

**CHAPTER 12**

**NEW SECURITY PARADIGM,  
THE RELEVANCE OF HYBRID WARFARE:  
THE CASES OF TÜRKİYE AND VENEZUELA**

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**Abstract**

The following paper addresses the phenomenon of hybrid warfare as the combination of conventional and non-conventional elements to undermine States, generate and lead to situations of social crisis, polarisation and political instability. In light of the coup d'état in Venezuela (2012) and the attempted coup d'état in Türkiye (2016), an in-depth description of the events, the intervening actors, their narratives and their interests through the strategic management of the media and social networks is carried out. The results indicate that both cases cannot be analysed only as coups d'état but as examples of hybrid warfare in their conceptualization and theorization. Finally, Türkiye's and Venezuela's domestic and foreign policy initiatives to mitigate the impacts of hybrid warfare are examined. A priori, regional integration plays a key role in strengthening states in the face of the emerging threats posed by this phenomenon.

***Keywords***

*Hybrid Warfare, Cyber Security, Multidimensional Security, Türkiye, Venezuela*

## **Introduction**

In the discipline of International Relations, the realist and neo-realist traditions are concerned with the territorial security of the State (or national security), which is the main object of reference. However, critical theories argue that the state is not the only relevant actor on the international scene and that there are different categories of analysis, including human security, environmental security and economic security. The contributions of the Copenhagen School are useful, going far beyond state integrity, taking relevant aspects such as the integrity of social groups, individuals, etc. In this sense, the concept of Multidimensional Security emerged, developed within the Organization of American States through the 2003 Declaration on Security in the Americas. The key point and the major contribution made by this concept is the importance of considering and addressing new or emerging threats in the international security spectrum.

At the same time, the boundary between combat fronts and allied or enemy geographical zones is becoming increasingly blurred, and the very notions of war and peace tend to be diluted. In this analytical framework, the non-military capabilities of an actor, as well as its use of conventional and unconventional tactics, become relevant. Actors ranging from states, non-state armed groups, international organisations, private companies to individuals from civil society, pursue a specific strategic, political or economic objective in their manoeuvres.

There is a growing literature among international analysts that incorporates the phenomenon of hybrid warfare as an explanatory framework for multiple tactics ranging from psychological warfare, propaganda, economic and financial blockade, cyber-attacks and international smear campaigns to ideological warfare.

Understanding these key concepts of multidimensional security and the notions of hybrid warfare in its digital variant and cybersecurity opens the way to the analysis of their impact and the use of the tactics employed as a scenario where, in addition to a large flow of information and data, the interests of particular actors are at stake. Especially of the national State, which on the one hand, while increasingly permeable to hybrid and propaganda attacks, makes use of them at the cost of suffering international discredit and international isolation due to the questioning of democratic quality.

The analysis proposes to offer a novel theoretical and contextual framework through a comparative lens including authors outside the mainstream taking as cases of analysis the coup attempts in Venezuela (2012) and Türkiye (2016) in which elements of hybrid warfare were identified that challenged the traditional notions of coup d'état Türkiye - Attempted Coup 2016 at. With a key role in the strategic management of information (information warfare), mobilisation of civil society, use of social networks and international smear campaigns.

The cases chosen are relevant for analytical purposes: Türkiye with its key geographical position as a bridge between Europe and Asia, neighbouring the Middle East. This location gives it a significant strategic value, particularly in terms of security, migration and energy trade. Venezuela as a Caribbean country and with a strong projection towards South America since the Chavez governments (1999-2013) constitutes one of the largest oil reserves in the world.

A qualitative study of both cases will allow us to analyse the processes by which both countries suffered hybrid warfare threats with different internal and external impacts. In both cases we analyse the role of regional integration and state strengthening in the face of the crises, with some substantial differences in the case of Türkiye where, according to our analysis, the exit from the crisis was more successful in strengthening the state and Türkiye's position at the regional and international level.

This work inevitably interacts with current academic literature, governmental and NGO reports, national and international legislation, as well as official documents from international agencies regarding security and hybrid warfare. The general objective of this paper is to describe the unconventional elements of hybrid warfare and to describe its impact on the Venezuelan and Turkish crises. From which the following specific objectives are derived: to identify the actors, their interests and hybrid threats, to describe the reasons why both processes cannot be defined only as a traditional coup d'état or attempted coup d'état. Finally, it is necessary to reflect on the instruments that countries can use to neutralize the emerging threats of hybrid wars within the framework of regional integration.

## **General Approaches and Uses of the Hybrid Warfare Concept**

One of the forerunners of the study of hybrid warfare is Walker who, as early as 1988, stated that the wars of the 21st century would be characterized by an intimate blend of conventional actions and special operations, of unusual combinations of technologies and tactics.

