

Hybrid Warfare & the TPLF-Junta in Ethiopia

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Introduction

Viewed from international relations perspectives, hybrid warfare *combines military and nonmilitary* plus covert and overt means, such as disinformation, cyberattacks, economic coercion, law-fare, corruption, and irregular and regular forces. Hybrid methods are used to blur the lines between war and peace.

In recent years, using the lessons learned during the recent American and NATO-Pact member countries' joint hybrid war experience on Syria, Libya and Yemen, implemented by using humanitarian support and democracy as pretexts to justify their interference in these nations' domestic affairs.

Historically, the Western neocolonial domination remains persistently motivated by backstabbing Ethiopia's legitimately elected government out of sheer domination and utterly in defense of their vested self-interest in Africa. Both the Biden government and the NATO-Pact member nations in Europe are sore with PM Abiy's geopolitical balancing game between Washington and Beijing. PM Abiy believes in the motto: African problems be solved by African solutions.

Although the US-hand-picked and appointed former TPLF-regime was kind of related to China while on power, this time, the Biden administration pushed heavily to coerce PM Abiy to distance Ethiopia from its tie with China, which did not materialize as demanded by a number of Biden-admin's envoys. Consequently, to implement their Hybrid War on Ethiopia, the joint American and NATO-Pact groups jointly their diplomatic fight with all possible means with the aim to return the TPLF-combatant group to power in Addis Ababa, and if not in a national governing capacity, then, at least, to succeed from Ethiopia and maintain the Tigray region as its own autonomy.

Subsequently, the Biden administration and its allies continue to do everything that would frustrate and deter the PM Abiy government in their efforts to "contain" China. In order to understand this ongoing controversy in clear manner I would like to explain the modus operandi of hybrid warfare in some detail picking the most salient features of it.

Hybrid warfare is a warfare tactic characterized with the following six aspects:

- 1) A non-standard, complex, and fluid adversary. A hybrid adversary can be state or non-state. For example, in the Israel–Hezbollah War of 2006 and the Syrian Civil War, the main adversaries are non-state entities within the state system. The non-state actors can act as proxies for countries but have independent agendas as well. For example, Iran is a sponsor of Hezbollah, but it was Hezbollah's, not Iran's, agenda that resulted in the kidnapping of Israeli troops that led to the Israel–Hezbollah War. On the other hand, Russian involvement in Ukraine can be described as a traditional state actor waging a hybrid war (in addition to using a local hybrid proxy) although Russia denies involvement in the Ukraine conflict.^[1, 2, 3]
- 2) A hybrid adversary uses a combination of conventional and irregular methods. Methods and tactics may include conventional capabilities, irregular tactics, irregular formations, diplomacy, politics, terrorist acts, indiscriminate violence, and criminal activity. A hybrid adversary may also use clandestine actions to avoid attribution or retribution. The methods are used simultaneously across the spectrum of conflict with a unified strategy. A current example is the Islamic State's transnational aspirations, blended tactics, structured formations, and cruel use of terrorism as part of its arsenal.^[4, 5, 6]
- 3) A hybrid adversary is flexible and adapts quickly. For example, the Islamic State's response to the US aerial bombing campaign was a quick reduction of the use of checkpoints, of large convoys, and of cellphones. Militants also dispersed among the civilian population. Civilian collateral damage from airstrikes can be used as an effective recruiting tool.^[7, 8]
- 4) A hybrid adversary uses advanced weapons systems and other disruptive technologies. Such weapons can be now bought at bargain prices.^[9, 10] Moreover, other novel technologies are being adapted to the battlefield such as cellular networks. In 2006 Hezbollah was armed with

¹ Fleming, Brian P. (2011-05-19). ["Hybrid threat concept: contemporary war, military planning and the advent of unrestricted operational art"](#) (PDF). [United States Army Command and General Staff College](#). Archived from the original on 2015-08-05. Retrieved 2015-08-05.

