

# NATIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES DURING HYBRID WARFARE: THE EVOLVING ROLE OF INTELLIGENCE

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## Abstract

*Post-Cold War global strategic dynamics have evolved, with conventional warfare generally perceived as the least preferable option. Consequently, growing reliance on non-traditional instruments of combat is necessitating a reappraisal of the customary understanding of national security. With the evolution of warfare and the emergence of concepts like hybrid wars, the challenges of the national security apparatus have become more complicated. Among the national security hierarchy, intelligence has always assumed greater focus for being the first line of defense. However, intelligence organizations are predominantly structured to address traditional national security threats. Would it be possible for a conventionally trained intelligence hierarchy to deal with the hybrid warfare challenges without being restructured? Can intelligence setups address non-traditional security threats while presumably lacking functional adaptability in the physical and cognitive domains? This paper will seek an understanding of national security during hybrid warfare and evaluate the role of intelligence in addressing evolving challenges.*

**Keywords:** *Hybrid Warfare, National Security, Non-Traditional Threats, Intelligence*

## Introduction

Security in all conceivable dimensions, perspectives and domains can largely be understood as the quest for survival, whether collectively or individually, against each and every aspect that can endanger the core interests. Since antiquity, the threat perceptions over security

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concerns have been in the process of constant evolution, primarily influenced by the prevailing strategic contexts of a particular era. Consequently, the traditional national security concept of the contemporary world seems irrelevant if compared with the global dynamics of the pre-Westphalian international system, where nation-states did not exist. Likewise, the national security dynamics of present-day world are also in the process of constant transformation, essentially in correspondence with the ever-evolving dimensions of threats and vulnerabilities. Thus, the security challenges being confronted by a nation-state today are relatively in contrast to what was being perceived in the era immediately preceding the Cold War. The emergence of the concept of hybrid warfare has changed the strategic calculus of threat perception, infusing numerous uncertainties with functional apprehensions as well as doctrinal ambiguities. Besides the overall conceptual anxieties on the part of all decision-makers, the operational challenges, especially for national security intelligence, have grown manifold. Forecasting, predicting or professing - the core tasks of any intelligence community - have become ambiguous, obscure and blurred as the opaque nature of the hybrid war threats. The persistently conventional mode of intelligence response against the emerging hybrid security challenges thus seems largely inconsequential, somewhat chaotic, and potentially non-productive.

It would be fair to assume that in the contemporary world where large-scale conventional war-fighting appears least preferable owing to excruciating costs, hybrid warfare emerges as a viable option. Besides being cost-effective, the primary attraction of hybrid warfare for a state actor is its non-attribution, which allows the pursuit of an objective when overt action appears unfeasible.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the employment of a hybrid war strategy often results in creating ambiguity as well as confusion regarding the character, source and aim of the threat, complicates the decision-making of the target while staying below the threshold of recognized war.<sup>2</sup> This paper contends that compared to the conventional challenges, the quest of national security turns into a complicated and highly demanding task when a state is confronted with the hybrid war threats. Consequently, the challenges emanating from hybrid warfare necessitate the reorientation of the national security apparatus, which is generally organized to deal with conventional threats. In the succeeding paragraphs, the deliberations on the evolution of the hybrid warfare concept and its influence on the traditional understanding of national

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Aaronson et al., "NATO Countering The Hybrid Threat," *Prism* 2, no. 4 (September 2011): 115, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26469152>.

<sup>2</sup> Jan Joel Andersson, and Thierry Tardy, "Hybrid: What's In A Name?" *European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS)*, (2015): 2, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep06844>.

security will be made. In the final part, this paper will highlight the evolving role of intelligence hierarchy when faced with the challenges of hybrid warfare, proposing the essence of reorientation in the conventional mode.

## **Literature Review**

There is reasonably sufficient input available on all the three domains of national security, hybrid warfare and intelligence. At individual level, all the three concepts are elaborately deliberated by various scholars all over the world; however, much has not been written to discuss these aspects collectively. While talking of hybrid warfare, Michael Aaronson, Jan Joel Andersson, Thierry Tardy, Frank Hoffman, and Ofer Fridman discuss various facets of the concept that distinguish this mode of conflict from conventional warfighting and result in the blurring of methodologies, ambiguities and non-attribution. Patrick J. Cullen, Erik Reichborn-Kjennerud and Alexandru C. Apetroe explain how hybrid warfare term is used for explaining the transition of conflict in non-conventional modes, while Julian Lindley-French highlights NATO's view on the concept, terming it a new way of warfare. Rob De Wijk, Andrew Korybko, and John J. McCuen further elaborate on additional dimensions of the Hybrid wars, believing it as a mode of conflict that would be preferred by the weaker actors, may also target trade connectivity initiatives and likely to vacillate between different battlegrounds.

