

A Critical Analysis of Strategies to Counter Hybrid Warfare: Way Forward for Pakistan

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Abstract:

This paper analyses the effectiveness of the strategies and policies being adopted by Pakistan to counter Hybrid Warfare (HW) and suggests steps to formulate a plan to counter the future challenges of HW. The evolving categories of conflict actors and their tactics cannot be located under the generational model of warfare. The wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Ukraine, and Pakistan are the classic examples of HW where strategies like the blending of conventional competencies, irregular campaigns, information operations, and terrorism are employed to achieve desired objectives. HW poses a threat to global and national peace and security. The conflict domain in Pakistan changed after the 9/11. Pakistan faces a lot of challenges in the domain of HW ranging from ethnic and sectarian issues, poor governance, weakening economy, and a sorry state of education coupled with external threats at regional and global front. The societal fault lines, economic disparities, political marginalization, and demographic inequities are exploited as major playing fields to unleash a HW against Pakistan. This paper helps the policymakers and practitioners to evaluate the effectiveness of existing strategies and to formulate innovative tactics to counter hybrid warfare.

Keywords: Pakistan, Hybrid Warfare, Strategies, Policies, Terrorism, Irregular warfare.

INTRODUCTION

“The categories of warfare are blurring and no longer fit into neat, tidy boxes. One can expect to see more tools and tactics of destruction -- from the sophisticated to the simple -- being employed simultaneously in hybrid and more complex forms of warfare.”

Robert M. Gates, U.S. Secretary of Defence (*Gates, 2009*)

Hybrid warfare's preference over direct application of military instruments - at least in the initial stages of a conflict - is because of the very nature and spirit of war. Since the ultimate objective of belligerents in a conflict is to achieve victory regardless of the means employed (Kuperman 2007, 39), hence it is natural that one would like to pick the most economical and cost-effective tools from the inventory, thus minimizing own losses. Moreover, one tends to bring the adversary on the most challenging turf to fight, thereby reducing chances of his success and increasing his own. The primacy of hybrid warfare with the beginning of the Twenty-First Century is due to unmatched progress in the fields of technology and globalization. Information technology (IT) affords instant connectivity and synergy among various threads of hybrid war. Previously, these means were used only as force multipliers to the application of the military instrument, but technology has multiplied the effects of psychological, economic, political and information tools and hence brought them to

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the forefront of a war-waging arsenal. In the post-truth world, the power of media and information operations is all too obvious to be explained.

Pakistan is confronting a comprehensive variety of challenges in the hybrid warfare sphere. What are the critical challenges of hybrid warfare to national security and integrity of Pakistan? To mitigate these challenges, what strategies has Pakistan adopted? This paper comprehensively answers these questions and provides a way forward for Pakistan. There is no comprehensive research that focuses on countering multiple dimensions of hybrid warfare. Therefore, this paper makes a genuine contribution to the literature on countering Hybrid Warfare.

Facets of Hybrid Warfare

There is no universally accepted description of hybrid warfare, and the understanding of the concept is very vague and theoretical (Cullen & Kjennerud, 2017). It only defines irregular means to counter a conventionally superior power. Therefore, hybrid warfare is accepted as the common denominator to all asymmetric threats. Hybrid warfare manifests itself on the composite and dynamic adversary, be it a state or non-state. Incidentally, during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon with the consequent struggle by Hezbollah and the civil war in Syria, hybrid threats emanated from non-state entities within the state system (Sandawi, 2010). During the conflict, these non-state actors, besides having their own independent and specific agenda, could also be supported as proxies for other states or countries having their interest in the conflict (Peters, Koechlin, Förster, & Zinkernagel, 2009). Russia's invasion of Ukraine is known or referred to as a traditional state actor instigating and perpetuating a hybrid war using a local hybrid entity. However, Russia has amenable denied its connection in the Ukraine conflict (Toal, 2017). Therefore, it can be summarised that a hybrid adversary may use a combination of conventional and asymmetric approaches (Schroefl & Kaufman, 2014) against the opponent including (Hoffman, 2016; Najzer, 2018; The Economist, 2018): a. Orthodox capabilities; b. Irregular formations; c. Asymmetrical tactics; d. Terrorist acts; e. Criminal acts; f. Indiscriminate violence, and; g. Clandestine actions to conceal identification.

