

Fighting Hybrid: Hybrid Threats to Pakistan's National Security

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Abstract

As warfare passes through its fifth generation of evolution, the coming of *Hybrid Warfare* marks a major mutation of its journey. As geopolitical biases gravitate eastwards and international realignments deepen roots, Pakistan finds itself at the epicenter of the power struggle between the geopolitical poles. Its arch-rival has also swooped in to take advantage of any opportunity afforded herein. Together, Pakistan's protagonists have subjected the country to a plethora of hybrid onslaughts, cutting through all possible domains of the human experience; diplomatic, economic, military, informational, legal, and social, etc. Through qualitative research within the realism theory domain, this study finds that the responsibility of fighting a hybrid onslaught is not to be relegated to the military prong alone. Instead, a whole-of-the-nation approach has to be adopted to safeguard national security, which may include honing intelligence capabilities, developing and employing diplomatic muscle, nurturing a more robust economy, educating the nation about the hybrid threat, diversifying the media's portfolio, leveraging international legal frameworks, establishing Hybrid Warfare Centers of Excellence, eliminating terrorism and sub-nationalistic sentiments and maintaining a credible deterrent.

Keywords: Hybrid warfare, national security, terrorism, non-linear conflict.

Introduction

The Clausewitzian school professes that while the *nature* of war remains unchanged i.e., it remains violent, interactive, and political, its character¹ may change with evolution in social values, laws, technology, etc. Based on these changes in the character of warfare, Lind² gave his generational warfare model in 1989, which defined four generations of warfare that had evolved since the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) i.e., once the nation-

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¹ Bastian Giegerich, 'Hybrid Warfare and the Changing Character of Conflict', *Connections*, 15:2 (2016), 65-72.

² William S. Lind, et al., 'The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation', *Marine Corps Gazette*, 85:11 (2001), 65-68.

state was entitled to a monopoly over the use of force. With the proliferation of nuclear weapons, conventional military warfare is fast becoming a cost-prohibitive option. Conversely, the internet blitz, electronic & social media, economic manipulation tools, and coercive diplomacy have all offered newer avenues for influencing the adversary. Thus, warfare is undergoing another morphosis molding the art into its fifth generation, where assorted threats demand the securitization of almost every walk of life within nation-states. The range of threats in this new phenomenon called the 'Hybrid War' is spread over both kinetic and non-kinetic domains, and as always, aims at forcing the opponent to yield to one's own will. While the spectrum of hybrid war may start from seemingly benign threats, it holds the potential of turning kinetic as soon as the enemy has been significantly mellowed and success is assured. In essence, hybrid warfare entails the combined use of all hard and soft power tools available to a state, and may even include the state-sponsored use of non-state actors.

Few analysts trace the origins of hybrid warfare to the Peloponnesian war of the 5th Century B.C. during which the Athenians and Helots forced the Spartans to fight on internal and external fronts, thus overpowering them. During WW-2, Britain's employment of direct military strategy³ while simultaneously raising local resistance movements against Germany through the 'Special Operations Executive'⁴ is another example of a hybrid strategy. *Kautilya's* (350-275 B.C.) idea of the *silent war* explained in his *Arthashastra*,⁵ can be considered a precursor to the modern-day hybrid war as it includes continuous fighting, assassinations, employment of secret agents, sowing discord amongst the enemy, use of women as weapons of war, use of religion and superstition, and spread of propaganda and disinformation.⁶

An apt definition of modern-day Hybrid warfare is that: 'Hybrid threats combine military and non-military as well as covert and overt means, including disinformation, cyber-attacks, economic pressure, deployment of irregular armed groups and use of regular forces. Hybrid

³ Williamson Murray and Peter R Mansoor, *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁴ Nigel Morris, 'The Special Operations Executive 1940-1946', *BBC History*, 2001.

⁵ 'Economic Constraints of the Arthashastra Period', accessed 14 June 2023, <https://ukdiss.com/examples/kautilya-arthashastra-and-war.php#citethis>.

⁶ Roger Boesche, 'Kautilya's Arthashastra on War and Diplomacy in Ancient India', *The Journal of Military History*, 67:1 (2003), 9-37.

methods are used to blur the lines between war and peace and attempt to sow doubt in the minds of targets'. In practical application, the Russian concept of 'nonlinear conflict' exemplifies a hybrid warfare strategy.⁷

Pakistan's humble beginnings, its persistent conflict with an adversary five times its size, the consequent dismemberment in 1971, the presence of an irredentist western neighbor, a long-drawn war on terror, foreign-sponsored sub-nationalistic drives, internal political instability, an ever-wavering economy and effects of the ongoing geopolitical contestation have constantly kept the national security apparatus under duress. While Indo-Pak's overt nuclearization in 1998 has largely reduced the chances of a conventional war, it has also encouraged the adversaries to explore new avenues for continuing their age-old conflict and competition. Thus, a new genre of hybrid war has crept into South Asian warfare.

Taking a holistic view, it comes to the fore that in the past two decades despite Pakistan's unmatched contributions to the war on terror and despite being the only country that has been successfully able to bottle down the genie of terrorism, it is at times viewed as part of the problem, rather than as part of the solution. International security advisories at times treat it as a no-go area, the safety and security of its nuclear assets are repeatedly questioned, economic sanctions have been imposed on it intermittently, foreign aid has remained conditional to the extent of arm-twisting, armed forces have been amassed on its borders twice in the preceding decades alone, its mega-development projects, particularly China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) have consistently been demonized, foreign intelligence operators have been found operating within its folds, despite the immense potential, its tourism industry stands at rock-bottom, and social media platforms are full of fake, belligerent, and confused narratives against it.⁸

Considering all these aspects, one concludes that Pakistan has been subjected to a well-orchestrated hybrid onslaught. What is this onslaught aimed at? Who are the main players? Is the end objective turning Pakistan into a pliant state? Is it aimed at breaking it up and absorbing it? Is it aimed at shelving its nuclear program? Is it aimed at

⁷ Joshua Stowell, 'What Is Hybrid Warfare? Non-Linear Combat in the 21st Century,' *Global Security Review*, <https://Globalsecurityreview.Com/Hybridand-Non-Linear-Warfare-Systematically-Erases-the-Divide-between-Warpeace/>. Accessed 7 (2019).

⁸ Mohammad Nadeem Mirza and Summar Iqbal Babar, 'The Indian Hybrid Warfare Strategy: Implications for Pakistan', *Progressive Research Journal of Arts and Humanities (PRJAH)*, 2020.

keeping it in a turbulent state to discourage perceived Chinese expansion toward the Indian Ocean? This article aims to assess the objectives and nature of this hybrid onslaught and find a way around it.

The Geopolitical Context of Hybrid onslaught against Pakistan

As the world gravitates from a uni-polar to a multi-polar order and USA and China inch closer to the Thucydides Trap,⁹ Pakistan finds itself at an important crossroad, wherein it is being compelled to choose a side. Historically, Pakistan had been part of the US camp right through the Cold War era, up until the fall of the USSR in 1991, and its choice has served it reasonably well. However, in the post-cold War timeframe, it became a victim of US sanctions, largely owing to its nuclear program. With the dawn of the 21st century, it found itself at the epicenter of the war on terror and was sucked into the war on the US-led coalition's side, albeit remaining accused of playing a double game, despite suffering heavy losses and laying human sacrifices.

