forms and nature of future armed conflicts.

Legal notice:

Federal Ministry of Defence

DefenceStaff/ Military Strategy Division

Rossauer Lände 1, 1090 Vienna