HYBRID WARFARE AND THE CROSS TRAINED THEATRE OF COMMAND

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स्वधर्ममपि चावेक्ष्य न विकम्पितुमर्हसि ।
धर्म्याद्धि युद्धाच्छ्रेयोऽन्यत्क्षत्रियस्य न विद्यते ॥ २-३१॥
(Shri Madbhagwat, pp. 2-31)

Even if you have to look at your dharma (duty), you should not hesitate to fight as the basic duty of the martial race is to fight for the righteous and there is nothing more important than that.
Be bothered of your assignment - In the battlefield, there are different kinds of assignments given to different sets of people. All assignments are unique in their respect and are distributed among the people as per their abilities and acumen. In the battlefield, every assigned work to individuals must be carried out effectively and efficiently without being concerned about activities that are not assigned to him. If every assignment is performed in its best form, the battle no more remains invincible.

Warfare from time immemorial has been manifested in many forms. In the pre-historic times it was more for the control of resources resulting into ground fights for supremacy. As the techniques and horizons evolved, the deployment of varied strategies and tools came to the fore. The resources for the battlefield ranged from the surface to air to water and then to space and finally in the abstract domains of cyber. The unique abilities of commanders to mix and utilize the resources available in these realms in proper proportions and timely utilization resulted into more complex warring behaviors.

The earliest forms of warfare mainly deployed resources on ground such as the ground forces in the form of trained military, which later included the resources in air as well as on sea in the form of air assets and water assets of higher endurances. The mobility of equipment from one location to the other during

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war also became significantly fast and therefore had definite effect on shifting locus of war zone from one location to another very swiftly. Space assets began to realize importance in the last forty to fifty years when quest to weaponize the space became one of the glaring challenges for many advanced nations. The nature of the domain being symmetric and was heavily dependent on the scientific knowhow, investments as well as the strategic positioning of the nation state, the domain was open only to select few and others had entry barriers in this realm of warfare.

The military commanders had by this time begun to realize the importance of joint commands where all the realms could combine their respective strengths to give a synergic effect to the outcome of a war. Several joint commands were set up in different countries in order to augment their resources together to have decisive edge over their adversaries. The space assets were utilized for identifying the position of their adversary as well as keep a watch on the communication that could be of strategic advantage to them. This led to a completely new domain of warfare where eyes and ears of the nation states got extended in space and could provide actionable intelligence in the real time about the adversary.

A famous quote from Mao Zedong –

 "In order to win victory we must try our best to seal the eyes and the ears of the enemy, making him blind and deaf, and to create confusion in the minds of enemy commands, driving them insane." (Zedong, 1949)

This was the time when electromagnetic spectrum were used and misused for the advantage of the nation states. Space added a new flavor to such operations. Satellites positioned in the orbit were equipped to take sub meter resolution pictures of areas of their interest and were in a position to feed in directly to the ground stations in real time thereby spelling out the positioning of the enemy assets on ground. Later, the communication satellites were also in a position to intercept radio and other communications off any area and position on the globe.

Now, the strengths of the space, integrated with the real time battle assessment techniques and fusing of information obtained through several channels including human intelligence provided a fairly intelligent situational awareness

to the nation state and therefore a realistic assessment led to increased lethality. These aspects of warfare theories as yet were more symmetric in nature and therefore were useful in determining the balance of power at the global levels.

The advent of cyber came as a completely new dynamics of warfare. The pros of adopting cyber surpassed the cons of such adoption and therefore more and more nations gradually shifted their infrastructure based services from the physical domain to the virtual domains. The critical information infrastructure began to be relied upon for citizen based services and its resilience became one of the important factors of governance. The global market opening up to the market driven global village began to see the utilization of the networked resources primarily relying on the connected networks which later on graduated to the cloud based infrastructure etc.

The famous treatise of war – the Art of War by Sun Tzu states –

"..now the reason the enlightened prince and the wise general conquer the enemy whenever they move and their achievements surpass those ordinary men is – foreknowledge." (Tzu, 475-221 BC)

Foreknowledge or in the current parlance Intelligence was considered to be the most important factor in ensuring a win without fighting. All the platforms of warfare

There was yet another shift in paradigm where the cyber might could affect the health of a nation more than the military might. The loss of business and disruption in utility and infrastructural services could inflict greater damage than even the conventional methods. Economic Warfare, Currency Manipulations as well as Payment systems therefore became the instruments and platforms for creating effect in the warfare zone. The 4D's – Disruption, Denial, Degradation and Destruction of key assets became important consideration for any warfare strategies across the globe. The platforms began to be used and misused for asymmetric gains and combination of platforms and tools became even more disruptive.