In China, Pakistan found a time-tested friend who was now rising fast to the geopolitical center stage, getting assertive by the day. Through CPEC, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) flagship project, China vowed to invest \$ 46 Billion in Pakistan's infrastructure at a time when Pakistan's economy was shaking under the stress of debt.¹⁰

Incidentally, in the last 50 years, Sino-Indian relations have seen more lows than highs, the lowest being the 1962 Sino-Indian war and the recent Galwan skirmish.¹¹ India sees CPEC as part of a greater Chinese 'string of pearls' strategy aimed at encircling India and is hell-bent on derailing the project.¹² The attacks on PC Gwadar and the Chinese Consulate in Karachi are all linked to a larger strategy aimed at CPEC.

⁹ Graham Allison, 'The Thucydides Trap', *Foreign Policy* 9 (2017), <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/06/09/the-thucydides-trap/>. Accessed 5 May 2023.

¹⁰ Katharine Houreld, 'China and Pakistan Launch Economic Corridor Plan Worth \$46 Billion,' *Reuters*, 20 April 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-china-idUSKBN0NA12T20150420>. Accessed 3 December 2022.

¹¹ Marcelo Duhalde, Dennis Wong, and Kaliz Lee, 'India-China Border Clash Explained,' *South China Morning Post*, 2 July 2020. Accessed 15 June 2023.

¹² Prabhaskar K Dutta, 'Can China Really Encircle India with Its String of Pearls? The Great Game of Asia', *India Today*, 15 June 2017, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/china-encircle-india-string-of-pearls-982930-2017-06-15>. Accessed 19 May 2023.

The Sino-Indian adversarial relationship and great-power politics led to a thaw between USA and India.

In the geopolitical context, the US-led Western world would prefer a status quo in which the US remains the sole superpower, followed closely by the UK and other European allies. This status clearly leaves no room for China or any other country at the center stage of global politics. The US and its allies thus want Pakistan to distance itself from China, denying it access to the Arabian Sea and consequently to the Persian Gulf. In the regional context, India also wants Pakistan to distance itself from China as its megalomaniac views consider China as a growing rival. Concurrently, India wants Pakistan to accept its regional hegemony, conform its foreign policies to larger Indian designs, as has already been done by Myanmar, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, give India free & guaranteed access to Central Asia and resolve the longstanding disputes particularly Kashmir, on India's terms. It is thus a struggle for geopolitical prowess for China and a struggle for survival for Pakistan.¹³

Components of the Hybrid War against Pakistan

Diplomatic Domain: 9/11 provided India with an opportunity to project Pakistan as a terrorism-sponsoring state and to paint the indigenous Kashmiri freedom struggle as foreign-aided terrorism. However, owing to Pakistan's much-needed support in the war on terror, it was possible for Pakistan to keep the world players interested in itself and to counter the nefarious Indian efforts.

Come 2016, India was again quick to blame Pakistan for the *Uri attack* and subsequently launched a diplomatic maneuver to isolate Pakistan internationally. At the G20 Summit in September 2016, India blatantly referred to Pakistan as 'one single nation spreading agents of terror in the region'¹⁴ and later boycotted the 19th SAARC Summit scheduled in Islamabad in November 2016, which had to be eventually cancelled. India thereafter explored and propagated Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) as an

¹³ Muhammad Faisal, 'Pakistan-China Relations: Beyond CPEC,' *Strategic Studies* 40:2 (2020), <https://issi.org.pk/pakistan-china-relations-beyond-cpec/#> Accessed 3 June 2023.

¹⁴ 'PM Modi Hits out against Pakistan at G 20 Summit', *New Delhi Times*, 5 September 2016, <https://www.newdelhitimes.com/pm-modi-hits-out-against-pakistan-at-g20-summit123/>. Accessed 29 October 2022.

alternative to SAARC.¹⁵ In April 2017, India and Bangladesh condemned Pakistan for sponsoring terrorism and radicalism.¹⁶

In June 2017, during Modi's visit to the USA, the US government sanctioned Syed Salahuddin, the leader of *Hizb-ul-Mujahideen*, as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist,¹⁷ while both Trump and Modi called on Pakistan to ensure that its territory was not used to launch terror attacks on other countries.¹⁸ India also used the BRICS' declaration¹⁹ in September 2017, the 6th Heart of Asia Conference in July 2018,²⁰ and the SCO Meeting in September 2020²¹ and November 2020²² to further the same agenda.

In November 2020, India handed over a dossier to the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council which allegedly

¹⁵ 'Rajya Sabha TV-The Big Picture: BIMSTEC vs. SAARC', <https://www.insightsonindia.com/2019/06/11/rajya-sabha-tv-the-big-picture-bimstec-vs-saarc/>, 'Accessed 18 November 2022.

¹⁶ Roche, Elizabeth, 'India, Bangladesh Ink 22 Pacts, Modi Announces \$4.5-Bn Line of Credit to Dhaka,' *Mint*, 8 April 2017, <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/kduouENTGMfwEmokftAqoN/Modi-announces-45-billion-line-of-credit-to-Bangladesh-Te.html>. Accessed 8 June 2019.

¹⁷ Naveed Siddiqui, 'Kashmiri Militant Leader Punished as Modi Visits US,' *Dawn*, 26 June 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1341914/kashmiri-militant-leader-punished-as-modi-visits-us>. Accessed 17 August 2018.

¹⁸ 'Trump, Modi Call on Pakistan to Stem Terrorist Attacks', *Dawn*, accessed 12 January 2019, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1341915>. Accessed 12 January 2019.

¹⁹ 'BRICS Name Militant Groups as Regional Security Concern', *Dawn*, 5 September 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1355705>. 10 August 2018.

²⁰ 'The 6th Heart of Asia Conference & The Future of Pak-Afghan Relations', *Jahangir's World Times*, 5 January 2017, <https://www.jworldtimes.com/old-site/pakistan-affairs/the-6th-heart-of-asia-conference-the-future-of-pak-afghan-relations/>. Accessed 3 December 2020.

²¹ Ahmad Adil and Islamuddin Sajid, 'India Walks out of Meeting over New Pakistan Map', *Anadolu Ajansi*, n.d., <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/india-walks-out-of-meeting-over-new-pakistan-map/1974502>. Accessed 3 September 2022.

²² Sachin Parashar, 'SCO: India Slams Pakistan for Terror, Opts out of BRI Endorsement', *Times of India*, 30 November 2020, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/sco-india-slams-pakistan-for-terror-opts-out-of-bri-endorsement/articleshow/79497940.cms>. Accessed 14 September 2021.

showed Pakistan's involvement with four militants from *Jaish-e-Mohammad*, shot dead in Jammu.²³

Economic Domain: Pakistan's economy has been subjected to a tight squeeze through economic sanctions, levied to force it into compliance. Foreign economic assistance is unabashedly being used as coercive leverage. Loans from the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) have been followed up by very strict conditions, leading to public dissatisfaction and social fissures.