² Grant, Greg (2008-05-01). ["Hybrid Wars"](#). [Government Executive](#). National Journal Group. Archived from the original on 2015-08-05. Retrieved 2015-08-05.

³ Deep, Alex (2015-03-02). ["Hybrid War: Old Concept, New Techniques"](#). [Small Wars Journal](#). Small Wars Foundation. Retrieved 2015-08-05.

⁴ Pindják, Peter (2014-11-18). ["Deterring hybrid warfare: a chance for NATO and the EU to work together?"](#). [NATO Review](#). Archived from the original on 2015-08-05. Retrieved 2015-08-05.

^{5,55} Hoffman, Frank (2007). *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid War*. Arlington: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies. p. 24.

⁶ Standish, Reid (2018-01-18). ["Inside a European Center to Combat Russia's Hybrid Warfare"](#). [Foreign Policy](#). Retrieved 2018-01-22.

⁷ Fleming, Brian P. (2011-05-19). ["Hybrid threat concept: contemporary war, military planning and the advent of unrestricted operational art"](#) (PDF). [United States Army Command and General Staff College](#). Archived from the original on 2015-08-05. Retrieved 2015-08-05.

⁸ El Mawy, Reda (2014-09-30). ["Islamic State 'adapting to US-led air strikes'"](#). [BBC News](#). Archived from the original on 2015-08-05. Retrieved 2015-08-05.

⁹ Whitney, Craig R. (December 2012). ["Ruling Arms"](#). [World Policy Journal](#). **29** (4): 86–93. doi:[10.1177/0740277512470932](#). Archived from [the original](#) on 28 December 2012. Retrieved 17 June 2016.

¹⁰ Schroeder, Matt & Lamb, Guy (2006). ["The Illicit Arms Trade in Africa"](#) (PDF). [African Analyst](#). Archived from [the original](#) (PDF) on 21 February 2007. Retrieved 17 June 2016.

high-tech weaponry, such as precision guided missiles, which nation-states typically use. Hezbollah forces shot down Israeli helicopters, severely damaged a patrol boat with a cruise missile, and destroyed heavily-armored tanks by firing guided missiles from hidden bunkers. It also used aerial drones to gather intelligence, communicated with encrypted cellphones, and watched Israeli troop movements with thermal night-vision equipment.^[11, 12]

- 5) Use of mass communication for propaganda. The growth of mass communication networks offers powerful propaganda and recruiting tools.^[13, 14] The use of fake-news websites to spread false stories is a possible element of hybrid warfare.^[15, 16, 17]
- 6) A hybrid war takes place on three distinct battlefields. They are the conventional battlefield, the indigenous population of the conflict zone, and the international community.^[18, 19]

Hybrid Warfare's Relation to the Grey-zone War

The concepts of "hybrid warfare" and the "grey-zone war" possibly build on some age-old military strategies. What is relatively new now being the adversaries exploiting information technology vulnerabilities to achieve an outcome.

As regards the 'Grey-zone war' threats, cyber-attacks, poisonings, espionage and disinformation are all examples of grey zone activities, but that list is not exhaustive. For this reason, there is great need to prepare a defense force that is ready to counter any potential grey zone threats in a given country

The concept of grey-zone warfare (or conflicts) is distinct from the concept of hybrid warfare,²⁰ although the two ideas are intimately linked as most often they apply unconventional tools and

¹¹ Grant, Greg (2008-05-01). "[Hybrid Wars](#)". [Government Executive](#). National Journal Group. [Archived](#) from the original on 2015-08-05. Retrieved 2015-08-05.

¹² Deep, Alex (2015-03-02). "[Hybrid War: Old Concept, New Techniques](#)". [Small Wars Journal](#). Small Wars Foundation. Retrieved 2015-08-05.

¹³ Jasper, Scott; Moreland, Scott (2014-12-02). "[The Islamic State is a Hybrid Threat: Why Does That Matter?](#)". [Small Wars Journal](#). Small Wars Foundation. Retrieved 2015-08-05.

