

Q: The ascending potency of hybrid warfare being pointed on the state of Pakistan is adding to the security woes of the country.

Answer:

HYBRID WARFARE

It is a strategy to achieve political, strategic, or destabilisation objectives using a blend of unconventional methods such as cyber attacks, economic manipulation, proxy war, and propaganda with conventional military tactics. This approach challenges the demarcation between warfare and nonmilitary strategies.

OBJECTIVES OF HYBRID WARFARE

- a. Influence: Hybrid warfare can be used to shape the public opinion, changing the media narrative, swaying domestic and international perceptions in favour of the aggressor's interests.
- b. Destabilisation: It can also be used to incite internal chaos, social unrest, and political instability in the target state to weaken its capabilities.

c. Economic disruption: This type of warfare can also be used to ~~express~~ ^{reduce} a country's ability to address its security concerns through economic pressures, sanctions, and financial manipulations.

d. Undermining Sovereignty: It can also be used to erode the legitimacy of the target government by creating mistrust that weakens institutions and public support for their own government.

METHODS OF HYBRID WARFARE

a. Conventional tactics: Traditional military actions involving the use of armed forces, military equipments and strategies towards specific objectives.

b. Non-conventional tactics: Unconventional tactics such as sabotage, guerrilla warfare, and insurgency that deviates from standard military practices.

c. Kinetic and subversive efforts: The former means involve physical actions such as armed attacks, while the later involves ~~inerting~~ ^{involves} creating mistrust, undermining institutions, and spreading disinformation.

d. Regular and irregular tactics: Regular tactics involve uniformed and well defined military operations, whereas, irregular ones involve asymmetrical methods by non-uniformed ~~and~~ ^{or} non-state actors.

B. Information and Cyber Attacks: former involves spreading propaganda to manipulate public opinions while later targets digital networks or infrastructure to steal secret data or disrupt operations.

HYBRID WARFARE AS A THREAT

Hybrid warfare poses a significant threat due to its capacity to exploit societal vulnerabilities in the modern world.

a) Asymmetry: Hybrid warfare often relies on this as a smaller adversary can inflict substantial damage to a more powerful target and making it challenging for the traditional military powers to counter effectively. For example, insurgent groups with guerilla tactics and often low-cost weaponry can disrupt larger and better military forces, as seen in Afghan insurgency against Soviet forces.

b) Complexity: Due to blurred line between conventional and nonconventional tactics, it gets difficult for target state to respond with clear-cut strategies and blame a particular group. Such as Russian use of both military forces and non-uniformed "little green men" in Ukraine, made it difficult to find out the origin of the forces and hindered a decisive response.

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c) Undermining Confidence: Information warfare can erode public trust in governments and institutions, causing confusion and compromised national unity, as can be seen from the spread of false information in 2016 U.S. presidential election, along with hacking of political organisations that resulted in doubt about the legitimacy of the election process by weakening social cohesion.

HYBRID WARFARE AS A THREAT TO PAKISTAN'S SECURITY

~~Internal Unrest~~ AND ITS IMPACTS

a) Internal Unrest: Exploiting ethnic, religious, and sectarian differences can fuel internal conflicts, and undermine national unity, and create distractions from external security concerns.

For instance, the arrest of Imran Khan, the ex-prime minister of Pakistan, earlier this year led to May 9 riots, which incited civil unrest and thus, this internal unrest resulted in the distractions from external threats such as rise of militancy in Pakistan.

b) Cross-border Terrorism: Neighbouring countries, such as India, supporting NSA to conduct attacks in Pakistan can strain security forces and create vulnerabilities in internal security.

For example, the involvement of external actors in supporting militants in FATA led to prolonged conflicts and challenges in restoring peace and stability.

c) Information Manipulation: False information and narratives can create public skepticism about the government's ability to manage security threats effectively. For example, during military operations in North West Frontier Province, starting from 2014, under the name of Operation Zarb-e-Azb, certain news outlets spread misinformation about civilian casualties creating doubt in public minds against Army and the government of Pakistan leading to protests, therefore the government had to allocate its resources in addressing this concern too.

d) Economic Pressure: Current economic instability can hinder Pakistan's ability to invest in security measures impacting its defence preparedness and limiting defence robustness.

e) Cyber Vulnerabilities: Cyber attacks on critical infrastructure can disrupt essential services and compromise sensitive data. Such as, 2015 Cyber Attack on PSX disrupted trading operations, highlighting vulnerabilities in digital security leading to economic security concerns.

CONCLUSION

Pakistan must bolster its cybersecurity capabilities, enhance intelligence and counterintelligence efforts, social unity, diversify its economy, and build strong international alliances to effectively counter the multipolarized challenges posed by hybrid warfare and safeguard its national security.