Pakistan has been in the crosshairs of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and was grey-listed from 2018 to 2022. India, which was a co-chair of FATF and Asia-Pacific Group (APG) consistently maneuvered behind the scenes to get it blacklisted.²⁴ Pakistan narrowly missed being backlisted owing to the support of China, Turkey, and Malaysia. Trade between the countries also remained post-2019.

Military Domain: Pakistan's overt nuclearization in 1998 and the futility of India's Operation Parakaram²⁵ in 2001 led to the birth of India's Cold Start Strategy, which was subsequently checkmated through Pakistan's *Azm-e-Nau* series exercises and the New Concept of Warfighting that ensued.

9 out of 11 Indian Corps remain deployed along the Indo-Pak border, while both adversaries are engaged in a tit-for-tat arms race. Pakistan's strategy is defensive in nature and cannot be blamed for fueling the arms race. India being the regional hegemon is the main driving force of this pernicious cycle.

During the preceding decades, India amassed its forces twice on the Indo-Pak border i.e., in 2001 and 2008 with over a million soldiers from two nuclear-armed countries deployed eyeball-to-eyeball for over six months, each time. Both those times, it chose to look away from the

²³ 'India Tells UNSC Pakistan behind Plot 'to Wreak Major Havoc' in Kashmir,' 23 November 2020, <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/world/2020/11/24/India-tells-UNSC-Pakistan-behind-plot-to-wreak-major-havoc-in-Kashmir>. Accessed 6 January 2021.

²⁴ Saleh M Zaafir, 'India Planning to Make Stronger Case at FATF to Get Pakistan Blacklisted,' 7 May 2020, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/655340-india-planning-to-make-stronger-case-at-fatf-to-get-pakistan-blacklisted>. 27 October 2021.

²⁵ Gurmeet Brig (R) Kanwal, 'Lost Opportunities in Operation Parakram', *Indian Defence Review*, December 13, 2011, <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/spotlights/lost-opportunities-in-operation-parakram/>. Accessed 14 November 2019.

root causes of the problem i.e., its illegal occupation of Jammu & Kashmir and the independence struggle therein.

‘Ceasefire violations’ and unabated ‘Indian shelling along the line of control’ is another favorite Indian strongarm tactic. 2900 ceasefire violations were recorded in 2020²⁶ alone, in which 33 innocent Kashmiris were martyred while another 260 were injured. On 18 December 20, Indian troops even targeted a United Nations vehicle carrying two officers of the United Nations Military Observers Group for India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), in the Chirikot sector.²⁷

In the aftermath of the Uri attack²⁸ of 16 September 2016, Indian authorities hastily propagated a make-believe story of undertaking a surgical strike²⁹ inside Pakistani territory, in which they claimed to have killed up to 38 terrorists. While Indian officials were still tweaking the script of the loosely choreographed drama in a desperate bid to fix plot holes in the storyline, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) seized the initiative and took local and foreign journalists on a visit to the purported strike locations along the Line of Control to debunk the myth of Indian surgical strikes.³⁰

On 14 February 2019, a suicidal attack on a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) convoy led to the death of 78 CRPF soldiers.³¹ Again, India was quick in pointing fingers at Pakistan, and on 26 February 2019, India claimed to have launched a ‘non-military pre-emptive airstrike’ using 20 Mirage 2000 aircraft in Operation Bandar,

²⁶ Tariq Naqash, ‘2020 Roundup: 33 Civilians Martyred, 260 Injured by Indian Shelling in AJK, Says Minister,’ January 1, 2021, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1599059/2020-roundup-33-civilians-martyred-260-injured-by-indian-shelling-in-ajk-says-minister>.

²⁷ Naveed Siddiqui, ‘Indian Troops Target UN Vehicle from across LoC in ‘New Low,’ December 18, 2020, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1596462>.

²⁸ ‘India’s Fallen Heroes: The 18 Soldiers Who Lost Their Lives in Uri Attack,’ n.d., <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-s-fallen-heroes-the-17-soldiers-who-lost-their-lives-in-uri-attack/story-vzn8pYHFNpKgm34M6ptg5I.html>.

²⁹ ‘Transcript of Joint Briefing by MEA and MoD (29 September 2016)’ (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, https://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/27446/Transcript_of_Joint_Briefing_by_MEA_and_MoD_September_29_2016).

³⁰ ‘Surgical Strikes’: Journalists Flown to LoC to Debunk Indian Myth,’ 2 October 2016, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1192133/surgical-strikes-journalists-flown-loc-debunk-indian-myth>.

³¹ ‘Kashmir Attack: Tracing the Path That Led to Pulwama,’ 1 May 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-47302467>.

which 'struck the biggest training camp of Jaish-e-Mohammad in Balakot'³² and 'killed 300 militants'.³³

Pakistan responded the following day. On 27 February 2019, Pakistan Airforce (PAF) launched 'Operation Swift Retort', engaging six targets inside Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir, shooting down two IAF aircraft, apprehending one of the pilots' Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman.³⁴ In the heat of the battle, India accidentally shot down one of its own MI-17 helicopters in Budgam.³⁵ A battle of narratives ensued thereafter in which India tried to paint the event as its military victory, even granting gallantry awards to their pilot who owed his life to a timely rescue from charged-up locals by Pakistani soldiers.

False Flag Operations: India has increasingly and alarmingly ventured in the direction of conjuring false flag operations which at times have brought both nuclear nations to the brink of war. India was quick to blame Pakistan for the Samjotha Express bombing³⁶ of 2007, whereas later investigations revealed that the bombings were the works of Hindu nationalist extremists and included the names of Sunil Joshi, Swami Aseemanand, Lieutenant Colonel Shrikant Prohit, and Abhinav Bharat group, among others. Other incidents bearing the markings of false flag operations include the Malegaon Mosque (2006), Mecca Mosque bombings in Hyderabad Deccan (2007), and Ahmedabad bombings

³² 'India Struck Biggest JeM Training Camp in Pak: Full Text of Govt Statement,' 26 February 2019, https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-struck-biggest-jem-training-camp-in-pak-full-text-of-govt-statement-119022600337_1.html.

³³ 'Indian Air Strike in Balakot Killed 300 Militants: Sources,' February 26, 2019, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/indian-air-strike-in-balakot-killed-300-militants-sources/articleshow/68165466.cms?from=mdr>.

³⁴ *DG ISPR COMPLETE Press Conference - 27 February 2019* (Public News, 2019), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7LMPbXE5s7Y>.

³⁵ Abhishek Bhalla, 'Budgam Mi-17 Crash: IAF Chief Admits Big Mistake, Says Our Own Missile Hit Chopper,' *India Today*, 10 February 2022, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/budgam-mi-17-crash-iaf-chief-admits-big-mistake-1606217-2019-10-04>.

