

Hybrid Warfare And The Preparedness Of India

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ABSTRACT

Hybrid warfare is the amalgamation of conventional and irregular strategies in conflicts that present and future enemies are expected to utilize in warfare. It favours indirect and asymmetric strategies to diminish an adversary's strength, influence, and resolve. Defence analysts have recognized hybrid conflict as a phenomenon that will increasingly define and test the intelligence system in the future. Hybrid warfare encompasses the entire spectrum of conflict by integrating the intensity and lethality of conventional warfare with the zeal of irregular warfare, alongside technological advancements in cyber and Information Warfare (IW). It also involves perpetrating acts of criminality, legal infractions, and public unrest in the target nation during peacetime. Hybrid Warfare is hybrid not only in its powers and consequences but also in its theory and reasoning.

Keywords: Hybrid Warfare, Narco-terrorism, Arthashastra, Information warfare.

INTRODUCTION

Warfare has consistently developed over the years, transitioning from linear and columnar tactics to the employment of irregular and unorthodox methods. This has resulted from advancements in technology and alterations in the capabilities, conditions, and motivations of nation-states. Given the low chance of all-out battles among global powers due to the associated costs and minimal possible advantages, nations may employ a combination of conventional, unconventional, and non-contact strategies, or may rely exclusively on unconventional strategies in the future. India has consistently upheld a policy of peace and cooperation with its neighbours to foster regional harmony among South Asian nations. However, since its inception, it has consistently represented a vulnerability in the geopolitical and strategic arenas. Referencing the ancient text 'Arthashastra,' Kautilya counsels the monarch to formulate a foreign policy aimed at subjugating other states, guided by the theories of Upayas (means), Saptanga (elements of a state), and Mandala (circle of states). However, paramount to all else was the presence of a clandestine agency, consistently engaged in assassinations, subversion, and inciting discord. The contemporary geo-political landscape is predicated on a comparable framework, and the aforementioned ancient theories are relevant, either directly or as a corollary. The formulation of foreign policies within the existing bipolar system may be the origin of Hybrid Warfare.

Hybrid warfare is the amalgamation of conventional and irregular strategies in conflicts that present and future enemies are expected to utilize in warfare. It favours indirect and asymmetric strategies to diminish an adversary's strength, influence, and resolve. Defence analysts have recognized hybrid conflict as a phenomenon that will increasingly define and test the intelligence system in the future. Hybrid warfare encompasses the entire spectrum of conflict by integrating the intensity and lethality of conventional warfare with the zeal of irregular warfare, alongside technological advancements in cyber and Information Warfare (IW). It also involves perpetrating acts of criminality, legal infractions, and public unrest in the target nation during peacetime. Hybrid Warfare is hybrid not only in its powers and consequences but also in its theory and reasoning.

This concept is not new and predates the emergence of contemporary nation-states. Hybrid Warfare is characterized as an evolving strategic approach to conflict, re-emerging as a means for nation-states to exert influence over individuals and nations through the utilization of national power, employing all available forces and capabilities. It may be conducted by state or non-state actors, or a combination of both, and aims at the

cognitive domain by kinetic and non-kinetic methods. It is characterized by the employment of hybrid forces employing hybrid tactics without temporal limits.

Hybrid Warfare denotes the employment of unorthodox tactics within a multi-domain conflict. Hybrid warfare employs not only conventional military techniques but also non-military instruments to attain supremacy, inflict harm, subvert, or exert influence. It is a combination of conventional and unconventional strategies employed against a significantly more powerful opponent to attain political goals unattainable through traditional warfare.

Hybrid warfare is fundamentally ambiguous. They employ unorthodox strategies, including cyber-attacks, propaganda, political warfare, economic coercion, sabotage, sponsorship of armed proxy fighters, and gradual military expansionism. These approaches are typically obscured by misinformation and misdirection, making it challenging to identify the guilty parties. Hybrid warfare is characterized by ambiguous and typically progressive aggressiveness.

The 21st century has seen numerous nation-states and non-state groups engage in hybrid warfare. In antiquity, Kautilya delineated the fundamental principles for the evolution of a state's foreign policy to maximize advantages inside alliances while systematically undermining adversaries through diverse and sustained measures. Excluding the primitive era, the inaugural proof of Hybrid Warfare emerged during the Industrial Revolution, specifically in the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. Hybrid Warfare possesses intrinsic benefits over traditional warfare, attributable to its nature and the prevailing geopolitical context.