Hoffman (2007), one of the great theorists of the concept, describes hybrid warfare as a type of conflict that “incorporates a range of different forms of warfare, including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts involving coercion, indiscriminate violence and criminal disorder” (p.58). The concept of “the hybrid” has emerged in International Relations as a way of understanding the evolution of warfare confrontations towards more ambiguous and uncertain forms, denoting greater speed and lethality than the irregular wars of the past, due to the diffusion of advanced technologies.

Originally defined in a 2002 U.S. Navy academic paper the concept of hybrid warfare was used to warn of the tactics employed by the Chechen insurgency against the Russian military during the First Chechen War (1994-96) (Colom Piella, 2018). In 2005 the paper “The War of the Future: the Coming of Hybrid Conflict”, written by the current Pentagon incumbent, James N. Mattis, endowed the concept with theoretical content.

The concept of Hybrid Warfare was used in the international community to describe Moscow’s interventions in Crimea and Ukraine or its information operations in several Western countries. In the case of Crimea, Russia used covert military forces, as well as disinformation and support for separatist movements, which generated a complex and multifaceted conflict that affected Ukraine and the international community. The crisis in Ukraine began to escalate in late 2013, when the then Ukrainian president, Viktor Yanukovich, decided to reject an association agreement with the European Union in favour of closer ties with Russia. This triggered mass protests, known as the Euromaidan, which resulted in Yanukovich’s ouster in February 2014.

Political instability in Ukraine made it easier for Russia to act in Crimea, a strategically important peninsula with a majority Russian-speaking population. Russia deployed unidentified military forces and conducted intense propaganda to legitimise the occupation on behalf of the Russian-speaking community. The strategies deployed by Russia in the annexation of Crimea were identified as hybrid warfare tactics, the debate ceased to be academic and became popularised and used in the media.

The contributions of the Argentine author Mariano Bartolomé are valuable, who proposes that hybrid warfare is not limited to the West but finds strong points of contact with doctrines outside that geographical area and different cultural systems. For example, the Gerasimov Doctrine (in reference to its creator), chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, who describes the new form of warfare as “a means to achieve the desired strategic direction and geopolitical effects, using primarily non-military approaches” (Schnauffer 2017, cited for Bartolome, 2019 p.14).

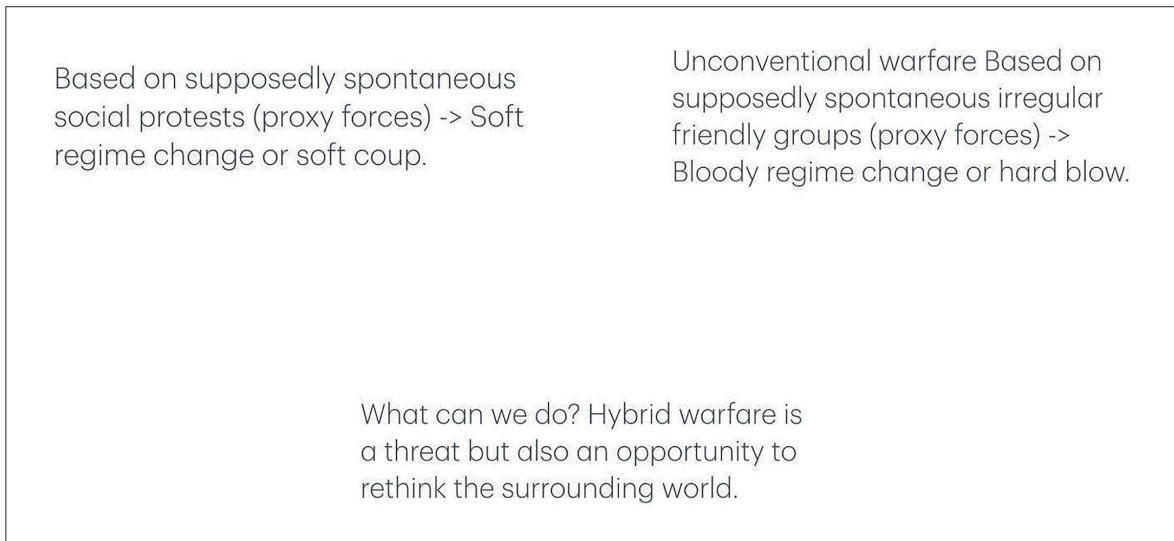
## **Grey Zone and Hybrid Threats**

Baqués (2017) defines the grey zone as that area disputed in a hybrid war, and which is in an intermediate situation between war and peace. Hence, the grey zone is the territory where the escalation of events (supposedly controlled) with a direct or indirect destabilising pretension takes place. It is direct when the destabilisation is carried out within the target State, and it is indirect when it is carried out in one or several States adjacent to the real target to cause problems on their borders, regional destabilisation or to change their governments (and then their populations) in order to direct them against the target State.