³⁶ Sofi Ahsan, 'Samjhauta Express Blast Case Explained: Who Are the Accused? What Did NIA Chargesheet Say?,' *The Indian Express*, n.d., <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-samjhauta-express-blast-verdict-today-who-are-the-accused-what-did-the-nia-chargesheet-say-5620175/>.

(2008), all of which were initially blamed on Pakistan, but were later traced back to Hindu extremists.

Informational Domain: The infowar between both belligerents saw new peaks at the time of the Indian Surgical Strike charade of September 2016 and the Operation Bandar-cum-Operation Swift Retort period of February 2019. In the latter incident, Indian authorities tried to sell the idea that IAF had downed a Pakistani F-16, however, the claim was later exposed by U.S. officials, who verified that all of Pakistan's F-16s were accounted for.³⁷ On another occasion, India blamed Pakistan for spearheading infowar against it in the context of the Galwan Valley clash.³⁸

In end-2020, the Brussels-based EU Disinfo Lab exposed Indian infowar methods in its report titled 'Indian Chronicles: Deep Dive into A 15-Year Operation Targeting the EU and UN to Serve Indian Interests'.³⁹ EU Disinfo lab reported that over 750 fake media houses set up in 116 countries worked 24/7 to weave a vast network of deception, while more than 550 domain names were registered under false names by New Delhi. To create an aura of credibility around their suspicious activities, the string-pullers resurrected more than 10 dysfunctional NGOs accredited with the UN, fake letterheads, and multiple identity thefts.⁴⁰

Anti-Pakistan sentiment sells well amongst the Indian public and that is what the electronic media cashes on, unfortunately in turn it also aggravates the rhetoric. Bollywood continues to churn out anti-Pakistan movies e.g., *Mission Majnu* (2022), *Uri-The Surgical Strike* (2019), *Raazi* (2018), *Baby* (2015), *Agent Vinod* (2012), *1971* (2007), *LOC Kargil* (2003), *Gadar* (2001), *Border* (1997), etc. Its jingoistic media regularly propagates false narratives such as the fabricated downing of

³⁷ Lara Sellgman, 'Did India Shoot Down a Pakistani Jet? U.S. Count Says No.,' *Foreign Policy*, 4 April 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/04/04/did-india-shoot-down-a-pakistani-jet-u-s-count-says-no/>.

³⁸ Ananth Khishnan, 'Pakistanis behind 'Chinese' Info War on India-China Border Standoff,' *The Hindu*, 3 August 2020, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/pakistanis-behind-chinese-info-war-on-india-china-border-standoff/article32255760.ece>.

³⁹ Gary Machado et al., 'Indian Chronicles' (EU DisInfo Lab, n.d.), https://www.disinfo.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Indian-chronicles_FULLREPORT.pdf.

⁴⁰ Nasim Ahmed, 'India's Info War against Pakistan', *Cutting Edge*, 1 January 2021, <https://weeklycuttingedge.com/indias-info-war-against-pakistan/>.

Pakistan's F-16⁴¹ in 2019, while some of its television talk shows and their hosts, Arnab Goswami,⁴² and the likes, maintain a permanently bellicose attitude towards Pakistan, in turn affecting Indian public opinion. More recently, the Indian Army has raised an Information Warfare Branch which is to be commanded by a Lieutenant General.⁴³

Cyber Domain: In 2016, Snowden papers revealed that the US hacked into targets in Pakistan's National Telecommunications Corporation (NTC) to spy on the country's political and military leadership.⁴⁴ In April-May 2019, mobile phones of over two dozen Pakistani government officials, including defense and intelligence officials were allegedly hacked by Israeli firm NSO using a malware named Pegasus.⁴⁵ In August 2020, a major cyberattack by Indian agencies was identified and reported by ISPR which included deceitful fabrication by hacking personal mobiles and technical gadgets of government officials and military personnel.⁴⁶

Few significant cyber-attacks on Pakistani websites/ portals include the August 2021 cyberattack on the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR)'s portal in which hackers put the data acquired from the site on sale for \$30,000/- on a Russian website, ransomware attack on K-Electric website in September 2020 which led to the leakage of 8.5 GB data, cyberattack on Meezan Bank resulting in the leakage of data of 69,189 bank cards and cyberattack on Pakistani Banks in November

⁴¹ Sellgman, 'Did India Shoot Down a Pakistani Jet? U.S. Count Says No.', op.ict.

⁴² Murtaza Ali Shah, 'Anti-Pakistan Hate Show: Arnab Goswami's Channel Fined Rs4.3m in UK', *The News*, 23 December 2020, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/762992-anti-pakistan-hate-show-arnab-goswami-s-channel-fined-rs4-3m-in-uk>.

⁴³ Abhishek Bhalla, 'Defence Ministry Clears Information Warfare Branch for Army to Counter Fake News,' *India Today*, 8 March 2019, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/defence-ministry-clears-information-warfare-branch-army-counter-fake-news-1473624-2019-03-08>.

⁴⁴ 'US Hacked NTC to Spy on Pakistan Military, Political Leadership: Snowden Documents', 20 August 2016, <https://www.geo.tv/latest/112040-US-hacked-NTC-to-spy-on-Pakistan-military-political-leadership-Snowden-documents>.

⁴⁵ Mubashir Mubashir Ali, 'Israeli Spyware Used to Target Pakistani High Officials through WhatsApp', *Daily Times*, 20 December 2019, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/523810/israeli-spyware-used-to-target-pakistani-high-officials-through-whatsapp/>.

⁴⁶ 'ISPR Press Release PR-146/2020-ISPR' (ISPR, 12 August 2020), <https://www.ispr.gov.pk/press-release-detail?id=5806>.

2018 effecting nearly 20,000 customers.⁴⁷ Pakistan's ex-foreign minister Mr. Shaukat Tarin has stated that the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) is subjected to 71,000 cyber-attacks per month.⁴⁸

Social Domain: Few Baloch sub-nationalist groups have been identified to be playing in Indian hands, being directly supported by RAW, carrying out terrorist activities within Pakistan such as the attack on PC Hotel Gwadar, the attack on the Chinese Consulate in Karachi, and the more recent attack on Karachi Stock Exchange. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been openly ranting about extending support to Baloch sub-nationalists to help them stand against Pakistan.⁴⁹ Indian Navy's ex-commander Kulbhushan Jadhav had admitted that his task was to hold meetings with the Baloch insurgents and carry out activities with their collaboration.⁵⁰

Indian Defense Minister Manohar Parrikar has said on record that we can 'neutralize terrorists through terrorists only'⁵¹ giving away Indian inclination towards using terrorism as state policy. Similarly, the Doval Doctrine ascribed to the Indian National Security Advisor Ajit Doval is predicated on jingoism, hawkishness, and aggression. Doval has often been found thumping his chest about his undercover stay in Pakistan and has publicly made remarks about severing Balochistan.⁵²

Indian involvement in Pakistan's long-drawn war on terror has been well-known and was confessed by Latifullah Mehsud, a close aide

⁴⁷ 'Here's a Recap of Major Recent Cyber Attacks in Pakistan,' August 23, 2021, <https://propakistani.pk/2021/08/23/heres-a-recap-of-major-recent-cyber-attacks-in-pakistan/>.

