

HYBRID WARFARE: EMERGING CHALLENGES FOR PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Hybrid Warfare is gaining currency and posing new challenges to military thinkers and practitioners. The changes by the technological revolution, information and psychological operations, digitisation of the battlefield, and modernisation in conventional warfare have ceased to be the standalone option for applying force. These changes envisage the application of all Elements of National Power (EoNP), projected along a continuous span of activities, stretching from stability, security, reconstruction and terminating at armed conflict. The paper explains that hybrid warfare is the instrument of choice by the challengers, primarily India, to weaken Pakistan, subjugate it and either balkanise it or make it a flaccid state as the least desired objective. With hybrid warfare as an instrument of application against Pakistan, this article has attempted to dissect its contours and impact on Pakistan.

Keywords: *Elements of National Power, Hybrid Warfare, Orchestrated Instability, Non-Contact Warfare, Grey Zone Strategies*

Introduction

Conventional war, with increased lethality, technological advancement, the threat of nuclear exchange and extension of battle¹ has become a cost-prohibitive option. The phenomenal rise of non-state actors and the violence associated with these elements vis-à-vis the reluctance of the states to engage in conflicts at a massive scale has reduced the space for conventional application. There is an increasing

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¹ With all the elements of national power (EoNP) now involved in the national security, the wars are not limited to conventional spaces where large scale manoeuvres used to be conducted to outwit the adversary.

reliance on subjugating the enemy's will through hybrid warfare. Post World War II (WWII) era witnessed more reliance on information and economic warfare. This application of hybrid warfare attains political and strategic ends and has led to the evolution of hybrid war. The term hybrid warfare owes its genesis to the fact that when the space and scope for conventional wars under nuclear overhang reduced, the states made resort to a combination of kinetic and non-kinetic means of force to exert pressure against an adversary. Thus, hybrid warfare is the product of a wide range and simultaneous application of battlefield tools in the same battle space.²

The phrase "hybrid war" was coined following the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah conflict.³ Hybrid warfare connotes unconventional methods as part of a "multi-domain" war concept, i.e., conceptually distinct domains applied synergistically through a joint operation aimed at disrupting and disabling the adversary's response options without resorting to a full-scale conventional war. Still wanting a unified definition, various scholars have defined Hybrid warfare per their scholastic opinion.⁴ Hybrid warfare refers to unconventional methods as part of a "multi-domain." Rather than relying exclusively on conventional means of war, i.e., the application of traditional weapons and troops on the battlefield, hybrid warfare emphasises blending conventional warfare with irregular warfare. The unconventional means include political warfare, which employs political means to subdue the adversary's will. Besides cyber warfare, economic warfare, fake news, diplomacy, and lawfare are employed in hybrid war to delegitimise the opponent.⁵

The 2006 Israel-Hezbollah battle was a classic example of hybrid warfare, with Hezbollah combining political movement with decentralised resistance forces that would blend with civilians.⁶ To counter the Islamic

² Tarik Solmaz, "Hybrid Warfare: One Term, Many Meanings," *Small Wars Journal*, February 25, 2022, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/hybrid-warfare-one-term-many-meanings>.

³ Frank G. Hoffman, "Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars," (Arlington: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, December 2007), <https://www.potomacinstitute.org/>; Ilmari Kähkö, "The Evolution of Hybrid Warfare: Implications for Strategy and the Military Profession," *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters* 51, no. 3 (August 25, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.55540/0031-1723.3084>.

⁴ Brian P. Fleming, "The Hybrid Threat Concept: Contemporary War, Military Planning and the Advent of Unrestricted Operational Art," *Defense Technical Information Center*, May 19, 2011, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA545789>.

⁵ Reid Standish, "Inside a European Center to Combat Russia's Hybrid Warfare," *Foreign Policy*, January 18, 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/01/18/inside-a-european-center-to-combat-russias-hybrid-warfare/>.

⁶ Frank G. Hoffman, "Conflict in the 21st Century."

State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL), the US used a combination of kinetic and non-kinetic means, including the use of force, psychological warfare operations and use of intelligence-led operations. Similarly, the Russian campaign leading to the annexation of Crimea can be cited as an example of hybrid warfare.

Pakistan has also been subjected to hybrid warfare, the most evident manifestation being the separation of East Pakistan in 1971.⁷ Post-nuclearization of the sub-continent, the space for the application of conventional means against Pakistan by India has reduced. However, hybrid warfare gives greater leverage to the adversaries against Pakistan.⁸ Since the space for conventional war has greatly reduced, hybrid warfare has gained greater currency. Besides elucidating the theoretical perspective, the rationale for carrying out this research also identifies threats posed to Pakistan and the response options thereof. This calls for a deeper understanding of all forms of hybrid warfare and the exploitable fault lines of Pakistan. This paper explores the conceptual contours of hybrid warfare to understand the existing and emerging challenges that Pakistan faces from hybrid warfare, and proposes countermeasures. It explains the factors which have caused a paradigm shift from conventional warfare to hybrid warfare and analyse the hybrid threat spectrum that Pakistan will face in the future.