Though regarded by many as a contested concept, national security has been well-deliberated among international relations scholars. Walter Lippmann, in 1943, suggested it to be a condition where a nation-state defends its legitimate interests. Arnold Wolfers also echoes similar views on the concept, while Anton Grizold claims that the term emerged during World War II, also quoted Vojin Dimitrijevic's five aspects on national security. According to Norman A. Graebner, the US first institutionalized the term national security in 1947; Robert G. Patman links it with the military dimension, while Mario Nobile defines the concept comprehensively. Deliberations about national security during the hybrid warfare era highlight divergent views on the concept other than unanimity of views on survival, as highlighted by Melvyn P. Leffler. Robert G. Patman underlines evolving strategic dynamics after globalization, Christian Fjäder highlights the importance of geographical space in the conventional understanding of security, and Anton Grizold identifies various influences on national security. Richard Matthew, George Shambaugh, Christian Fjäder, Matthew Sussex, Jennifer D. Sciubba, and Michael Clarke et al. deliberate upon several non-traditional threats influencing the understanding of national security in a non-military domain as well as the involvement of non-state actors.

National security intelligence has been among the popular research subjects, especially for Western scholars in the post-9/11 world. John P. Sullivan and Douglas Keane provide a basic understanding of intelligence functions. Sherman Kent, regarded as the most influential American writer on the subject, and Vernon Walters define intelligence, while Lyman B. Kirkpatrick Jr states the official view of intelligence, all declaring it a form of knowledge and information. Examining the role of intelligence in hybrid war environments, Peter Chalk emphasizes the essence of integrating input from different intelligence agencies, while Didier Bigo highlights the need for information collection when internal security is threatened. According to Allan E. Goodman, the role of intelligence against transnational groups is vital, and it is important to understand the global political structure. Simon Dalby views institutional reforms as vital for an effective role of intelligence; Reinales Fernando highlights the need for strong public relations while Mikael Weissmann et al. identify the increasing role of modern communication for intelligence operations and suggest red teaming techniques.

## **Research Methodology**

Descriptive research has been resorted to in this paper to explore the evolution of the national security concept in the hybrid warfare era and the evolving role of intelligence organizations in dealing with impending challenges. Descriptive research methodology helps evaluate of national security concepts in the contemporary world, where hybrid wars are preferred to hurt adversaries without getting into an all-out conflict. The paper also seeks to analyze the role of national security intelligence during hybrid war environments through descriptive techniques when the ensuing conflict is mostly in the non-conventional domain. Thus, the research would examine the potential influences of hybrid warfare on the conventional understanding of national security and how intelligence hierarchy is required to adapt itself to evolving threats. The paper relies upon input from relevant books, research papers, and the thesis and on-the-job experience of the authors on the understudied subject.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Selecting a theoretical framework for the study that seeks to find an interlinkage of three dimensions, though largely intertwined but needing independent explanations in our reckoning, has been challenging. It was earnestly felt that debating theories of warfare or conflict, national security, and intelligence individually, though relevant to the topic under study, would expand the scope of the paper beyond manageable limits. Consequently, it explored a single theory that helps explain all three domains and their interdependence for a collective impact. Towards this end, this paper consults the contentions of 'Neorealism or Structuralism'

to highlight the security challenges of a nation-state against hybrid threats in the anarchic world and the evolving role of intelligence setups.

In the prevalent global system, primacy of rationally acting nation states is a generally accepted phenomenon, and has been leading contention of the neorealist thinkers. Keohane (1986) highlights this fact by asserting that the: "states are the key units of action; states seek power, either as an end in itself or as a means to other ends; and they behave in ways that are, by and large, rational."<sup>3</sup> Being rational actors, the states seek to develop policies that allow them to pursue their national interests, where quest for survival against potential security threats is always one of the primary objectives. A rationally behaving state would thus always be cognizant of evolving national security challenges, whether these are in the conventional domain or transpire in the form of non-traditional threats like hybrid warfare, and prepare itself accordingly.

National security challenges, whether in conventional or non-conventional domains, are significantly exacerbated by global anarchic environments, as per the neoliberalist understanding. The absence of a globally valid systematizing mechanism perpetuates a "Hobbesian fear" and a similar security dilemma also has a similar" connotation.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Waltz (1979) further argues that each actor (state) is compelled to "put itself in a position to be able to take care of itself since no one else can be counted on to do so."<sup>5</sup> This environment of uncertainty and fear leads nation-state to view other actors with suspicion and to seek to secure themselves against all potential threats, including the hybrid warfare.

In environments of uncertainty and ambiguities regarding the intention of others, whether a friend or foe, there is always an inevitable quest among policymakers to have prior information and forewarning. It is natural that due to an "irreducible uncertainty" about the exact "intentions of others," policymakers of a nation-state tend to develop a feeling of negativity as well as a trust deficit.<sup>6</sup> This is where the role of national security intelligence comes in the limelight for providing the policy makers credible information, forewarning about potential challenges and predicting likely unfolding of highlighted events. With attributes of non-conventional warfare much more intriguing and unpredictable, the role of intelligence also gets complicated and needs a realignment to counter the evolving national security challenges in the anarchic world.

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<sup>3</sup> Robert O. Keohane, ed, *Neorealism and its Critics*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 7.

<sup>4</sup> Jack Donnelly, "Realism," in *Theories of International Relations*, edited by Scott Burchill, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 38.

<sup>5</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (New York: McGrall-Hill Inc., 1979), 107.

<sup>6</sup> Donnelly, "Realism," 38.

