

# Essay

## Challenges of hybrid warfare and regional dynamics Outline

### I Introduction

The present era's hybrid warfare poses several challenges. This, in turn, has an impact on regional dynamics as well. However, this could be managed.

### II Challenges of hybrid warfare

i) It has multiple dimensions making it difficult to manage

Example: Traditional and non-traditional means

ii) Use of psychological attacks to sabotage others

iii) Social media used as a potent tool of this war

iv) Spread of disinformation is present to defame adversary

v) False propaganda is there, which spoils the image of an entity

vi) Knowledge about advanced technological tools is needed

vii) It creates fear of both kinetic and non-kinetic methods of attacks.

### III I mpact on regional dynamics

- b) Hybrid warfare intensifies regional rivalries. Example: Pak-India hybrid war.
- (ii) It makes regional collaboration difficult.
  - (iii) A stronger power in the region exploits a weaker power.
  - (iv) Regional players are compelled to increase their military and non-military spend.
  - (v) An environment of uncertainty is created in the region.
  - (vi) The chances of a full-scale war increase.
  - (vii) The prosperity and growth of the region are compromised.

#### IV Countering hybrid warfare

- (i) Developing policies to handle this new form of war.
- (ii) Resolving issues through dialogue and diplomacy.
- (iii) Diverting resources used to conduct hybrid wars.
- (iv) Improving awareness about hybrid warfare.

#### V Conclusion

# Essay

'Only the dead have seen the end of war.' (Plato)

Hybrid warfare has emerged as a phenomenon of concern for not just regional players, but also for nations all over the world. There are several challenges posed by hybrid warfare, such as the multiple dimensions it has, the psychological attacks it wields, its use of social media tools, spread of disinformation through it, the false propaganda it gives rise to, etc. Moreover, regional dynamics of the different regions of the world engaged in hybrid warfare are also adversely affected. Hybrid warfare intensifies regional rivalries and makes regional alliance difficult. It also creates space for a stronger power in the region to exploit a weaker power. Additionally, regional players are compelled to increase their war spending and an overall environment of uncertainty is created in the region. However, with the help of some pragmatic counter measures, hybrid warfare could be effectively controlled. These include developing policies to regulate this war, resolving issues through non-confrontation, etc. Hence, even though the present era's hybrid

warfare poses several challenges and has an impact on regional dynamics. This could be managed with the help of some well thought and timely actions.

Hybrid warfare has multiple dimensions making it difficult to manage. The term hybrid implies a combination of methods which brings in the multiple aspects of hybrid warfare. Both traditional and non-traditional means of attack are employed in hybrid warfare. There is the on-ground battle and then there is the virtual battle. This, in effect, makes it difficult to control hybrid warfare.

Moving on, this warfare makes use of psychological attacks to sabotage people. The mind is a direct target which is the mind of a person. This mind is played with and defiled. Entities and people are verbally and subtly harassed, which makes them question their credibility. As a result of this, multiple entities have stopped performing the functions they used to perform. All this reinforces the damage done by psychological attacks in hybrid warfare.

Further, social media is used as a potent tool of this war. Discussions and comments on social media are quite common and the use of this media has exponentially increased in recent times. Social media discussions, at times, take an ugly turn and spiral out of control, this leads to a virtual cyber war. Cyber wars are an important component of hybrid war and are difficult to control. Thus, social platforms as war tool can be quite lethal.

Moreover, disinformation is spread to defame adversaries under hybrid warfare. Disinformation or misinformation can play a critical role in ruining a country's reputation for life. As a case in point the USA began a disinformation <sup>campaign</sup> against China to compromise its position and stall its economic rise. This was proved by the many fake accounts present on social media to slander China. Hence, disinformation as a tool in hybrid warfare is powerful.

Additionally, false propaganda is another method used to spoil the image of an entity. False propaganda like disinformation is

considerably damaging to the image of an entity or a country. In recent times Russia's false propaganda against Ukraine and the West is a glaring example of this. This has seriously damaged the reputation of not only Ukraine, but also member of the NATO in the West. In effect, false propaganda is a detrimental tool of hybrid warfare.

