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**Final Paper**  
**Research Proposal**

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## **SUBJECT OF PAPER**

Combating the Ascending Threat of Hybrid Warfare to Nation States: A Singapore Perspective

## **BACKGROUND**

Because of rising global interdependency and interconnectivity, the application of hybrid warfare by state or non-state actors through a blend of conventional and unconventional, regular or irregular, as well as information and cyber means has become more prevalent. Singapore, given our connectivity to the world, geostrategic locale and demographic makeup, is not immune to these multi-faceted threats that are without clearly-defined adversaries and time frames. The annexation of Ukraine's Crimea peninsula in 2014 was a prime example of how states are using hybrid warfare to achieve their gains. Increasingly, emerging threats like the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) are also using hybrid warfare to fracture the solidarity of a targeted country.

While the concept of hybrid warfare is not new, the astute use of disinformation in today's conflicts is a new front that every country must defend itself against. Amplified by social media, disinformation can cause disunity and dissent among the population. This can substantively threaten a nation state like Singapore, where racial and religious harmony have been

the bedrock of its national security strategy. Hybrid threats however, extends beyond merely social and psychological realms. History have shown that hybrid warfare can also be pursued to threaten a country in other fronts such as economic, terror, cyber and criminal. The fact that hybrid threats are more challenging to detect and counter as opposed to dealing with a direct adversary in conventional warfare has made it even more attractive for state and non-state actors in achieving their objectives. Therefore, Singapore must always adopt a Whole-of-Government approach in sustaining peace and security. Given the varying degrees and manners in which hybrid threats can operate or be employed flexibly, Singapore must constantly review its national security strategy for relevance and effectiveness.

### **AIM OF PAPER**

1. To analyze the relevance and effectiveness of Singapore's national security strategy against hybrid warfare.
2. To recommend new opportunities and capability domains that will sharpen Singapore's edge against hybrid threats.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What is hybrid warfare and the associated threats to nation states such as Singapore?

2. How effective is Singapore's national security strategy against hybrid warfare, particularly in terms of its political, economic, military, social and psychological preparedness?

3. What are the new opportunities and novel capability domains that can be pursued to better defend against hybrid threats?

## **RESEARCH CLAIMS**

1. The ever-increasing risk of hybrid threats to Singapore's national security, given our connectivity to the world, geostrategic locale and demographic makeup.

2. A small nation state like Singapore, which has no natural resources or hinterland, must continuously sharpen and strengthen its edge against hybrid threats, by actively exploring new opportunities as well as further developing our human capital and capabilities.

## **METHODOLOGY**

1. Through the Phenomenon Analysis Model, this paper will describe the concept of hybrid warfare, examine its increasing application, and highlight the associated threats to nation states. The paper will seek to draw connections with Singapore's national security strategy and review its effectiveness against hybrid threats. Specifically, the review will assess the nation state's degree of preparedness in the political, economic, military, social and psychological realms. To better deal with hybrid threats, the

paper will also explore new opportunities and examine novel capability domains in both traditional and untraditional areas.

- a. Introduction – Background and Research Outline.
- b. Hybrid Warfare – Its Emergence, Ascent, and Threat to Nation States.
- c. Relevance and Effectiveness of Singapore’s National Security Strategy against Hybrid Warfare – Its Political, Economic, Military, Social and Psychological Preparedness.
- d. New Opportunities and Capability Domains.
- e. Conclusion.

## **IMPORTANCE OF PAPER**

Singapore is certainly not immune to hybrid threats. As a ‘little red dot’ with an open economy that is subject to varying influences, Singapore is particularly susceptible to hybrid warfare. Considering reports of Russia’s successful ‘demonstration’ of the effective use of non-kinetic options such as cyber-attacks, information warfare and propaganda in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, Singapore’s extensive reliance on technology, networks and connectivity has provided the requisite infrastructure for these non-kinetic options to thrive in. It is therefore critical that Singapore continue to build up a strong defence during peace. Given the evolving use and exploitation of the instruments of national power – diplomatic, economic, military and information – in the hybrid threat construct, this paper will seek to review Singapore’s national security strategy for its continued relevance and effectiveness since the establishment of the ‘Total Defence’ concept in the 1980s. Importantly, the

paper will explore new opportunities and examine novel capability domains that the small nation state could pursue in order to ‘stay ahead of the game’ in an increasingly complex and contested environment.