Literature Review

The fusion of regular and irregular wars and technologies would create a synergetic effect for those perpetrating this kind of war against adversaries.⁹ Indian view on hybrid warfare emphasised the employment of state and non- state actors to create a synergy combining conventional and non-conventional means of coercion. The open-ended battlefield would yield much more consequences for the adversary. Dismemberment of Pakistan in 1971, causes of unrest in Karachi in 1980s, support to Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), keeping Pakistan in the Gray List of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and on-going unrest in Balochistan are some of the Indian hybrid warfare strategies.¹⁰

As part of a "multi-domain" strategy for fighting a conflict, hybrid

⁷ Muhammad Ashraf Nadeem, Dr. Ghulam Mustafa, and Dr. Allauddin Kakar, "Fifth Generation Warfare and its Challenges to Pakistan," *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs* 4, no. 1 (March 29, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.52337/pjia.v4i1.118>.

⁸ Ghulam Muhammad Malik, "Weaponization of All Elements of National Power by India: Hybrid Warfare against Pakistan," *The Dialogue*, December 31, 2020.

⁹ Frank G. Hoffman, "Conflict in the 21st Century".

¹⁰ Nouman Mubarik, Junaid Jhandad, and Asma Shakir Khawja, "Indian Hybrid Warfare in Pakistan: Spin off Ramifications for Pakistan's National Security," *Journal of Indian Studies* 7, no. 1 (2021): 107–22.

warfare is defined as using unorthodox tactics.¹¹ These means and methods are aimed at disruption and disability of opponent's actions sans engagement in open hostilities and envelopes the combination of conventional and unconventional strategies.¹² The unconventional means are more lethal and challenging than conventional warfare¹³ and encompass fake news (i.e, EU DisinfoLab) and proxies (i.e., Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)).¹⁴

Being more diverse and having wider consequences on the adversary,¹⁵ this type of warfare is also referred to as "competition short of conflict," "gray zone strategies"¹⁶ and "active measures". It is also referred to as "New Generation Warfare" since it uses more information and technology.¹⁷ Hybrid strategies have been advocated by and applied by different states with direct or indirect involvement of military instruments of the state, their intelligence agencies and non-state actors as proxies.¹⁸ Hybrid warfare is used to influence decisions and State policies with or in combination with the violent application of force. These other reasons may include acquiring land, and gaining an advantage over the adversary by applying lawfare and coercion while staying short of direct conflict and conventional warfare.¹⁹

There is a broad spectrum of conflicts, including grey zone, hybrid

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- ¹¹ Andrew Dowse and Sascha-Dominik Bachmann, "What is 'Hybrid Warfare' and What is Meant by the 'Grey Zone'?" *The Conversation*, June 17, 2019, <https://theconversation.com/explainer-what-is-hybrid-warfare-and-what-is-meant-by-the-grey-zone-118841>
 - ¹² Erik Reichborn-Kjennerud and Patrick Cullen, "What Is Hybrid Warfare," *Norwegian Institute of International Affairs Policy Brief* 1 (February 26, 2016), <http://hdl.handle.net/11250/2380867>
 - ¹³ James K. Wither, "Making Sense of Hybrid Warfare," *Connections* 15, no. 2 (2016): 73–87.
 - ¹⁴ Waseem Ahmad Qureshi, "The Rise of Hybrid Warfare," *Notre Dame Journal of International & Comparative Law* 10, no. 2 (2020)
 - ¹⁵ Taras Kuzio and Paul D'Anieri, "The Soviet Origins of Russian Hybrid Warfare," *E-International Relations*, June 13, 2018.
 - ¹⁶ Hal Brands, "Paradoxes of the Gray Zone," January 2016. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2737593>
 - ¹⁷ James K. Wither, "Making Sense of Hybrid Warfare."
 - ¹⁸ Christopher Paul, "Confessions of a Hybrid Warfare Skeptic," *Small Wars Journal*, March 3, 2016. <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/confessions-of-a-hybrid-warfare-skeptic>.
 - ¹⁹ Lyle J. Morris et al., "Gaining Competitive Advantage in the Gray Zone: Response Options for Coercive Aggression below the Threshold of Major War" (RAND National Defense Research Institute Santa Monica United States, 2019). <https://www.rand.org/>

war, conventional and limited conflicts.²⁰ Many terminologies have been used to denote the notion of hybrid warfare while applying non-traditional or special war tactics. The terminologies used in these contexts include; hybrid influencing, threats, and adversaries. The instruments and means for applying the hybrid warfare method, including its most essential component, have evolved through conventional and unconventional warfare tools.²¹ Economic warfare²² against the target state is considered an essential component of this unconventional warfare. The instrument of its application includes the entire spectrum of use of force, including regular military or irregular forces.²³

Tools of Hybrid Warfare

Like conventional warfare, hybrid warfare aims to acquire dominance over the adversary. If employed prudently and in the correct permutation, the tools of hybrid war, including regular military forces, economic coercion, diplomacy, use of proxies, fanning local uprising, info warfare, and cyber-attacks can cause tumultuous effects over the hostile target state, whether domestically or internationally. By its capabilities of involving every citizen and every instrument of the adversary, warfare provides the initiator with a unique advantage of bypassing the UN Laws and Geneva conventions regarding adherence to fundamental human rights and not attacking non-combatants.²⁴

The activities while employing proxy forces range from hiring, funding and abetment of terrorist organisations are employed primarily to destabilise a target state. Fanning and accentuating the unrest locally, creating economic instability, and negative image branding, domestically and internationally, to project the target state as dangerous and unviable for business. These are a few examples of waging proxy wars against a hostile state.