## Hybrid Warfare: The Origin and Evolution of the Concept

National security has been an ever evolving phenomenon that is shaped with the prevailing strategic dynamics, technical innovations and changing modes of conflict such as hybrid warfare concept. Hybrid Warfare has been one of the most deliberated concepts among the academicians as well as practitioners since the advent of 21<sup>st</sup> century, leading to various debates, arguments and diversified opinions. Questions have been in abundance on the claims that the concept of hybrid warfare was a new threat to the national security and emerged in the contemporary arena amid technological, military as well as strategic reorientation. According to most of the Western literature, the term hybrid warfare is generally linked with an American military scholar Frank Hoffman. He contended that, "blurring of modes of war, the blurring of who fights, and what technologies are brought to bear, produces a wide range of variety and complexity that we call Hybrid Warfare."<sup>7</sup> Notwithstanding that the introduction of the concept has mostly been attributed to Hoffman, there are claims regarding the earlier contributions of several theorists on the subject. It is suggested that the expression of 'hybrid' had previously been used for elaborating a blurred line that existed between regular and irregular combatants and their capabilities.<sup>8</sup> However, the extensive work of Hoffman on hybrid warfare and its influence on the intellectual discourse that commenced all over the world towards conceptualizing the modes, means and dimensions of modern conflict, cannot be ignored.

The concept of hybrid warfare concept is in a state of continuous evolution with ongoing investigation of various dimensions, ideas, and facets. It may not yet have achieved the status of a universally agreed doctrine, but it is interpreted based on strategic dynamics, threat perceptions, politico-economic dimensions, technological status and socio-cultural orientations. There are consensual views on most of the key aspects. Among these facets of hybrid warfare, the elements such as the blurred nature of the conflict, the combination of various modes of combat, the wide-range and unpredictability of the targets, the involvement of state and non-state actors, the ability to influence adversaries without direct involvement and the issue of non-attribution are most commonly referred to. The hybrid challenge can be expected across all the realms of a state, as it is designed to exploit the prevalent national vulnerabilities that might be spread over the political, economic,

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<sup>7</sup> Frank Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Warfare*, (Arlington: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007), 14.

<sup>8</sup> Ofer Fridman, *Russian "Hybrid Warfare": Resurgence and Politicization*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 20.

social, informational, infrastructural and military spectrums.<sup>9</sup> With hybrid warfare threats permeating across all the national domains; there is an urgent need for have an all-inclusive response. This response is crucial for anticipating, forecasting, identifying and countering potential challenges. In sum, the hybrid war threat can be termed as an umbrella term that encompasses a broad range of existing adverse circumstances as well as actions, which may include terrorism, migration, piracy, corruption, and ethnic conflict.<sup>10</sup>

The terminology of 'hybrid warfare' broadly reflects diversified conflict modes simultaneously, combining conventional with irregular as well as cyber warfare, besides the subversive elements for avoiding responsibility and destabilizing the adversary without direct involvement.<sup>11</sup> It has been claimed during a conference organized by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Defense College on the subject that the 'strategic hybrid warfare is not simply an alternative form of warfare; it is the new way of warfare.'<sup>12</sup> The contention may reflect the Western thought process since most of the NATO states had to confront non-state militant groups in different parts of the world after the Cold War and did not face conventional armed combat. However, global dynamics, especially in the wake of two Russian invasions of Ukraine, have validated the probabilities of inter-state conflicts, where the employment of hybrid warfare by conventional militaries is hard to negate. Therefore, it appears unconvincing to categorize hybrid warfare as an instrument of combat by the non-state actors alone. In hindsight, as long as the weak actors, even if states, confront stronger ones, this form of warfare would continue to remain the norm.<sup>13</sup>

Hybrid wars may also seek the far-reaching objective of disrupting multipolar transnational connectivity projects by externally provoking identity conflicts in the ethnic, religious, regional, financial or political

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<sup>9</sup> Patrick J. Cullen and Erik Reichborn-Kjennerud, "MCDC Countering Hybrid Warfare Project: Understanding Hybrid Warfare. A Multinational Capability Development Campaign Project," (2017): 3, <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/>

<sup>10</sup> Aaronson et al., "NATO Countering Hybrid," 115.

<sup>11</sup> Alexandru C. Apetroe, "Hybrid Warfare: From "War during Peace," to "Neo-Imperialist Ambitions,"- The Case of Russia," *Online Journal Modelling the New Europe* 21 (2016): 97, <https://www.ceeol.com/search/>

<sup>12</sup> Julian Lindley-French, "NATO and New Ways of Warfare: Defeating Hybrid Threats," (NATO Defense College, Rome, 29-30 April 2015), 3, <http://www.ndc.nato.int/news>.

<sup>13</sup> Rob De Wijk, "Hybrid Conflict and the Changing Nature of Actors," in *The Oxford Handbook of War*, eds. Julian Lindley-French and Yves Boyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 266.

domains within a targeted transit country.<sup>14</sup> In order to find the practical manifestation of hybrid threats against the transit initiatives, the controversies raised against China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) can amply reflect such external provocations. The enormity of fighting and winning the hybrid wars can be assessed from the fact that it involves three decisively distinct battlegrounds: conventional, exclusive conflict zone, and finally, the domestic players as well as the international community.<sup>15</sup> It implies that the threat of hybrid war would embroil security forces; all internal socio-political and economic players; informational means as well as diplomatic resources, simultaneously in divergent zones. Hybrid threats can be predicted when recognized as the externally provoked asymmetrical conflicts aimed at sabotaging geo-economic interests for geostrategic gains by exploiting socio-cultural vulnerabilities such as ethnicity, religion, history, administrative boundaries, socio-economic disparity and physical geography.<sup>16</sup> Hybrid warfare would thus exploit every conceivable domain of conflict, necessitating involvement of all stakeholders of the state as well as the population itself, since the 'three battlegrounds' would warrant a 'whole of nation' response.

