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THE CHANGING FACE OF WARFARE: KINETIC AND NON-KINETIC DIMENSIONS

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Colonel Sofiya Qureshi's statement on Operation Sindoor highlights a significant development in India-Pakistan relations and military defence strategies. On Thursday, Pakistan reportedly launched 300 to 400 drones, attempting to breach Indian airspace and target key locations. The Indian armed forces responded with both kinetic and non-kinetic methods, successfully shooting down many of these drones. The incident appears to be a test of India's air defence capabilities and an effort to gather intelligence. Preliminary investigations suggest the drones used were Turkish-made Asisguard Songar drones, raising concerns over the involvement of foreign technology in the operation.

KINETIC WARFARE

Kinetic warfare refers to the use of physical force and violence to achieve military or political objectives. It typically involves the deployment of armed forces and weaponry such as infantry, artillery, tanks, aircraft, naval vessels, and missiles. It is the most traditional and visible form of warfare.

CHARACTERISTICS OF KINETIC WARFARE



NON-KINETIC WARFARE

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Non-kinetic warfare refers to the use of indirect, non-violent, and non-physical methods to influence, destabilise, or coerce an adversary. It operates across domains such as cyberspace, information, economy, diplomacy, and space without conventional use of weapons or physical combat. This form of warfare is often covert, continuous, and strategic, aiming to weaken a state's functioning, morale, and global standing without engaging in open battle.

SCOPE OF NON-KINETIC WARFARE

Domain	Description	Examples
Cyber Warfare	Disruption or destruction of digital networks and critical infrastructure.	Hacking, ransomware, cyber espionage, and Chinese cyberattacks on Indian servers.
Information Warfare	Manipulation of information to influence public opinion or decision-making.	Fake news, propaganda, deepfakes, Russian interference in U.S. elections.
Economic Warfare	Use of financial tools to weaken a country's economy.	Sanctions, trade embargoes, tech denial; U.S. sanctions on Iran and Russia.
Diplomatic Warfare	Strategic use of diplomacy to isolate or pressure a country.	Expelling diplomats, blocking global alliances; Isolation of North Korea.
Space Warfare	Targeting or jamming of space-based assets like satellites.	Anti-satellite weapons, GPS signal disruption; ASAT tests by major powers.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: KINETIC VS NON-KINETIC WARFARE

Aspect	Kinetic Warfare	Non-Kinetic Warfare
Nature	Physical violence, direct confrontation	Psychological, economic, cyber, diplomatic, or information-based
Means Used	Armed forces, missiles, tanks, bombs	Cyberattacks, propaganda, sanctions, space systems, and coercive diplomacy
Actors	Primarily state militaries	States, non-state actors, hackers, proxy groups
Visibility	Highly visible (media coverage, battlefield action)	Often covert, difficult to detect or attribute
Impact	Immediate physical destruction and casualties	Long-term strategic destabilisation, societal or economic erosion
Cost	High financial, human, and material costs	Lower immediate cost, but potential for massive long-term consequences
Duration	Generally time-bound and geographically limited	Continuous or prolonged without a formal declaration of war

Aspect	Kinetic Warfare	Non-Kinetic Warfare
Legal Framework	Governed by international humanitarian laws (e.g., the Geneva Conventions)	Often falls in legal grey zones; lacks clear international regulation

IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL SECURITY

- 1. Multi-Domain Threats:** Warfare now spans land, air, sea, cyber, space, and information, demanding integrated defence strategies.
- 2. Cybersecurity Priority:** Over 1.3 million cyberattacks in India (2022) highlight the need for robust cyber defence (e.g., Defence Cyber Agency).
- 3. Information Manipulation:** Disinformation can erode public trust and stability; counter-strategies are essential.
- 4. Economic Resilience:** Overdependence on imports (e.g., \$20B Chinese electronics) poses risk; Atmanirbhar Bharat is critical.
- 5. Space Vulnerabilities:** With 50+ Indian satellites, protection from ASAT threats is a strategic necessity.
- 6. Attribution Challenge:** Cyber attacks are hard to trace, complicating retaliation and response.
- 7. Asymmetric Threats:** Drones and malware by non-state actors demand advanced surveillance and legal frameworks.
- 8. Continuous Conflict:** Non-kinetic warfare persists in peacetime, requiring 24/7 vigilance and preparedness.