For Barrios and Refoyo Acedo (2020), hybrid warfare has two elementary components: colour revolution (soft coup), consisting of mass movements planned using combined tools of propaganda and psychological studies with the use basically of social networks, applications and Internet technology platforms, to destabilise governments through spontaneous popular demonstrations in the name of abstract demands such as democracy, freedom, among others, and unconventional warfare or (hard coup) as illustrated in figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Destabilisation Manoeuvres: How to Unleash Hybrid Warfare (Barrios & Refoyo Acedo 2020)*



There are destabilisation actions whose purposes are: alteration, change or restart of regime to influence, control or collapse the target government, through the use of identity conflicts such as the use of various historical, ethnic, religious, socioeconomic and geographical reasons. Importantly, colour revolutions use political and social proxies called proxy forces to disrupt the social fabric of the target state; while unconventional wars use military proxies to physically break the connection between all elements of society. In this understanding, a proxy actor (intermediary or delegate) is the crucial tool with which an attacking state exercises its power in the target state in a covert and indirect way (Korybko, 2016).

On the other hand, hybrid threats are coordinated and synchronised actions that deliberately attack the systemic vulnerabilities of states and their institutions through a variety of means and in various sectors (political, economic, military, social, informational, infrastructural and legal) using cyberspace as a tool. These threats often originate from the intelligence services of threat actors, but can also come from other actors, and are more complex and multidimensional.

Among the hybrid threats we highlight the role of cyber-attacks and information warfare. Two examples of cyber-attacks to highlight are: This cyber attack comes as Iran begins its nuclear policy of Uranium Enrichment. In a cyber attack by Israel on the Natuk plant in Iran by the Stuxnet virus which is a computer worm that destroyed 1000 uranium enrichment separation centrifuge machines. What can be observed is the sophistication of the virus manufactured in laboratories in the USA and Israel: the virus penetrated the network, then spread through the computers, reprogrammed them and then the centrifuge machines were destroyed. Another example to note is the case of Lithuania. During the year 2022, the EU (European Union) imposed sanctions on Russia over the enclave of Kaliningrad territory belonging to Russia. Kaliningrad is of great geopolitical importance for Russia being the only port with an exit to the Baltic Sea, Lithuania is the territory through which goods pass between Russia and Kaliningrad. In response to the EU sanctions, a group of Russian hackers called Killnet (a group linked to the Kremlin). This group through DDOS attacks, brought down security networks, attacked the infrastructure of that country, both public and private. Among which we can count among the public ones, the Migration Office and the National Data Office.

## Venezuela: Coup d'Etat 2002

On April 11, 2002, a political and economic crisis was unleashed as a consequence of the crisis in the Venezuelan oil sector, a crucial industry in the country's economic scheme. This institutional crisis began with the call for a national strike on April 9 organised by the top management of PDVSA (Petroleum of Venezuela), and FEDECÁMARAS (grouping of business chambers and the CTV

(Venezuelan Workers Confederation), organised middle and upper social strata, unionised workers, the Catholic Church hierarchy, private media and political parties of the opposition and sectors of the armed forces that expressed their discontent with the political and economic situation against the constitutional government of Hugo Chávez (El Mundo, 2002; UNCUYO, 2005).

The role of the mass media was key in the narrative construction of the coup d'état. Under the banner of freedom of expression, they applied tactics of concealment and manipulation of information. This provided the perfect justification for the coup to be presented as a humanitarian exigency. One of the "strategies" was to take phrases out of context, manipulate the information, deforming Hugo Chávez's messages, generating a climate of political polarisation and social chaos. As an example, we may mention some cases of the graphic press. The demonstrators in favour of the coup destroyed the Cuban Embassy and assaulted Chávez's ministers, they were called "civil resistance" framed in a great "Popular Indignation" (El Mundo, 2002; UNCUYO, 2005).

On the other hand, the opposition organised large demonstrations, taking advantage of the social and economic discontent that were called through Facebook, Twitter and FaceTime.

The coup had the support of important sectors, such as businessmen and some memberse of the Armed Forces. The cooperation between these actors and the opposition shows the use of unconventional coalitions to generate a change of power.

Although there are theories suggesting possible U.S. involvement or complicity in the coup, the relationship between the Venezuelan government, opposition and external factors reflects the international dimension of hybrid warfare, where state actors influence conflicts through resources, information and logistical support, generating international pressure and isolation. The coup attempt and its related events led to extreme political polarisation in Venezuela, a common feature of hybrid conflicts. Narrative management on both sides, as well as the creation of an environment of mistrust and delegitimization of opponents, persisted as part of this dynamic (La Voz, 2012).