At the conceptual and academic level, any threat may be classified as hybrid as long as it involves more than one war sizes, dimensions or shapes. When any threat is termed, perceived or real, or actual use of force as a hybrid, the term loses its essence and results in creating more confusion rather than clarifying the exact nature and character of modern war. The essence is that the adversaries within contemporary conflicts use simultaneously conventional/ unconventional, irregular/regular, explicit/hidden tools and exploit the whole arsenal at their disposal to fight the supremacy that some or others hold in traditional warfare (Chuka & Born, 2014; Hoffman, 2009). The hybrid wars are not limited to traditional military tools but to a wide variety of dimensions with respect to contemporary war (Wither, 2016).

In a nutshell, the hybrid war in the 21st Century exploits the internal weaknesses and fault lines of the target states by employing non-military means, including diplomatic, political, economic, and informational (Maaz, 2018, p.36). Besides, it focuses on intimidating, manipulating, and coercing the target state's infrastructures while also keeping the conventional military forces ready for employment as the final blow to crumble the adversary (Calha, 2015). The fundamental theme behind the application of hybrid tools is the subversion of masses in the target state that become unwitting pawns in the hands of hostile forces against their state. By the time the pattern can be

discerned, it is generally too late to apply any corrective measures or affect a change of course. Experts believe that there are four stages in the application of classic hybrid warfare against the opponent (Kříž, Shevchuk, & Števkov, 2015), which include:

- a. Demoralization through inducing paralysis in the functioning of the state and removing trust of the masses in the ability of the state institutions to check the rot.
- b. Destabilization, either successive or simultaneous of the state which leads to the virtual standstill of the state organization and the resultant weakening of trinity of the state.
- c. Creation of alibi for a crisis situation with shifting loyalties of state servants and officials in the ensuing state of chaos and unpredictability.
- d. Ultimately leading to the final stage of taking over the control of the target state indirectly using the disenfranchised segments of the society acting in cohorts with the attacker.

From this analogy, it is evident that modern HW is about old approaches and practices suitably tailored to mesh with the development of technology and information tools which conveniently conceal the actual originator of the onslaught (Deep, 2015). In essence, therefore, there is nothing novel or innovative about HWs. In the past, no innovation is observed in so many conflicts globally with the exception that these are manifested either as grey zone hybrid or as open hybrid threats (Chambers, 2016, p.14). It is another matter, however, that the earlier types remain more elusive and challenging to recognize as compared to the latter one.



Figure 1 : Instruments of Hybrid Warfare (Sehgal,

Hybrid conflicts of the 21st century are different from previous conflicts. Now these are waged in an environment of unprecedented and vast security environment along with more excellent communication and information space to exploit the vulnerabilities of the target state (Johnson,

2018). Hybrid conflict can now be considered as the manifestation of the effect-based approach to accomplish the policy objectives in obtaining a security environment. This kind of conflict can have a host of features due to the availability of various means, which can act to bring capitulation of the adversary. Therefore, it would be safe to claim that the application of hybrid means and ways can only be restricted by the imagination of the one waging it. Military thinkers, and executioners, need to remain wary of the new techniques and approaches towards conducting HWs more efficiently and innovatively. For the potential adversaries equally responsive and effective counter-strategies would have to be evolved to balance the equation.

Major Challenges of Hybrid Warfare Faced by Pakistan

The review of existing literature reveals that most of the scholars discuss HW as per their perspectives/ environment and use a diverse range of terminologies. There is no universally accepted understanding/definition of HW. Most of the scholars like Zafar Jaspal, Ikram Sehgal and Anum Sheikh have focussed on the manifestations of the HW in Pakistan and how Pakistan should prepare for the hybrid threats emanating from Eastern front (Jaspal, 2018; Sehgal, 2018, 2019; Sheikh, 2017)? The work done by Korybko (2017) gives a comprehensive account, but this is focussed narrowly on the economic domain and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The existing literature lacks comprehension, conceptual clarity, and integration to develop the bigger picture of HW landscape employed against Pakistan. The existing literature lacks rational strategies to counter the hybrid threats, and generate an all-inclusive and well-knitted response.