CHALLENGES TO MITIGATING KINETIC AND NON-KINETIC

- 1. Attribution Difficulties (Non-Kinetic):** Cyber and information attacks are often anonymous, making retaliation or legal action complex.
- 2. Legal and Ethical Grey Zones:** International laws lag behind in regulating cyber, space, and info warfare, leading to unchecked actions.
- 3. Rapid Technological Advancement:** Emerging tech (AI, deepfakes, drones) evolves faster than defense capabilities and regulatory frameworks.
- 4. Asymmetric Warfare Tactics:** Non-state actors and smaller nations can inflict high damage using low-cost non-kinetic tools (e.g., cyberattacks, drones).
- 5. Resource and Infrastructure Gaps:** Many countries lack the skilled manpower, infrastructure, or funds to defend against complex, hybrid threats.
- 6. Civil-Military Coordination Deficits:** Effective mitigation requires real-time coordination between military, intelligence, civilian agencies, and private tech firms.
- 7. Dependence on Foreign Technologies:** Over-reliance on foreign defence and digital tech increases vulnerability to supply chain sabotage or espionage.
- 8. Public Awareness and Preparedness:** Low media literacy and awareness among citizens make societies more susceptible to propaganda and disinformation.

WAYS TO STRENGTHEN KINETIC AND NON-KINETIC WARFARE METHODS FOR INDIA

- 1. Modernise Armed Forces (Kinetic):** Invest in next-gen weapons, indigenous defence production, and joint theatre commands. Accelerate projects like Agni-V, Tejas, and INS Vikrant for strategic deterrence.

- 2. Boost Cyber Capabilities (Non-Kinetic):** Expand the role of the Defence Cyber Agency and collaborate with CERT-In and private tech firms. Develop offensive and defensive cyber tools with real-time response capacity.
- 3. Strengthen Space & Satellite Security:** Secure India's 50+ satellites; scale up ASAT and anti-jamming capabilities. Develop space situational awareness (SSA) infrastructure.
- 4. Develop Information Warfare Units:** Establish dedicated units to combat fake news, deepfakes, and psychological warfare. Promote media literacy and fact-checking ecosystems.
- 5. Enhance Economic Resilience:** Reduce dependence on strategic imports (e.g., electronics, semiconductors) through PLI schemes and Atmanirbhar Bharat. Build buffer stocks and diversify critical supply chains.
- 6. Strengthen Civil-Military Synergy:** Improve coordination between armed forces, intelligence, tech startups, and academia. Set up Integrated Defence Innovation Hubs.
- 7. Invest in AI and Quantum Technologies:** Promote research in AI-enabled surveillance, predictive defence, and encryption. Collaborate with institutions like DRDO, ISRO, and IITs.
- 8. Legal and Policy Reforms:** Frame clear cyber laws, data protection legislation, and counter-disinformation regulations. Push for global norms on non-kinetic warfare (e.g., cyber ethics, space rules).

CONCLUSION

Modern warfare has evolved beyond traditional battlefields into complex, multi-domain confrontations involving both kinetic and non-kinetic strategies. While physical warfare still poses direct threats, non-kinetic means such as cyberattacks, propaganda, and economic coercion have become equally potent tools of national influence and disruption. For a country like India, strengthening both dimensions through technological self-reliance, robust cyber and space infrastructure, legal reforms, and civil-military synergy is essential. A future-ready defence strategy must integrate hard power with smart, adaptive, and proactive measures to safeguard national sovereignty and security in an era of continuous and covert conflict.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q. With reference to the changing dimensions of warfare, consider the following statements:

1. Kinetic warfare involves indirect methods such as cyberattacks, economic sanctions, and information warfare.
2. Non-kinetic warfare includes physical force, such as the use of tanks, missiles, and armed forces.
3. Information warfare can be used to manipulate public opinion and decision-making, often through tactics like fake news and propaganda.

How many of the above-given statements are correct?

- A) Only one
- B) Only two
- C) All three
- D) None

Answer: A

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q. Discuss the implications of this shift in warfare for national security, particularly for India. Also, outline strategies that India can adopt to strengthen its defence capabilities in both kinetic and non-kinetic warfare domains.

