

Conflicts in Ukraine and Nagorno-Karabakh highlight the link between hybrid warfare and public health

Vinay Pathak

Pathak V. Conflicts in Ukraine and Nagorno-Karabakh highlight the link between hybrid warfare and public health. *J Nurs Res Pract.* 2022; 6(12):190-191.

ABSTRACT

The weaponization of healthcare, the use of unconventional weapons, the deliberate displacement of civilian populations through direct targeting, sexual violence, disinformation campaigns, and the interruption of basic services like access to water, food, gas, and medical care are all examples of hybrid warfare tactics. Public health is harmed by all of these behaviours. Azerbaijan and Armenia's Second Nagorno-Karabakh War in 2020 and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine serve as illustrative examples of the novel and disastrous public health effects of hybrid warfare targeting civilians.

The knowledge gained through these battles ought to be a cautionary tale and a call to action. Politicians and public health professionals should push for a thorough reevaluation of prior strategies to mitigate the effects of hybrid warfare. It is crucial to make coordinated efforts and employ measures to reduce these effects on public health at every stage. By implementing a more stringent and comprehensive scheme to both prevent war and scale up punishments for the use of hybrid warfare tactics, the international community should promote the de-escalation of conflicts and priorities the health of civilians. Failure to do so will surely lead to a rise in the frequency with which this situation occurs worldwide, wiping out the public health victories of the preceding century.

Key Words: *Armenia; Nagorno-Karabakh; Ukraine; Hybrid war*

OPINION

There are numerous and well-established effects of conflict on public health. Infectious disease epidemics harm to and fatalities of soldiers and civilians, population displacement, and instability of vital health resources like food, water, and sanitation are only a few of them. Conflict has an impact on the systems that support health and safety in addition to the immediate survival. Guidelines for the Geneva Convention were formerly created to safeguard civilian populations. With the introduction of hybrid war, the environment has undergone a significant transformation. Although the definition of hybrid warfare is not universally agreed upon, it can be understood as conflict employing both conventional and non-conventional tactics with a flagrant disdain for the lives of civilians.

As a result of the lack of regulations that are unique to these strategies, the Geneva Convention's rules are increasingly disregarded or evaded in this situation. The most recent illustration of how a hybrid war that targets people undermines public health is the conflict in Ukraine. Hybrid warfare ushers in a new era of health issues that could quickly get worse. Hybrid warfare can harm health through the employment of unconventional weaponry, sexual violence, military attacks on medical facilities and personnel, forced

population reduction, and sabotage of vital supplies and food sources, all of which destabilize civilian populations.

Hybrid warfare, however, is not limited to the Ukraine. The 2020 Second Nagorno-Karabakh War between Azerbaijan and the Autonomous Republic of Artsakh included similar strategies. Both wars include protracted historical struggles and focus on recovering land from the Soviet Union. The conflict in Ukraine, however, has affected a wider population and resulted in more human displacement, perhaps having even more negative effects on public health around the world. The battle in Ukraine is currently showing few indications of ending, unlike the six-week-long Nagorno-Karabakh war. The lessons of hybrid warfare demonstrate trends in its particular impact on public health in both Ukraine and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Healthcare weaponization, or deliberately restricting access to healthcare as a military tactic, is a component of hybrid warfare. Historically, a red cross on the building's roof served as a target in hybrid warfare, warning aircraft not to bomb the structure. Since the invasion, there have been multiple reported attacks on healthcare facilities in Ukraine, which have caused countless injuries and fatalities as well as disruptions to critical care. In Nagorno-Karabakh

Editorial Office, *Journal of Nursing Research and Practice*, Windsor, Berkshire United Kingdom.

Correspondence: Vinay Pathak, Editorial Office, *Journal of Nursing Research and Practice*, Windsor, Berkshire, United Kingdom Email id: nursingresearch212@yahoo.com

Received: Dec 10, 2022, Manuscript No. PULJNRP-22-5860; Editor assigned: Dec 14, 2022, PreQC No. PULJNRP-22-5860(PQ); Reviewed: Dec 21, 2022, QC No. PULJNRP-22-5860 (Q); Revised: Dec 26, 2022, Manuscript No. PULJNRP-22-5860 (R); Published: Dec 29, 2022, DOI: 10.37532/Puljnrp.22.6(12).190-191.



This open-access article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License (CC BY-NC) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits reuse, distribution and reproduction of the article, provided that the original work is properly cited and the reuse is restricted to noncommercial purposes. For commercial reuse, contact reprints@pulsus.com

in 2020, similar healthcare disruption and weaponization tactics were used. Attacks against public health assets, such as maternity facilities, ambulances, and healthcare personnel, restricted access to emergency care and non-emergency medical treatment.