The next big change in the game of asymmetries came in the form of social media and its wide usage. The platform permeated into the cognitive as well as the non-cognitive domains where many of the facts could be empirically

verified, however the majority of it remained unverified and devoid of logical deduction. The swiftness and the fast mobility and spread of information through these platforms made it almost impossible to rely on the empirical information and factual knowledge as it was impossible to verify the same using available methods in the limited time. Also, to add complications in the matter, the spread of information whether right or deep fake is geometric thereby making the search engines pick and assign higher grading to such deep fakes leaving the right information behind several pages in the search list. Computer Vision was yet another game changer in the domain of cyber. On one hand it was to produce a great enablement to the systems at large, on the other hand it proved to be a great weapon of war. The ease with which the machines could be trained and made to learn and create text, context as well as pictures and videos, the scenario became all the more difficult to paint. While the issues of fakes and the deep fakes are still catching the attention of most law enforcement agencies today, the technical aspects of the same is already being deployed as a part of the media toolkit for strategic warfare in the hybridized domain of warfare.

Over the period of time, the zones of warfare – the land, sea, water, space and cyber have now matured to a great deal. While the conventional weapons are being innovated on a day to day basis by arms producing states, the non-conventional weapons of war such as the information domain is watching the weaponization by large and small states and non-state actors on an hourly basis. The uncontrolled and no entry barriers have led this domain of warfare available to all and sundry making it more complex than ever before.

Hybrid warfare is not a new word coined in the dictionary of warfare. The ancient epics like Shri Mad have references to each of these forms of warfare including some of the abstract domains of occult and Tantras which is yet to find place in the modern methods subscribed in the hybrid warfare of today's world. The basis tenets of warfare has been beautifully not only illustrated but also exhibited in multiple stories of war including intelligence gathering, diplomacy, misinformation, virtualization, worship, strategic weapons and many such aspects that have only manifested itself now in technical terms, however all the aspects do have reference to our rich historical heritage.

Hybrid warfare in terms of Wikipedia is–

" *a theory of military strategy first proposed by Frank Hoffman which employs political warfare and blends conventional warfare, irregular warfare and cyber warfare with other influencing methods, such as fake news, diplomacy, lawfare and foreign electoral interventions. By combining kinetic operations with subversive efforts, the aggressor intends to avoid attribution or retribution"* (contributors, 2024)

Hybrid form of warfare has the following sub-components –

- (a) Conventional Warfare
- (b) Economic Warfare
- (c) Diplomatic Warfare
- (d) Information Warfare
- (e) Psychological Warfare
- (f) Spiritual Warfare
- (g) Space Warfare

(h) Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Warfare

Each of these sub-components of the hybrid warfare are a realm in itself however a short description of these forms of warfare are given below –

Conventional Warfare – Conventional Warfare comprises of the traditional methods of warfare that involves engagement of military powers in the air, sea, land and space. Foreknowledge plays an important role in this form of warfare and are normally extracted through COMINT (Communication Intelligence), HUMINT(Human Intelligence), IMINT(Image Intelligence), ELINT(Electronic Intelligence). Different technical as well as non-technical methods are deployed to glean information about the adversary in order to gain significant strategic advantage over the adversary. Sophisticated weapons and military might are the single most important denominator for a decisive win in this form of battle.

Economic Warfare – While most nations in the bi-polar world focus their attention on the well being of their population, the major agenda of governance remains economic prosperity of the nation state. In order to attain a state of economic dominance, the nation states try and exploit their resources both natural as well as artificial in the optimum and efficient way. The advent of a global economic village and opening up of the global markets have led to the exchange of goods and services across the globe with much ease and therefore the cross currency trades and a favorable balance of trade becomes one of the target for welfare states. Having an ability to influence the economic processes of ones adversary therefore has become one of the most potent weapon of warfare. Share markets, banking sectors, money market, interest rates are now closely related to the well being of the nation state and therefore any method to disturb the balance is counter productive for the state.

Diplomatic Warfare – Diplomatic warfare is a form of warfare where global influence plays a major and decisive role. This form of warfare relies its effect on the diplomatic underpinnings and exploits the relationship with friendly, neutral and hostile nations by deploying the right mix of techniques and strategies. Sanctions and trade barriers act as a potent tool for such diplomatic warfare.

Information Warfare – Information Warfare in the current times has gained enormous traction. The domain of information has a special ability to reach every nook and corner of the world with a click of a button. Also, since the utility services, essential services, and other critical information infrastructure heavily rely on the deployment of information technology and communication networks, the destruction, denial, degradation and disruption can cause heavy damages to the nation state sometimes may even effect the continuity of the government. Information warfare has another attribute of being available at all times without geographical boundaries. The asymmetric nature of this domain does not distinguish or debar non-state actors from participating in the battle.

Wikipedia defines asymmetric warfare as –

" a type of war between belligerents whose relative military power, strategy or tactics differ significantly. This type of warfare often, but not necessarily, involves insurgents or resistance movement militias who may have the status of unlawful combatants against a standing army". (contributors, 2024)

Psychological Warfare – Perception in the current global dynamics play a great role in winning or losing the battle. Social media acts as an excellent tool of such forms of warfare where technological enablement help create information that builds or destroys perception thereby causing psychological pressure in the minds of the adversary.

Spiritual Warfare – Spiritual warfare is a very old form of warfare that was in historic times practiced by the Christians in the form of occult and spirits. The super natural forms of beings were made to influence the direction of the war. It was slated to create influence in the minds of people and aspects such as black magic, tantras as well as spiritual practices gained significance. This form of warfare once again has started to gain momentum in the current world order though behind the curtains at the moment.