(250 words, 15 marks)

UNRAVELING THE MYTH: IS IMF FUNDING TERRORISM?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The IMF's approval of a \$1 billion disbursement to Pakistan under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) has sparked significant controversy, particularly from India. New Delhi has strongly opposed the decision, raising concerns that the funds could be misused to support state-sponsored cross-border terrorism. The approval came after a board meeting in Washington, where the IMF also reviewed a proposed \$1.3 billion loan for Pakistan under the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF). India lodged a formal protest, pointing to Pakistan's inadequate progress on IMF reforms and the potential diversion of funds. India abstained from the vote, with the finance ministry warning that rewarding Pakistan's track record of terrorism could set a dangerous precedent.

WHAT IS THE IMF?

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is a global financial institution headquartered in Washington, D.C., established in 1944 during the Bretton Woods Conference. It aims to promote international monetary cooperation, secure financial stability, facilitate global trade, support high employment and economic growth, and reduce poverty worldwide. With 190 member countries, the IMF provides short- and medium-term loans to nations facing balance of payments problems, helping them stabilize their economies. It also monitors global economic trends, advises governments on economic policies, and offers technical assistance and training. The IMF's funding comes from its member countries' financial contributions, known as quotas, which also determine their voting power. Through its programs and surveillance functions, the IMF plays a crucial role in maintaining the health and stability of the global financial system.

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF) MANDATE

- 1. Promote International Monetary Cooperation:** The IMF facilitates collaboration among member countries on global monetary issues, exchange rates, and financial stability.
- 2. Ensure Exchange Rate Stability:** It aims to maintain orderly exchange rate arrangements and avoid competitive devaluations that could disrupt global trade.
- 3. Facilitate Balanced Growth of International Trade:** By promoting trade, the IMF supports employment, income growth, and the reduction of poverty globally.
- 4. Provide Financial Assistance:** The IMF lends to member countries facing balance of payments problems to help restore economic stability and confidence.
- 5. Surveillance and Policy Advice:** The IMF monitors the global economy and the economic and financial policies of its member countries, offering policy advice to promote macroeconomic stability and growth.

6. Capacity Development: It provides technical assistance and training to help countries strengthen their capacity to design and implement effective policies.

7. Crisis Prevention and Management: The IMF helps prevent financial crises through early warning systems and helps countries manage crises through lending and policy support.

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF) FUNDING ANALYSIS

Decade	Key Events and Developments	Funding Instruments and Responses	Notable Country Engagements
1950s–1970s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – IMF builds foundational tools – Bretton Woods system in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Stand-By Arrangements (SBAs) introduced in 1952 – SDRs created in 1969 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – UK (1976 loan), several European nations
1980s–1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Latin American Debt Crisis – Post-Cold War transitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Structural Adjustment Programs – HIPC Initiative was launched in 1996 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mexico, Argentina, Sub-Saharan countries
2000s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Asian Financial Crisis (1997–98) – Globalisation intensifies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Large bailout packages – Enhanced surveillance and early warning frameworks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – South Korea, Indonesia, Thailand
2008–2010s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Global Financial Crisis – Eurozone Debt Crisis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Increase in IMF lending capacity – Flexible Credit Line (FCL), Precautionary Credit Line (PCL) launched 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Greece, Portugal, Ireland
2020s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – COVID-19 pandemic – Global debt and inflation shocks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Emergency financing tools – Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) – Reforms in concessional lending 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Argentina, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Zambia
Cumulative Stats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Over \$1 trillion in lending capacity (as of 2024) – SDR 112.48 billion credit outstanding (Dec 2024) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – SDR allocations, concessional and non-concessional facilities, Technical Assistance, Capacity Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 90+ countries with active or past programs

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF) CONTROVERSY RELATED TO FUNDING

Point	Explanation	Example
1. IMF Does Not Directly Fund	The IMF lends only to governments and central banks for macroeconomic	No IMF funds have ever been shown to directly finance groups like ISIS or Al-

