

# HYBRID & PROXY WARFARE

**NEWS:** Recently, the Union Defence Minister emphasized that India's fight against terrorism is now part of its National Defence Doctrine, reinforcing its commitment to eliminating hybrid and proxy threats.

## WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

### Understanding Hybrid Warfare

#### 1. Definition and Objective

- Hybrid warfare is a strategy used to destabilize adversaries without resorting to open military conflict.
- It integrates both kinetic (traditional military force) and non-kinetic (cyber, information, economic) tools.

#### 2. Cyber Warfare

- Includes attacks on critical infrastructure such as power grids, banking systems, and government databases.
- Aim is to cripple operational capabilities and erode public trust in institutions.

#### 3. Disinformation Campaigns

- Involve spreading fake news, manipulated narratives, and propaganda via digital platforms.
- Goal is to polarize societies, influence public opinion, and undermine governance.

#### 4. Economic Coercion

- Use of sanctions, trade restrictions, and financial manipulation to hurt economic stability.
- Often used to exert geopolitical pressure without military action.

#### 5. Proxy Conflicts

- Support to insurgent groups or non-state actors in adversarial states to weaken internal security.
- Involves covert funding, training, and arms supply to these actors.

#### 6. Example: Russia-Ukraine Conflict

- Russia employed cyberattacks on Ukraine's grid and government networks, deployed drone warfare, and faced global economic sanctions.
- Demonstrates a comprehensive hybrid warfare approach involving multiple non-military fronts.

## II. Understanding Proxy Warfare: Indirect Conflict Through Third Parties

### 1. Definition and Modus Operandi

- Proxy warfare involves indirect engagement through local armed groups or proxies to fulfill strategic objectives.
- It allows the sponsor to avoid direct blame while destabilizing the adversary.

### 2. India's Experience with Proxy Warfare

- India has been a target of prolonged proxy warfare, primarily orchestrated by Pakistan.
- These acts are designed to weaken India internally and internationally.

### 3. Pakistan's Proxy War Tactics

- Cross-Border Terrorism: Targeting Indian civilians and security forces through terror outfits.
- Smuggling Operations: Drug and weapon smuggling, particularly in Punjab, to fuel unrest and radicalization.

## III. India's Response to Hybrid & Proxy Warfare

### A. Cyber Warfare Preparedness

#### 1. Emerging Threats

- State-sponsored cyber attacks, including malware infiltrations and spyware like Pegasus.

#### 2. Defensive Measures

- Establishment of CERT-In, Defence Cyber Agency, and formulation of a Cyber Security Policy.

### B. Tackling Information Warfare

## 1. Challenges

- Fake news, deep fakes, and disinformation campaigns targeting national cohesion.

## 2. Institutional Response

- PIB Fact-Check Unit, Draft Digital India Bill (2023) to regulate digital content and enhance accountability.

## C. Countering Proxy Warfare & Terrorism

### 1. Security Threats

- Terror financing, cross-border infiltration, and insurgent support networks.

### 2. Measures Taken

- Strengthening NIA, amendments to UAPA, compliance with FATF guidelines to curb funding sources.

## D. Military Doctrine and Capabilities

### 1. Challenges in the Gray Zone

- Maritime salami slicing, border skirmishes, and psychological operations.

### 2. Strategic Modernization

- Implementation of Theatre Commands, Tri-Service Joint Exercises, and Defence Space Agency (DSA) to counter multi-domain threats.

## E. Legal and Institutional Gaps

### 1. Current Limitations

- Absence of a unified legal framework or national strategy specific to hybrid warfare.

### 2. Need for Reform

- Proposal for a comprehensive National Hybrid Warfare Policy and coordinating body.

## IV. Key Strengthening Measures and Strategic Enhancements

### 1. Cyber Defense Infrastructure

- Enhancing digital surveillance, intrusion detection systems, and offensive cyber capabilities to deter and respond swiftly.

## 2. Military Modernization Initiatives

- Investments in Artificial Intelligence-based warfare, Electromagnetic Spectrum Control, Cyber-Physical Systems, and Space Security.

## 3. Institutional Reforms in Armed Forces

- Appointment of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) to ensure integrated operations.
- Creation of Integrated Battle Groups (IBGs) for rapid mobilization and response.
- Progress toward Military Theaterisation for joint-command efficiency.

## 4. Strengthening Intelligence Networks

- Active roles of RAW, IB, and NTRO in gathering, analyzing, and preempting threats across domains.

## 5. Building Strategic Global Partnerships

- Collaborating with allies for joint counter-disinformation operations and economic resilience.
- Example: India's participation in Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) to bolster regional security and technology cooperation.

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