Another major challenge posed by hybrid warfare is the knowledge and understanding required about advanced technology to deal with it. This is because technology is being used in all aspects of war. Advanced weapons and cyber systems both make use of the latest technology out there. Without the latest and most developed technology hybrid warfare would be impossible. Hence, this war cannot be tackled if there is no knowledge about the technology used to conduct it.

Yet another challenge of hybrid warfare is the fear that it creates about the use of both kinetic and non-kinetic means of attack. At times the fear of the war is greater than the war itself.

This could also be the reason why countries such as Iran are holding nuclear ambitions. These and other security ambitions can endanger the world even further. Thus, the multi-faceted nature of hybrid warfare makes it exceedingly fear inducing.

When it comes to the impact on regional dynamics, hybrid warfares intensify regional rivalries. The deeply entrenched rivalry between India and Pakistan in the South Asian region has been intensified by hybrid warfare. India has constantly carried out false and defamatory campaigns against Pakistan on different media platforms - either social media or the main stream media. The net effect of this is increased regional frictions and conflicts.

In continuation of intensified rivalries, the incentives for collaboration amongst regional players also disappear. When regional players or countries are at war with each other, they cannot be expected to do something constructive together. As Japan and China are each others adversaries, they are not coming

together to achieve something with unity on economic, social, or political fronts. They simply represent alliances and approaches towards their common issues. As a result of this it is difficult to expect something constructive to be achieved in a region without regional collaboration.

As a result of hybrid warfare, a smaller or weaker power would be exploited by a stronger power. It is witnessed that weaker powers are subsumed by stronger powers. Stronger powers can use threats and manipulative techniques to make smaller powers do what they want done. Afghanistan was used by the US and Russia to fight their ideological war. A situation like this can resurface, given the increasing deployment of hybrid warfare in regional affairs.

Furthermore, regional players are compelled to increase their military and non-military spending as a result of hybrid warfare. They have to do so in order to save themselves from this war. Countries like China and India are increasing



their security and defence spendings to protect themselves. This is proved by their recent defence budgets. Resultantly, hybrid warfare increases the financial burden of regional players.

Moreover, an environment of uncertainty is created in the region. Lack of trust develops between regional players engaged in hybrid warfare. This impedes the chances of motivating the people of the region to work together in a positive manner. The region, in turn, loses its appeal and relevance to the world. Also, all the attention is diverted to the hybrid war taking place over there.

Hybrid warfare, also, increases the chances of a full-scale war erupting. While hybrid war is not war in its traditional sense, it has the potential to escalate. A full-scale war would be exceedingly damaging not only to the region in which it is being carried out, but also the world at large. Hence, hybrid warfare is closely tied to war in its traditional sense, making this war a real

cause of concern.

In addition to this, the growth and prosperity of a region are compromised as a result of hybrid war. A region which is engaged in war would not focus on collaboration for the sake of prosperity and progress of the region. All the resources of the region would be utilized in the war, making their availability for other purposes non-existent. This proves that hybrid warfare is inimical to regional economic and social growth.

In order to counter the rise of hybrid warfare new policies should be developed. These policies can help regulate the means used to conduct hybrid war. Moreover, there should be a move towards adopting diplomacy and dialogue for the resolution of issues as opposed to opting for war. This could help the countries of the world keep the appeal of hybrid warfare in check.

Moreover, resources of countries and nations must be diverted towards more constructive uses and away from conducting this war. This will help the countries on a national level and the world as a whole. Also, improving awareness about hybrid warfare and its implications would help reduce the acceptance of this form of war as a means of engaging in conflict. The net result of all this would be reduced investment and interest in this war.

To conclude, the challenges of hybrid warfare are deeply intertwined with regional dynamics. These challenges not only shape regional dynamics but also help predict the future of the region. The most profound aspect of hybrid warfare is the psychological damage that it does to a nation or a regional player. Yet, with the help of some well-meaning policy actions and tools, the menace of hybrid warfare could be effectively tackled.