

Impact And Strategy: Navigating Hybrid War Challenge In Pakistan

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Abstract

Almost every nation or society faces a grave threat of hybrid war. Various states are mulling over the impact and countering strategy within their policy circles. This study aims to understand how a country like Pakistan navigates a hybrid war challenge. However, it is not a new reality. Different countries like Pakistan, India, America, Iran, Russia, and Israel have their perspectives on hybrid warfare. It has been evolving for centuries, but its manifestation in the modern day has increased. Taking advantage of politico-ethnic fault lines, socio-religious weaknesses, and identity conflicts, hybrid warfare promotes employing all tools available to subdue an adversary's will, including regular or irregular, conventional, or unconventional methods of combat. It is gaining popularity among international strategists. After the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, the global security community's interest increased considerably. In context, this paper attempts to understand how Pakistan navigates the hybrid war challenge. It also discusses its impact and suggests a countering strategy to deal with increasing hybrid warfare against Pakistan.

Keywords: Hybrid war, conflict and cooperation,
Pakistan, disinformation, Strategic Security

Introduction

In this era of artificial intelligence, space wars, information, and globalization, hybrid warfare is not a new phenomenon but an evolving field of study in Pakistan. The unconventional ways of fighting are deeply rooted in our

political, economic, and social spheres. It includes military and non-military, besides disinformation, cyberattacks, and economic hurdles. It applies to regular and irregular ways of warfare. It is defined as: "a hybrid war is a full spectrum war with both physical and conceptual dimensions: the former, a struggle against an armed enemy and the latter, a wider struggle for, control and support of the combat zone's indigenous population, the support of the home fronts of the intervening nations, and the support of the international community, secure and stabilize the indigenous population, the intervening forces must immediately rebuild or restore security, essential services, local government, self-defense forces and essential elements of the economy." (Glenn. R. 2009).

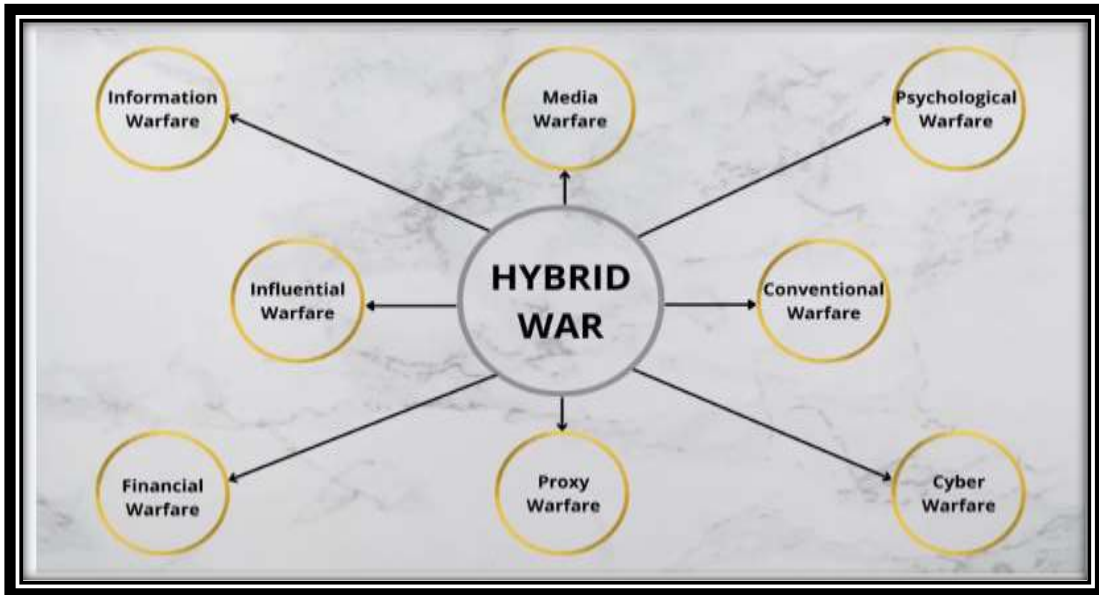
Academics, policymakers, and media increasingly use "hybrid warfare" to describe modern conflict. It discusses several alternative ways to battle that differ from how people used to think about combat. However, none of these are truly "new," as the military concepts underlying them can be found in Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, written over 2,500 years ago. According to Monaghan, Cullen, and Wegge (2017), hybrid warfare is "the synchronized use of multiple instruments of power tailored to specific vulnerabilities across the full spectrum of societal functions to achieve synergetic effects. The instruments of power are military, political, economic, civil, and information". (Monaghan, Cullen, and Wgge, 2017). Moreover, technology and cognitive warfare, which employ all elements of a nation's might against a common foe, include information warfare as one of their subsets. Politicians use the enemy's impression management and cognitive processes to further their agendas.