PART II: CHALLENGES POSED BY HYBRID WARFARE FOR INDIA

India has predominantly been a pacifist nation bereft of an expansionist intent. It firmly advocates for coexistence in 'peace and harmony' with its neighbours. Non-alignment and non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations have been fundamental principles of India's foreign policy, notwithstanding brief exceptions such as the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971 and the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in Sri Lanka from 1987 to 1990. The well-being and development of its populace, facilitated by continuous economic progress, has been India's primary national objective. Nevertheless, a prolonged 'defensive posture' has transformed India into a 'reactive power,' resulting in responses that are situational and episodic. The global community perceived India as a soft state that failed to respond decisively to the Proxy War initiated by Pakistan until the recent Post-Uri Surgical attacks (2016) and post-Pulwama Balakot attacks (2019), thereby demonstrating a newfound determination. Since its independence in 1947, Pakistan has excelled in this endeavour, with its primary focus directed towards India. Conversely, China possesses a strategic culture and is enhancing its military capabilities to meet the demands of engaging in hybrid warfare. Consequently, the risks associated with Hybrid Warfare encompass irregular tactics, terrorist activities, and criminal disturbance, particularly in the cyber and economic spheres. The probable objective of India's opponents is to destabilize the nation through diverse threats, which are expected to primarily emerge during peacetime and escalate during wartime, alongside the deployment of conventional troops. India's neighbours, particularly Pakistan, has initiated a prolonged proxy war since independence, employing terrorism as a tool of state policy specifically against India.

Hybrid Warfare challenges for India Pakistan's Strategy

Pakistan employs a strategy of 'Bleed with a Thousand Cuts' against India. Pakistan leveraged its experience in supplying, targeting, and leading the 'mujahideen' against the Soviets in Afghanistan to conduct a proxy war in Jammu and Kashmir from the late 1980s. Pakistan facilitated the insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir through target selection, provision of equipment, leadership, financial support, and encouragement. The primary objective of all entities functioning under the direction of Pakistan was the annexation of Jammu and Kashmir to Pakistan. An aggressive information warfare effort was initiated to disseminate disinformation and misinformation, oppress the public, exploit anti-government feelings, and incite separatist sentiments in Kashmir. Irregulars from Pakistan, trained, armed, and commanded by regular forces, regularly infiltrated, while locals were incited to perpetrate acts of terrorism and instigate social unrest. The acts of violence led to the evacuation of the minority 'Kashmiri Pandits' group, altering the demographic composition of the Valley, which aligned with Pakistan's broader agenda for a potential United Nations (UN) vote in Kashmir.

Chinese strategy

India cannot remain unaffected by Chinese hybrid missions in South Asia, a strategy that excludes non-state actors or kinetic assaults. Over the past decade, China has been recognized for its active implementation of the three-warfare strategy—media, psychological, and legal warfare—to undermine Indian determination in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region. The Chinese policy of three warfare extends beyond propaganda and disinformation tactics. The three warfare strategies seek to extend traditional military dynamics into the political sphere, aiming to erode India's organizational structures and military morale. A gradual and covert tactic, the approach aims to subjugate India without engaging in combat. An illustrative instance is the confrontation between the two formidable nuclear military powers, accompanied by China's assertions and

rapid infrastructural advancements on the Doklam plateau in 2017, as well as the subsequent Galwan conflicts in 2020.

North-Eastern Terrorism

The northeastern states of India have had the most protracted terrorism in the nation. The intensity of violence varies, although recently it has diminished, with the exception of certain areas in Manipur and Nagaland. The connection between criminals, drug traffickers, rebels, and the state sponsorship from foes, who offer ideological and material assistance from beyond the border, is equally concerning. Terrorists' own secure sanctuaries or ambiguous territories across international boundaries. A certain level of subversion exists among the populace in specific regions. The factors of contemporary instability—corruption, inadequate governance, unemployment, inequitable income distribution, insufficient development, and ethnic fragmentation—are present and facilitate the proliferation of hybrid elements inside the network.

1. Simultaneity and multi-modality of hybrid capabilities

The mobilization of security personnel and institutions, along with the intimidation of opponents opposing the terrorists' violent methods, is aimed at fostering the perception that the entire populace has risen against the government and that the system has disintegrated. Internal subversion is initiated to regulate and restrict the authority of state institutions. The efficacy of hybrid warfare lies in internal subversion, which is a primary factor contributing to a nation's destabilization. Pakistan has successfully instigated internal subversion in the Kashmir Valley, which is a significant component contributing to the efficacy of the hybrid warfare it is conducting.

2. Information war

The efficacy and volatility of hybrid warfare are significantly amplified by information warfare. It fosters the illusion of achievement, determines the metrics of triumph, and serves as a powerful instrument for a disinformation campaign against established regimes. In the digital age, media emerges as a formidable instrument in the information warfare. Pakistan and China have been maximizing this opportunity.