### **Türkiye Attempted Coup d'état 2016**

On Friday, July 15, 2016 around 9 pm, Turkish soldiers were seen in Istanbul across the width and length of the city. Bridges were blocked, flights delayed and a curfew ensued. In Ankara, the headquarters of TRT (The Radio and Television Institute of Türkiye) was occupied by soldiers, and the first night news anchor Tijen Karakaş read the memorandum of 'Peace Board in the Homeland' (coup plotters in Turkish Armed Forces). Although the country had experienced several military interventions, this time it was a shock.

Türkiye's President-elect Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (2014) was in Marmaris at the time, taking a short vacation. As soon as he heard the news, he took action and barely evaded captured by the hands of the platoon assigned to capture him, or kill him if necessary. On the plane to Istanbul, Türkiye's financial capital and largest city, Erdoğan used his phone to contact the television and media networks (TRT) and urged the Turkish people (whether they voted for him or not), to defend democracy.

Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım, former President Abdullah Gül, and other esteemed high-ranking politicians addressed the Turkish people using WhatsApp and Facetime social network and called on people to take to the streets and stop the army to safeguard the democratic regime. Former President Abdullah Gül proclaimed that the army's actions were unacceptable. Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım said that 'the elected government is still in office no matter what' and that the cabinet ministries have no intention of bowing down to those who are traitors'. He further called the military action against the elected government as a mutiny. In both cases, the actors attempted to influence public perception, using mass media, social networks and state media to convey their version of events.

For the first time in the country's history, in response to the government's pleas, Turks filled the streets and clashed against the army. Ordinary people from all strata of society, unarmed and without using major violence, risked their lives to safeguard democratic order.



However, during the night of July 15, Turkish soldiers killed nearly 250 civilians and wounded almost two thousand more by shooting and shelling them from planes and helicopters. Demonstrations continued for several days. The coup plotters allegedly relied on networks of influence within state institutions, indicating a lack of cohesion and loyalty within the armed forces and other sectors of the government. This resonates with hybrid warfare tactics, where internal divisions were used to facilitate a change of power.

Later, the government announced that the coup plotters had been from the faction loyal to the cleric Fethullah Gülen. It turned out that followers of the religious movement created and inspired by Fethullah Gülen were secretly infiltrated into military posts over time, and when the alliance between the government and the religious movement ended, they tried to capture the power of the Turkish government. Fethullah Gülen is currently residing in a small town in Pennsylvania, USA, almost two decades. Following suspicions of U.S. logistical collaboration there were some diplomatic tensions between Türkiye and the U.S. after the events of the coup.

**Table 1**  
*Dimensions and actors of hybrid warfare (Own elaboration based on the analysed categories and authors)*

Dimension	2002 Venezuelan Coup	2016 Turkish Coup Attempt
Gray Zone	Venevision, Radio Caracas, Social Networks	Social Networks, Facetime, WhatsApp, TRT
Subnational Armed Conflict	Colectivo chavista (Movimiento Tupamaros de Venezuela, La Piedrita)	People's Protection Units (YPG)
Political Warfare	Support for Opposition Groups (COPEI, Fedecamaras)	Support for Terror Groups (PKK)
Military Warfare	Covert Operations	Covert Operations
Information Warfare	Media Communication, Use of Propaganda	Media Communication, Use of propaganda
External intervention	Possible participation or complicity of the US	Possible participation or complicity of Fetullah Gullen (based in the US)

**Table 2**  
*Actors and their strategies (Own elaboration)*

	Intento de Golpe en Venezuela (2002)	Intento de Golpe en Turquía (2016)
Elements of Hybrid Warfare	Media (Univision, Radio Caracol, etc.) play a crucial role. Disinformation strategy, mobilise and justify the coup	Use of the Media to control the narrative and the government itself used the state media to transmit its version of the events TRT.
Mobilization of Social Groups	Opposition (Fedecámaras, Oil Unions, Political Parties: Copei, etc.) used tactics of large demonstrations as a tool to destabilise the government.	Armed Forces faction against Erdogan, mix of civil and military tactics, but the government generated a quick response.
Support from Key Sectors	Fedecámaras, Petroleum Unions, Political Parties (COPEI, Acción Cristina, etc.), military sectors	Support within State Institutions and other government sectors
Use of Security Forces	implication of desertion of some members of the military and security forces	Use of the Armed Forces as a response capacity
External intervention	Possible participation or complicity of the US	Participation or complicity of Fetullah Gullen (based in the US)

### **Treatment of Hybrid Warfare at the Sub-National and Regional Level**

The projection of Venezuela's regional integration policy since the governments of Hugo Chavez (1999-2013) is Caribbean but also South American with its incorporation in 2006 as an associate member in MERCOSUR a trade bloc that brings together Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, and its key role in the creation and participation of UNASUR. Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), a regional organisation that promotes integration and cooperation among South American countries (Serra, 2016).