Whatever the reason, it has resulted in many new terminologies and labels for what is now known as hybrid warfare. When discussing the "grey zone," the United States Special Operations Command states that various names in US literature have referred to this issue. Low-intensity combat or operations, tiny wars, and military operations that are not wars. Low-intensity operations may be a sort of combat in hybrid warfare.

Western countries are believed to employ hybrid tactics, and counterinsurgency operations highlight hybridity. Non-state actors insurgencies are the most likely to adopt hybrid

warfare, and some of the most recent insurgencies have used elements of terrorism. The changing global order, rising leadership, and rapidly changing geopolitical environment have all impacted the drivers and determinants of foreign policy. The following figure shows how hybrid war can pose a multiple and multi-dimensional challenge to a state.

Figure 1. Hybrid War Fronts



Source: Indian Foreign Affairs. (March 6, 2021). Hybrid Warfare: A New Face of Warfare. Link: <https://indianforeignaffairs.com/tag/hybrid-warfare/>. Accessed on: 23.12.2022.

Moreover, artificial intelligence, digital technology, and modern communication networks have changed foreign policy. The virtual world of the internet and social media has shortened the time available to respond to events influencing foreign policy, necessitating a coherent, mature, and efficient mechanism to deal with the modern environment's intricacies and challenges.

Similarly, diplomacy and warfare are no longer just the domain of states in the twenty-first century. The role of non-state actors in statecraft (both benign and aggressive) has transformed the overall picture. Clausewitz's notion of war as the continuation of policy through other means has progressed to the fifth generation, resulting in hybrid warfare. To deal with the changing threat matrix, the hybrid warfare environment needs a review and revision of policy alternatives, which manifests through a combination of

tactics and means, including hard and soft power, various participants, transformed purposes, and remodeled ideas of victory.

Hence, the main objective of this article is to understand how Pakistan navigates the hybrid warfare challenge, discuss its impact, and suggest a strategy to stop the growing hybrid attacks against Pakistan at the domestic and international levels. This paper includes the genesis of hybrid warfare, reviews the literature on hybrid warfare, briefly discusses the theoretical framework, explores the roots, focuses in detail on the impact of hybrid warfare, suggests strategy, and, lastly, this article concludes.

Growing Studies on Hybrid Warfare

There are several studies on hybrid warfare. For instance, the study of Ahluwalia, V.K. (2019) discusses hybrid warfare and wars in the future in great detail. At the same time, the research of Suchkov, M.A. (2021) revisits hybrid warfare and explains how the warfare concept contributes to shaping military and political discourse. In addition, a very comprehensive discussion on the term 'hybrid war' and its meaning has been done by Solmaz, T. (2022). Further, on hybrid warfare and technologies, the study by Thiele, R. (Ed). (2021) is also interesting regarding future technologies. At the same time, the study by Kalniete, S., and Pildegovics, T. (2021) highlights the European Union's resilience in dealing with hybrid threats. On the concept of hybrid warfare, the study by Reichborn-Kjennerud, E and Cullen, P. (2016) informs us about how to think and operate analytically within the security environment. It provides a flexible tool for understanding the problem rather than the solution.

Hence, the research on hybrid warfare has been conducted from various dimensions, like theoretical perspective, real and constructivist, social media as an instrument of hybrid warfare, asymmetric conflict, hybrid warfare in Asia, climate warfare and strategy, and hybrid war with Chinese characteristics. (Filipec, O. 2019; Svetoka, S. 2016; Herța, L. M. 2017; Aoi, C., Futamura, M., & Patalano, A. 2018; Briggs, C. M. 2020, and Raska, M. 2015). Last but not least, the study by Yan G. (2020) enumerates the key features, for instance, synergy, ambiguity, asymmetry, innovative disruption, and over psychology, that largely affect the main tools of Artificial Intelligence for military, political, and

economic, civil, and informational (Yan, G. 2020). The above literature review on hybrid warfare shows several studies have been conducted on this theme. This term came to the limelight of the international community after the Russian military engagement in Ukraine. Though this term is not new to academic scholars, it has gotten too much media attention in recent years. This article explores the roots of this term, discusses its impact, and suggests a counter-strategy.