Clausewitz stated, "Every age has its own kind of war, its own limiting conditions, and its own peculiar preconceptions" (Paret, Howard, & Brodie 1976, 593). Pakistan is facing a broad range of challenges in the HW domain. The susceptibilities present in the state structure provide opportunities to adversaries to employ HW against Pakistan (Iqbal, 2018). Challenges have been realized and discussed in academia, government and military circles over the past few years. The government of Pakistan (GOP), in collaboration with armed forces and law enforcement agencies (LEAs), has designed and instituted specific measures to counter HW challenges faced by Pakistan. National Internal Security Policy (NISP 2014-2018) was formulated for the very first time, and significant focus remained on the national integration through dialogue with all stakeholders to augment and support national security structure (Khan, Jaspal, & Yasmin, 2017; Ullah, Salim, & Baloch, 2019). The GOP took a significant step in the aftermath of the incident of Army Public School (APS) in 2014 and devised an elaborate National Action Plan (NAP) to counter different instruments of HW (Pasha 2019, 49). The GOP, with the help of all leading political parties, incorporated NAP to the constitution through the 21st amendment. Different segments of the civil society highly appreciated this initiative by the GOP.

Since HW employs a host of means in a well-coordinated and synchronized manner against the target state, the traditional mind-set of defending the state with kinetic means is not an appropriate response to such aggression (Bachmann, 2012; Gunneriusson, 2012). The threat has to be identified and responded to with superior imagination, coordination, and execution with the highest level of coordination and cooperation among all national power elements (Bachmann, 2012; Cullen & - Kjennerud, 2017). Therefore, it can be argued that the states fail to sense the gravity and enormity of the threat and leave its response to military means alone would only do so at their peril. A successful response to hybrid onslaught demands intricate, timely and smooth cooperation and

coordination among various stakeholders, including state institutions, masses, economic structures, media, think tanks and international like-minded organizations/countries. A systematic approach to the subject from assessing vulnerabilities to correct and comprehensive threat assessment and superior response at all tiers vertically and horizontally would be required to defeat the threat successfully.

EXISTING RESPONSE BY PAKISTAN AGAINST HYBRID WARFARE

The measures already undertaken mostly counter the menace of terrorism and not the hybrid threats as identified in preceding paragraphs. This existing approach revolves around the concept of *Dialogue, Deter and Develop* (3Ds) and perhaps has worked to a reasonable extent thus far. However, when viewed from the prism of the current threat spectrum, these measures may fall short. Since hybrid threats target all spheres of society (i.e. philosophical, political, ideological, diplomatic, economic, informational, social, legal and institutional), this necessitates an equally matching and comprehensive approach from a strategic level. Following has been implemented as a response in this regard:

Operation Zarb-e-Azab

Zarb-e-Azb means the sharp strike or the strike of the sword, which was used by the last Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the battles of Badr and Uhud. Zarb-e-Azb operation was launched in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) region (Rehman, Nasir, & Shahbaz, 2017) in June 2014 as a reaction to attack at Jinnah International Airport Karachi. It was a very comprehensive operation, which included intelligence-based operations (IBOs) around the country to counter the threats imposed by the perpetrators of violence (Javaid, 2016). The operation had four major goals, including strikes on militant groups in North Waziristan, eradication of foreign militants hiding in FATA region, protection and rehabilitation of local populace and maintaining law and order situation in the area for the resumption of routine life (Javaid 2016, 165). A large number of IBOs were also conducted to eradicate militant's outfits that were waging a HW against Pakistan. The operation got complete support from all state institutions to become a successful endeavour to counter hybrid threats to Pakistan. Khawaja Asif, the then Defence Minister of Pakistan stated that "the operation will continue until it reaches its logical conclusion. Any group that challenges Pakistan's constitution, attacks civilians, soldiers, and government installations and uses Pakistani territory to plan terrorist attacks will be targeted" (Javaid 2016, 166). Zarb-e-Azb was a determinant effort to counter HW employed against Pakistan.