¹⁴ Standish, Reid (2018-01-18). "[Inside a European Center to Combat Russia's Hybrid Warfare](#)". [Foreign Policy](#). Retrieved 2018-01-22.

¹⁵ Pindják, Peter (2014-11-18). "[Deterring hybrid warfare: a chance for NATO and the EU to work together?](#)". [NATO Review](#). [Archived](#) from the original on 2015-08-05. Retrieved 2015-08-05.

¹⁶ Lucian Kim, [Russia having success in hybrid war against Germany](#), [Reuters](#) (February 7, 2016).

¹⁷ Sean Sullivan, [A Joint Centre To Combat Hybrid Warfare Threats](#), [F-Secure](#) (November 24, 2016).

¹⁸ Pindják, Peter (2014-11-18). "[Deterring hybrid warfare: a chance for NATO and the EU to work together?](#)". [NATO Review](#). [Archived](#) from the original on 2015-08-05. Retrieved 2015-08-05.

¹⁹ McCuen, John J. "[Hybrid Wars](#)" (PDF). [Military Review](#). **88** (2): 107.

²⁰ Stoker, Donald; Whiteside, Craig (Winter 2020). "[Blurred Lines: Gray-Zone Conflict and Hybrid War—Two Failures of American Strategic Thinking](#)". [Naval War College Review](#). **73** (1): 1–37.

hybrid techniques in the grey-zone warfare.²¹ However many of the unusual tools used by some states in the grey-zone include, among others, such aggressive means as propaganda campaigns, economic pressure and the use of non-state entities that initially may not cross over the usual threshold into formalized direct state-level aggression.²²

Grey zone warfare operations may not clearly cross the threshold of war. That might be due to the ambiguity of international law, ambiguity of actions and attribution, or because the impact of the activities does not justify a response. In recent years, cyber-attacks, and the subversion of our democratically elected governments and their public institutions by means of fake news and misinformation through the main and social media centers have created unwanted tension and civil unrest as well as social cohesion and national security in the Horn of Africa and other parts of the continent.

A proxy war is an armed conflict between two states or non-state actors which act on the instigation or on behalf of other parties that are not directly involved in the hostilities. Whereas conventional warfare is generally used to reduce the aggressor's or the opponent's military capability directly through attacks and maneuvers, unconventional warfare is an attempt used to achieve victory indirectly through a proxy force sent on mission to invade and make a surprise attack.

A hybrid warfare is a newly emerging, but murky concept examined in recent conflict studies, and it refers to the use of unconventional methods as part of a multi-domain warfighting approaches strategically designed to disrupt and disable an opponent's actions without engaging in open and direct hostilities.

In Africa, hybrid warfare is employed as part of a broader campaign – including political, criminal and economic activities to cripple the well-being of a nation under surveillance. And because this tactic mainly features the ambiguity associated with the grey zone, it is well suited to achieve political outcomes without resorting to traditional conflict. The effects and outcomes of hybrid warfare are often in the headlines today jointly used by the US and its NATO-Pact member countries in Europe in applying covert approaches on several African countries. Jointly US and NATO member countries intervene through spreading an open hybrid warfare strategy aimed to strengthen their arrogant neocolonial governing (controlling) conditions in parts of Africa. Their styles of intimidation and intervention actions have involved a combination of propagative activities, including mass disinformation campaigns by using the main and social media centers; economic manipulation, employing surprise warfare attacks by means of proxies

²¹ Carment, David; Belo, Dani. ["Gray-zone Conflict Management: Theory, Evidence, and Challenges"](http://www.airuniversity.af.edu). www.airuniversity.af.edu. Air Force University. Retrieved 18 February 2021.