These silent proxy wars have the potential to escalate into military action.²⁵ The intensification of the Syrian civil war during the Arab Spring

²⁰ Frank G. Hoffman, "The Contemporary Spectrum of Conflict: Protracted, Gray Zone, Ambiguous, and Hybrid Modes of War," *The Heritage Foundation*, 2016, 25–36. <https://www.heritage.org/>

²¹ Bettina Renz, "Russia and 'Hybrid Warfare,'" *Contemporary Politics* 22, no. 3 (2016): 283–300.

²² Qureshi, "The Rise of Hybrid Warfare."

²³ Wither, "Making Sense of Hybrid Warfare."

²⁴ Jerrod K. Allen, "Cognitive Depth and Hybrid Warfare: Exploring the Nature of Unique Time, Space, and Logic Frames", (Kansas: US Army School for Advanced Military Studies Fort Leavenworth United States), May 25, 2017.

²⁵ Muhammad Nadeem Mirza and Summar Iqbal Babar, "The Indian Hybrid Warfare Strategy: Implications for Pakistan," *Progressive Research Journal of Arts and Humanities (PRJAH)* 2, no. 1 (2020): 39–52.

is an example of hybrid war.²⁶ Fanning local unrest through proxies to create instability, leading to civil war in a targeted State, is another manifestation of hybrid warfare. The unrest in Pakistan, especially in Balochistan, is squarely attributed to the hybrid warfare capabilities of our time-tested nemesis, India.²⁷ The info domain of hybrid warfare uses mediums like social media and electronic media for perception management through false propaganda and fake news with an intent of negative image branding and sowing the seeds of dissension among the citizens against their government.²⁸

Diplomacy, an instrument of this kind of warfare, is the adroit application of statecraft to isolate and disparage a target state amongst nations. With offensive diplomatic capabilities spanning national and international politics, statecraft, and diplomacy, the initiator dominates and exploits the target state's vulnerabilities, thus creating an unfavourable environment, leading to the imposition of punitive action on a target state.²⁹ Economic sanctions, lawfare and such intentional nuisances are aimed at seriously eroding a target state's economic element of national power. Such sanctions affect a target country's international trade and severely impact the state's domestic economy. Information and IT capabilities of the aggressor state vis-à-vis the response capabilities of the target state play an important role in deciding the outcome of hybrid warfare. Information management, cyber-attacks and artificial intelligence are the key enablers and instruments of choice in hybrid warfare.³⁰ Though considered the least favourable option³¹, a state's kinetic application of military can help achieve the desired objective and

²⁶ OĞUZ Şafak and Kadir Ertaç Çelik, "Conflict in Syria: Is it a Proxy Warfare?," *Uluslararası Kriz ve Siyaset Araştırmaları Dergisi* 2, no. 2 (2018): 44–69. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/uksad/issue/41747/504107>

²⁷ Mubarik, Jhandad, and Khawja, "Indian Hybrid Warfare in Pakistan"; Shakoor Ahmad Wani, "The New Baloch Militancy: Drivers and Dynamics," *India Quarterly* 77, no. 3 (2021): 479–500.

²⁸ William II Murray, "Hybrid Warfare Dilemmas in the Middle Colonies during the American Revolution" (US Army School for Advanced Military Studies Fort Leavenworth United States) July 5, 2017) : 1-43.

²⁹ Sascha-Dominik Dov Bachmann and Hakan Gunneriusson, "Eyes Wide Shut: How Russia's Hybrid Warfare Exposes and Exploits Western Vulnerabilities," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, no. January 18 (2017) urn:nbn:se:fhs:diva-7160 ; Inam Ullah Shah, "Indian Hybrid War: Challenges for Pakistan," *Strafasia*, June 18, 2019, <https://strafasia.com/indian-hybrid-war-challenges-for-pakistan/>

³⁰ Ralph D. Thiele and Johann Schmid, "Hybrid Warfare–Orchestrating the Technology Revolution," *ISPSW Strategy Series*, no. 663, (January 2020), <https://www.ispsw.com/wp->

³¹ Maaz Nisar, "5 GW and Hybrid Warfare its Implications and Response Options," Escola Marechal Castello Branco, 2018, <https://bdex.eb.mil.br/jspui/bitstream/123456789/2827/1/>