Space Warfare – With several nations breaching the earth gravitation have reached the outer space and have also positioned their technical assets in space. These technical assets are in the form of sensors that are capable of providing communication links but at the same time have extra ordinary advantages in terms of intercepting the communication from space to mapping the landscape of the globe. The real time sub-resolution pictures and videos are helpful in

identifying assets and give out a great deal of information to the advantage of the nation using this form of warfare. Also, weaponization of the space and destroying assets in the outer space would have significant effect on the future warfare dynamics.

Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Warfare – This form of warfare is more strategic in nature and has long term consequence on the human survival on the mother earth. Normally, such forms of warfare are restricted by the theory of no-first use, however provocations may lead to a devastating effect of this form of warfare. The outbreak of COVID 19 though is controversial but some argue that it is the first wave of a biological warfare tested by some nation states.
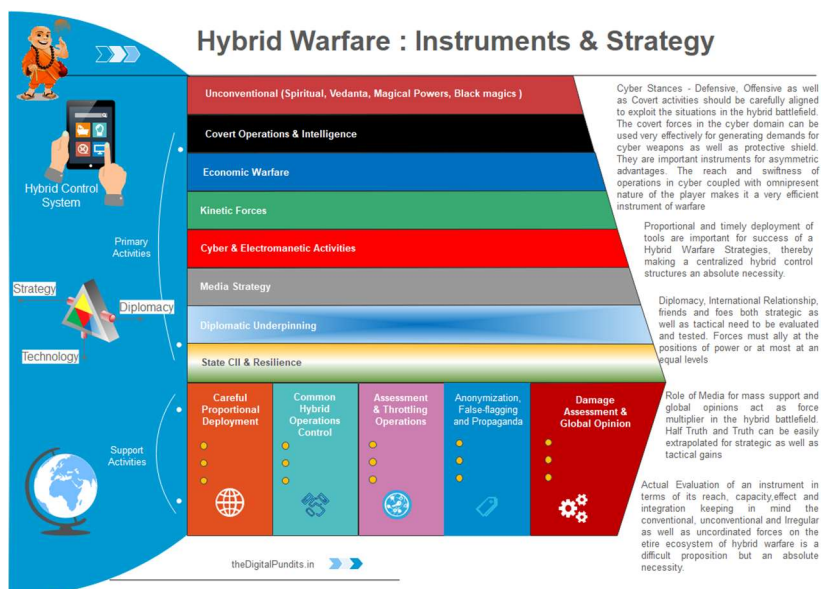
Robotics and Artificial Intelligence Warfare – The deployment of machines and robotics with special abilities and trained brain set is yet another challenge. The robots capable of making human like decisions aided with super intelligence, machine learning algorithms and in some cases self learning algorithms are sure to find deployment in military strategies. The terminator kind of weaponized robots are no more a figment of fiction but is a reality today.

While each of the sub-components of hybrid warfare are lethal in their cause and effect, the situation would further become more complex when smart and able military commanders and the political bureaucracy would mix and match, the components with varying magnitude and create a warfare toolkit with effective and efficient management of war. All the aspects would be adequately chosen, deployed at the right time in right proportions and then using technology the flags would be raised to cover up and deflect the cause else where.

Ancient epic Shri Mad Bhagwad has very clearly defined the different tenets of a hybrid warfare. It on one hand mentions the importance of a situational awareness for battlefield assessment where Dhritarashtra (Dhritarashtra was the king of the Kuru kingdom, with its capital at Hastinapura. He was born

blind, which some interpret as a symbol of his flawed judgement. He fathered one hundred sons, known as the Kauravas, with his wife Gandhari. His eldest son, Duryodhana, played a pivotal role in the conflict with the Pandavas) takes the first hand stock of the battle field through Sanjay, it talks of the basics of war such as – know your enemy, know your strength, assess the strike capability of your enemy, understand the enemy's strategies, plan your strategy, identify vulnerabilities of your enemy, timely exploitation of the vulnerability and many such aspects so important for the winning of the war.

A quote from Shrimad -

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय | सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते || 2-48 || (Shri Madbhagwat, pp. 2-48)

Performing Yoga is about doing your duties and not have attachments with success or failure. When success and failure are equipoised, this is what is called Equanimous Yoga.

Performance over Results - This is the verse where principles of Karma are defined. It says that the action must be the sole activity in a battlefield, the thought of the result of the battle front must be in the back of the mind and should not be the primary one. If all the positioned assets determined to perform their respective parts of the activity in the battle field just do their jobs optimally, the results of the war would automatically follow. Therefore, a war commander must instill a sense of action in the forces and strive to optimally position his assets in the battlefield with specific jobs and identified tasks including benchmarks of performance.

Conclusion

Hybrid warfare is a mix of the conventional, unconventional, stereotypical, non-stereotypical, regular and irregular form of warfare where the actors come not only from the state but non-state actors too play a major role. The domain of warfare is not just the physical space but can be waged in the abstract domains of cyber, psychology and occult. The permeation of this form of warfare in the cognitive as well as non-cognitive domains make it potent and lethal in its effect.

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