²² Belo, Dani; Carment, David. ["Grey-Zone Conflict: Implications for Conflict Management"](http://www.cgai.ca). www.cgai.ca. CGAI. Retrieved 24 February 2021.

and insurgencies; exerting diplomatic pressures, joint military operations and pretentious legal actions that provide the excuse for further overt invasion and toppling of undesirable African governments

The term hybrid warfare originally referred to irregular non-state actors with advanced military capabilities. The first detectable academic use of the term “hybrid” as introduced to approaches of warfare dates back to 2007, when LTC Frank Hoffman wrote about the rise of hybrid wars in the Middle Eastern country context, namely, the combination of kinetic and non-military tools used by actors such as Hezbollah during Israel's military campaign of 2006. When directly attacking on battle fields, hybrid warfare uses such military tactics as invasion, insurgency, intervention, wave of human storming, surprise attacks, proxy war, range war, ethnic war, religious war, etc. For instance, in the 2006 Israel-Lebanon War, Hezbollah employed a host of different tactics against Israel that included guerilla warfare and use of technology for sharing information campaigning. Following that war, in 2007, the US defense researcher Frank Hoffman expanded on the terms “hybrid threat” and “hybrid warfare” to describe employing multiple, diverse tactics simultaneously against an opponent.²³

The 2014 ISIL advance into Iraq

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is a non-state actor that uses hybrid tactics against the conservative Iraqi military. Usually, ISIL has makeshift aspirations and uses irregular and regular tactics and terrorism.²⁴ In response to this, the Iraqi government turned to hybrid tactics by using non-state and international actors to counter the ISIL's advance. Amidst the scene, the US was a hybrid participant and used a combination of outdated air power, advisers to Iraqi government troops, the Kurdish Peshmerga, and the sectarian militias; it also trained opposition forces within Syria. This hybrid war was a conflict with an interconnected group of state and non-state actors pursuing overlapping goals and a weak local state.²⁵ The main phase of the conflict ended following the defeat of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in the country in 2017 but a low-level ISIL insurgency is ongoing in the rural north parts of the country.

The recently propagated disinformation and propaganda deception campaigns are not new concepts in warfare, but we have seen a significant change in how information is being manipulated by the US and its NATO-Pact member countries, especially when it comes to

²³ Hoffman, Frank (2007). *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid War*. Arlington: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies. p. 24

²⁴ Jasper, Scott; Moreland, Scott (2014-12-02). ["The Islamic State is a Hybrid Threat: Why Does That Matter?"](#). *Small Wars Journal*. Small Wars Foundation. Retrieved 2015-08-05.

²⁵ Schroefl, Josef; Kaufman, Stuart J. (2014-10-03). ["Hybrid Actors, Tactical Variety: Rethinking Asymmetric and Hybrid War"](#). *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. **37** (10): 862–880. doi:10.1080/1057610X.2014.941435. ISSN 1057-610X.

employing the renown media centers like BBC, CNN, Aljazeera, AFP, UPS, etc., as well as through social media headquarters like Facebook, Google, and Twit to take the lead in spreading dramatic and one-sided fake news to influence public opinion to their side. Although the Western governments have demonstrated the ability for their joint intent to concoct a well-coordinated fake news and misinformation domestically in their respective countries, at the sometime, they disseminate and combat to control the African nations' welfare and security under their desired approaches to satisfy their own vested interests for economic dominance.

African demand to be represented in the UN-Security Council

Africa's absence from the UN-security Council's representation on permanent basis is a historic neocolonial injustice that requires instant correction. With its 1.2 billion population size, it is astonishing to know that Africa is the only continent not currently represented in the permanent category of the Council and, at the same time, underrepresented in the non-permanent category as well. By all fairness, it is high time to demand that Africa must be represented by at least two to four permanent seats and by five to seven non-permanent ones. Especially since 2009, African leaders including PM Abiy Ahmed have intensively and persistently been demanding for permanent representation of Africa in the UN-Security Council. If given the righteous opportunity for representation, this means Africa's ability to veto can provide an effective check on ill-advised hybrid warfare schemes and its use to prevent Western nations' periodically scheduled aggressive missions to thwart Africa through their dubious interventionist ventures in the pretext of defending democracy and human rights in the continent.