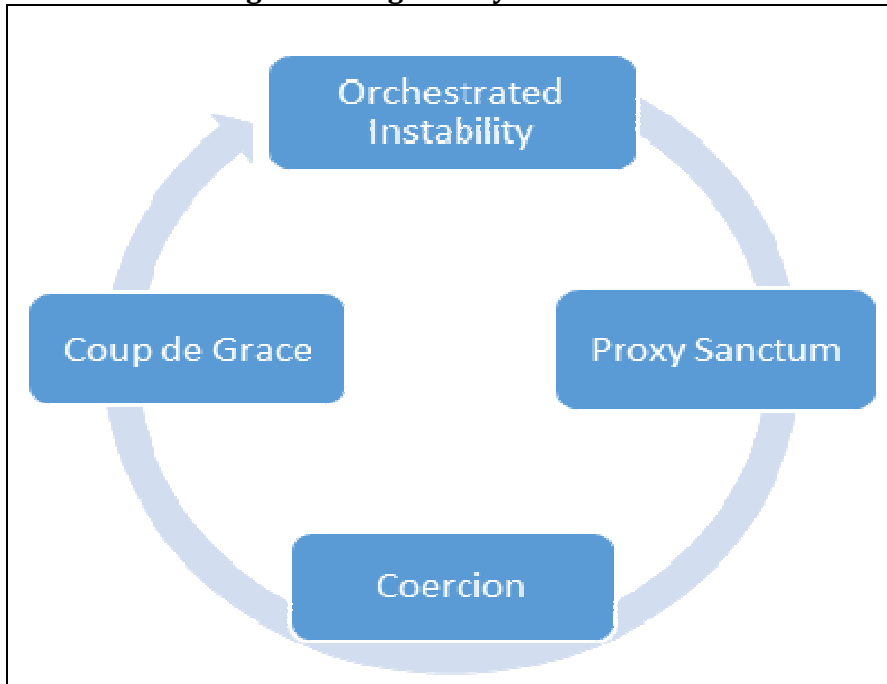
dislocation of status quo.³²

Stages of Hybrid Warfare

The four stages that a conflict continuum in hybrid environment can be categorised include:

- Stage-1. Orchestrated Instability.
- Stage-2. Proxy Sanctum.
- Stage-3. Coercion, and the last stage denoting Coup de Grace.³³

Figure 1: Stages of Hybrid Warfare



Source: Compiled by the Author

Hybrid Spectrum

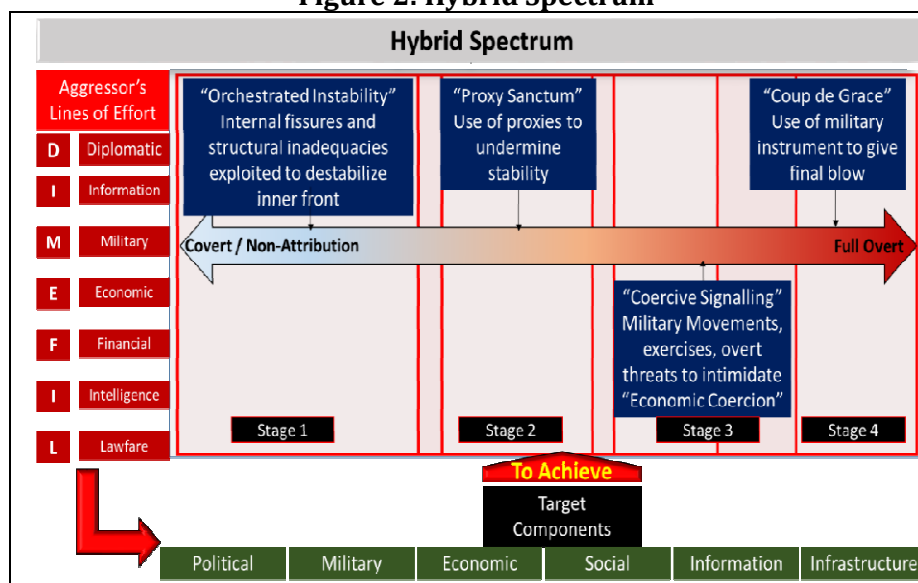
The stages, design, and various tools available culminate in a hybrid warfare model, as shown in Figure-2. This hybrid spectrum is composed of an aggressor who employs multiple thrust lines to influence various components of the target state over time while transiting from covert to overt phases of hybrid warfare. These components include; Political, Military, Economic, Social, Information, and Infrastructure (PMESII). Depending on the prevailing environment, these stages could be

³² Gary Schaub Jr, Martin Murphy, and Frank G. Hoffman, "Hybrid Maritime Warfare: Building Baltic Resilience," *The RUSI Journal* 162, no. 1 (2017): 32–40.

³³ Williamson Murray and Peter R. Mansoor, eds., *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

employed in a sequence, overlapping or skipped altogether.³⁴

Figure 2: Hybrid Spectrum



Source: Compiled by the Author

Hybrid Warfare- Regional Context

The confluence of four sub-littoral systems, Pakistan's geo-strategic location, and a turbulent regional security calculus, particularly the Afghan imbroglio, make Pakistan a prime target of multi-layered threats of hybrid warfare. The Chinese strategy of global outreach through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and China- Pakistan economic Corridor (CPEC) has further accentuated the vulnerabilities of Pakistan to the hybrid dimension of warfare.³⁵

Being the victim of its geography, Pakistan has suffered the consequences of the Afghan conflict. Pakistan has been at the fore in the aftermath of more than 40 years of war, civil unrest, and insurgency, along with terrorism and foreign involvement in Afghanistan. It has borne the brunt of terrorism in the wake of 9/11. Pakistan has been persistently subjected to various instruments of hybrid warfare. The nation's resolve and numerous sacrifices by its Armed Forces have enabled it to withstand

³⁴ Patrick Cullen and Erik Reichborn-Kjennerud, "Understanding Hybrid Warfare," *Multinational Capability Development Campaign Project*, 2016-17. 2016-17, <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/>.