National Action Plan

The NAP was envisaged and implemented by the GOP in early 2015 in the backdrop of deadly APS Peshawar attack in consensus with all the institutions of the state (Hassan & Khan, 2019). The main objective was to crack down on the terrorists and to supplement the Operation Zarb-e-Azab. NAP was welcomed by all major stakeholders, and the general public due to its very important goals. NAP was devised to integrate domestic and foreign policy decisions to eradicate the menace of terrorism and associated instruments of HW. The 21st amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan was based on the framework provided by the NAP. It consisted of 20 major points, including special military courts, banning armed militias, forming NACTA, hate speech control, financial blocking of terror organisations, forming of special anti-terrorism force, measures to protecting minorities,

madrassahs reforms, rehabilitation of internally displaced persons (IDPs), and monitoring of social media and internet (Khan & Saeed, 2018). Military courts designed under the NAP proved very useful to prosecute the culprits, and speedy trials and decisions. National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) was also established with the vision to strive for a safer tomorrow by comprehensively countering terrorism in all its manifestations (National Counter Terrorism Authority [NACTA], 2019) but desired results could not be achieved owing to lack of capacity to implement the devised strategies. The plan was well charted down, but lacked the political will to implement it.

Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad

Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad was launched in early 2017 to counter the terrorism and hybrid strategies adopted by Pakistan's enemies. The fundamental aim of the operation was to wipe out the remaining terrorists and to consolidate further the success achieved in the previous operation to protect Pakistan from both internal and external threats of HW (Iqbal, 2017). The uniqueness of this operation was the joint planning and integration of armed forces, intelligence agencies, and LEAs to accrue maximum advantages against enemies. The NAP was pursued as the hallmark of this operation.

National Internal Security Policy-2014, 2018-2023

The GOP published the first NISP in 2014, which was an outstanding achievement due to prevailing unrest in the country. The measures taken under the framework of NISP-2014 were successful in mitigating the challenges of peace and conflict in Pakistan. The primary focus of NISP-2014 was to construct a national narrative on violent extremism, sectarianism, religious militancy, terrorism, and violence to deal with increasing extremism in society (Aslam 2018, 312). The government took a step further and formulated a comprehensive policy in the shape of NISP-2018 to counter-terrorism and extremism in Pakistan. All the stakeholders gave inputs for devising an integrated response to bring sustainable peace in the country. The issues, including promotion of democracy, the rule of law, inclusive growth, and respect for diversity to achieve sustainable peace and security were given significant importance in NISP-2018 (Aslam 2018, 312).

COUNTERING HYBRID WARFARE

The dormant or active societal fault lines, economic disparities, political marginalization, and demographic inequities provide an ideal playing field to unleash a HW against a vulnerable and struggling enemy (Najzer, 2018). All these vulnerabilities, coupled with the availability of IT, make an ideal combination for the success of the HW. In the technology savvy environment, any attack on power grids, computer systems with allied economic facilities can have a severe impact on public morale resulting in a spontaneous reaction against government's inability to protect the lifeline of civic amenities. The ground can thus be prepared to initiate a crisis and aggravate it by injecting other tools of hybrid arsenal to complicate the situation and induce a sense of insecurity in the masses. Thus, a small opening can be gradually exploited to inflict crippling of the inner front without much cost.

To successfully counter the hybrid threat, policy, in synchronization with strategy at all levels, should ensure the creation of an integrated National Security Apparatus (NSA) capable of comprehensively addressing hybrid threats in the complete threat spectrum, reducing the pull on

any single state institution, especially military. Politically led and owned, societal and institutional measures synchronized through a coherent policy are the need of the hour. Hybrid threats are not linear; therefore, they require a sophisticated and multi-spectral approach based on these policy considerations and the need for a comprehensive policy behind any successful strategy. A National Hybrid Response Regime (NHRR) at a policy level and Counter Hybrid Warfare (CHW) strategy at military strategy level is proposed, which collectively gives a comprehensive approach, presenting response cardinals for all stages of the grey zone and high-end HW.

Proposed Response Framework

The complex nature of threats calls for a **“Whole Nation Approach”** within DIMEPIL framework, where all Elements of National Power (ENPs) and the societal segments are glued together in addressing critical vulnerabilities in the society and create a resilient domestic environment which eventually leads to the first strand of preventing the very ideology of Pakistan from being compromised. This approach must include the policy of **“Identifying, Preventing, Deterring, Defending and Developing (IPDDD)”** with a context of short-term, mid-term and long-term measures in global, regional, and domestic domains.

Countering Hybrid Warfare: Way Forward for Pakistan

In the light of the proposed framework, the following measures are suggested to counter HW including measures and strategies at national level and to mitigate the security challenges. Figure-2, gives a broader perspective of hybrid attacks and relative defence domain. The economic and financial reforms are also being discussed to augment other domains.