Venezuela is a founding member of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA). Venezuela is a member of CELAC, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, a political forum that brings together all the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. It is a founding member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) which is an intergovernmental organization that coordinates oil production policies among its members. Venezuela has also participated in other regional initiatives, such as the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) and the Association of Caribbean States (ACS). However, its participation in these organizations has been affected by the ongoing political and economic crisis in the country (Serbin, 2006).

Likewise, Hugo Chavez's foreign policy was guided by his Bolivarian ideology and his objective of promoting Latin American and Caribbean integration and unity. Within the framework of his foreign policy, some initiatives were developed as general frameworks in the strengthening of the region in opposition to historical U.S. imperialism.

Likewise, Chávez was an open critic of US policies in Latin America, promoting a multipolar world order in which the countries of the South would have a voice and decision-making capacity. In this sense, in 2006 he promoted the withdrawal of Venezuela from TIAR (Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance), a mutual defence pact between American countries.

Since the creation of UNASUR, Venezuela has played a key role in the definition of a new defence and security doctrine in the region. In 2008, the South American Defense Council was created, represented by the Ministers of Defense of the Member States (Méndez, 2011).

On the other hand, Chávez provided support to leftist movements and progressive governments in Latin America and the Caribbean, establishing close relations with leaders such as Evo Morales, Rafael Correa and Daniel Ortega. In that sense, Chavez launched Petrocaribe: an initiative that provided subsidised oil to Caribbean countries in exchange for political support. Petrocaribe became an important tool to strengthen Venezuela's ties with Caribbean countries and to counter U.S. influence in the region.

In the international order, Chavez promoted cooperation among the countries of the Global South, established alliances with countries such as Russia, Iran and China (Serbin, 2006).

Since 1952 Türkiye has been a key ally of NATO and the West, contributing significantly to NATO operations and missions around the world, contributing annually about 1.5% of its GDP and the second most important army of the alliance. (NATO, 2024). Since 1999 Türkiye has been an official candidate for EU accession but negotiations in that process stalled in recent years. However, Türkiye's international projection has been oriented towards other regions of the world such as the African continent or Latin America (Foyth, 2016).

In turn, it is a member and founding partner of (OIC) Organization of Islamic Cooperation. It participates as an observer in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) adhering to several GCC initiatives, such as the Gulf Shield Force. It is a founding member of the OTS, an intergovernmental organisation that brings together Turkish-speaking countries.

Within NATO, a number of initiatives have been developed to address hybrid warfare as a threat equal to or greater than military warfare. These include the Hybrid Warfare Defence Center of Excellence and the Hybrid Warfare Working Group. These initiatives foster cooperation among member nations



in preventing and responding to hybrid threats, countering misinformation and improving NATO's strategic communication. In turn other related working groups on hybrid threat management such as the NATO Working Group on Cyber Defence or the NATO Center of Excellence for Resilience.

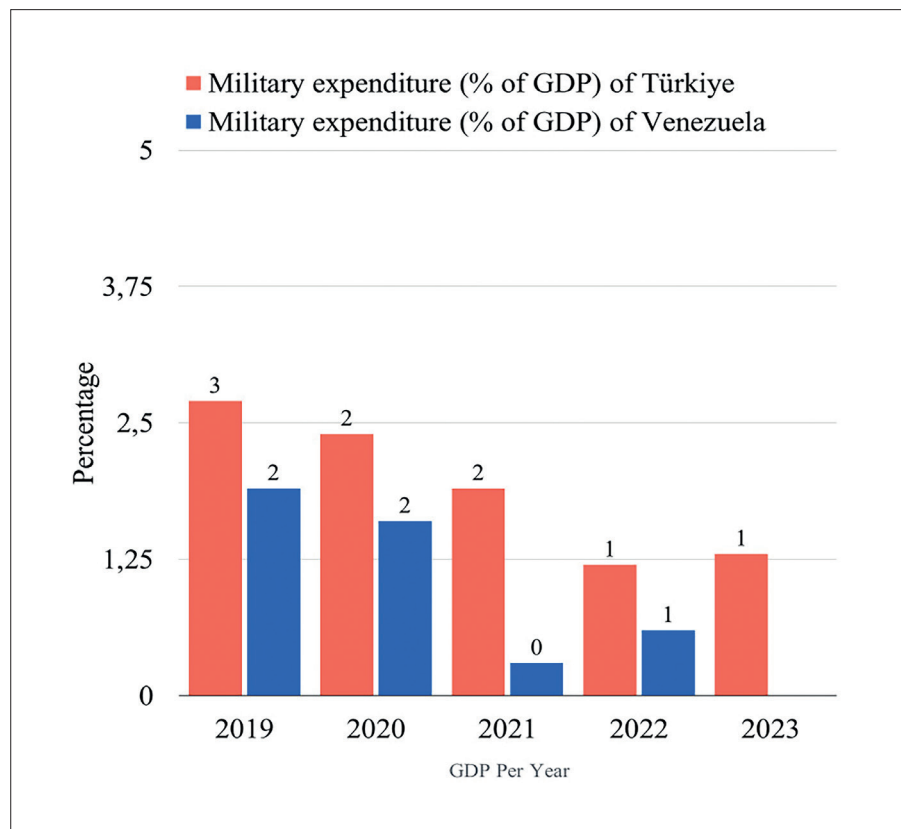
The European Union has established a Hybrid Threat Response Framework to improve cooperation between member states in preventing and responding to hybrid threats. The Framework includes measures to improve information sharing, strengthen cybersecurity, and support civil society groups working to counter disinformation. Other regional blocs such as ASEAN have also taken steps in the same direction.