Point	Explanation	Example
Terrorist Groups	stability, not to individuals or groups.	Qaeda.
2. Risk of Misuse by Fragile or Corrupt States	In states with weak governance, funds meant for development can be diverted to questionable ends, including military use.	Pakistan: Allegations that some funds from IMF loans were indirectly diverted to military budgets which have supported militant proxies in Kashmir and Afghanistan.
3. Lack of On-ground Spending Oversight	IMF monitors macroeconomic indicators, but not the specific usage of funds after disbursement, creating loopholes.	Yemen (pre-2014): Before the civil war, weak financial systems created risks of IMF aid being channeled inefficiently or lost in corruption networks.
4. Example – Pakistan	Received 23 IMF loans, yet faces persistent FATF scrutiny for terrorism financing. Critics argue IMF support indirectly strengthens institutions linked to militant support.	2019 IMF bailout to Pakistan (\$6 billion) despite being on the FATF Grey List , raising global criticism.
5. Geopolitical Influence in IMF Decisions	Major IMF shareholders (like the U.S.) influence lending decisions for strategic allies, even with terrorism allegations.	Egypt: Despite authoritarian governance and accusations of crackdowns fueling radicalization, Egypt received major IMF support (e.g., \$12 billion in 2016), allegedly to maintain regional stability.
6. Violation of FATF Norms Ignored	Some IMF recipients are under FATF monitoring for terror financing but still get funding without stringent conditions.	Pakistan (2018–2022): Received IMF support while under FATF Grey List , though improvement efforts were underway.
7. Undermining Peace and Stability Goals	IMF loans may help governments that oppress minorities or fuel radicalism, prolonging instability.	Myanmar (before 2021 coup): IMF funds (COVID emergency loan) were disbursed before the military coup, which later sparked armed conflicts.
8. Need for Stronger Anti-Terror Safeguards	Analysts urge IMF to integrate anti-terror financing and transparency conditions in high-risk countries.	Sri Lanka (2023 IMF deal): Experts recommended IMF closely monitor fund usage due to risks of political instability and opaque spending during crisis recovery.

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF) IS FUNDING TERRORISM.

1. No Direct Funding to Terrorist Entities: The IMF strictly lends to sovereign governments and central banks, not non-state actors, making direct funding of terrorism institutionally impossible.

2. Indirect Risks via Corrupt Regimes: In countries with corrupt institutions or poor governance, IMF funds may be diverted to military or intelligence wings, which may support militant groups. Example: Allegations against Pakistan's military for backing proxy terror outfits using public funds.

3. Repeated Bailouts to High-Risk Nations: The IMF has granted repeated bailouts to nations like Pakistan and Egypt, despite their questionable human rights records and links to extremism, indirectly enabling such regimes.

4. Inadequate Oversight After Disbursement: The IMF monitors macroeconomic indicators but has limited control over how loans are actually used on the ground, opening the door to misuse. Example: Concerns in Yemen, Afghanistan (pre-Taliban), and Sudan.

5. Geopolitical Favouritism Undermines Accountability: Powerful IMF members (e.g., the U.S.) influence funding decisions for strategic allies, even if those allies are linked to extremist sponsorship. Example: U.S. support for IMF loans to Pakistan during the War on Terror era.

6. Ignoring FATF Grey List Status: Countries flagged by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) for terrorism financing have still received IMF funds. Example: Pakistan received IMF aid in 2019 while on FATF's Grey List.

7. Support for Authoritarian Regimes That Fuel Radicalisation: IMF funds can prop up governments whose actions, repression, foster radical extremism, contributing indirectly to terrorism. Example: Loans to Egypt and Myanmar despite crackdowns on opposition and minorities.

8. Weak Conditionalities in Conflict Zones: IMF programs in conflict-affected or fragile states often lack strong transparency, disarmament, and anti-terror clauses, risking indirect harm. Example: Sudan and Afghanistan prior to regime collapses.

INDIA STANDS ON IMF

1. Advocacy for Equitable Quota Reforms: India consistently demands quota and governance reforms in the IMF to better reflect the growing economic weight of emerging and developing economies, including itself. Example: India supports shifting quota shares from over-represented to under-represented countries.

2. Support for Multilateralism & Financial Stability: India supports the IMF's central role in global economic stability, financial surveillance, and crisis response but urges more inclusive policy frameworks for developing nations.

