

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-54372

Title: Measuring the Impact of Hybrid Warfare and Gray Zone Strategies on Turkey's Middle East Policy: 1991–2024

Recommendation:

Accept after minor revision.....

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		✓		
Techn. Quality		✓		
Clarity		✓		
Significance		✓		

Reviewer Name: Dr. ABDUL HASEEB MIR

Date: 18-10-2025

Reviewer's Comment

This article presents an ambitious and analytically sophisticated study linking hybrid warfare, gray zone strategies, and Turkish foreign policy through a multi-level causal mechanism model. It stands out for its rigorous theoretical integration of neorealism and securitization theory and its extensive use of empirical data across more than three decades. The paper is methodologically sound, clearly structured, and makes a significant contribution to both security studies and regional policy analysis. With minor refinements in analytical focus and stylistic concision, it is suitable for publication.

Detailed Review Report

The manuscript "*Measuring the Impact of Hybrid Warfare and Gray Zone Strategies on Turkey's Middle East Policy: 1991–2024*" offers a timely and original contribution to the study of contemporary security dynamics. The author examines how Turkey's exposure to and use of hybrid and gray zone strategies have shaped its regional policy. By blending neorealist and

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constructivist perspectives, the study moves beyond traditional security narratives and provides a multi-dimensional understanding of Turkey's strategic behavior.

Relevance and Originality:

The paper addresses an important research gap by empirically operationalizing hybrid warfare and gray zone concepts within a regional framework. While these terms are widely discussed in Western strategic studies, their systematic measurement in Middle Eastern contexts remains rare. The author's focus on Turkey's long-term transformation from 1991 to 2024 is particularly commendable. It not only traces evolving threat perceptions but also contextualizes domestic institutional changes in defense and security doctrine. The study thus bridges conceptual and empirical divides in the field.

Methodology and Data:

The use of a **mixed-method design**—combining quantitative event data (ACLED, GDELT, SIPRI) with qualitative discourse analysis (parliamentary records, official strategy documents, and leader speeches)—is one of the paper's main strengths. The analytical framework is sophisticated, and the hypotheses are logically derived from the theoretical model. The triangulation of datasets and process tracing across critical historical episodes (1991 Gulf War, 2003 Iraq invasion, 2011 Syrian crisis, and post-2016 interventions) provides depth and credibility. The author demonstrates excellent methodological rigor, although a more explicit discussion of **causality limits**—especially regarding intervening political or economic factors—would strengthen the argument.

Findings and Interpretation:

The empirical results are compelling. The study confirms that increased hybrid threat exposure correlates with intensified cross-border operations and securitization discourse. It also identifies the institutionalization of asymmetric capabilities—particularly unmanned aerial vehicles, cyber defense, and electronic warfare—as central to Turkey's adaptive strategy. The link between discourse and policy output is convincingly established through content analysis of official communications. These findings advance both theoretical and applied understanding of hybrid strategy implementation in emerging powers.

Theoretical and Scholarly Contribution:

The integration of **neorealist power balance** and **Copenhagen School securitization theory**

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represents a valuable theoretical innovation. The model effectively captures how structural constraints generate threat perceptions, how these are discursively constructed as existential challenges, and how this process legitimizes material policy changes. Few studies manage to connect the structural, discursive, and behavioral levels of analysis so coherently. This framework could serve as a model for comparative studies on hybrid warfare in other regional settings.

Areas for Improvement:

While comprehensive, the manuscript would benefit from a more concise presentation of the theoretical discussion—certain sections reiterate conceptual distinctions already established earlier. The conclusion could also be sharpened by summarizing key policy implications in a more practical tone for policymakers and scholars. Furthermore, the study's heavy reliance on state-level discourse could be complemented with more attention to **societal-level perceptions** or **media framing**, which would enrich the securitization analysis. Lastly, the reference section could be slightly streamlined for readability.

Style and Presentation:

The paper is written in a formal, academic style with impressive command of the literature and methodological clarity. It demonstrates consistent citation and robust academic ethics. However, minor language polishing (particularly simplifying complex sentences) would improve readability for international audiences.

Recommendation

Decision: *Accept after minor revisions*

Suggested Revisions:

- Condense repetitive theoretical sections.
 - Strengthen discussion of causal limitations and societal implications.
 - Edit for stylistic clarity and concision.
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