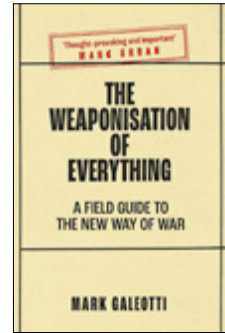


Book Review

The Weaponisation of Everything



Author: Mark Galeotti

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Reviewed by Squadron Leader Beth Lindley

Introduction

Published a month prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine 24 February 2022, Mark Galeotti's *The Weaponisation of Everything: A Field Guide to the New Way of War* is nevertheless relevant and important reading for those studying how to fight hybrid warfare. Galeotti, as the inadvertent inventor of the phrase 'Gerasimov Doctrine', is keen that this book is not seen as advocacy for *the* new way of war, but rather a guide to *a* way of war that is increasingly playing out on the global stage. You may know it as 'Grey Zone Warfare. Asymmetric War. Tolerance Warfare. Unrestricted War. Non-Linear Warfare.' (p. 14) Or, in current military parlance, sub-threshold conflict.

'It is early on the morning of 23 February 2014' the first of many case studies, historical or hypothetical, that Galeotti artfully uses to illustrate his point and open every chapter. The Russian invasion of Crimea on that day is described as 'the first true "hybrid war" conquest'. Galeotti highlights Russia's use of 'deception and treachery', that is to say, 'little green men' and cyberattacks, in a 'ruse [that] is pretty transparent, but it gives Kyiv and the West some pause.' A pause long enough for the peninsula to be, at least for now, irrevocably taken. Case studies include an attack on the National Grid, biohazards in the water supply (a true story from 1570), and 'fake news' about Catherina Medici. This 'new way of warfare' is not new. It's not just Russia, either: Galeotti outlines how 'they' accuse 'us' in the West of the same and call it *gibridnaya voina*. (pp. 12-14)

We learn that the term 'hybrid war' was so-called by Frank Hoffman, in reference to the militant group Hezbollah's battle against the state military of Israel. Now an umbrella term for unconventional warfare, the Western Centre of Excellence in Finland includes state actor activity in the definition of hybrid war, meaning any combination of 'overt and covert military and non-military means'. (p. 15) In other words, everything.

The idea of the 'weaponization of everything' isn't new, either, having been in general use since 2017 and '[reflects] a kind of nostalgic amnesia for a lost world that never really existed' (p. 15) in which civilians were not involved in conflict, as though the Russians themselves didn't use rape and murder as a weapon of war against Europe in the 20th century.

The 'unprecedented interconnectivity of the modern world' (p. 16) enables new methods of warfare, through cyber, space, and the electromagnetic spectrum, as Galeotti demonstrates throughout the book, yet examples of hybrid warfare can be found everywhere throughout history.

Globalisation is viewed as the cause of this perceived shift – 'interconnectivity' – but really that means having a better understanding of wars that happen far away. Civilian casualties are nearly impossible to hide in the age of social media and mobile phones. 'By definition everything becomes public; the only question is how quickly and with what spin.' (p. 33) For Western democracies, public opinions count when it comes to wars. It also means the potential for information exploitation has exponentially increased.

Sub-threshold activity is that which subverts an enemy's expectations or freezes their ability to react, whether through confusion/deniability or attack, which we see in Russia in 2022 and in Rome in the third century BC. It is just the means which have changed.

Importantly, *The Weaponisation of Everything* is not 'apocalyptic', as Galeotti describes most other work on this emerging form of conflict. Instead, he offers lessons and examples of previous hybrid warfare, described in plain language. Galeotti's pithy journalistic style makes for easy reading, if a little Hollywood, as he declares 'Nothing, after all, is more powerful when weaponised than intellect and imagination!' (p. 10)

Each chapter ends with a reading list under the heading 'Want to know more?' Here Galeotti provides a diverse selection of further reading, accompanied by his comments. For military theorists, academics, and planners, this complements the traditional understanding from doctrine such as the recent Integrated Operating Concept or the Joint Concept Notes for Multi-Domain Integration and Information Advantage.

The Weaponisation of Everything should be recommended to all air power professionals, regardless of Profession, but especially those involved in planning multi-domain operations. The problem with hybrid warfare is that the West treats it as new and dangerous. Galeotti

proves how this form of warfare is as ancient as war itself. One example that is not mentioned in the text is the Trojan Horse: deception is an ancient art. It does, however, require a risk appetite we are currently unfamiliar with, and an ability to conduct unconventional or ungentlemanly activity, else we risk being outpaced by our adversaries.

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