⁴⁸ Mubarak Zeb Khan, '71,000 Cyber Attacks Made on FBR Portals Every Month: Tarin,' *Dawn*, 1 October 2021, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1649393>.

⁴⁹ Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, 'PM Modi Raises Balochistan, Blasts Pakistan in His Independence Day Speech,' *The Economic Times*, 16 August 2016, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/pm-modi-raises-balochistan-blasts-pakistan-in-his-independence-day-speech/articleshow/53714625.cms?from=mdr>.

⁵⁰ Waqar Ahmed, 'Indian-Funded Terrorism in Balochistan,' 8 January 2021, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/770909-indian-funded-terrorism-in-balochistan>.

⁵¹ 'We Have to Bring Terrorists to Deal with Terrorists: Indian Defence Minister,' *The News*, 24 May 2015, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/12627-we-have-to-bring-terrorists-to-deal-with-terrorists-indian-defence-minister>.

⁵² Abdul Rasool Syed, 'Doval Doctrine & Covert Operations,' *Daily Times*, 18 March 2019, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/366415/doval-doctrine-covert-operations/>.

of Hakeemullah Mehsud⁵³ and Ehsanullah Ehsan,⁵⁴ former TTP spokesperson after his surrender once he admitted to the collaboration between NDS, RAW, and TTP. Links between Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM) and NDS & RAW have already been exposed by the Inter-Services Public Relations Department (ISPR)⁵⁵ on more than one occasion.⁵⁶ Modi has already confessed to the links between the Mukti Bahini and RAW during his 2015 visit to Dhaka.⁵⁷

Lawfare: Despite having met 26 of the 27 given requirements, Financial Action Task Force (FATF) kept Pakistan on the grey list, something which the Indian government overtly claimed credit for engineering, till it was removed from the grey list in 2022.⁵⁸ Whereas Indian Naval intelligence officer Kulbhushan Yadav confessed to involvement in enticing Baloch sub-nationalists to secession, India took the case to the ICJ and turned it into a matter of granting counselor access rather than espionage.

In August 2019, India revoked both Articles 370 and 35A stripping Kashmir of its special status and opening doors for demographic changes. This act violates the instrument of accession signed with the Maharaja in 1947, UN resolutions, and various Indo-Pak bilateral agreements and further hyphenates India's forceful occupation of Kashmir. Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh's statement that any future talks about Kashmir would be regarding Pakistani Administered

⁵³ 'VIDEO: Key TTP Terrorist Confessed to Indian, Afghan Backing,' *Geo News*, 16 December 2016, <https://www.geo.tv/latest/123951-VIDEO-Key-TTP-terrorist-confessed-Indian-Afghan-backing>.

⁵⁴ Syed Raza Hassan, 'India, Afghanistan Gave Help to Pakistani Taliban, Says Group's Ex-Spokesman,' *Reuters*, 27 April 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/pakistan-militants-idINKBN17T0EB>.

⁵⁵ 'Pakistan Military DG ISPR Exposed PTM Links with RAW and NDS with Evidences,' *Times of Islamabad*, 29 April 2019, <https://timesofislamabad.com/29-Apr-2019/pakistan-military-dg-ispr-exposed-ptm-links-with-raw-and-nds-with-evidences>.

⁵⁶ 'PTM Funding: The Role of RAW-NDS, Wealthy FATA Diaspora in the Gulf & Hostile Agencies,' 30 April 2019, <https://www.globalvillagespace.com/ptm-funding-the-role-of-raw-nds-wealthy-fata-diaspora-in-the-gulf-hostile-agencies/>.

⁵⁷ 'PM Narendra Modi Accuses Pakistan of Creating Nuisance, Promoting Terror,' *India Today*, 8 June 2015, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/modi-in-dhaka-pakistan-terror-land-border-agreement-saarc-uncs-sheikh-hasina-256089-2015-06-07>.

⁵⁸ 'US Says 'recognises, Supports' Pakistan's Efforts to Meet FATF Requirements,' *Dawn*, 20 July 2021, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1636195>.

Kashmir has further added fuel to the fire. India also propagates that CPEC is an illegal project as it flows through its Union territories of Jammu & Kashmir, illegally occupied by Pakistan.

Using Sports as Leverage: Pakistani players have been stopped from playing in the Indian Premier League (IPL). A particularly pointed episode occurred in 2010 once Pakistani players were invited to take part in the bidding process, but later none were selected for the teams.⁵⁹

Post-Pulwama incident, the Indian cricket team wore military camouflage caps to a match against Australia on 8 March 2019.⁶⁰ ICC however framed the cap issue as a ‘fund-raising drive’ and ‘tribute to the armed forces’ by the Indian Cricket team. The ICC’s position negated its own code of conduct that did not permit players to convey messages through arm bands or other items⁶¹ and also negated its own precedents, e.g., it had earlier banned English player Moeen Ali⁶² from wearing wristbands with ‘save Gaza’ and ‘free Palestine’ written on them. In 2019, India did not issue visas to Pakistani shooters⁶³ to deny them the opportunity to participate in ISSF Shooting World Cup.⁶⁴

Ban on Artists: In 2016,⁶⁵ after the Uri incident, ‘Indian Motion Pictures Producers Association (IMPPA)’ imposed a ban on Pakistani actors,

⁵⁹ Raja Yousuf, ‘IPL: A Story of Continuing Insults for Pakistan,’ *The Express Tribune*, 12 February 2012, <https://tribune.com.pk/article/10205/ipl-a-story-of-continuing-insults-for-pakistan>.

⁶⁰ ‘Pakistan Wants ICC Action against India for Wearing Army Caps,’ *AlJazeera*, 9 March 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/sports/2019/3/9/pakistan-wants-icc-action-against-india-for-wearing-army-caps>.

⁶¹ Khalid Hussain, ‘Don’t Mix Sports with Politics,’ *The News*, 10 March 2019, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/tns/detail/567405-dont-mix-sports-politics>.

⁶² ‘ICC Take Action over Ali’s Wristbands,’ *Cricket.Com.Au*, 29 July 2014, <https://www.cricket.com.au/news/icc-investigate-england-allrounder-moeen-ali-for-gaza-wristbands/2014-07-29>.

⁶³ Chander Shekhar Luthra, ‘India Denies Visa for Pakistan Shooters for ISSF Shooting World Cup,’ *DNA*, 19 February 2019, <https://www.dnaindia.com/sports/report-india-denies-visa-for-pakistan-shooters-for-issf-shooting-world-cup-2721537>.

⁶⁴ ‘Olympics-IOC Urges India Isolation after Pakistani Athletes Denied Visas,’ *Reuters*, 22 February 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/olympics-india-pakistan-idUKL3N20H033>.