## **National Security: Conventional Dimensions and Evolution to the Hybrid War Environments**

### **The Concept of National Security**

The term national security carries the status of a buzzword in the contemporary world and signifies a nation-state's quest for survival, sustainability and protection against all kinds of potential threats. Writing as early as 1943, Walter Lippmann has been of the view that a nation may claim to have security when it is not compelled to abandon its legitimate interests for avoiding war and, if challenged, has the capacity of maintaining them by war.<sup>17</sup> Wolfers, a well-reputed expert of the subject, thinks security as some degree of protection of values previously acquired, which rises as well as falls with the capacity of a nation in deterring an attack, or defeating it.<sup>18</sup> If viewed retrospectively, it is the security of a nation-state, essentially an entity linked with the emergence of post-Westphalian global order, which shaped in to present day world after the

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<sup>14</sup> Andrew Korybko, "Hybrid Wars, The Law of Hybrid Warfare," *Oriental Review* 4 (April 2016) 1, <https://orientalreview.org/2016/03/04/>.

<sup>15</sup> John J. McCuen, "Hybrid Wars," *Military Review*, March-April (2008), 107, [www.armyupress.army.mil/](http://www.armyupress.army.mil/)

<sup>16</sup> Korybko, "Law of Hybrid War," 8-9.

<sup>17</sup> Walter Lippmann, *US Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic*, (Boston, MA: Little and Brown, 1943), 51.

<sup>18</sup> Arnold Wolfers, "National Security As An Ambiguous Symbol," *Political Science Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (Dec 1952) : 484, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/>

demise of colonial era. National security, in its present manifestation, appears to be a concept that gained currency or wider recognition after World War II, when several autonomous states emerged in the once-colonial space. According to a few analysts, it was only during World War II when the terminology of 'national security' was formally introduced in the 'strategic' lexicon among other traditionally used expressions, such as military affairs as well as external and military policy.<sup>19</sup>

The concept of national security had not even been institutionalized in the US till 1947; it was formalized with the passing of the National Security Act by the Congress.<sup>20</sup> Thereafter, various attributes of national security and the challenges linked with the concept have been among the most debated subjects. Grizold has quoted Vojin Dimitrijevic, who suggests five main aspects of national security: (1) ensuring the existence of the state as a political community; (2) protecting territorial integrity; (3) maintaining political independence; (4) ensuring quality of life; and finally, (5) embedding of the 'vital interest' of the state in the national security policy.<sup>21</sup> The core assumption inspiring the conventional understanding of the security is primarily linked with the military dimensions, which influence majority of the interactions among the nation states.<sup>22</sup> One of the most comprehensive definition of the national security has been offered by Mario Nobilo, who defines it as:-

"..... an intricate interaction between political, economic, military, ideological, legal, social and other internal and external social factors through which individual states attempt to ensure acceptable provisions to maintain their sovereignty, territorial integrity, the physical survival of its population, political independence and possibilities for a balanced and rapid social development on an equal footing."<sup>23</sup>

## National Security in the Hybrid Warfare Era

National security underlines a nation-state's interests in almost every conceivable domain, ranging from the protection of territorial integrity to the realms of economic, diplomatic and social viability. However, understanding of the concept has been relative, with each player looking at it differently since divergent political, economic, and strategic

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<sup>19</sup> Anton Grizold, "The Concept Of National Security In The Contemporary World," *International Journal on World Peace* (September 1994): 40, <http://www.jstor.org/>

<sup>20</sup> Norman A. Graebner, ed. *The National Security: Its Theory and Practice, 1945-1960*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 39.

<sup>21</sup> Grizold, "Concept of National Security," 40.

<sup>22</sup> Robert G. Patman, ed, *Globalization And Conflict: National Security In A 'New' Strategic Era*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 35.

<sup>23</sup> Grizold, "Concept Of National Security," 40.

dictates influence respective threat assessments. The security narrative of each player, therefore, has to encompass varying objectives without any universally consensual interpretation of its features or what is required to be incorporated. Consequently, except for a broader agreement on security being more than national survival, all other aspects involved are often left vague and indeterminate.<sup>24</sup> Despite the prospects of system threatening large scale military conflicts reducing in the post-cold war world, the international security dynamics are now being confronted with new modes of challenges. There have been increasing concerns about potential instability in the world from the weak or failed states, the eruption of new civil conflicts due to the inadequacy or nonexistence of legitimate governance, an upsurge of conflicts on the issues of identity, driving mobilizations along ethnic, racial as well as religious lines; and increase in the media coverage as part of the globalization.<sup>25</sup> National security during hybrid warfare environment, therefore, becomes an intriguing phenomenon since threats as well as vulnerabilities linked with it are considerably different than the challenges confronted during traditional wars.