Warden's Five Rings Theory

Leadership, system basics, population, infrastructure, and the military are the five pillars of Warden's Five Rings Theory. According to Warden, it is necessary to incite the people against the government and the military to destabilize a state. The government may respond with repression, turning the public against the police (as in the Arab Spring), or the government may change hands, as in Iran under Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh. Warden's Five Rings is a military strategic offensive theory based on five layers of system attributes. They are named after former American Air Force officer and air power theorist Col. John A. Warden III. The opponent's centers of gravity were assumed to be located on each system level or "ring." Warden's five rings were designed to be struck separately to paralyze their various forces, a condition known as physical paralysis. To maximize the effectiveness of a strike attack, the attacker would engage as many rings as possible to kill the enemy's leadership in the central ring. The result would be total physical paralysis.

Genesis of Hybrid Warfare

As a military strategy, Hybrid warfare was propounded by Frank Hoffman- an American defense analyst. As a political tool, it includes conventional and unconventional methods, cyber warfare, and electoral intervention. As counted through a Google search, forty books on hybrid warfare exist. Its impact and implications are wide and deep.

Table. 1. Roots of Hybrid Warfare

Year	Event in History
431-405 BC	Peloponnesian War
1755-1763	French and Indian War in North America
1875-1833	the American Revolution
1808-1814	the Peninsular War

1860–1861	Garibaldi's Campaign in Southern Italy
1861–1865	the Union's Counter-guerrilla War
1937-1945	the Sino-Japanese War
1927-1950	the Chinese Civil War
1946-1954	the War in Indochina
1955-1975	Vietnam War
2006	Israel's Military Campaign against Hezbollah
2007 is still going on	Conflicts in the Middle East/West Asia/Asia

Source: Compiled by the Author

History shows that British regulars challenged French control of major Spanish cities during the American Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. Spanish guerrillas attacked their lines of communication. In the Arab Revolt, the British Army employed conventional operations in Palestine with irregular forces. These events are said to have been the origins of hybrid warfare. However, the emergence of non-state actors, information technology, and the spread of superior military systems means that modern hybrid conflict, despite its historical roots, can alter the strategic calculations of future belligerents.

Frank Hoffman started writing about the rising hybrid wars in the Middle East in 2007. He focused on the combination of kinetic and non-military tools used by actors like Hezbollah during Israel's military campaign in 2006. This was the first recognizable academic use of the term "hybrid" as it related to warfare.

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union came a new international order where the concept of conventional state-on-state combat is now more frequently challenged by non-traditional means. Conflicts in Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, and the South China Sea have been defused thanks to the overwhelming military might of the United States, but this has also given rise to a new kind of warfare that tries to exploit the limitations of traditional military organizations. Contrary to how conflicts have historically had both regular and irregular elements in various theatres of operations, current hybrid warfare frequently mixes these elements.

Practitioners of modern hybrid warfare combine "conventional capabilities with irregular tactics and formations, and terrorist activities include indiscriminate violence, coercion, and criminal behavior." According to this theory, warfare is characterized by asymmetric tactics and

strategies and occurs in various operational situations. Given the interconnectedness of contemporary society, it is particularly challenging for the military to counter these strategies since hybrid war occurs on three different fronts: the conventional battlefield, the local population of the conflict zone, and the worldwide community.

A noted military strategist, Clausewitz, said, "Every age has its kind of war, its limiting conditions, and its peculiar preconceptions." The military commander fighting a hybrid war must leverage various capabilities, including conventional high-intensity conflict units, decentralized special operations forces, and sophisticated information and technology platforms. A flexible and adaptive military is necessary to meet the complex challenges of contemporary hybrid wars that concurrently integrate conventional, irregular, and terrorist components. Pakistan has focused more on a counterinsurgency strategy in the aftermath of its conflicts in the tribal belt. The insurgency is not, however, Pakistan's only military issue.

Impact of Hybrid Warfare

Whether social, political, economic, informational, military, or diplomatic, hybrid warfare influences all spheres of state power. In its broadest definition, hybrid warfare encompasses cyberwarfare, media war, social media war, misinformation war, false flag operations, and surgical and false flag operations.

In the context of fifth-generation warfare, there is an undue emphasis placed on deception and deceit to extend the impact of hybrid warfare. Hybrid warfare is the practice of employing conventional and unconventional subversion techniques to engage in an offensive against an adversary. This is done to achieve the goal of achieving victory. A gang of ten people carried out an attack on the General Headquarters Rawalpindi in Pakistan in 2009. Consequently, this attack was considered to be an act of terrorism. Hybrid warfare was conclusively demonstrated in this manner. This ambitious assault was carried out with the express purpose of disproving the concept that a nation's nuclear program could continue to be safe, even if the military headquarters of that nation were susceptible to attack. As a result of the continuing propagation of misinformation in the aftermath of the attack, Pakistan's view of global security was further damaged. Because of the

contradictory nature of hybrid warfare, Pakistan is currently in a precarious situation.