⁶⁵ Michael Safi, ‘Indian Films Banned, Pakistani Actors Ejected – How the Kashmir Crisis Is Hitting Bollywood,’ *The Guardian*, 9 October 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/09/indian-films-banned-pakistani-actors-ejected-how-the-kashmir-crisis-is-hitting-bollywood>.

singers, and technicians till 'normalcy returned'. In February 2019,⁶⁶ after the Pulwama incident, the All-India Cine Workers Association (AICWA) announced a total ban on Pakistani artists working in the Indian film industry. In August 2019, the Federation of Western India Cine Employees (FWICE) banned⁶⁷ Indian singer Mika Singh from performances in India, as retribution for performing in Karachi. In April 2020, Indian artists were warned against collaborating with Pakistani artists online, when Rahat Fateh Ali Khan, Harshdeep Kaur, and Vijay Arora participated in a digital concert.⁶⁸

Responding To Hybrid War

A broad spectrum of hybrid threats merits a broad-based response. Each hybrid strand needs to be tackled separately e.g., a diplomatic offensive will have to be answered in the diplomatic domain, while social threats will have to be answered in the social domain. Some threats can be effectively addressed in the short term, while others will require long-term engagement.

Responding at the Geostrategic Level

Choosing the right side in the ongoing Geopolitical Contest: In the anarchic global arena, there are no permanent friends and foes, only national interests remain supreme. In the Sino-U.S. power struggle, Pakistan needs to choose the correct side and that side is neither the American nor the Chinese side. Instead, Pakistan needs to choose its own side i.e., it has to keep its national interests above everything else and must side with the player with whom its interests align. It had been the U.S. in yesteryears, it is China today. That said, Pakistan can ill-afford to completely let go of the U.S. owing to U.S.'s geopolitical clout and economic prowess. Dealings with Russia, Japan, EU, Saudi Arabia, and Iran also need to be enhanced.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ 'All Indian Cine Workers Association Announces Complete Ban on Pakistani Artists, Actors Amid Pulwama Attack,' *Outlook*, 18 February 2019, <https://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/entertainment-news-all-indian-cine-workers-association-announces-complete-ban-on-pakistani-artists-actors-amid-pulwama-attack/325699>.

⁶⁷ 'India Bans Mika Singh for Performing in Pakistan', *Dawn*, 15 August 2019, <https://images.dawn.com/news/1183502>.

⁶⁸ 'Indian Artists Warned against Online Collaborations with Pakistanis', *Dawn*, 14 April 2020, <https://images.dawn.com/news/1185053>.

⁶⁹ Dinkim Sailo, 'Pakistan in the New Geopolitics of Asia' (FES Asia Geopolitical Programme, FES Asia Editorial, 2023), <https://asia.fes.de/news/pakistan-in-geopolitics>. Accessed 13 March 2023.

Diplomatic Response: In the diplomatic domain, Pakistan needs to present a coherent and unified front to the external world. Its foreign policy must accrue maximum benefits from the geopolitical contestation at play. Since it can ill-afford to rub any of the great powers the wrong way, it must therefore try to play the role of a bridge between both the contestants, as it had successfully done in the 70s.⁷⁰ Where this seems untenable, it may join the bloc favoring its national interests, while keeping doors open for rapprochement with the other. Banking on its cultural diversity, it must present its softer image to the international community. Additionally, it must use its geostrategic location as leverage, by contributing in the Afghan Peace Process, thereby keeping the world powers interested in it. UN, OIC, SAARC, and other available international forums be proactively used to raise the Kashmir issue. Pakistan can also bridge gaps within the Muslim world by leveraging its good relations with KSA and Iran.⁷¹

Indian human rights violations in general and those in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) in particular must be brought in front of the whole world. Pakistan must continue to make public Indian atrocities through dossiers, as was done in September 2021,⁷² and by submitting such dossiers to the UN, as was done in November 2020.⁷³

Response at the National Level

Strategizing against Hybrid Warfare – Adopting a Whole of the Government Approach. Fighting hybrid wars cannot be relegated to the military alone. Since the hybrid onslaught occurs in every domain, be it diplomatic, social, or economic, the response has to be given in all these

⁷⁰ Burr, William. 2002. ‘Kissinger's Secret Trip to China’. <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB66/>. 15 November 2022.

⁷¹ Nisar Ahmad Khan, ‘Contemporary Relations between Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia: Present Challenges’ (Islamabad Serena Hotel, 2018), <https://thesvi.org/contemporary-relations-between-pakistan-iran-and-saudi-arabia-present-challenges-compiled-by/>. Accessed 15 June 2023.

⁷² ‘Pakistan Dossier Details Indian War Crimes, Rights Violations in Kashmir’. 2021. *TRT World*. <https://www.trtworld.com/asia/pakistan-dossier-details-indian-war-crimes-rights-violations-in-kashmir-49904>. Accessed 15 June 2023.

⁷³ ‘Pakistan Gives UN A Dossier on India, New Delhi Dubs It ‘Lies’’. 2020. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/11/25/pakistan-gives-un-a-dossier-on-india-new-delhi-dubs-it-lies>. Accessed 15 June 2023.

domains also. This implies that a whole of Government⁷⁴ approach is to be adopted for a coherent and effective response. Under the overall umbrella of the National Security Council, each government department needs to identify threats within its domain and hone its skills to respond. Inter-ministerial coordination is also critical to keep the response coherent. A coordinated response must be open to critique, should be endorsed as an integral of the National Security Policy, and must be reviewed every 2-3 years.⁷⁵

Self-Assessment to identify and protect Vulnerabilities: The government must undertake a periodic review to identify and address national vulnerabilities. The civil and military hierarchy must sit together to share thoughts, exchange notes, and strategize. The scope of traditional threat assessment methods must be spread to include non-conventional domains also. It must also be appreciated that a government with a stable political and economic standing will remain less vulnerable to hybrid threats.

Incorporating Civil Society: Freedom of thought and self-expression, and the capabilities of social media and other media groups and think tanks collectively surpass that of governmental institutions. Civil society must, therefore, be propped, incorporated, and mobilized at the national level to add an additional layer of national defense. Building up a pool of experts on hybrid warfare who can directly interact with the masses through electronic and social media will help in preempting and neutralizing hybrid threats in their infancy.

*Implementing the National Action Plan (NAP):*⁷⁶ The Army Public School attack of 16 December 2014 shook the nation and garnered a consensus to uproot terrorism for good, through concerted national efforts. While the National Internal Security Policy 2014 laid out broad policy guidelines for state institutions, an Action Plan was necessitated

⁷⁴ Inamul Haque, 'National Security Policy of Pakistan 2022-2026 - An Appraisal,' *The Express Tribune*, 15 January 2022, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2338864/national-security-policy-of-pakistan-2022-2026-an-appraisal>. Accessed 30 May 2023.

⁷⁵ Rabia Akhtar, 'Pakistan's New National Security Policy: A Step in the Right Direction,' *Atlantic Council*, 20 January 2022, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/southasiasource/pakistans-new-national-security-policy/>. Accessed 16 August 2022.

