



Phillips P. OBrien @PhillipsPOBrien Wed Mar 02 09:57:01 +0000 2022

Been trying to get my head around what is happening in the Ukrainian War, as it represents something different than we have seen before. This is my first group of thoughts, so probably deeply flawed, but I think what we are seeing should be called: Semi-Symmetric Warfare.

It's not a counter insurgency/insurgency war, though it is between what would be thought of as asymmetric forces. However what we seem to be seeing is an effort by the Ukrainians to erase the asymmetry. In many ways very successfully so far.

War has certainly become even more technological in the last century, and that has led to problems that the Russians are experiencing. The most advanced systems are actually very complex. Requiring great expertise, flexibility, advanced training and in some ways decentralisation

What the Ukrainians are doing is taking advantage of this complexity to keep Russia from benefiting as it should from its more modern military forces. You take advantage of the difficulty that they clearly have in maintaining air control not through direct engagement

With fixed wing aircraft, but countering with lots of drones throughout the area (many which the Russians can't obviously track) and handheld anti-air to keep Russia from benefiting fully from its fixed wing aircraft.

Likewise in semisymmetric warfare having lots of heavy AFVs are not important (maybe an impediment) but lots of mobile forces capable of degrading logistics and some Russian AFVs is crucial as it keeps the Russians from fully utilising combined arms

It's not insurgency warfare as it's not hit and run. It's more offensive than that with significant moments of standing and fighting. But it is aimed at specific weaknesses in coordination of the most complex Russian systems.

It does require significant state planning; excellent almost real time intelligence, and access to large stores of high quality equipment, larger than a normal insurgency could expect.

However what the Ukrainians are showing that a state can directly engage what looks to be a much more powerful state using semi-symmetric warfare to cause enormous disruption quickly.

It also means that you don't need to think about guerilla/insurgency wars lasting for years and years, but semi symmetric wars that can become quickly too difficult for the advanced power.

Hopefully this concept might make even more advanced powers reluctant to make the stupid choice to go to war.

Thoughts on semi-symmetric warfare appreciated.

More and more evidence of the Ukrainians being able to disrupt or take advantage of the inability of the Russians to mount complex modern operations. Something is happening here <https://t.co/coQmvUyZZt>

And here's one from the ground war to compare to the air war <https://t.co/hLRanGiAfc>

A key element of semi symmetric warfare (maybe Compensated Asymmetric is better?) is to have large stores of the right equipment to disrupt the more complex systems of the more technologically advanced power. It's clear what some of them are now. <https://t.co/bcHkFHqLt7>

And effective UAVs of course. I wonder if UAVs, Stingers and Javelins are actually more useful now to the Ukrainians than traditional fixed wing aircraft being rushed in?