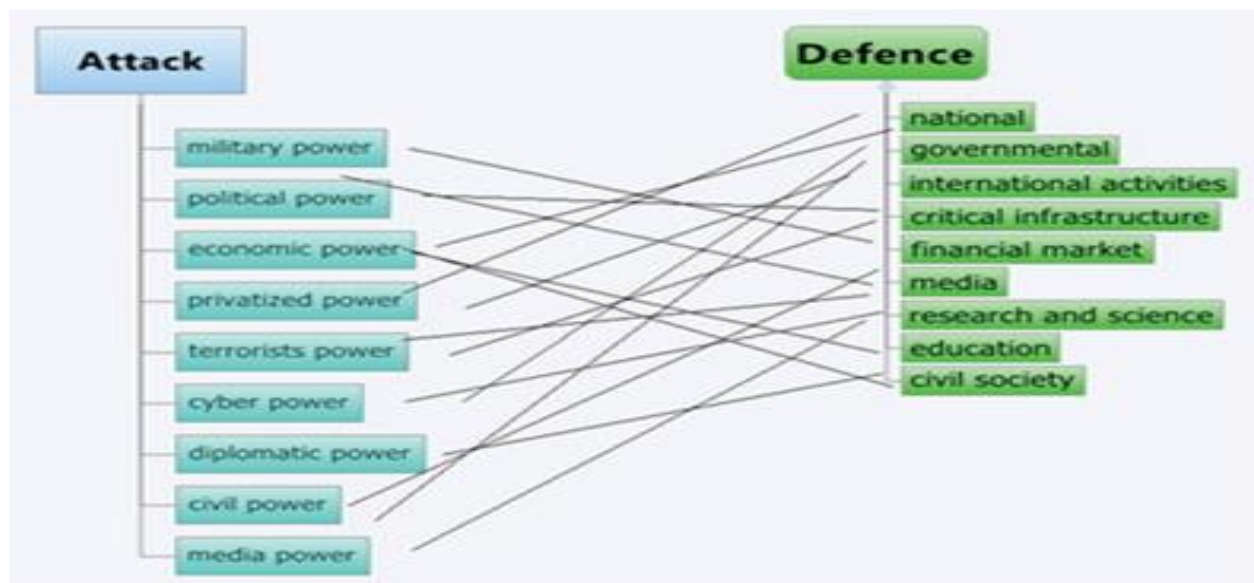


Figure : 2 Hybrid attack and defence systems. (Otaiku 2018, 13)

Needed National Level Measures

In order to fight Hybrid Warfare in Pakistan, the following aspects need to be addressed at the national level:

Formulation of National Strategy

A comprehensive and well thought out political strategy needs to be evolved, to underline political and military responses to HW. At present, no such strategy exists to counter the challenges posed by the different instruments of HW. The current framework of NISP-2014 and NISP 2018-23 have mainly focussed on counter-terrorism and counter-extremism, while many other tools of HWarfare are not under the radar (Ullah, 2020). There is an essential requirement of a comprehensive review of internal security policies and strategies to counter the challenges posed by different instruments of HWarfare.

Good Governance.

The government must demonstrate performance management to the common masses by:

- a. Strong anti-corruption policies.
- b. A balance between the institutions.
- c. Good relations between the central and federal units.
- d. Provision of a legal basis for judicial, policy, and administrative reforms.
- e. Equal distribution of resources.
- f. Curtailment of unnecessary government expenditure.
- g. Provision of standard education.

Economic Development

Economic road maps have to be realistically tailored. Following is therefore recommended for the improvement of economy:-

- a. The current focus has to be on short term factors, which will restore economy to its position of natural potential.
- b. Energy and food security have to be essential ingredients of the economic development plan.

Harmony between Political and Military Leadership

The essential political interface is necessary to deliver a comprehensive response to HW. Ministry of Defence (MoD) and Joint Staff Headquarters (GHQ) must broaden their role in promoting threat awareness by improving political and military coordination. The state institutions should be gelled up together to counter the contemporary threats to the country in hybrid domain.

Public and Political Support

The government needs to foster genuine support of all the stakeholders by reaching out to all religious and political parties and form unity among all strands of opinions to develop consensus on all thorny issues faced by the country. At present, no such forum or institution is available.

Legal Issues

HW tends to test the relationship between the state and judiciary on civil/human rights. The mechanism needs to be evolved at the national level to tackle legal problems erupting in today's environment.