On the domestic front regarding the development of cyber capabilities Türkiye has been investing in its development, both in the military and civilian spheres. This involves establishing specialised teams, training cybersecurity experts and implementing advanced technologies to protect its critical systems. It has pushed for legislation and regulatory frameworks to strengthen cybersecurity and combat cyberattacks, including the protection of critical infrastructure.

Türkiye has placed particular emphasis on protecting its critical infrastructure, such as energy grids, transportation and communications systems. This involves implementing robust cybersecurity measures and conducting regular risk assessments. It has in turn established cyber incident response teams (CSIRTs) to detect, analyse and mitigate cyber-attacks quickly and efficiently. These teams work closely with the public and private sector to ensure a coordinated response to cyber threats.

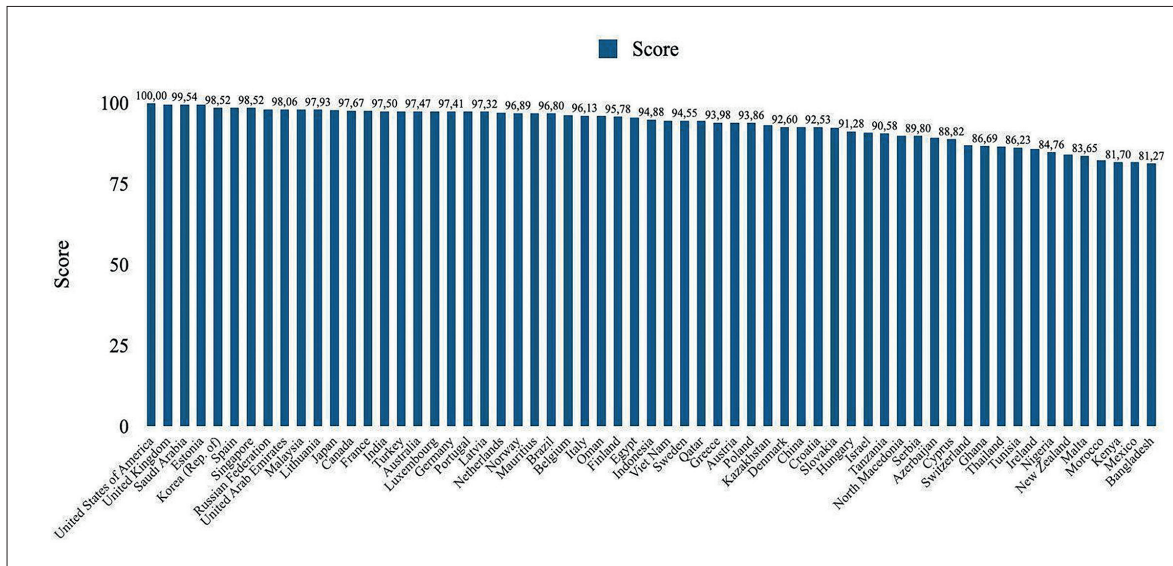
One of the most recent and innovative tactics to strengthen the financial sector is the creation of the digital Turkish Lira. The project is in the research phase, its development is driven by the Central Bank of the Republic of Türkiye (Cointelegraph, 2024). Türkiye publishes report on the first phase of the digital lira project

**Figure 2**  
*Graphic of Comparative Military Spending Venezuela and Türkiye (Own elaboration based on the latest NATO report)*



