

Note from the Editor

Carl von Clausewitz had noted, “*Every age has its own kind of war, its own limiting conditions, and its own peculiar preconceptions*”. If that stands valid, then the 21st century is definitely an age cut above all the past centuries, including the one which saw the two World Wars. Violence, conflict and wars may easily be defined within measurable parameters. Globalisation and revolution due to the advent of information technology ushered in the darker side of globalisation, existentialism and the Hobbesian notion of “a man in the state of nature”. Instead of the state as an actor to wage war against an adversary which was also a state, and, hence, a unit for post behavioural analysis, the world actors, comprising nation states, are facing an adversary that incorporates a “diverse and dynamic combination of conventional, irregular, terrorist and criminal capabilities”.

The rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and the ultimate neutralisation of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi on October 26, 2019, by the personnel of the US Delta Force in which the US had to secure permission from Russia, Iraq and Turkey to fly over their air space, represents the global nature of hybrid adversaries who will continue to flourish for a considerable period of time in the present 21st century. The US further proceeded to dispose off the body of the globally acclaimed terrorist by burying it at sea, as was done in the case of Osama bin Laden in 2011, to institutionalise a violent methodology to checkmate the emergence of any iconic benchmark of leadership amongst the perpetrators of hybrid adversaries. Historically, one can see the globalisation of the phenomenon of hybrid adversaries by the two significant leaders of terror groups operating to destabilise the geographical areas of the world under their influence for years. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was not only a leader of the most brutal terrorist organisation but also the Islamic State’s leader.

He, thus saw, hybrid threat as a mechanism which can be represented as a diverse and dynamic combination of irregular forces and criminal elements all unified to achieve mutually benefiting effects. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, thus, represented a non-state entity within the state system. It is evident that the global system had learnt very little for tackling hybrid adversaries from the threat posed by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) operating in Sri Lanka before it was neutralised by the use of conventional forces in the most unconventional manner.

However, the term hybrid threat or defining hybrid warfare has led to many a debate because there is no universally acceptable definition to explain them. The term hybrid warfare, at a normative and intellectual level, appears to be too abstract and the latest thinking seriously considers referring to irregular methods to counter a conventionally superior force. A hybrid adversary is a complex, non-standard and fluid adversary which demonstrates flexibility and adapts rapidly, uses advanced weapon systems and many a disruptive technologies plus mass communication for propaganda for recruitment and to spread fake news. A hybrid war takes place in conventional battlefields, amongst the indigenous population of the war zone and the international community. Therefore, it is pertinent to counter such threats not only militarily but also through unconventional means to make it more holistic. As is evident, the ISIS-like phenomena proliferate because these are not just terrorist organisations but comprise an idea which operates as a highly decentralised entity. Thus, countering it would require a strategy that cuts its basic supply chain, that is, the ISIS needs to be refrained from monetising its acquired natural resource which is oil. If not contained at the primal stage, these entities will sprawl, as ISIS-like organisations can be equated with metastasised cancer, and can form an example for other such hybrid adversaries to be a mirror image in operations. Therefore, the world has to take note of these to contain this phenomenon.

Similarly, in South Asia, India faces a challenge from hybrid adversaries in its neighbourhood which support terrorism as a state policy. The situational success of such a policy against India has started acting as a catalyst to germinate hybrid adversaries amongst the other neighbouring states which have failed to provide good governance, economic stability and ideological preconditions through strong and ethical leadership, resulting in creating splinter groups identifying themselves as a product of the crisis of identity. It has, thus, become essential for India to pay utmost attention to neutralise the adverse effects of hybrid adversaries emanating from almost the entire region of South Asia. To undo the adverse effect and prevent India from being embroiled in protracted hybrid warfare, it is essential to understand and study the normative, cultural and civilisational preconditions that further the cause of hybrid adversaries around it.

The essays in this special edition of the *CLAWS Journal* comprise an attempt by a bevy of young but entrenched professionals focussing their attention on the issue related to the evolution of, as well as the prescriptive recommendations to tackle, hybrid warfare. It is hoped that these very perceptive articles will lead to a major debate and aid our understanding of hybrid adversaries which have become a threat to India's national security perspectives.

Prof. Gautam Sen
Editor-in-Chief
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