Understanding of Hybrid Warfare at all Levels

The complexity of HW threats makes it essential that future leaders understand the implications and trade-offs between preparing for and performing counterinsurgency and stability operations.

National Security Workshop

Such workshops are an excellent platform to discuss issues of national and international importance. They should be continuously organized at federal and provincial levels, including members from political, social, business, judicial and LEAs.

Trade Not Aid

Pakistan must make all-out endeavors to explore markets for its commodities. Right now Pakistan need "trade and not aid." This will not only generate Foreign Exchange Market for the country but also create job opportunities.

Policy Research Institutes

The government must establish not only policy research institutes but also encourage the private sector in this field. Independent think tanks like Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) and Islamabad Strategic Studies Institute (ISSI) are best suited for the task.

SECURITY CHALLENGES (BOTH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL)**Capacity Building for Civic Response Against Terrorism**

For enhancing civic response, a comprehensive civil defence strategy with the following main constituents needs to be evolved:

- a. Citizen participation
- b. Target hardening
- c. Safeguarding critical infrastructure
- d. Short term rescue and relief through crisis response capacity building
- e. Management strategy for catering long-term physical and psychological effects of the terrorist attacks.

Funding of Anti-State Elements

Elements of HW rely on funding themselves through legitimate business activities, charitable organizations, direct contributions, and criminal activities (drug smuggling, racketeering, extortion, etc). Stopping the flow of money to the terrorist organization can hamper their ability to conduct terrorist attacks.

CONTEMPORARY WARFARE**Media**

Effective media handling in HW is of paramount importance . To use media in an optimistic way following may facilitate:-

- a. Educating media
- b. Identification of rogue elements

- c. Strict approach towards media contents
- d. Establishment of media groups

Improving Technology

Steps recommended for progress in the field of Bio/Nano-technology are:-

- a. Organizations working under Strategy Plans Division (SPD) are best suited for the tasks. SPD must open up to development in the field of such technology.
- b. Higher Education Commission (HEC) should introduce subjects related to nanotechnology in its existing establishments/ syllabus.
- c. Agriculture universities to undertake projects related to biosecurity and prepare next-generation for such eventualities.
- d. The subject of Robotics or Robotic Engineering can be taught at related institutes working under the National University of Science and Technology (NUST).

RESOURCE CATASTROPHE

Resource catastrophe is another factor that can be exploited by adversaries to propagate wrong narratives in masses. The following measures are recommended in this domain.

Food and Water Security

Pakistan's growing population and food prices need a "food and water conservation strategy." Ministry of food and agriculture must analyse and come up with long-term goals in this regard.

Migration of Skilled Individuals

The Pakistani government must establish favourable political, social, and economic conditions that would serve as incentives to curb the brain drain.

Energy Sufficiency

In order to overcome energy crisis following steps may be taken:

- a. Proper energy efficiency measures may be adopted in the industrial sector
- b. More focus should be placed on hydropower and alternative energy
- c. Effective utilization of Thar coal and other natural resources is necessary
- d. Above all, management and fair distribution of all available energy resources is of utmost importance

MILITARY LEVEL

Research and Analysis of Hybrid Warfare

Concept of Hybrid Warfare must be further researched and analysed at Military Operations or Doctrine & Evaluation Directorate, General Headquarters. Military Operations may detail selected formations to carry out a comprehensive study of HW in Pakistan.

Specialized Training

Training should emphasize on developing an understanding of terrorist tactics, organization/ conduct of relief/ rehabilitation operations, concept and operation modalities of HW. Introduction/ discussion on the subject can be conducted at Army Schools of Instructions.

Intelligence System

An effective intelligence system is mandatory for the conduct of successful HW operations. Significant tenets of intelligence system must be specially devised for HW including:

- a. A bottom-up approach needs to be implemented in the entire area of operation.
- b. The intelligence loop needs to be faster.
- c. Accuracy must take primacy over quantum.
- d. The principle of exercising restraint could be adhered for a moral ascendancy, when in doubt.

Integration rather than Segregation

The forces should try to increase the mutual security interdependence with the community and try to wrest away this advantage from the hostile combatants. Efforts must be made to have more significant interaction with masses to mitigate the induced fears.

