

Identifying Levels of Hybridity in War

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Hybrid warfare, as a concept and military strategy, is as old as the warfare itself. It employs a combination of political warfare alongside conventional warfare, irregular warfare and cyber-warfare. It also deploys variety of methods to instigate the people of the target state through media campaigns propagating fake news, diplomatic manoeuvres, manipulation of the workings of international institutions, and even interfering into electoral system.

Pakistan has been subjected to different forms of hybrid warfare over the last five decades, though the terminology gained ground only in recent years. Unfortunately, successive politico-military administrations in Pakistan failed to identify the levels of hybridity correctly and therefore the response prepared and executed was based on evolving situations. Resultantly, Pakistan's stance was not recognized by the global community, instead the perpetrators of hybrid war, led by India, were able to malign Pakistan for acts done by elements against it.

Therefore, it is necessary to correctly identify the levels of hybridity Pakistan has been subjected to, so that a coherent, sustainable, effective, and an integrated response is developed, and employed successfully.

For the elements of hybrid war to be effective against the target state, it is important that the campaign has an unrelenting support of the political leadership of launching country at the policy level. Such level of commitment by Indian political leadership was visible when it decided to support separatists' elements in erstwhile East Pakistan. India's deep involvement in the breakup of Pakistan through the hybrid deployment of integrated elements of hard and soft power was confessed by the incumbent Prime Minister Modi during his visit to Bangladesh in 2015. PM Modi takes pride in his arrest after participating in Satyagraha movement at the age of 20-22. However, the concept of Satyagraha movement as introduced by Gandhi was that of a non-violent movement against the evil, but Modi participated in a violent agitation movement which led to the breakup of Pakistan and created Bangladesh.

At the strategic level of hybridity, all elements of national security led by military establishments are deployed against the target state to achieve the stated objectives. After the creation of Bangladesh in 1971, to further impose existential threats to Pakistan, India carried out its nuclear tests 1974. Concurrently, US imposed sanctions on both India and Pakistan, which was far more harmful to Pakistan as it was refused an atomic reprocessing plant from France, sale of 110 A-7 aircraft from the US, and SAAB 37 Viggen aircraft from Sweden. In the early 1980s, India occupied the vacant and un-demarcated Siachen glacier, by employing the kinetic means of hybrid warfare.

At the operational level of hybridity, India deployed a combination of kinetic and non-kinetic elements of hybrid warfare in the post-nuclearized environment where an all-

out conventional war became a distant probability. The same was exposed by European watchdog DisInfoLab through the India Chronicles.

At the tactical level, India has been sponsoring the acts of terror in Karachi and Balochistan for the last two decades, through the active support of local operators, and Indian infiltrators, also highlighted in the India Chronicles.

Having identified the levels of hybridity employed against Pakistan, not only by India but also by the US and its allies, through economic and military sanctions in international institutions, such as International Monetary Fund (IMF), and above all the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Recent confession of India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar clearly reflects that FATF was used as a political tool against Pakistan as part of a policy decision by India alongside its western allies. Please refer to Dr Usman's article on the subject available on CASS website.

Therefore, to effectively counter known and unknown hybrid threats which would keep changing faces, Pakistan may formulate a multidimensional strategy which can counter the evolving threats at the corresponding levels of hybridity.

At the policy level, Pakistan may opt to respond to international organizations, institutions, and states collaborating against its vital national interests without any consideration of relationship, because 'Appeasement is a failed strategy and does not work in international affairs.' To do so, Pakistan must take its allies and strategic partners in confidence to counter the concerted efforts of its enemies, be it in kinetic or the non-kinetic domain.

At the strategic level, Pakistan may respond by disrupting enemy's designs through the use of emerging technologies and expose the perpetrators with available evidence. Pakistan must not shy away from raising the levels even if global players are visibly supporting India in its efforts to malign it. Jaishankar's admission about FATF must be highlighted and the responsible institutions must be questioned about the processes adopted to keep Pakistan in the grey list for so long, despite its best efforts.

At the operational level, apprehended must be summarily tried and punished to create deterrence in the hearts and minds of the potential terrorists. Media campaign must be well orchestrated so that enemy's efforts do not succeed in demoralizing the people, and local facilitators in the media must not be allowed to sell enemy's agenda in the garb of freedom of expression.

At the tactical level, Intelligence-Based Operations (IBO) must be continued in areas identified as hotspots. Similarly, Counter-Insurgency (CI), and Counter-terrorism (CT) strategies must be reviewed from time to time due to evolving threats and situations.

Pakistan is once going through troubled waters due to evolving regional environment. India and its western allies are not interested in stability of Pakistan and indeed the region and therefore, are likely to continue their effort of hybrid warfare at all levels, warranting a matching response.

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