Public health was notably hampered by the hybrid warfare tactic of striking Nagorno-Karabakh during the COVID-19 outbreak. As refugees fled from Nagorno-Karabakh to neighboring Armenia, the country's already overburdened healthcare system was put under additional strain. Displacement-related shelter overcrowding probably made the pandemic's spread worse. Ukraine has also seen worsened COVID-19 impacts and increased spread of infectious diseases like cholera and diarrheal diseases, as well as chronic diseases and injuries, despite the fact that the Russo-Ukrainian War began when the pandemic was more under control.

Non-conventional weapons are used in hybrid warfare tactics. Such weapons were used against residents in Nagorno-Karabakh, causing emigration by making homes uninhabitable. In residential areas, landmines, phosphorous bombs, drones, and cluster bombs were all used carelessly. Roads and bridges were attacked, making it impossible to flee and get medical care. The use of these unconventional weapons and tactics is becoming more widespread in Ukraine, raising fears of nuclear contamination in the wake of the Chernobyl disaster and the bombing of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear reactor. This was an implied threat to attack the Medsamor nuclear power plant during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Acute radiation sicknesses, which can be fatal and increase cancer risks for decades, as well as soil pollution, which worsens food shortages, are all health problems posed by nuclear contamination.

Hybrid warfare also exhibits organized sexual brutality against civilian populations. Its impacts are widespread; in one research, more than 75% of survivors reported high rates of health problems such as infertility, chronic pain, genital damage, substance addiction, sociality, and STDs. Wartime sexual violence can cause community displacement, a lack of access to mental health services, forced pregnancies, and financial hardships. Survivors frequently endure stigmatization and long-lasting rifts in their families and communities. Mercifully, because there was less hand-to-hand fighting and there was a quick evacuation of women and children, the Nagorno-Karabakh war was spared planned campaigns of sexual violence. A more sobering lesson has been learned from the Ukraine conflict. The civilian populace has been made vulnerable using sexual assault as a tool. Human trafficking and reports of sexual violence seemed to increase after the invasion of Ukraine.

Water, food, and electricity are three things that humans and the crops they grow depend on being supplied with. Water resources in Nagorno-Karabakh had a significant impact on the conflict and Azeri-Armenian relations; it is important to note the conflict over the Black Lake and hydroelectric power plants. During the battle, cleanliness and food availability were affected when the water supply was contaminated or limited. Armed forces frequently kidnapped livestock or civilians, creating unrest and displacing populations. Similar to this, the conflict in Ukraine has put the public's health in grave jeopardy by depriving many residents of basic necessities including access to crucial crops. Food insecurity is a global issue that has been impacted by the conflict in Ukraine. 12% of the world's calories, almost one-third of its traded wheat, and a significant portion of its fertilizer are produced in Russia and Ukraine. The global economy is in danger as a result of the war in Ukraine and the

high price volatility of other commodities like coal and oil. Hybrid warfare can be viewed as a conflict rife with war crimes, including the systematic targeting and devastation of infrastructure and civilians. The devastating health effects of war are illustrated through cases from the Ukraine and Nagorno-Karabakh, teaching us important lessons for the future. Pre-conflict de-escalation and deterrence to prevent war, early warning protocols and timely detection systems to enable safe evacuation of civilians, mitigation during conflict, including attention to medical and mental health needs on the ground and in refugee populations, and post-conflict rebuilding and speedy prosecution for violations of the accepted principles of war, are all phases in which solutions can have a significant impact. Hybrid war has caused harm that demands quick decisions at every stage.

Data are essential for guiding policy and allocating resources, yet there is little quantitative study in this field. Attacks on healthcare professionals and institutions are crucial to monitor because they have direct effects on disease that are possibly the most obvious. Attacks and migration can be documented using satellite imagery data, although measurement techniques may be affected by the turmoil of battle. In conflict zones, data monitoring for infectious diseases is essential but difficult. Finding displaced persons and having medical professionals on the ground to record and address the effects of sexual violence, issues with mental health, and acute and chronic health problems provides insight into disease burden. It is necessary to notify the use of non-conventional weapons so that enforcement measures can be taken. International organizations and observers must examine the evidence and record it. This work has been done by the International Committee of the Red Cross, together with the Conflict Observatory Project and research on the effects of attacks on healthcare. In order to support potential future prosecution, Physicians for Human Rights has documented assaults on healthcare workers and institutions. This documentation must be viewed through the lens of public health in order to guide mitigating activities. Agencies, politicians, and public health specialists should all be aware of the need for a global and equitable response to hybrid warfare. Its long-term effects on public health and willful harm to civilians must be recognized and addressed if the international community is to properly address them. Politicians and public health professionals should push for a thorough reconsideration of current practises to guarantee that the Geneva Conventions and international humanitarian law's regulations are no longer broken. The distinction between deaths of combatants and civilians has become hazy. The effects of hybrid warfare on morbidity and mortality are a preventable deterioration of the improvements in public health made over the previous century. Let's not overlook the need to protect global health as a new global order is established.