Mental Conditioning of Troops

Nowadays, the troops have an exposure to open media, and they interact with various segments of society. Effective measures may be instituted for their mental conditioning to ward off the influences that negatively affect their psychology. Interaction by senior officers is a handy platform.

Media Campaign

Interservices Public Relations (ISPR) must plan a strong, and effective media campaign. If possible, ISPR can buy some air time on leading channels. The themes must focus on the following:-

- a. Recounting the achievements of the armed forces
- b. Anti-Pakistan elements working inside Pakistan should be exposed
- c. Role of the Army played in nation-building tasks
- d. Army's sacrifices in operations
- e. The misperceptions about the war on terror should be cleared to the public

Technological Vulnerabilities of Pakistan Army

Technological Vulnerabilities of the Army needs to be addressed immediately. Following is recommended in this regard:

- a. All possible safeguards against hacking / unauthorised use of open application server must be put in place and analysed for any loopholes.
- b. Apart from utilizing US-based GPS, Pakistan army can also endeavour shifting on a Chinese based or indigenous GPS system.
- c. Own defence research laboratories like KRL, Integral dynamics, and engineering universities like NUST, UET and GIKI should be consulted for improvement of currently held drone technology with particular emphasis on weapon carrier drones.
- d. Pakistan needs to create a centralized, aggressive and proactive command for cyber warfare at Joint Staff Headquarters (JSHQ) utilizing resources of the civil sector.

Intelligence Sharing and Integration

Pakistan needs to immediately propose that all of the Afghanistan's neighbours (Iran, the Central Asian Republics, and China) and Russia share their anti-terrorist intelligence. The Kabul government, the United States and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and India could also be invited to participate in this mechanism for appearances' sake.

FUTURE OF HYBRID WARFARE

The world is becoming more susceptible to the interdependencies and interconnections among states and regions because of globalization. The manipulation of these susceptibilities becomes a target of those who aim at undermining the system or its parts. It is due to the interdependence and interconnectedness of the present-day world that potential HW practitioners would seek to cripple the adversary and impose their will by attacking and neutralizing the cardinal points in the body of the target states which are vital for its normal functioning (Dayspring, 2015). Through the application of this technique, maximum possible informational and moral effects and outcomes would be achieved by employment of minimum effort and energies with barely any chance of being recognized, hence the plausible deniability. Let us be clear that our individual, and organizational structures, are not yet ready to understand and then respond to hybrid threats adequately.

Hybrid threats will only grow and complicate with time and would be pursued by more and more belligerents, both state and non-state, along with equally innovative and unorthodox approaches for achieving the ends of policy or political purposes. HW is still in the nascent stage of conceptualizing and countering the hybrid onslaught both in physical and the information environment. Preventive or defensive approaches contemplated by the nation-states or structures/leaders can, at best, act as a temporary remedy to the menace by limiting the effects. Nevertheless, then the practitioners of hybrid means would also learn other innovative and novel techniques to circumvent and bypass the defensive mechanism, thereby giving rise to a vicious circle of cause and effect.

A complicated aspect of HW is that it can be waged at any time and stage of a crisis in the target state, and the victim may not realize that it is being subjected to HW until it is too late. During peacetime, hybrid tactics can be employed in the garb of benign and benevolent activities in the target state, such as support for human rights, gender equality, freedom of expression and right to information. At this stage, the purpose of such activities would be to test and recruit potential pawns to deepen the cleavages and fault lines in the state structure which can then be controlled as per the required intensity under an overall plan of action, all done in a calibrated and methodical manner. Few examples can be NGOs and INGOs and the support extended to their activities on the pretext of humanitarian sentiments, preparing and propagating specific themes in print, electronic and social media to condition and influence the target audience and reshaping their opinion in favour of or against a particular issue, influencing syllabus and curricula of public and private schools, instigating various rights groups in their struggle for a specific agenda and legitimizing their activities by overt and covert actions and pronouncements. In recent days, unprecedented and unwarranted coverage and support of Pakhtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM) activities by hostile agencies and international media organizations, sympathizing with the agenda of renegade political factions, and supporting specific political parties/personalities with a vested interest are cases in point (Shaukat, 2020).