³⁵ Nasreen Akhtar, Inamullah Jan, and Sumaira Akram, "Hybrid Warfare Strategy of India: Impacts on Pakistan," *Global Regional Review* VI, no. II (June 30, 2021): 64-72, [https://doi.org/10.31703/grr.2021\(VI-II\).09](https://doi.org/10.31703/grr.2021(VI-II).09).

the challenges of hybrid warfare.³⁶

India views Pakistan as a roadblock to its regional and international aspirations. It has never shied away from using conventional and hybrid warfare tools against Pakistan's weak points through diplomatic means or exploitation of internal vulnerabilities. India has successfully applied hybrid warfare by making maximum use of information warfare.³⁷ India indulged in intense information warfare to justify the abrogation of Article 370 that gave autonomous status to Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK). This has been corroborated by the EU Dis-infoLab findings.³⁸

Analysis

After reviewing various components of hybrid warfare, it is appropriate to critically identify the grey areas and protective measures for Pakistan. For a long time, Pakistan has been the target of an on-going hybrid war. The main characteristic of this threat is that it is persistent, well-planned, and constantly shifts between different dimensions depending on the current geo-strategic and geo-political situation.³⁹ It has now been well reckoned by all that a purely military option is hard to generate in the first instance, and subsequently achieving desired objectives is more or less not satisfactory. However, the Balakot episode in 2019⁴⁰ has alluded to the new notion of escalation being introduced by India, whereas in the continuum of the hybrid spectrum, the war would be considered a process rather than an event. In this type of force coercion, the continuum of hybrid warfare would be applied with the rudiments of non-contact warfare,⁴¹ gaining more currency.⁴²

In contrast to what India wants the world to think about Pakistan's

³⁶ Sahibzada Muhammad Usman, "FATA Merges into Pakistan's National System," *South Asian Survey* 29, no. 1 (2022): 103–18.

³⁷ Mubarik, Jhanda, and Khawja, "Indian Hybrid Warfare in Pakistan."

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Muhammad Ashraf Nadeem, et al., "The Emergence of Hybrid Warfare and International Security Environment: A Case Study of Pakistan," *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs* 4, no. 3 (2021).

⁴⁰ Hassan Jalil Shah and Naseem Anwar Khan, "Nuclear Deterrence and Conflict Transformation: Assessing States Behaviour in South Asia," *MARGALLA Papers*, 2019, 53.

⁴¹ Non-contact warfare is defined as the form of warfare in which states seek to employ all elements of national power to leverage their influence across multiple domains to target adversary's population, sovereignty, governance structures and economy through non-military or military non-kinetic and kinetic means. Vivek Verma, "Non-Contact Warfare: Lessons from the US National Defence Strategy," *CLAWS Journal* 14, no. 1 (2021): 67–84.

⁴² Vivek Verma, "Non-Contact Warfare: Lessons from the US National Defence Strategy," *CLAWS Journal* 14, no. 1 (2021): 67–84.

intention to bleed it with a thousand cuts, this gradual implementation of hybrid warfare through a thousand cuts is intended to undermine the state from within. This argument gains more weightage when viewed from South Asia's nuclearised environment, making conventional war a cost-prohibitive option for the adversary. Hence resorting to waging hybrid threats against Pakistan is a cost-effective option.

Pakistan's countermeasures would entail the employment of all elements of national power (EoNP), including Military, Economy, Diplomacy, and IT would be synergistically employed in what is denoted as the "Whole of Government Approach" to ensure returning losses to the adversary. As enunciated earlier, an effective response to the hybrid threat entails a "Whole of the Nation's Approach".⁴³ The National Security Council (NSC) neither has a law to define the criterion for its membership nor regular consultations conducted (as part of the system) for updating the response options in various spheres of national security, including hybrid threats. Additionally, carrying out threat perception and assessment by civil security-related institutions is rare. This laid-back approach entirely relies on military feedback on various core issues, including non-traditional security threats. This skewed approach towards security-related issues results in a security paradigm wholly placed in the domain of the military, which does not have the wherewithal to integrate the remaining elements of national power into the security structure of Pakistan. The 2019 crisis and Pakistan's Operation Swift Retort have made it clear that India will continue to use hybrid warfare against Pakistan for attrition, keeping the kinetic application towards the end of the spectrum.⁴⁴ The Balakot episode has resulted in the recalibration of national security options for pursuing strategized response options against hybrid threats.⁴⁵

Through the hybrid threats, India is making Pakistan pay a heavy price for its national security.⁴⁶ Therefore, the existing policy of keeping ambiguity in the National Security Policy would no longer be a viable option. Making national security a wholesome issue, all the stakeholders

⁴³ Murat Caliskan, "Hybrid Warfare through the Lens of Strategic Theory," *Defense & Security Analysis* 35, no. 1 (January 2, 2019): 40–58, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14751798.2019.1565364>.

⁴⁴ "US Averted Indo-Pak Nuclear War: Pompeo," *The Express Tribune*, January 25, 2023, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2397638/us-averted-indo-pak-nuclear-war-pompeo>.

⁴⁵ Muhammad Husnain, Muhammad Mateen, and Asia Maqsood, "Analysis of Pakistani and Indian Media towards Warfare: Case Study of Pulwama Attack & Balakot Airstrike," *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry* 12, no. 8 (2021).

⁴⁶ Håkan Gunneriusson, "Nothing is Taken Serious Until it gets Serious: Countering Hybrid Threats," *Defence Against Terrorism Review* 4, no. 1 (2012): 47–70.

and institutions now need to be clear about their role in neutralising its adverse effects.

