

Regional Security Implications of the Hybrid War in Afghanistan

A Fuard^{1#}

¹Director-Resurge, 17, 5th Lane, Colombo 03

[#]asiffuard@gmail.com

Abstract

In the aftermath of the US and NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, the war-torn nation has experienced a significant shift in the nature of its endless conflict. Following the Taliban regaining power by ousting the Kabul regime, Afghanistan has once again transcended as the latest geopolitical battleground for superpowers and regional state actors. The perpetual state of war in Afghanistan has converged local and transnational militant aspirations with geopolitical interests - leading to a nexus between state and non-state actors that are engaging in a hybrid war. The utilization of hybrid warfare strategies in Afghanistan by state and non-state actors has added a new dimension to the conflict, which has developed into the latest major threat to peace and security in the South and Central Asian region. As the Taliban grapples to maintain its hold on governance, their authority and legitimacy faces persistent challenges from local militants and transnational terrorist groups. This complex milieu provides a space for state actors and militant groups to operate below the threshold of a conventional war, by employing synchronized multidimensional methods of warfare. The objective of this paper is to help guide strategic thinking by understanding the applications of the concept of hybrid warfare in the context of the conflict in Afghanistan. This analysis examines the implications to regional security in South and Central Asia, by exploring the current trajectory of Afghanistan's perpetual war, which has evolved into a state of "perpetual hybridity" resulting from hybrid strategies that are directed by state and non-state actors.

Keywords: *Hybrid warfare, Perpetual War, Perpetual Hybridity, Afghanistan, Taliban, Islamic State Khorasan Province, Regional Security, Battle-space*