⁷⁶ 'National Action Plan, 2014' (National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA), n.d.), <https://nacta.gov.pk/nap-2014/>. Accessed 23 May 2021.

for quantifiable and time-bound actions with results. The 20 Points National Action Plan (NAP) for countering terrorism and extremism was quickly chalked out, however, its implementation was not as prompt as demanded by the then-prevailing disorder. True implementation of its 20 points will go a long way in suppressing and eradicating the scourge of terrorism from Pakistan.⁷⁷

Expediting the completion of CPEC: This flagship venture, being a game-changer and harbinger of prosperity for Pakistan, must be accorded the highest priority and implemented in the shortest possible time. Pakistan has taken quantum steps to ensure the security of CPEC which includes raising two dedicated Security Divisions⁷⁸ and capacity enhancement in many other hi-tech fields. The security apparatus must ensure that no untoward incidents occur which can impede and thwart the progress achieved on the corridor.

Carving out a National Narrative: A good job has already been done in creating a national narrative in the shape of *Paigham-e-Pakistan*,⁷⁹ which is a fatwa signed by over 1800 ulema outrightly denouncing terrorism, extremism, and sectarianism. However, despite having been around for three years it has not been disseminated well and has fallen short of making its true mark to date. The scope of the narrative may be broadened, allowing it to subsume other walks of social life. More widespread dissemination, supplemented by media debates and activities on national days will help in spreading awareness and creating faith in the national narrative, thereby striking at the very roots of the enemy's nefarious designs.

Economic Domain: Pakistan's economic plight makes it susceptible to different external pressures including economic intimidation and its purported benefactors hold sizeable influence over its policies and actions. Foremost, Pakistan needs to put its ailing economy on the right track to get itself out of the debt trap and its unhealthy cycle, and to save

⁷⁷ Tariq Khosa, 'CT NAP Revisited,' *Dawn*, 18 September 2021, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1646999>. Accessed 24 March 2022.

⁷⁸ 'Special Security Division Established to Secure CPEC,' *The Express Tribune*, 22 January 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1303428/special-security-division-established-secure-cpec>. Accessed 5 June 2023.

⁷⁹ 'Paigham-e-Pakistan' (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, n.d.), <http://www.paighamepakistan.com/>. Accessed 16 September 2021.

itself from the leverage that the lender states and organizations enjoy over it. It needs to turn around its economy fast, to be able to withstand economic blackmail. Broadening the tax net, increasing exports and addressing the trade deficit are crucial steps in this direction.

Informational Domain: Info war aims at subverting the opponent's population by delegitimizing the government, defaming the state organs, and sowing discord, while simultaneously feeding patriotic themes to its own populace to keep them charged, aware, and onboard. A well-deliberated informational prong must be launched by the government, aimed at showing the country in the right light. Rich history, culture, diversity, religious tolerance, growing economy, youth bulge, and tourism potential are a few of the themes showing promise. Indian nefarious designs must be continuously exposed taking cue from the recent exposition by the EU Disinfo Lab.⁸⁰ Pakistan also needs to diversify its media industry by opening more English channels for its voice to be heard internationally, far and wide. Regulatory authorities must regulate the authenticity of information showcased on mass media to combat its misuse.⁸¹

Cyber Domain: Pakistan's reliance on imported hardware, software, and services makes it susceptible to cyberattacks and data breaches through embedded malware, backdoors, and chipsets. Pakistan needs to enhance its cyber security capabilities to protect its computer-centric sectors. Government officials must stop using foreign social media as it remains prone to hacking and data leakage; an indigenous alternative must be made available widely. The National Cyber Security Policy⁸² needs to be implemented in letter and spirit to secure national services and infrastructure, while a combined civil-military cyber command force working under the National Security Council is required to synergize the

⁸⁰ 'India's 15-Year Information Warfare to Isolate Pakistan Debunked by EU DisinfoLab,' 10 December 2020, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/756547-eu-disinfoLab-debunks-indias-operation-of-over-750-fake-websites-to-take-down-pakistan>. Accessed 22 February 2022.

⁸¹ 'Media Laws and Rules,' *Ministry of Information and Technology, Government of Pakistan* (blog), accessed 20 July 2023, <http://www.moib.gov.pk/Pages/15/Media-laws-Rules>. Accessed 20 May 2023.

⁸² 'National Cyber Security Policy 2021' (Ministry of Information Technology & Telecommunication, Government of Pakistan, July 2021), <https://moitt.gov.pk/SiteImage/Misc/files/National%20Cyber%20Security%20Policy%202021%20Final.pdf>. Accessed 13 October 2022.

national effort. Regulation of Pakistani cyberspace, computers and mobile user records, and capacity building of LEAs is required to enable them to deal with cyber warfare. Cybercrime wings at FIA and NACTA need to be strengthened. Public campaigns are required to spread awareness.

Countering Fake News & Rumors: The deleterious effects of fake news are so severe that they necessitate state interventions in the form of task forces and institutions to counter the fake news e.g., the USA has created the Global Engagement Centre⁸³ while the European Union has created the Disinformation Review.⁸⁴ Pakistan must also establish a task force or institute to identify and address fake news in real-time. Websites must be penalized for both creating and sharing fake news, a case in point being the German Network Enforcement Act.⁸⁵ Government must encourage critical thinking in schools and PEMRA must monitor news being disseminated to the masses. It should however stay short of imposing a censorship regime as that is counter-productive. Professional and research-based investigative journalism must be promoted and correct perspectives must be propagated on social media.

Social Domain: Baloch sub-nationalism, religious extremism, and aversion in our tribal areas are a few of the fault lines being exploited by hostile intelligence agencies. The government needs to engage with these social forces, address their demands, and discourage & dissuade them from anti-state activities. Foreign support to anti-state elements must be severed. Sub-nationalist elements be taken on board, and high-paced development projects be undertaken in these areas to address the population's genuine concerns.

Lawfare Domain: Pakistan's Law Ministry must develop a strong legal arm that can tackle all threats in the legal domain and advise the government accordingly. Pakistan must adopt a well-informed legal

⁸³ 'Global Engagement Centre', U.S. Department of State, accessed June 15, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/under-secretary-for-public-diplomacy-and-public-affairs/global-engagement-center/>.

⁸⁴ '<https://Euvsdisinfo.Eu/>,' n.d., <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/>. Accessed 9 January 2022.

⁸⁵ 'Germany: Network Enforcement Act Amended to Better Fight Online Hate Speech,' accessed 10 June 2023, <https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2021-07-06/germany-network-enforcement-act-amended-to-better-fight-online-hate-speech/>. Accessed 10 June 2023.

stance on each of its international issues and then forcefully pursue the same through international legal bodies for maintaining an upper hand over its adversaries. These include the Kashmir issue, Indian misappropriation of the Indus Basin Water Treaty etc. The enemy must be pleaded out and denied a legal recourse. In-house, it must expedite legislation against destructive attacks on national assets such as pipelines and grid stations and create a mechanism to ensure their foolproof security.⁸⁶

Educating and Preparing the Nation for the Hybrid Onslaught: COAS once called every Pakistani ‘a soldier of Operation Radd-ul-Fassad’.⁸⁷ This analogy holds truer today than ever before, as the responsibility of defending our country (or any country for that matter) against foreign aggressions has now to be shared by both the soldier and the civilian, in their respective fields. For this purpose, it is imperative that the general public is specially made aware of the threats being faced so that they do not unknowingly bat for the wrong team. This requires broad-based regular debates on national security affairs in the parliament, in print and electronic media, and in educational institutes. Public participation will induce a sense of ownership in the masses.