Social media is aggressively used for perception management and social engineering to spread discontentment and despondency in Pakistan. Its user base in India projected Pakistan as a failing state and its army as the harbinger of all the ills Pakistan faces. There is, a need to harness the potential of social media to restore the faith of the youth in the state.⁴⁷

The information domain has effectively disseminated India's narrative on domestic and foreign fronts against Pakistan.⁴⁸ With the diminishing value of objective facts vis-à-vis the false news. In the battle of narratives, the dominance of media and propaganda cannot be over emphasised to win the battle against competing narratives. The whole-of-the-nation approach would necessitate integrating media warfare with our diplomatic overtures. India has effectively built a narrative and gained acceptance at domestic and international forums. Pakistan needs to enhance its intellectual capacity to build alternative and credible narratives. All the stakeholders, state entities and the people of Pakistan must recognize that hybrid threats are not only real but also consistent and present with a rising level of complexity.

Pakistan's Specific Hybrid Warfare Model

Pakistan has strategic competition and challenges, with India posing the biggest threat.⁴⁹ Several factors have contributed to exacerbating these internal and external challenges ranging from its geo-strategic, geo-political location to internal challenges, political instability, and economic vulnerabilities. Beyond all doubt, these hurdles need to be scaled back in order to compete with India strategically.⁵⁰ The effects of the US war on terror, Indo-US strategic convergence, and closer Pakistan-China relations, within context of CPEC have contributed to an accentuated hybrid threat to Pakistan.⁵¹

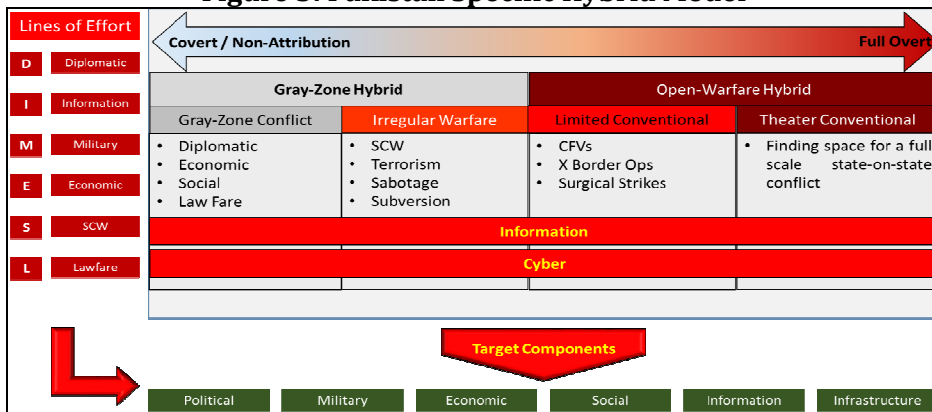
⁴⁷ Shahbaz Aslam, "Hybrid Warfare and Social Media: Need and Scope of Digital Literacy," *Indian Journal of Science and Technology* 13, no. 12 (March 28, 2020): 1293–1299, <https://doi.org/10.17485/IJST/v13i12.43>.

⁴⁸ Beatrice De Graaf, George Dimitriu, and Jens Ringsmose, *Strategic Narratives, Public Opinion and War: Winning Domestic Support for the Afghan War* (Routledge, 2015)

⁴⁹ Maaz, "5 GW and Hybrid Warfare its Implications and Response Options."

⁵⁰ Vira Ratsiborynska, *When Hybrid Warfare Supports Ideology: Russia Today* Research Paper 133, (Research Division, NATO Defense College, 2016)

⁵¹ Hussain, "Hybrid Warfare, 5th Generation Warfare and Pakistan's Response."

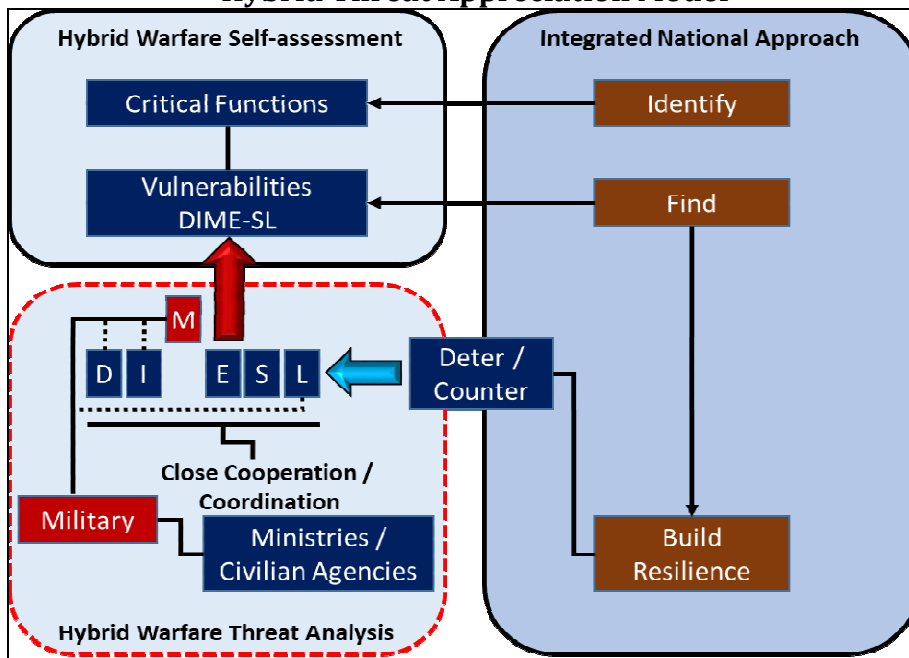
Figure 3: Pakistan Specific Hybrid Model

Source: Compiled by the Author

Pakistan continues to suffer a full spectrum of hybrid war with multiple thrust lines including Military, Economy, Diplomacy, Information warfare, Sub-conventional and Lawfare (DIME-SL). The bleeding of Pakistan through sub-conventional has been the instrument of adversary's hybrid warfare through violent non-state actors (VNSA).