With the progress of long term plan and higher intensity of crisis situation in the target country, inimical forces will step up the hybrid onslaught causing internal fissures, uncertainty, chaos, and greater instability without coming to the fore thereby making any efforts at recognition of the perpetrator and following countermeasures extremely difficult (Murray & Mansoor, 2012). At this stage, the energies and focus of the target state would be minimizing the damage and figuring out the matching response to counter and defeat the onslaught. Gradually, the stage will be set for the initiator of hybrid attack to peak the momentum and deliver a final blow either covertly if feasible like the event of Crimea or overtly to apply military force as happened in East Pakistan. However, this analogy presumes that HW is a means of merely shaping the environment before the final blow is delivered. With no holds barred, the aim being that when applied, the armed forces of target country have no chance to defeat the aggression. By the time it realizes the enormity and scale of hybrid means employed against it, it can, at best, point out the individuals and organizations directly involved in a HW and penalize them with a fleeting possibility of resorting to international laws and conventions to pinpoint the real instigators. Such are the perils of operating in a post-truth environment and a complex world where weaker states have to remain on guard against hybrid threats continuously.

WAY FORWARD FOR PAKISTAN

The fundamental requirement is to launch a campaign to bring awareness about hybrid threats among state institutions, governmental machinery, LEAs, and the general public so that a well-integrated response can be generated at the state level. This can be accomplished through workshops, seminars, mainstream social media, and inclusion of related subjects in syllabi. While awareness and understanding about the hybrid threat is essential, the requirement of matching capacity at all tiers to physically fight the onslaught cannot be overemphasized. Development of credible institutional capacity in the mid-term to address the complete threat spectrum through centralized control and decentralized execution must be ensured at priority. There is an essential requirement of a comprehensive review of the internal security policies and strategies to counter the challenges posed by different instruments of HW.

While the enemy will always be on the lookout to detect and exploit Pakistan's internal weaknesses and fault lines to advance its agenda, the state must devise innovative strategies for greater national and institutional harmony and integration. This effort cannot be taken as a one-time measure as the innovative approaches to weaken country's internal cohesion will keep emerging necessitating corresponding countermeasures by the state. It is also emphasized that experience, expertise and institutional capacity of each state institution be optimally utilized to build related capacities of other state institutions. As recommended above, the specialist counter hybrid threat regime must continuously endeavour to detect and counter the growing hybrid threat swiftly and squarely. Failure to take timely action against prospective threats may lead to dire consequences at later stages. Therefore, identification and response to threats in lower fringes of "grey zone" must be put in action before these can transgress into high-end threats. Media in this era has become an all-encompassing source and can be utilized towards enhancing the national security and undermining the morale of the opponents. There is a need to use this resource effectively. Pakistan needs to adopt a comprehensive media policy and requires enhancing its lobbying efforts in order to address the gap between the real situation and the wrong image of the country.

CONCLUSION

Hybrid conflict cannot be categorized as a new form of warfare. However, in the 21st century's specific security environments and more so because of the unprecedented progress of globalization with a resultant increase in inter-dependencies and susceptibilities of nation-states, it does provide answers to persistent problems of overcoming the adversary with more economy of effort and plausible deniability. In a way, HW is an expression that offers multiple players the likelihood of attaining political objectives in the face of mighty adversaries. This is not limited to military domain alone as economically crippling the enemy is the most prudent way of subduing his will. Therefore, it is prudent to say that HW does not constitute any innovation or novelty in and of itself. Man has been using it since antiquity to varying degrees and intensities owing, primarily, to the availability of alternate means of waging war. HW, due to its non-attribution, ambiguity, plausible deniability and cost-effectiveness, is a preferred option for future conflicts. The answer to the question of, "why it is gaining such prominence now?" lies in the fact that chances and wherewithal to harness, employ and synchronize non-military means against the adversary has simply multiplied - thanks to rapid advancement of technology and increased interdependence of the global order. The dormant or active societal fault lines, economic disparities, political marginalization, and demographic inequities provide an ideal playing field to unleash a HW against a vulnerable and struggling country like Pakistan. All these vulnerabilities, coupled with the availability of IT, make an ideal combination for the success of the HW. The application of non-kinetic means to pursue their respective interests lies at the heart of strategies focussing on HW. Therefore, it is significant to understand the ends, ways and means concerning non-kinetic strategies. Policymakers now have a most significant challenge towards emergency preparedness to counter the threats associated with HW. Pakistan needs to adopt innovative strategies for mitigating the challenges imposed by HW.

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