This is because hybrid warfare poses a threat not just to Pakistan's security but also to the security of the entire world. As a consequence of the development of identity crises that originate from external sources, there has been a recurrent pattern of violence directed towards particular communities in regions such as Baluchistan and the KPK, which are of significant importance for international trade. Because the Hazara population in Baluchistan has been subjected to constant persecution for a long time, a substantial amount of hate has been built.

Several people who are present in the area have voiced their reservations over the measures taken by the authorities to protect their families. Following the brutal kidnapping and murder of eleven Hazara coal workers by the IS Group in 2021, a large split has arisen between the federal government and the aggrieved Hazara community in Pakistan on the most efficient measures to safeguard the safety of the Hazara people. This rift has been caused by the fact that the IS Group was responsible for it. The incident that took place in Dasu in 2021, in which Chinese individuals were the targets of attacks, caused the Pakistani public to express worries regarding the safety of foreign citizens who were living in the nation. Due to the circumstances, the Dasu Dam project was put on hold for an extended period. As a result of India's worrying collaboration with terrorist outfits and non-state actors, the law-and-order situation in certain regions of Pakistan is deteriorating. This is a cause for concern. Both the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), which are both considered to be terrorist groups, continue to receive financial and material support from India. As an example of this kind of aid, Kulbhushan Yadav's allegation that RAW gives financial support to the BLA, driven by malignant forces, serves as an illustration. One of the most harmful actions that India has taken is the 15-year campaign of information warfare and propaganda that it has been waging against Pakistan to undermine its international position, particularly inside the United Nations and the European Union.

In the year 2020, the European Union Disinformation Lab published "The Indian Chronicles," a comprehensive investigation that revealed India's utilization of over 750

websites across 119 nations to disseminate fabricated information on Pakistan and exclude it from global deliberations. This revealed the fallacy of this vile scheme, which was exposed by the publication of "The Indian Chronicles." Furthermore, the United States uses Pakistan's diplomatic isolation as a strategic tool to pressure the government and compel compliance with its policy directions. This is achieved by leveraging Pakistan's diplomatic isolation. Furthermore, the fact that Pakistan is included on the "grey list" of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) even though it has complied with all of the directions issued by the financial watchdog could be interpreted as an evil ploy that was coordinated by certain elements to put Pakistan's economic stability in jeopardy.

As a result of increasingly sophisticated cyber-attacks on Pakistani government organizations, the security situation in the country is deteriorating. When compared to other forms of hybrid warfare, data leaks, and cyberattacks have the potential to impact the state's routine operations in a manner comparable to that of conventional warfare. Several cyber assaults were launched against the National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) and the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) in 2021. The attacks that were discussed above caused harm to the infrastructure of Pakistan's financial security system and put the personal information of millions of people at risk of being compromised. In addition, supporters of the cyberespionage firm NSO Group believe that Imran Khan, the former prime minister of Pakistan, could be a prospective target of the Pegasus spyware application created in Israel in 2021.

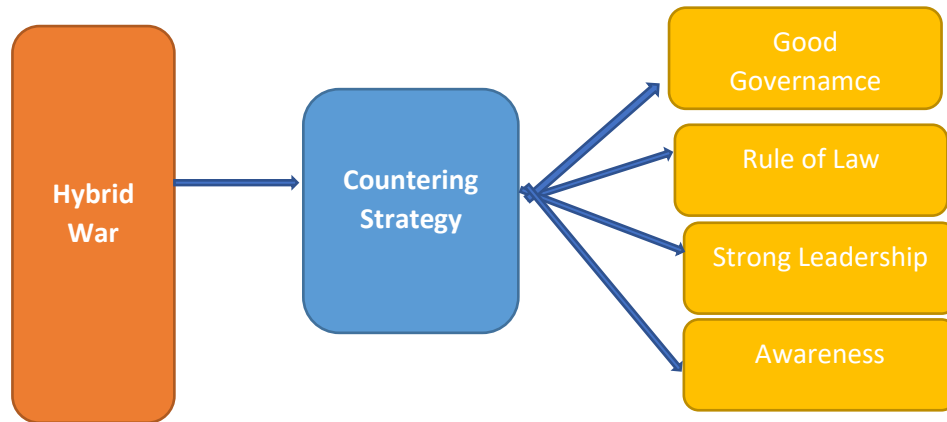
A Countering Strategy

A clear, cohesive, and coordinated strategy is pivotal for achieving desired goals in hybrid warfare. Strategic objectives are used to articulate policy decisions. These goals are aimed at countering a hybrid warfare operation. In a dynamic strategic environment, it is essential to revisit plans constantly. All efforts and activities to combat hybrid warfare are commendable and help achieve goals.