Hybrid Warfare Put into the Ethiopian Context

In 1991, the then Head of the African Affairs Unit of the US-State Department, Ambassador Herman Cohen, played a major role by applying his "hybrid-warfare" invasive roles by shuffling the Derg-government in Ethiopia with the TPLF. In the name of diplomatic mediation and conflict resolution in the "Horn of Africa" (a name coined to belittle and destroy the ever existed name 'Ethiopia'), Cohen who chaired the US-concocted negotiations, had to discard the novel plans and make unexpected alliances backing the TPLF-led rebel seizure of Addis Ababa, the capital, and Eritrean demands for self-determination, but warning that Ethiopia "cannot expect international cooperation without democracy." Cohen facilitated his covert hybrid warfare' mission for Ethiopia's so-called "transition to democratic rule". Yet, Cohen's action was purposefully overhauled by the sneaky TPLF-events of deception maneuvered by Meles Zenawi and Sebhat Nega of the TPLF rebel leaders.

The TPLF's own conspiracy devised for implementing its long designed and Dedebbit framed constitution that borne the 9-ethnic-based regional-federates in Ethiopia. By so doing, the TPLF coerced and drew a new regional map that bounded major land mass

into the Tigray region simply by taking away bordering areas located on the Afar, Amhara, and Gumuz regions and including them to Tigray region. Besides, the TPLF utilized the constitution for its ethnic divisive actions for nearly three decades by defaming and demoting Ethiopia as a united nation. It continued aggressively amassing the nation's revenue to enrich TPLF-top echelon's money saving coffins at home and abroad.

Yet, to our surprise, over the years since the coming to power of TPLF in Ethiopia, Herman Cohen pretended as if he was an outspoken critic of the TPLF and its monopoly on political power and domination of the Ethiopian economy. Suffice to point the following three critical comments he made in the recent past. Firstly, in 2012, Cohen disclosed that: "They [TPLF] are condemned to rule the country as a minority and that is very dangerous for [Ethiopia's] stability."²⁶ Secondly, in December 2015, he concluded PLF's extra-legal killings and arbitrary detentions as: "The political leaders of the Ethiopian Government have a policy of killing all opponents who take to the streets to demonstrate against them. Other opponents who do not demonstrate but make public statements instead, are sent to jail for long periods. I fail to understand why the Ethiopian regime feels it is necessary to exercise such extreme control to the point of committing murder periodically against their own citizens."²⁷ Thirdly, in December 2017, Cohen described his observation as: "... mainly there is no sharing of economic or political power, and that there was such a small group that I said very unhealthy and it would not last. It couldn't possibly last, which I see evidence now but it is not lasting." By these comments, Cohen pretended to express his concern over the "breakdown of law and order" in Ethiopia, that the "central government's loss of control" and the "broad feeling of disintegration" and the destructive nature of "ethnic politics" in Ethiopia is a frightening concern. At the end, he calls for "reconciliation" through broad public participation including "women, youth, the press" and other marginalized groups; and lamented that it was the TPLF that "decided to own a minority command which did not share economic power and political power."²⁸

In recent months, the U.S. and the EU jointly devised hybrid warfare policies against Ethiopia and Eritrea that have been intentionally orchestrated as one-sided by a failure to understand the

²⁶ TPLF Monopoly "on Economic and Political Power in Ethiopia Could Not Possibly Last" – Ambassador Herman Cohen. January 15, 2018. Source: <https://www.nazret.com/2018/01/15/tplf-monopoly-on-economic-and-political-power-in-ethiopia-could-not-possibly-last-ambassador-herman-cohen/>

²⁷ TPLF Monopoly "on Economic and Political Power in Ethiopia Could Not Possibly Last" – Ambassador Herman Cohen. January 15, 2018. Source: <https://www.nazret.com/2018/01/15/tplf-monopoly-on-economic-and-political-power-in-ethiopia-could-not-possibly-last-ambassador-herman-cohen/>