The scope of the conventional national security concept has primarily been centered on maintaining security within a geographically distinct space with the aim of protecting the state's survival.<sup>26</sup> The traditional understanding of security essentially symbolizes a situation where threat either does not exist or can be dealt with rather conveniently. Even in the absence of a threat from an adversary, the national security of a country may still be elusive if some of its members are aggrieved with certain policies of that state. Hence, national security aspirations in the present-day world are mostly influenced by the cognizance of various influences on it, being an intricate fusion of many components. These components may include various social dimensions (politics, economy, culture, social welfare, health, ecology, education, military affairs, etc.), required to be deliberated in all its complexity.<sup>27</sup> The proliferation of many novel and previously unfamiliar security threats, mainly in the non-traditional domain, are compounding the challenges of the states in maintaining comprehensive national security. The prevalent notion of uncertainty over global strategic environments and ambiguity about the modes of warfare and even the identity of the perpetrators of hostile activities complicate the response options.

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<sup>24</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler, "National Security," *The Journal of American History* 77, no. 1 (June 1990): 144, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2078646>.

<sup>25</sup> Patman, *Globalization and conflict*, 11-12.

<sup>26</sup> Christian Fjäder, "The Nation-State, National Security And Resilience In The Age Of Globalization," *Resilience* 2, no. 2 (May 2014): 117, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21693293.2014.914771>.

<sup>27</sup> Grizold, "Concept of National Security," 38.

Contrary to hybrid threats, the identity of the adversary and the modes of conflict during most facets of conventional warfare are largely evident, perceptible and warrant response predominantly through traditional means. The transformation of the international dynamics where the emerging trends have decisively evolved the conflict spectrum, hybrid warfare has shifted the focus of traditional national security threat perception. Apparently, the present-day national security threats are, therefore, located in a complex, dynamic, and global web that has been created by modern communication, ease of transportation, and information technologies.<sup>28</sup> The continuous proliferation of non-traditional security threats, essentially in the non-military domain and mostly involving non-state actors, such as global terrorism, organized crime, the spread of pandemics, natural calamities, and drug trafficking etcetera, are presenting new security challenges.<sup>29</sup> All these features can be very conveniently exploited by the players initiating hybrid warfare against any nation state, thus necessitating formulation of national security strategy on the basis of evolving threats. It has, therefore, led to the re-evaluation of threat matrix, since nearly all the dominant powers has changed distinctly alongside the securitization of plentiful challenges, which are transnational, environmental as well as effectively intermestic in nature.<sup>30</sup>

While the concept of security has been traditionally contested owing to many divergences in its interpretation, the emergence of hybrid war threats has added more ambiguities, uncertainties and vagueness about its parameters. The predominant question now is that whether protecting or fortifying the territorial jurisdiction of a state against external or externally sponsored threats shall be considered adequate for national security. While conventionally, it implies security against threats from other states, such a propensity overlooks impending challenges of the hybrid warfare era, such as terrorism, environmental hazards, economic meltdown, poverty, natural calamities and many others.<sup>31</sup> Definitely, all of these issues threaten not only the integrity of states but the lives of its inhabitants also, emerging as a potentially serious vulnerability that may be exploitable by the hostile players. Hence, national security becomes a dilemma when one is led to believe that a

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<sup>28</sup> Richard Matthew and George Shambaugh, "Sex, Drugs, and Heavy Metal: Transnational Threats and National Vulnerabilities," *Security Dialogue*, 29/2 (June 1998): 163, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010698029002005>.

<sup>29</sup> Fjäder, "The Nation-State," 117.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Clarke et al., *The Palgrave Handbook of National Security*, (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 2.

<sup>31</sup> Matthew Sussex, "Understanding National Security: The Promises and Pitfalls of International Relations Theory," in *The Palgrave Handbook of National Security*, ed. by Clarke Michael et al., (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 25.

specific menace is growing, which can be arrested through the application of force made on our initiative, but in reality, the threat has yet to be revealed unambiguously.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, the use of force or hard power in these situations can be counter-productive, owing to the blurred nature of hybrid warfare threats. Thus, any premature or irresponsible response or mishandling at an early stage may, at times, proliferate a minor threat into something far more challenging.

One of the fundamental attributes of hybrid warfare is that it focuses more on influencing the cognitions of the targeted population in contrast to conventional wars, where occupation of geographical territories and annihilation of adversary's armed forces are generally the primary objectives. The vulnerability of the population to hybrid war threats and propensity to externally sponsored manipulation and intrigues not only undermines the domestic writ of the targeted state but seriously jeopardizes the quest for national security. Population issues such as fertility, mortality, and migration continue to be crucial to every feature of national security, including the state's capacity to defend itself from external challenges, avoid the threat of collapse, or address the individual needs of its inhabitants.<sup>33</sup> Hybrid war actors seek to overpower the adversary without an armed conflict and therefore, any exploitable opportunity amid the demographic tendencies, especially the public dissension, acts as stimuli against the target. The alienation of the domestic population from national social, political, as well as economic activities is a recipe of fueling resentment, deprivation and antagonism, thus exposing them to manipulation. Certain peculiar demographic trends, like the higher proportion of youth in the population with majority becoming disillusioned from the policies of the state may serve as the breeding place for hybrid threats, resulting in a civil conflict.<sup>34</sup>