3. Opposition to One-size-fits-all Conditionalities: India emphasises that IMF's structural adjustment programs should be context-specific and not impose harsh, uniform austerity measures that hurt vulnerable populations.

4. Call for Enhanced Voice of the Global South: India, as a leader among G20 and BRICS nations, advocates for greater representation of the Global South in IMF decision-making processes. Example: During India's G20 Presidency in 2023, it pushed for reforms in global financial institutions, including the IMF.

5. Responsible Borrower with Strong IMF Ties: India has not sought IMF bailouts since 1991 and is now seen as a responsible stakeholder, contributing to IMF resources (e.g., NAB, PRGT) rather than depending on them.

6. Support for Debt Sustainability in Developing Countries: India supports IMF efforts to address debt vulnerabilities in low-income countries, especially in Africa, but demands fair burden-sharing by all creditors, including private and bilateral lenders.

7. Focus on Development-Centric IMF Role: India urges the IMF to balance its role in macroeconomic stability with support for inclusive growth, infrastructure financing, and social development in the Global South.

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF) OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY

- 1. Commitment to Public Disclosure:** The IMF maintains a Transparency Policy aimed at publishing most of its reports, country assessments (Article IV Consultations), and lending program details on its website. Example: Staff reports, financial statements, and Executive Board assessments are available online.
- 2. Access to Information Policy:** Since 2013, the IMF has followed an “even-handed” and time-based disclosure approach, where most country documents are published within 14 days of Executive Board approval—unless the country objects.
- 3. Publication of Surveillance Reports:** The IMF publishes Global Financial Stability Reports, World Economic Outlook, and Fiscal Monitor Reports, providing global data and independent analysis accessible to the public and policymakers.
- 4. Open Data Initiatives:** The IMF hosts the IMF Data Portal, offering free access to databases such as International Financial Statistics (IFS), Balance of Payments Statistics, and Government Finance Statistics. This promotes data-driven decision-making and academic research.
- 5. Independent Evaluation Office (IEO):** The IEO conducts objective assessments of IMF policies and programs and publishes its findings to enhance institutional accountability and learning.
- 6. Engagement with Civil Society and Media:** The IMF conducts press briefings, stakeholder consultations, and civil society forums to explain its policies and decisions, promoting greater public understanding.
- 7. Criticism of Selective Transparency:** Despite its efforts, critics argue that IMF transparency can be selective and politically influenced, especially regarding internal deliberations, negotiation processes, or decisions involving powerful countries.
- 8. Ongoing Reforms for Enhanced Accountability:** The IMF is currently working to strengthen grievance mechanisms, improve real-time transparency in emergency lending, and expand disclosure of debt sustainability analyses.

CONCLUSION

The IMF plays a pivotal role in global economic governance by offering financial support, surveillance, and policy advice to stabilise economies in crisis. However, its recent decision to approve funding for Pakistan has reignited concerns over the misuse of resources in countries with weak governance and links to terrorism financing. While the IMF does not directly fund terrorist entities, the lack of granular post-disbursement oversight and geopolitical biases in lending decisions raise serious accountability questions. India’s strong protest underscores the need for tighter anti-terror safeguards, enhanced transparency, and reform in lending practices to prevent inadvertent support to regimes that may sponsor or tolerate terrorism. As a responsible stakeholder, India continues to push for a more inclusive, transparent, and development-focused IMF that aligns with the interests of the Global South while maintaining global financial stability.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the International Monetary Fund (IMF):

1. The IMF lends directly to non-state actors and private corporations in member countries.
2. IMF funding decisions are solely based on economic criteria without geopolitical influence.
3. India has not sought an IMF bailout since 1991.
4. The IMF publishes Article IV Consultation Reports for transparency.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only

- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 3 and 4 only
- D. 1, 3 and 4 only

Answer: C

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q. "While the IMF aims to ensure global financial stability and assist nations in economic distress, its funding decisions in politically sensitive regions have drawn criticism." Critically analyse the role of the IMF in the context of allegations of indirect support to terrorism, with special reference to India's recent opposition to IMF funding to Pakistan.

(250 words, 15 marks)

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Info@plutusias.com 8448440231 www.plutusias.com

By **PRATEEK TRIPATHI**
M.Tech (MNNIT, Allahabad)
M.sc In Physics,
Masters In Economics

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