Furthermore, Pakistan is trying to strengthen its government's capacity and autonomy to deal with evolving threats and challenges. Its policies are to counter the effects of hybrid warfare on the fundamental functioning of government and society. Unfortunately, Pakistan is failing

to counter a hybrid war on the domestic front. **See for details Diagram 1.**

Diagram 1



Compiled by the Author

To that end, it has built resilience against hybrid attacks by identifying vulnerabilities and developing a consistent and coordinated approach to resolving them using diverse tools. It is intriguing because it hinders or deters an adversary from participating in hybrid warfare. While taking steps to protect one's ability to act independently may be discouraging (through deterrence-by-denial), Nonetheless, a comprehensive deterrent must go beyond simply threatening or imposing fees (deterrence-by-punishment). If necessary, hybrid deterrence should be constructed from the start and re-established, with thresholds defined based on the defenders' interests and the adversary's intent and capacity. In addition, Pakistan needs to properly articulate its counter-offensive strategy by identifying warfare. Further, it should effectively deter the aggressor, give a befitting response to, or prevent or disrupt the attacker.

Apart from these strategies, this study offers a few recommendations that could help tame the rising tide of hybrid warfare at the domestic level. First, the governance system should be improved in which capacity needs to be enhanced to take independent actions. Secondly, the rule of law should be obeyed; thirdly, corruption should be discouraged at all tiers of the society; fourthly, there is an urgent need for comprehensive and strong coordination among three key stakeholders of power- judiciary, military, and civilian regime, fifthly, strong leadership and political will is required to take strong decisions at the national and

international level, sixthly, the government should maximize awareness through various media outlets.

Conclusion:

It is well-known that the hybrid war has become a cancer for modern society. Nations are making efforts to find treatment for this cancer. Moreover, with the persistent efforts to broaden and deepen socio-political fault lines and our own continued carelessness, anti-Pakistan elements began to succeed in operationalizing this warfare. However, more rifts were made due to combining pre-existing language and ethnic differences. Further, social inequality and ignored strata made matters even more complicated, separating us horizontally and vertically and striking at the core of our reason for existing. We are working to correct such dividing trends since their impact on society is now substantial and effective. It's crucial to realize that evaluating and analyzing the phenomenon is insufficient; it must also be properly and cogently fought. The new art and science of combat will continue to exist.

It is believed that the nation has to develop a distinct and practical unifying strategy to deal with polarization on several levels, which would pave the way for a stronger and more cohesive Pakistan in the future. Due to the media's considerable involvement in spreading false information, misleading the public, spreading propaganda, and conducting real operations, the conflicts in Syria, Yemen, and Afghanistan are all examples of hybrid warfare. Due to its wider scope of propaganda and ambiguity, the entire world is regarded as the battleground since the conflict is about eroding state ownership.

The economy, sovereignty, territorial integrity, cultural identity, and ideological and ethnic cohesiveness are among the target areas in this conflict. Other target areas include theatre command, control, communications, and intelligence targets. Hybrid warfare entails a wide range of actions and uses many tools to destabilize a society's decision-making. Through hybrid warfare, the enemy of Pakistan can interfere, intrude, and disrupt Pakistani security mechanisms. There are many ways in which anti-Pakistan elements can have easy access. For instance, first, interference in electoral processes. In this process, an opponent might use strategies like media and social media campaigns and funding resources for a political party to

influence the results of an election in a way that benefits the opponent's political objectives, second, disinformation and fake news. It means our enemy could manipulate and misinterpret reality and use lies to divide society further. By doing so, the enemy can confuse the populace and make it challenging for a government to obtain support from the people for a certain policy or activity in Pakistan. Third, cyberattacks. They could threaten the civilian population, an enemy might put pressure on the Pakistani government, and, fourth, drone assaults. It means the enemy can interfere with critical communication lines on a smaller scale. Such a strategy may disrupt military aviation operations. Fourth, financial leverage. An enemy can potentially disturb foreign investment, supply lines, and international agreements. What needs to be done is to build resilience by promoting democracy, exchanging knowledge and skills, coordinating efforts at the inter-sectoral, regional, and global levels, involving civil society, and enhancing media literacy.

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