The Post-Cold War triumph of capitalist neo-liberal order promoted materialism, besides allowing non-state actors the acquisition of treasuries and, hence, 'power,' which has increased their influence even beyond many of the sovereign states.<sup>35</sup> Increasing the role of these non-state actors not only proliferates the notion of uncertainty but also leads towards a strategically volatile world with diminishing sway of nation states. Simultaneous to the degeneration of the Cold War era global order after the demise of the Soviet bloc, an unprecedented technological advancement has introduced the phenomenon of globalization. While

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<sup>32</sup> Colin S. Gray, *National Security Dilemmas: Challenges & Opportunities*, (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2009), 12.

<sup>33</sup> Jennifer D. Sciubba, *The Future Faces Of War: Population And National Security*, (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010), 1.

<sup>34</sup> Sciubba, *The Future*, 153.

<sup>35</sup> Peter Chalk, *Non-Military Security And Global Order: The Impact Of Extremism, Violence And Chaos On National And International Security*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 3.

national security in such strategic environments is no longer limited to the protection of the geographical territories, so are the demands of articulating a response that is neither fixated nor redundant against emerging challenges. Owing to this multitude of challenges, perceived uncertainty and complexity resulting from global interdependencies, the rationalistic national security strategy seeks to embrace an 'all hazards' as well as 'all of society' paradigm.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, even the conventional forces responsible for the national security need to be innovative, seeking prior forecasting of impending threats and focusing on the capacity building of the intelligence agencies for timely response.

## **Intelligence: Methodology and Role during Hybrid Warfare**

### **Understanding and Defining Intelligence**

The intelligence domain being very intimately linked with national security, has been among the most debated subjects, particularly in the developed world. It is generally accepted that some of the major intelligence failures, like the Pearl Harbor attack and terrorist activities of 9/11, initiated greater debate on the role of intelligence hierarchy in the US. A huge interest of professionals and public in the subject has, therefore, resulted in several publications by the practitioners and academicians on intelligence's concept and taxonomy. Intelligence in the simplest of expressions can be termed as the acquisition of information on any area of interest, by every conceivable means, which enables the user a comparatively better foresight and response options. According to a precise, well-articulated and comprehensible definition, 'intelligence is more about early warning, strategic foresight, and real-time decision support for cooperative risk management than about gaining a secret advantage over a single state adversary'.<sup>37</sup> The unwavering significance of intelligence in the US has been signified by famous Clark Task Force of the Hoover Commission constituted in 1955, by stating that, 'intelligence deals with all the things which should be known in advance of initiating a course of action'.<sup>38</sup>

In the words of Sherman Kent, considered one of the most influential American scholars on the subject, intelligence is the 'knowledge which our highly placed civilians and military men must have to safeguard

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<sup>36</sup> Fjäder, "The Nation-State," 119.

<sup>37</sup> John P. Sullivan, "The New Great Game: Military, Police And Strategic Intelligence For Global Security," *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism* 2, no. 2 (2007), 17.

<sup>38</sup> Douglas Keane, Edward C. Keefer, and Michael Warner, eds, *The Intelligence Community 1950-1955*. vol. 11441, (Washington: Bureau of Public Affairs, Office of the Historian, 2008), 652.

the national welfare'.<sup>39</sup> Another former American intelligence official Vernon Walters defines intelligence as, 'information, not always available in the public domain, relating to the strength, resources, capabilities and intentions of a foreign country that can affect our lives and the safety of our people'.<sup>40</sup> The classification of intelligence as 'Foreign Intelligence' is explicitly elucidated by most of the scholars by primarily linking it with the activities of external players, who seek to hurt the national security interests. The orientation of intelligence would, therefore, stay focused on foreign lands during hybrid war environments since this emerging threat is also contemplated to be conceived externally, albeit in connivance with the internal players. Hence, as suggested in Volume II of the Encyclopedia of US Foreign Relations (1997), intelligence would continue to pursue 'the knowledge-and, ideally, foreknowledge-sought by nations in response to external threats and to protect their vital interests, especially the well-being of their own people.'<sup>41</sup>

### **Role of Intelligence in Hybrid Warfare**

Hybrid war challenge is unique in a sense that the identity of its originators as well as adopted methodology is blurred and hard to predict, thus undertaking preemptive option much more complicated. On the other hand, once commenced, it becomes that much demanding as well as costly in terms of men and material to fight against the hybrid war, since the entire spectrum of national structure is targeted. The best and most cost-effective defense against the hybrid warfare challenges is, therefore, forecasting or anticipating in advance and enabling the formulation of response option through pre-empting against the potential threats. This is where role of the national security intelligence comes in to focus, being the first line of national defense with the responsibility of anticipating and forewarning the policy makers. Although anticipation of potential threats and forewarning on the basis of actionable intelligence appears to be a standard or conventional task, then how can it be different in hybrid warfare environments? It is often suggested that intelligence would continue to do what it is supposed to do in the face of all potential security threats, whether conventional or unconventional. The paper essentially seeks to highlight this diversity by suggesting that as the best defense against hybrid threats is through the 'whole of nation approach,' so is the best intelligence response possible by the 'whole of intelligence approach.'