3. Economic and Resources Warfare.

China is the world's second-largest economy, exhibiting a consistent growth rate of six percent. It has significant economic warfare capabilities, including blockades, blacklisting, preclusive purchase, and seizing adversary economic assets. The substantial trade gap of \$54 billion between India and China affords China significant leverage to initiate an economic conflict against India.

4. Diplomatic Efforts in the Sub-Continent. China is cultivating friendly ties through 'debt trap' diplomacy while augmenting defence collaboration and infrastructure development initiatives in the Indian Subcontinent. Development initiatives in Gwadar, Hambantota, Coco Islands, and Nepal are notable areas of concern. It seeks to keep India preoccupied with resolving disputes with its neighbouring countries.

Hybrid Warfare in Western Front

Subtle change in Hybrid Warfare strategy post Burhan Wani's death

Following 2010, particularly after the Burhan Wani incident in 2016, the dynamics of unrest and the radicalization of youth revealed perilous trends orchestrated by Pakistan through social media and cyberspace. Nonetheless, the war is increasingly transitioning to both parties vying for control over the 'cognitive domain' of the populace. This 'mental space' has been influenced by hostile entities backed by Pakistan under the guise of religion, ethnicity, and erroneous history narratives. Despite being contained in 2019 and 2020, following the FATF 'gray listing,' overseas participation in Pakistan is expected to persist. The role of Pakistan in inciting violence in the Valley following Burhan Wani's killing in 2016 exemplifies its "grandiose design" in conducting a proxy war through the utilization of many elements of hybrid warfare.

Latest trends of Hybrid Warfare in J&K

Following the abrogation of Article 370, Pakistan, particularly its military leadership, has become increasingly irrelevant. Kashmir is consistently a historical chapter for them, and the influence that the ISI has cultivated over 70 years in Kashmir has dissipated. This has resulted in comprehensive alterations to Pakistan's strategy regarding Kashmir. Following are the most recent trends of Hybrid Warfare employed by Pakistan in the Kashmir Valley:

(a) Homegrown/ Indigenous evolution of terrorism

Following the abrogation of Article 370, several new terrorist organizations emerged, including The Resistance Front (TRF), The People's Anti-Fascist Force (PAFF), Kashmir Ghaznavi Force (KGF), and The Joint Kashmir Front (JKF). The development of these new entities represents Rawalpindi's effort to re-strategize its terrorism outsourcing, following the realization that Pakistan is unlikely to be removed off the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list in the near future. Intensified international pressure, acknowledgment of several terrorist organizations, and enhanced security measures limiting militancy and illicit cross-border operations

compelled the ISI to reformulate its strategy. Consequently, the establishment of groups such as TRF, a derivative of LeT, and PAFF, a derivative of JeM, was intended to shield Pakistan from FATF scrutiny.

(b) Emergence of 'Hybrid terrorism'

The targeted killings of civilians in October 2021 have led to the emergence of the term 'Hybrid terrorism.' Hybrid terrorism refers to an unregistered member of a terrorist organization who is assigned targets and equipped with small arms for the purpose of executing targeted assassinations. Following the execution of the targeted killing, the militant continues his daily activities rather than retreating underground like his full-time peers. These terrorists execute targeted killings of external labourers and members of minority communities, exemplified by the recent murder of six Hindu civilians, including two children, in the village of Dhangri, district Rajouri, in January 2023.

(c) Revival of terrorism in Poonch-Rajouri Sector

Following the abrogation of Article 370, the Kashmir Valley has progressively been inaccessible to Pakistan, as their network of supporters has been dismantled. Additionally, the physical distance from the Line of Control hinders their ability to supply weapons, funds, and other logistical support to these sympathizers. The malevolent gaze has, however, focused on a new target. The proximity of Poonch-Rajouri to the Line of Control facilitates Pakistan's ability to transport weapons, ammunition, funds, and narcotics by drones. The drones may conduct numerous journeys, transporting small caches during each journey across the Line of Control at various locations. The majority of individuals residing in the Poonch-Rajouri border region have family across the Line of Control. Pakistan has exploited the interpersonal bonds of those residing across the Line of Control for terrorist activities throughout the years. The recent Pahari reservation protest by the Gujjar-Bakkarwal clan has been adeptly leveraged by Pakistan, which excels at identifying and exploiting subtle divisions.