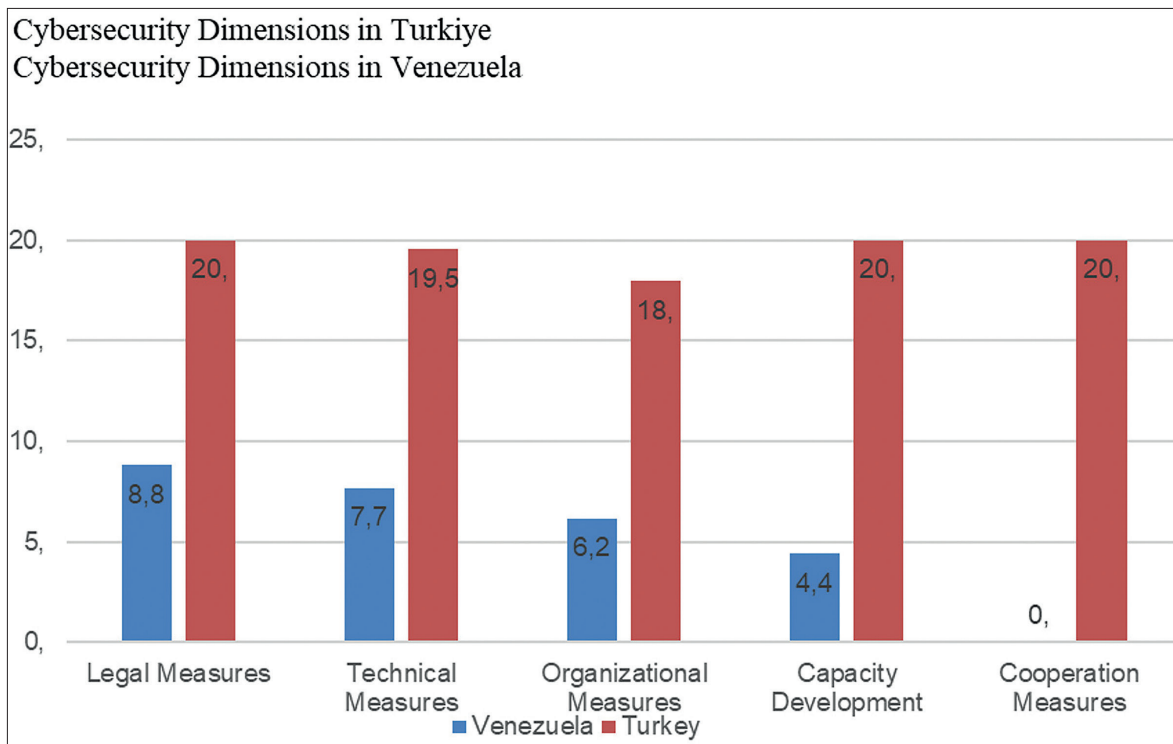
Self-elaboration according to Global Cybersecurity index 2020