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<sup>39</sup> Sherman Kent, *Strategic Intelligence for American Foreign Policy*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1949), vii.

<sup>40</sup> Vernon A. Walters, *Silent Missions*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Books, 1978), 621.

<sup>41</sup> Lyman B. Kirkpatrick Jr., "Intelligence," in Bruce W. Jentleson and Thomas G. Paterson, eds., *Encyclopedia of US Foreign Relations, Volume II* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997), 365.

However, the 'whole of intelligence approach' during hybrid warfare is only conceivable when the entire national security intelligence architecture is on the same page and convinced to initiate a well-collaborated effort at all the tiers.

Intelligence crafts entail a comprehensive methodology involving a well-conceived process of information acquisition, collation of relevant information, its analysis for converting it into an actionable input, and finally, dissemination to concerned offices. This entire process is a standard procedure adopted by every intelligence setup for undertaking its operations, regardless of the role, type, or level of these organizations. A complicated issue is confronted when the synchronization of the intelligence functions of different organizations for the preparation of an integrated response is required. For responding to hybrid threats, one challenge, therefore, is integrating the diverse input of the various state agencies, followed by persuading these outfits to operate beyond the constricted strictures of customary security thinking.<sup>42</sup> The acquisition process during the intelligence operation is more crucial since it is this initial stage where the information would be classified in to strategic, operational or the tactical categories. The categorization of acquired information would help not only in contextualizing the impending hybrid threat but also lead to the formulation of response at each tier. While acquired information classified as strategic would assist the senior level policy makers in prediction and preemption in the overall long-term response strategy, the operational and tactical level intelligence sharing is vital for immediate responses. The process may appear simple. However, the unending inter-institutional rivalries, tendency to protect leads (clues), proclivity towards credit seeking, and bureaucratic hurdles often inhibit meaningful cooperation among intelligence agencies.

Information acquisition for hybrid threats is a complicated process since a highly sensitive information being sought by a particular setup, may be deemed insignificant and hence, wasted by an outfit that somehow inadvertently comes across it. An apparent solution appears to be the establishment of a 'centralized acquired information collection center,' where the input from all agencies is received and evaluated. Another critical barrier towards intelligence gathering for hybrid war threats is the deep rooted focus of the agencies towards conventional ambit of national security, focusing on the threats to territorial integrity and national institutions. Such threats are generally viewed in the realm of either internal security challenges emanating from subversives, or otherwise externally initiated aggressions by other states.<sup>43</sup> This unidimensional

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<sup>42</sup> Chalk, *Non-military Security*, 139.

<sup>43</sup> Didier Bigo, "Borders, Security, State, Transnational," in *Paper presented before the 'Police and Immigration: Towards a Europe of Internal Security'*

orientation of the intelligence setups towards national security challenges and functional rigidity stemming from an intractable reliance on the traditional methodologies, results in response inertia. With the transformation of threat spectrum due to hybrid warfare, intelligence organizations being predominant means of acquiring information for preparing the response strategy, are required to focus on multifarious domains. Hence, in hybrid war environments, information is required on threats that may not be clearly internal or external; can be manifested in either conscious/ violent or alternatively unconscious/ non-violent mode; and could involve non-state actors or even amorphous non-governmental processes.<sup>44</sup>

The intelligence community may also be required to monitor the contemporary threats, which stem from the activities of groups and forces not essentially linked with a particular sovereign state and with the prospects of becoming even more transnational.<sup>45</sup> Given that the hybrid warfare environments are characterized with the blurring of means, methodology and the attribution, intelligence setups must organize according to the evolving threat spectrum. It would be inevitable to look for a broader, genuinely multi-disciplinary information as well as expertise base, while getting familiarized with innovative methods of acquiring, managing and analyzing the available data and intelligence.<sup>46</sup> A vital aspect shaping the hybrid war threats, which might not have been factored that prominently while dealing with the post-cold war conventional security challenges, is the understanding of evolving international politics. While global era during cold war and the period earlier, reflected visible polarization and strategic alignments, the contemporary international dynamics are complicated, intriguing, and blurred, thus a perfect manifestation of hybridity. In these circumstances, efficient intelligence output is dependent on an in-depth understanding of the process employed for the collection, analysis and utilization as well as of the developments shaping the emerging structure of global politics.<sup>47</sup>

Another major challenge for intelligence agencies is the issue of developing adaptability with the evolving threat matrix, since these setups, as suggested above, are primarily trained as well as organized for conventional security. Besides the institutional resistance from within, it is otherwise a hectic process to replace deeply embedded and well-

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*Workshop, European Consortium for Political Research Joint Session of Workshops, Madrid, 1994, 7.*

<sup>44</sup> Chalk, *Non-military Security*, 140.

<sup>45</sup> Allan E. Goodman, "Shifting Paradigms and Shifting Gears: A Perspective on Why There is No Post-Cold War Intelligence Agenda," In *Intelligence Analysis and Assessment*, ed. D. Charters, S. Farson, and G. P. Hastedt (London: Routledge, 2013), 5.

<sup>46</sup> Chalk, *Non-military Security*, 140.