The hybrid threat against Pakistan is at two distinct levels: the overt area of open-warfare hybrid threats and the hazy covert area of grey-zone hybrid threats. Hybrid threats against Pakistan become unique when viewed in the backdrop concurrent to the application of covert grey strategies through Sub Conventional Warfare (SCW) and terrorism; the strategic challenger, India is also overtly using her military instrument. This makes the military instrument a predominant factor in Indo-Pak context.

Figure 4: Proposed Hybrid Threat Appreciation Model
Hybrid Threat Appreciation Model



Source: Compiled by the Author

The threat analysis model to be used for carrying out hybrid threat perception can be summarized through the following cardinals

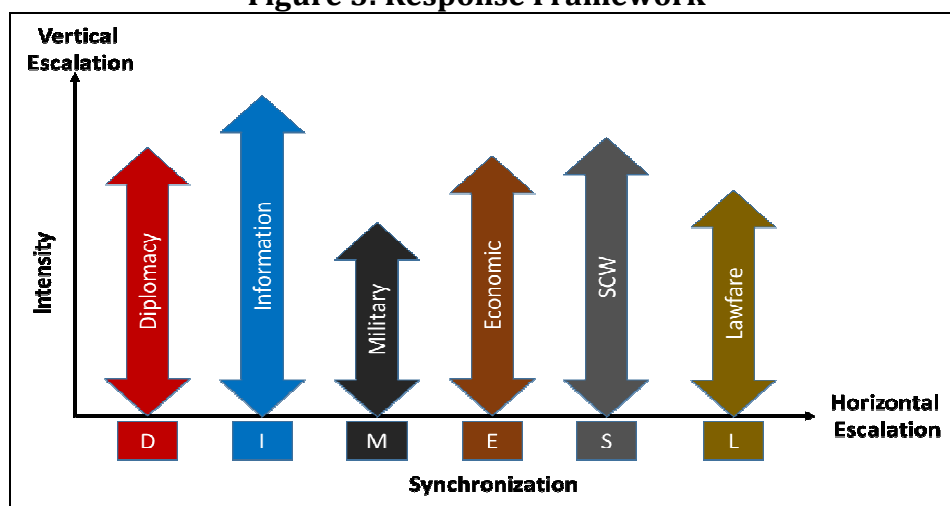
- Hybrid warfare is designed to attack several areas. The proposed model's upper left box indicates the state's need to assess the hybrid warfare spectrum to identify vulnerabilities and recognize critical functions. The realistic national self-assessment process would augment endeavours to evaluate the hybrid threats across each DIME-SL domain.
- The lower left box focuses on hybrid warfare threat analysis. In this domain, the military focuses on countering the threats emanating from the 'M' (military) threats. The other ministries and civilian agencies assist with non-traditional threat analysis, dealing with economic, lawfare, diplomatic, and information.
- The hybrid warfare threat analysis helps understand how a specific hybrid warfare actor can synchronously accentuate vulnerabilities across the DIME-SL spectrum.
- The integrated national approach aims at inculcating comprehensiveness of the response achieved through synchronizing the response of the entire nation, including government, masses and the military.
- The institutionalized process of collecting and disseminating threat and vulnerability assessment will ensure an enhanced early

warning capability in hybrid warfare domain that can help in formulating an effective response.

Hybrid Warfare, being asymmetrical and having multiple instruments of power, lays an increasing emphasis on ambiguity and creativity.⁵² Those intending to subject Pakistan to hybrid warfare would endeavour to create desired effects by harmonizing all elements of national power, both horizontally and vertically, orchestrated through a series of specific activities. The hostile state can accentuate Pakistan's vulnerabilities, both horizontally and vertically. In contrast, vertical effects can be achieved by escalating one or multiple instruments of power in the horizontal plane. The effects can be achieved by activating multiple instruments of power to achieve synergized effects greater than vertical escalation alone.

The key is that the different instruments of power are used in multiple dimensions and on multiple levels simultaneously in a synchronized fashion. This allows the adversaries to use different DIME - SL means to create synchronized assault packages specifically tailored to the perceived vulnerabilities of the target domain. This proposed framework (adopted from NATO Multinational Capability Development Campaign (MCDC) 2016-17 for countering hybrid Warfare) is based on two discrete yet interlocked categories that need to be understood in concert; the sum of hybrid Warfare is greater than each part.

Figure 5: Response Framework



Source: Compiled by the Author.

⁵² Muhammad Waqas Haider and Tahir Mahmood Azad, "Pakistan-India after Pulwama Attacks: Theoretical Assessment," *Asian Journal of International Peace and Security* (AJIPS) 5, no. 3 (Winter, 2021): 12-26.