**Figure 3**  
Graphic of Global Rank per Country According to Global Cybersecurity Index (ITU Publications, 2020)

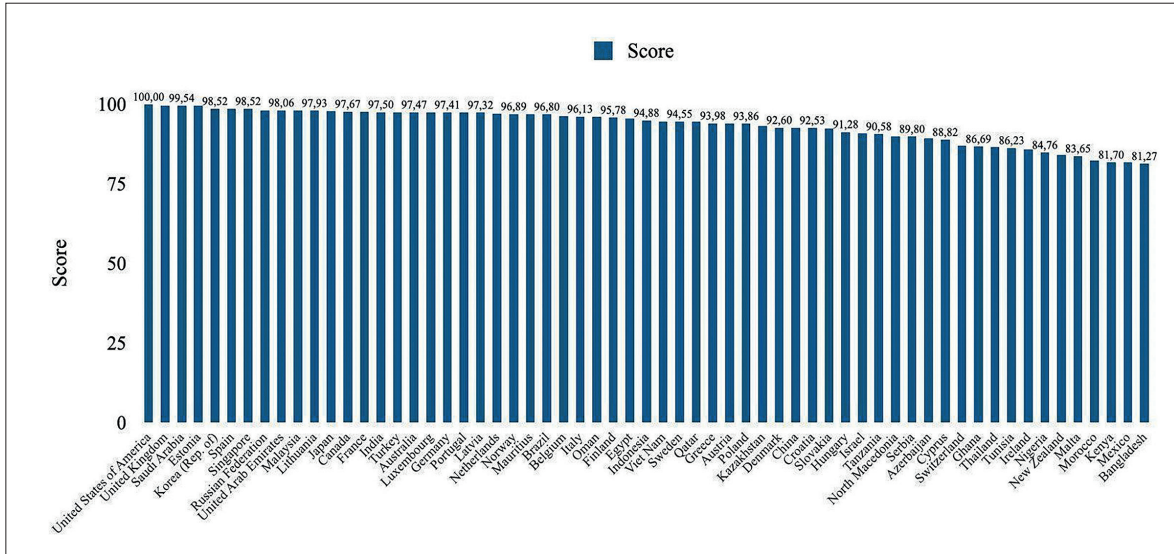


Self-elaboration according to Global Cybersecurity index 2020

**Figure 4**  
Comparative Graphic Between Türkiye and Venezuela in Cybersecurity Dimensions (ITU Publications, 2020)

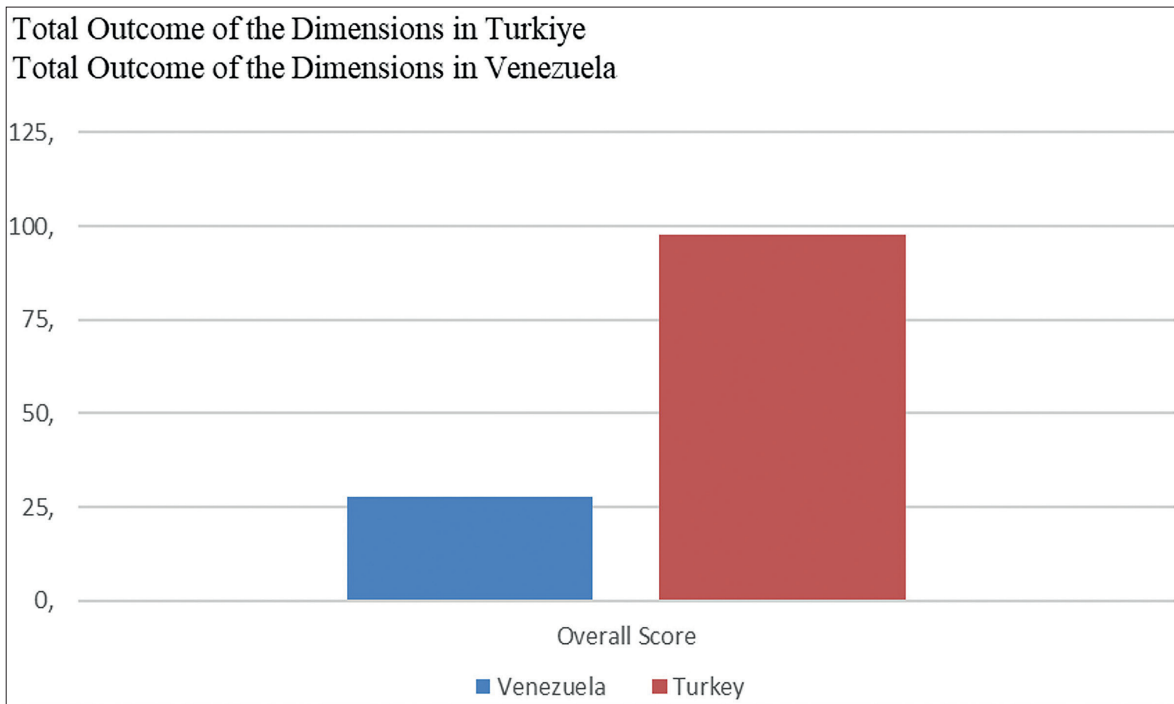


Self-elaboration according to Global Cybersecurity index 2020



Self-elaboration according to Global Cybersecurity index 2020

**Figure 5**  
Graphic of Total Outcome of the Dimensions (ITU Publications, 2020)



Self-elaboration according to Global Cybersecurity index 2020

### Final Comments

The coup d'état in Venezuela (2002) and the coup attempt in Türkiye against Erdogan's constitutional government (2016) present common elements that challenge the traditional notion of a Coup d'état, combining tactics, actors and practices that can be interpreted through the lens of hybrid war. Among them: the manipulation of information: the key role of the media in the construction of a narrative that favoured social polarisation, political instability and social chaos. At the same time, the strategic use of social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and FaceTime to mobilise (or demobilise) different social groups was a novel and disruptive tool. On the other hand, in both cases the coup forces used military resources to block roads and airports (Türkiye), while in Venezuela the coup plotters tried to capture the presidential palace and other public buildings by appealing to the conventional elements of hybrid wars.

Erdogan resisted the coup attempt while Chávez was ousted for a few hours and returned to power by loyal forces and popular pressure. Both coups had the support of key sectors such as political, economic, financial and religious groups that cooperated with the armed forces to generate destabilisation and regime change.

In both cases, the Hybrid War tactics used put the democratic regime at risk, leading States (and their civilians) to situations of vulnerability, polarisation and information warfare. In turn, the coup plotters attempted to gain support within the armed forces, bureaucracy, and civil society, promising structural reforms and a return to a more democratic government.

However, once the political crisis was over, Venezuela and Türkiye strengthened their regimes with greater centrality of the State in the social and political life of both countries and greater control over public institutions. In the international arena, both countries promoted greater autonomy with respect to the West and the United States and promoted regional integration.

For example, Chávez was a key driver of the creation of UNASUR while Erdogan expanded the scope of his foreign policy to other regions of the world such as the African continent or Latin America as “strategic” regions. However, Venezuela’s weak geopolitical position has managed to fragment the country while in Türkiye a stronger state centralization process is observed.

Türkiye emerged as a middle power in part due to its international relations and the revaluation of the international community regarding its geopolitical positions, its soft power and its active role in mediating the war between Russia and Ukraine. In both cases, it is observed that the areas of regional integration seem to be the most effective response to the threats that the phenomenon of hybrid war represents for States, governments and citizens.

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