(d) Narco Terrorism & misinformation campaign

Jammu & Kashmir has had a 2000 percent increase in heroin-related drug seizures from 2017 to 2023, rising from 3,000 to over 10,000 cases. Pakistan's endeavours to disrupt normalcy in Jammu and Kashmir, especially following the abrogation of Article 370, are grounded in its protracted proxy conflict with India. Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif acknowledged utilizing narcotics to fund an anti-India outlawed organization during an interview with 'The Washington Post' in September 1994. Narco-terrorism is the principal enabler in Pakistan's attempt to obstruct peace initiatives in the valley. Targets are allegedly used narcotics proceeds to finance a propaganda campaign. Organizations such as TRF are leading the dissemination of falsehoods to 'secularize' terrorism in Kashmir.

HOW INDIA IS ADAPTING TO HYBRID WARFARE & ITS COUNTERMEASURES

Discourse on hybrid wars has been present in India since the time of Kautilya, the ancient Indian polymath also referred to as Chanakya. India's existing military framework is a remnant of colonialism and has evolved from the structured battlefields of Europe. A significant difficulty for the Indian armed forces is to adjust to the requisite standard of the intricate and hybrid battlespace. In light of the challenges from its rivals, primarily Pakistan and China, India has prioritized both sub-conventional and conventional warfare, albeit within the context of nuclear conflict. Future threats will be intricate and hybrid, requiring a comprehensive revision of force application and warfare doctrines and methods. To clearly identify a precise target and the intended outcome of any war or conflict in alignment with the national and military goals, which will remain essential and non-negotiable, it is imperative to formulate a comprehensive campaign 'grand strategy' accompanied by many sub-strategies. Robust political resolve, bolstered by a cohesive and assertive combined services capacity that transcends terrestrial, aerial, and maritime domains, to safeguard their fundamental national interests. This necessitates a strategic shift from the current emphasis on territorial integrity to a more interest-driven capability. Consequently, India must realign its political ideology to foster a unified national consciousness that transcends mere reliance on soft power and conventional approaches. Kautilya's Arthashastra, a third-century treatise, and Nitisara by Kamandaki, a lesser-known military strategist, are key texts on the history of warfare in India. The primary lesson in both cases is that a multifaceted and hybrid amalgamation of national power elements is essential to impact the battlefield prior to the deployment of actual forces during or after conflict. Kautilya elaborates on diplomacy, dissent, economic pressure, and the continuum of force around conflict, whereas Kamandaki incorporates deception, psychological warfare, and benign neglect into these instruments of intimidation. In the context of the information age, these principles entail the weaponization of every contemporary, specialized, and disruptive instrument, technology, and ecosystem.

Hybrid War in Indian context is here to stay

India must recognize that hybrid warfare is a permanent reality, necessitating deeper understanding and a holistic national capacity to address it. Relying solely on the military to address hybrid threats is an ineffective strategy, as the boundaries of conflict and engagement are becoming increasingly indistinct. Concurrent involvement across several domains ought to be standard practice rather than an anomaly.

Capability as a Nation.

India's existing national policies, military conceptions, and force structures are inadequately aligned with the changing dynamics of conflict. To effectively formulate its joint warfare doctrines and adequately respond to the 'threat and capability' paradigm of conflict, a nation and its military must implement a cohesive, multifaceted strategy to attain 'maximum gain', achievable solely through professional military education and civil-military integration. The opponents' strategy may include a variety of threats, ranging from inexpensive and low-tech to costly and specialized technologies; therefore, it is essential to integrate all elements of national strength in to the nation's coordinated joint operational plans. The political leadership must promote politico-military diplomacy and effective statecraft policies that enhance soft power strategic communications to prevent conflicts, while simultaneously cultivating and maintaining a strong and credible military capability to protect the nation's vital interests.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, India's reaction to hybrid threats has consistently lacked an understanding of the psychological tactics employed by the opponent with remarkable skill. Consequently, India must adequately prepare for all hybrid possibilities to prevent being caught off guard, as the threshold and sentiments of the Indian public psyche have been heightened following the surgical strikes. India must not fall prey to hybrid warfare or suffer casualties due to its own negligence. It is necessary to reflect, analyse, and develop doctrines and tactics to establish an effective framework for addressing the issue. Hybrid warfare will characterize the future security landscape, and a disjointed strategy will undermine national interests. The discourse on ethics and regulations is irrelevant to hybrid warfare; what matters is the effect of one's response to a borderless conflict. According to Frank Hoffman, future conflicts will not be simply classified as conventional or irregular; the evolving nature of conflict is more complex than it seems. It can no longer be perceived solely through a narrow lens of traditional warfare, insurrection, or terrorism. In summary, a comprehensive grasp of hybrid warfare's nature and characteristics is essential for all political, bureaucratic, and security decision-makers at every level, including the 'Post and Jawans' level. Consequently, every Indian must combat the hybrid warfare conducted by our opponents.

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