- **Critical Functions and Vulnerabilities** These are activities or operations spread across the entire spectrum, including military, economy, politics, social, and information. These discontinuations of these activities may lead to the disruption of services that a working system like the state of Pakistan or society depends upon. These could be individuals, organisations, infrastructures and processes (i.e., legal-jurisdictional, technical or political). Pakistan has vulnerabilities in all critical functions, making it a soft target of adversaries.
- **Synchronisation of Means (Horizontal Escalation)** The ability of a hostile actor to effectively coordinate all instruments of power in time, space and purpose to create the desired effects; the key characteristics are synchronisation and simultaneity in the application of both military and non-military means. While the military aspect of the Balakot event was escalated with the informational and diplomatic aspects, efforts were made to link the issue to the FATF, synchronising the lawfare realm.

Way Forward

Specific recommendations at policy and military level are as under:

Policy Level

Being synchronized and systematic, hybrid warfare, calls for a synchronized response, which must be led and owned by nation's political hierarchy. It has to be the whole nation's approach to response mechanism.⁵³ Towards this end, the much-needed National Security Policy (NSP) has been a step in the right direction. While the NSP has declared "Economic Security" as the foremost cardinal of its policy, NSP would not yield the desired results unless duly backed up by a robust economy. An economy susceptible to internal and external shocks is a bad omen for the country's security; hence Pakistan needs to ensure a stable, progressive and robust economy.

The Clausewitzian Trinity (government, people, military) needs to respond forcefully to hybrid threats because a solid social contract between the government and its people serves as the first line of defense.⁵⁴ The nation's response calls for a stronger Government - military interface, capacity building of civil LEAs and intelligence outfits. A responsive and agile Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and Ministry of Law are quintessential for an effective response to hybrid threats in lawfare. Pakistan adopts an aggressive stance in the war of narratives while all-out attempts are made to counter and neutralise the hostile propaganda on both the domestic and global fronts.

⁵³ Sean Monaghan, "Countering Hybrid Warfare," *Prism* 8, no. 2 (2019): 82-99.

⁵⁴ Colin M. Fleming, *Clausewitz's Timeless Trinity: A Framework For Modern War* (Routledge, 2016)

Military Level

To respond to the altered battle space in hybrid warfare, our military instruments must ensure that they are well calibrated to respond to this form of warfare and appropriately postured to counter these threats. The Balakot event has amply demonstrated the resolve of the military instrument to deny space to the enemy for selective kinetic operations and an assured response for escalating the level of violence. The need for a credible defensive posture calls for corresponding military capabilities. The defence forces of Pakistan have robustly withstood the demands of both conventional and SCW threats. However, it must keep itself evolving to the changing nature of the threat. The defence forces would have to rely more on unconventional means, enhance intelligence and special forces capabilities and increase service interoperability.

Protect C4 Systems & Networks

Pakistan must ensure agile and configurable command, control, communication, computer, intelligence, information, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4I2SR) systems capable of making decisions to the lowest appropriate level. It must leverage technological advances to develop new capabilities and improve the existing capabilities to detect, identify, locate and engage source(s) of cyber-attacks to assure access to the flow of critical information. The need for developing offensive cyber capabilities must be considered. In the domain of concepts and doctrines, there is a need to enhance and develop offensive and defensive concepts. Similarly, strategies and legal frameworks are also to be put in place to deter, respond to and counter an attack in ungoverned areas of cyberspace and space.

Balochistan is a prime example of how hybrid warfare against Pakistan is most profitable when it succeeds in causing rifts between the public and the country's armed forces. In order to prevent our opponent from reproducing the circumstances of 1971, this strong relationship between the general public and the armed forces must remain preserved. All instruments of the state related to the battle of narrative must act in unison and synergize their efforts to thwart a powerful propaganda warfare against Pakistan.

On the diplomatic front, rather than operating in silos, all elements of national power must synergize their efforts for an effective diplomatic posture at the international level. The very effective military diplomacy in the Middle East, China, the US and Afghanistan needs to be tailored with the other instruments of diplomacy, including economic and political diplomacy, for a synergized output.

The military must take precautions to avoid being associated with extrajudicial murders, missing persons cases, or human rights violations in order to counter the negative effects of the selective application of lawfare in the form of international law against Pakistan as a tool of hybrid

warfare. Military must collaborate closely with Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) to calibrate response in lawfare domain in the international arena.

Conclusion

The idea of hybrid warfare is not novel; however, the manifestation spectrum is rapidly broadening and encompassing the whole range of Elements of National Power (EoNP). Threat dynamics in South Asia are characterised by hybrid warfare, necessitating a response approach that integrates policy, doctrine, strategy, and operations. One must be cognizant that a single instrument of national power cannot win hybrid warfare. It requires harmonization of all the elements of national power and appropriate governmental 'institutional machinery,' the processes, mechanisms, people and skills to formulate an effective response. Countering hybrid threats requires a 'whole-of-government' activity, that calls for a multidimensional approach to exploit and augment existing institutions, processes and organizations where possible. Deterring and responding to hybrid threats calls for a well-orchestrated planning process and implementation of measures across the DIMESIL domains using the Military, Political, Economic, Diplomatic and Information (MPEDI) levers of power.

This paper has discussed the notions of hybrid warfare and its spectrum, consisting of multiple thrust lines that an aggressor may employ against the target state. The spectrum of hybrid threats that Pakistan may face has been evaluated. The discussion served as a springboard for a proposed response framework that suggests course of action, identifying means that can prepare Pakistan to counter hybrid threats in the future. A holistic response to counter the hybrid threat would require use of all elements of national power. In light of foregoing analysis, additional research will be needed on the establishment of a National Security Organization and a Higher Defence Organization to deal with emerging hybrid threats to the security of Pakistan.