<sup>47</sup> Goodman, "Shifting Paradigms," 7.

acquainted operational methodology as well as thought process with something new. With intelligence agencies of the developing world generally prioritizing day-to-day matters and functional impediments where credit seeking becomes a major influence, preparing a long-term response against threats such as hybrid warfare is often the natural causality. Notwithstanding the inertia undermining prospects of institutional reforms in vintage operational procedures, there is no alternative if intelligence agencies are expected to play a purposeful role against emerging national security challenges in the contemporary arena<sup>48</sup>. Generally, intelligence services all over the world are apprehensive about public interactions and tend to stay low, while preferring to operate clandestinely as per the well-established norms of intelligence crafts. Contrarily, successful intelligence operations against hybrid war threats would significantly depend upon domestic public support and sympathy. Bruce Hoffman regards building solid relationships with the public as a key and a serious battleground since lacking it would make intelligence gathering that much more difficult.<sup>49</sup>

Hybrid warfare is regarded as a mode of conflict where advanced technologies facilitate the actors waging such wars and means of communication and reaching the public. Likewise, equal opportunities are available to the authorities as well, especially for their intelligence agencies, in the form of innovative media, new networks and new partnerships.<sup>50</sup> The emerging technologies would also play a vital part in shaping the future role of various traditional intelligence gathering, processing and analyzing mechanisms, specifically the extent of established human participation. The role of intelligence would essentially be the catalyst of responses against hybrid war threats since aspects such as cyber, virtual currencies like bitcoin, social media, and artificial intelligence (AI) would substantially impact the operational environments. Counterintelligence is likely to be the most crucial among various domains of intelligence, since the protection of men, materials and information against mostly faceless enemies appears to be a gigantic task. The challenge is enormous since denying the hostile elements access to cyberspace and the capacity to influence public opinion through the manipulation of mass media would require optimum resources as well as expertise. Intelligence agencies would be required to establish

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<sup>48</sup> Simon Dalby, "Security, Intelligence, the National Interest and the Global Environment," *Intelligence and National Security* 10, no. 4 (1995): 192, <https://doi.org/10.1080/>

<sup>49</sup> Reinaldo Fernando, ed. *European Democracies against Terrorism: Governmental Policies and Intergovernmental*, (New York: Routledge, 2019), 20.

<sup>50</sup> Mikael Weissmann, Niklas Nilsson, Björn Palmertz, and Per Thunholm, *Hybrid Warfare: Security and Asymmetric Conflict in International Relations*, (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 38.

connectivity within as well as outside the government institutions, relying on red teaming methods, and developing fragility indicators besides heuristics for identifying potential attack spaces.<sup>51</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The emerging dimensions of national security challenges, especially as multifarious as hybrid warfare, appear to have massively transformed the threat matrix, requiring innovative and methodical thinking. In essence, hybrid warfare has significantly influenced the understanding of national security and national interests as well, underlining several new avenues that are very much exploitable by hostile forces. The focus beyond conventional security challenges and protection of territorial integrity alone, has underlined the importance of other aspects such as natural resources, political stability, climate issues, economic viability, ethnic harmony and so on. Consequently, there are vital implications for security, necessitating a far-reaching reformulation of how it shall be conceived and precisely what all have to be secured inevitably, in the pursuit of 'national security'.<sup>52</sup> In these complexed environments, intelligence agencies have to confront intricate challenges and are, therefore, required to come out of conventional mindset, focusing on the diversity of tasks in hand. The intelligence setups need to be take notice of activities that may apparently be well beyond the traditional security ambit, even including aspects like mass migration, environmental concerns and infectious diseases.<sup>53</sup> While these domains may appear to be a little odd for intelligence agencies, which are primarily designed to deal with conventional security challenges, it needs to be understood that the hybrid warfare seeks to exploit every vulnerability.

Finally, national security challenges during hybrid warfare can be envisaged with a better understanding of prevailing political, economic and strategic environments by the officials of national security intelligence setups. This knowledge would not only reveal various global and regional alignments but may also help superior anticipation of potential threats and vulnerabilities. Given the declining appetite towards large-scale conflicts, the post-Cold War era has proliferated instability and violence in the form of the decomposition of states, civil wars, and empowerment of dissident communities on the basis of ethnic, religious and territorial affinities. Therefore, the national security paradigm is influenced by all these factors, resulting in several exploitable vulnerabilities by the adversaries if not anticipated and addressed by the national security apparatus. A nation-state will have to prepare itself for the challenges previously unheard of, which are far from being conventional and difficult

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<sup>51</sup> Weissmann et al., *Hybrid warfare*, 40.

<sup>52</sup> Dalby, "Security, Intelligence," 187.

<sup>53</sup> Matthew and Shambaugh, "Sex, drugs," 171.

to contain once these are fully transpired. Consequently, the debate on a nation's power, security and responding capacity against hybrid war challenges can be summarized as under: -

“...a nation's power depends on its political stability, social cohesion, and economic productivity.... an overarching synthesis must integrate political economy, military policy, and defense strategy....fears of foreign threats are a consequence of both real dangers in the external environment and ideological precepts, cultural symbols, and mistaken images.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Leffler, “National Security,” 143-144.