²⁸ TPLF Monopoly "on Economic and Political Power in Ethiopia Could Not Possibly Last" – Ambassador Herman Cohen. January 15, 2018. Source: <https://www.nazret.com/2018/01/15/tplf-monopoly-on-economic-and-political-power-in-ethiopia-could-not-possibly-last-ambassador-herman-cohen/>

corrosive effects of the TPLF-Junta's 1993 constitution imposed on Ethiopians forcibly and that continues to exacerbate ethnic divisions and human rights abuse ever since its application by TPLF-led parliament's decree. The US and EU preferred to simplify these persisting atrocities and conflicts committed by the war-mongering TPLF-junta for decades as mere ongoing fights between two forces of good and evil.²⁹

To our dismay, the UN-Security Council alone held a series of 12-meetings called upon in less than a year by the US and European regimes' joint efforts to topple the newly elected Ethiopian regime and replace it by their surrogate TPLF-war-mongering group that has been covertly operating in the "Horn of Africa" under their grey-zone or hybrid warfare mission for nearly three decades. Although Ethiopia remains to be one of the standing UN-peacekeeping countries, The UN is undertaking errands and acts that support hybrid-warfare tasks assigned TPLF-terrorist group simply to satisfy the wishes of the Biden government that is not happy with the democratically elected Ethiopian government. This UN-involvement is an orchestrated justification by the US and EU to humiliate and topple the current government in Ethiopia. Nevertheless, at the end of the day, justice will prevail.

At home in Ethiopia, tens of and thousands of Ethiopians have continued to demonstrate in front of the US and British Embassies in Addis Ababa to denounce the intentionally misguided U.S. and European policies toward the sitting newly elected Ethiopian government.

Likewise, among those living in diaspora, Ethiopian-Americans and Eritrean-Americans in Washington DC and in several other cities of the USA have held massive demonstrations in recent weekends, including in front of the White House in Washington DC, to denounce the Biden administration's coercive and biased policy towards Ethiopia and Eritrea and to demand its supportive policy that treats the TPLF-Junta aggressors' grey zone or hybrid warfare operations as victims. Ethiopians in Canada, South Africa, Israel and in several European cities have also held similar demonstrations exposing the grey-zone or hybrid warfare tactics covertly operated in collaboration with TPLF-Junta and its satellites like OLF-Shane and Gumuz.

Conclusive Remarks

The U.S. and the EU-regimes and even the UN-officials in the UN-headquarters have failed to condemn several of the genocidal atrocities committed by the TPLF-Junta, including the killing of over 1.000 innocent people by TPLF –Junta soldiers and militia on November 9-10 in Mai-Kadra and the recent mass killings in towns like Kemisse, Kombolcha, Nefass Mewchia, Hayik, Woldiya, Attaye, Shewa Robbit, and small towns and villages located in the Afar-Region. These

²⁹ TPLF Monopoly "on Economic and Political Power in Ethiopia Could Not Possibly Last" – Ambassador Herman Cohen. January 15, 2018. Source: <https://www.nazret.com/2018/01/15/tplf-monopoly-on-economic-and-political-power-in-ethiopia-could-not-possibly-last-ambassador-herman-cohen/>

massacres, and the identity of its perpetrators in most of the locations have been disclosed and described both by Amnesty International and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission. Likewise, there have been many other examples of ethnically motivated violence by TPLF-Junta in Ethiopia, including those incidences that have occurred in Metekel where TPLE-Junta-led ethnic Gumuz armed groups and OLF/Shenne armed ethnic groups have also engaged in a targeted campaign against other ethnic group members in the area, including the Amhara ethnic group.

At this juncture, it is sad to observe that the US, the EU and the UN officials are ganging up and using their covert hybrid warfare tactics through their surrogate TPLF-terrorist group against Ethiopia simply forcing the sitting government to surrender to their neocolonial arrogant foreign policy tactics that frustrates and keeps the Ethiopian government put under their surveillance with the aim to preserve its dependency on food aid and handouts from the Western donor communities.

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