

Challenges of hybrid warfare and regional dynamics

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In a globalized world, hybrid warfare has become a challenge for states. The globalization has connected states more and more but presence of multitactic warfare i.e. hybrid warfare has insecured states. The nation states do not trust each other inspite of interdependency. In addition to this, political scientists believe that this insecurity of states has roots in nefarious designs which are ^{being} used by states against each other. The states use nefarious designs to pursue their national interests. Similarly, hybrid warfare serves the interests of a few states. The challenges posed by hybrid warfare include multitactic strategies, disinforming public,

creating dividing lines and hidden identity of enemy. Furthermore, these challenges impact regional dynamics. In the context of South Asia, hybrid warfare has further exacerbated insecurity within the region. It flared the feelings of nationalism and hatred. Come what may, these challenges could be overcome if regional organizations and regional powers take responsibility by playing an active role to combat hybrid warfare.

Hybrid warfare is an asymmetrical and unconventional means of warfare. It is also known as fifth generation warfare. Political analysts believe there are certain modes of convergences: physical with psychological, military with non-military, combatants and non-combatants, and states with non-state actors. These modes of convergences are termed as hybrid warfare. The different tactics used are media, psychology, cyber, proxy, influence and financial constraints. Today, Pakistan has also fell victim to asymmetric warfare tactics. The anti-Pakistan forces continuously ^{use} methods of hybrid warfare to destabilize Pakistan politically and economically.

Amongst the other challenges of hybrid warfare, the first is its multitactic nature.

This makes the state vulnerable at different levels: national, regional and global. The multitactic nature includes use of military and non-military means. First, the use of military is a traditional method where states confront each other in battlefield. Furthermore, the non-military means is a non-traditional method. The most common tactic used of non-military means is political clout. For example, some analysts are of the view that Pakistan stayed in Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) grey list due to India's political clout in FATF. The prolonged stay in grey list threatened Pakistan to be blacklisted. This development was made despite Pakistan's highest compliance with FATF's demands and made Pakistan vulnerable at all aforementioned levels. Therefore, such non-military tactics come under the ambit of hybrid warfare and pose greater challenges by exposing state's vulnerabilities.

In addition to aforementioned challenge of hybrid warfare, another one is creating dividing lines between public and state. Another tactic of asymmetric means used in hybrid warfare is the use of media warfare to instil hate in public

against the state. Question arises, how the art of infusing hate is done. The answer is simple, public is disinformed through media. For example, according to an international think tank report, more than thousand Indian fake accounts disseminated anti-Pakistan campaign on Twitter (a social media platform). During May 2023 incident, these fake accounts started creating an anti-state narrative on Twitter. A lot of ^{violent} protests in the aftermath of May incident are linked with these campaigns (Dawn reported). Thus, the use of media warfare is used for creating gaps between state and citizens.

Moreover, another challenge posed by hybrid warfare is the paralysis of state machinery by disinformed public. As one mean is to disinform public, the other mean is to paralyze the state. This is the end goal of the opponent. A disinformed public would protest against its state and would sabotage the infrastructure during protests. This would ultimately paralyze the state system. Ultimately civilian and military leadership would be left with two options: combat against citizens or yield to their demands. Either way its a win-win situation for the enemy (Warden's five rings theory of hybrid warfare). Therefore,

disinforming public is a serious challenge but the domino-effect of disinforming public is more serious challenge. It paralyzes the state machinery which is the end goal of an opponent.

Every region has its own unique dynamics, South Asia has its own. The first regional dynamic, of South Asia, amongst others is the prolonged issue of Kashmir. The Kashmir issue has existed since partition of 1947. Several wars have been fought since then on Kashmir and it still remains a flashpoint. Recently, in 2019, India under Modi administration provoked rights of Kashmir and started delimitations there to make demographic changes (Article 370 and 35-A ~~of~~ of Indian Constitution abrogated, The Diplomat). Pakistan has taken the case to international forums but in vain. Any further provocation could instigate an incident similar to post-Pulwama or worst. Hence, the Kashmir issue remains a flashpoint between dyads in South Asia.

Hybrid warfare challenges regional dynamics of South Asia, the states feel more and more insecure about their neighbourhood.

The complicated dynamics have further pushed South Asian states in a security dilemma. With the prevailing threat of hybrid warfare, states have become further insecure. For example, India and China's rivalry of dominance has this growing sense of fear that China may use ^{Russia's} cyber warfare against India. Likewise, China has reservations about US-India synergy, China believes that India is developing its unconventional capabilities, with the help of ^{the} US, to use them against China. Therefore, it could be inferred that hybrid warfare is not only a challenge to the states but it also threatens the regional peace and security.

To overcome the challenges of hybrid warfare, there is a dire need of addressing the faultlines within a state. As the anti-state forces try to maneuver these faultlines for their national interests and use them against their opponents. Such as, in case of Pakistan, it needs to overcome economic crisis, provincial grievances, political instability and other ~~stern~~ key issues. Otherwise Pakistan would continue to fall prey to India's malicious tactics to sabotage Pakistan's sovereignty. If these above mentioned faultlines in Pakistan have been maximum addressed, this would reduce state's worry to half. Therefore, in order to address the

hybrid warfare, states need to bring their homes in order first.

To conclude, hybrid warfare used to be a tactic of weaker states but now it is being used by great powers, as well. This is due to the due to the hidden identity of the enemy and serious challenges posed against the opponent. Moreover, the asymmetric warfare has seriously challenged the regional dynamics especially of the South Asia. It directly threatens peace and security of the region. The threat of hybrid warfare would continue to exist, ^{but} however, better sense prevails in addressing it at regional and national level. First and foremost national issues need to be addressed and simultaneously collaboration at regional level is required.