Establishing a Hybrid War Centre of Excellence: Such a center of excellence, set up under the umbrella of the National Security Division and associated with the *National* Defense University, where a mix of government and defense experts can interact and conceptualize the threats and hone our capabilities of response, will go a long way in strengthening our national security apparatus. Inter-agency / inter-departmental brainstorming sessions will enable the forum to put forth a more cogent and doable course of action to the leadership.

Capacity Building of Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs): Most of our LEAs presently lack the capacity to engage with hybrid threats. They are therefore left out of the battle while the threat transits straight to the center of gravity. Police reforms and capacity building of civil armed

⁸⁶ Mujeeb Ali Samo, ‘Lawfare Move Is an Instrument for Foreign Policy’, *Pakistan Today*, 28 November 2021, <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2021/11/28/lawfare-move-is-an-instrument-for-foreign-policy/>. Accessed 23 April 2022.

⁸⁷ ‘Every Pakistani Is Soldier of Radd Ul Fasaad: COAS,’ *Associated Press of Pakistan (APP)*, 23 April 2017, <https://www.app.com.pk/national/every-pakistani-is-soldier-of-radd-ul-fasaad-coas/>. Accessed 27 March 2019.

forces through professional training, provision of modern equipment, merit-based recruitment & promotions, and depoliticization will enable these forces to play a more potent role in enhancing national security.

Addressing the Root Causes of Discord: Hybrid threats are often the consequences and not the root causes e.g., to exploit a sectarian issue, a reasonable sectarian fissure must first exist. It, therefore, flows that tackling hybrid threats alone will serve nothing more than cutting the head of the hydra as a new one will grow in its place. The deeper causes of discord and societal fissures will have to be clearly understood and addressed to deny exploitable opportunities to the adversary. Tactical brilliance will achieve nothing in the absence of an overarching strategy. Security challenges cannot be resolved entirely through administrative actions or counter-narratives unless the deeper, structural socioeconomic drivers are also worked at.⁸⁸

Response at the Military Level

Enhancing Intelligence Capabilities: The design behind each hybrid move needs to be unearthed well in time to minimize damages. To this end, an elaborate, hi-tech, and well-developed intelligence apparatus which can forewarn against impending threats and can preempt them, is an essential requirement. The collection and collation of information and its conversion into real-time actionable intelligence must remain the hallmark of hybrid warfare. Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Military Intelligence (MI), and Intelligence Bureau (IB) must work hand in hand and advise the government about the threats it faces, and specify the required response. Both ISI and MI Directorate must establish a cell within their folds specifically dedicated to counter hybrid threats.

Military Domain: In the military context, Pakistan must keep its forces ready and arrayed to deter any aggressive designs. Its nuclear policy must continue to augment the deterrent. Tit-for-tat responses, as displayed in February 2019 at the time of the Balakot incident will be essential to discourage Indians from trying to define a new normal or to impose any future misadventure. Ceasefire violations along the Line of Control (LoC) must be retaliated against in time and in kind, while at the same time, their details must be vigorously shared with the international

⁸⁸ Omama Anwar, 'Major Social Problems In Pakistan & Solutions in 2023!', *Healthwire* (blog), accessed 10 June 2023, <https://healthwire.pk/healthcare/major-social-problems-in-pakistan/>. 10 June 2023.

community in real-time. Stabilization operations such as *Radd-ul-Fassad* and the ongoing operations in Balochistan must be expedited and driven to their logical conclusion.

Hybrid Forces: At the individual level, a hybrid soldier will need to be more educated and aware of his surroundings. Geopolitical settings will play a role in cultivating his mindset. The hybrid soldier will be expected to gain intel, fight, destroy the enemy, rebuild, and restore, while simultaneously reaching out to the civilians caught in the crossfire and helping them cope with the war consequences. He will be expected to be as proficient with hi-tech computerized weapon systems, as he is with his gun. He will be able to bombard the adversary with mixed, often false but crippling info in real-time through electronic and social media, aimed at defeating him mentally, even before the first bullet is fired. He will be expected to see through such tactics of the enemy.

At the organizational level, armed forces must be equipped with a wider range of capabilities so as to be able to respond to both conventional threats, as from our Eastern border, and unconventional threats such as terrorism, sub-nationalistic undercurrents, and other internal security challenges. Readiness for both ends of the warfare spectrum will merit innovative training and equipping methodologies. Formations will need to be restructured into smaller, diverse, specialized teams from their present status of larger monolithic, uni-purpose entities.

Maintaining Comprehensive Deterrence: A broad-based comprehensive deterrence regime is essentially required to keep the enemy at bay. The adversary will seek to carve out space for limited engagements staying short of the nuclear threshold. The nuclear threshold must therefore be kept ambiguous, while deterrence through denial and appropriate punishment must remain instilled to keep the enemy's confidence level in the doldrums.⁸⁹

Adaptations Required in Military Culture: Battlefields of the yesteryears demanded strict order in the large-sized armed forces. The military culture of the time catered for the same, embodied in parades, salutes, and discipline. Modern-day battlefield asks more for intellect and

⁸⁹ Sannia Abdullah, 'Pakistan's Full-Spectrum Deterrence: Trends and Trajectories,' *South Asian Voices* (blog), 23 April 2020, <https://southasianvoices.org/pakistans-full-spectrum-deterrence-trends-and-trajectories/>. Accessed 10 May 2023.

initiative than obedience and order from the junior levels. Military culture needs to adapt accordingly.

Ensuring Force Protection: Hybrid wars are characterized by an absence of identifiable fronts, flanks, and rear areas, a conglomerate of combatant groups with different motivations, and the need for the armed forces to establish a persistent presence in population centers. In the new paradigm, the enemy would often seek nothing more than to inflict a steady trickle of casualties on the LEAs in the place of their choice, resultantly causing a large and complex force protection problem. Mission-oriented force protection will thus be required for both conserving the force and fulfillment of the mission.

Ensuring Population Protection: Military machinery may be tasked to perform law enforcement duties, as is at times the case in parts of ex-FATA, GB, and Balochistan. In such cases, security actions to protect the population from intimidation or harm by terrorists will be essential. A degree of order in the population must also be exercised through checking of identity, movement control, de-weaponization, jirgas, and policing activities.

Management of the Western Zone: Few players of the hybrid mix live astride Pakistan's western border, i.e., in Afghanistan and Iran, strike at will, and then slip across the border. To avert this, Pakistan must continue with its plans to fence the western border. Required forts must be constructed to dominate the fence and enhance its obstruction value for stopping infiltrators. Capacity building of Frontier Corps must enable it to guard the frontiers thereby allowing the de-induction of the Army from these areas. Operationalization of formal crossing points on the Pak-Afghan and Pak-Iran borders will promote trade, and discourage the illegal movement of persons, human trafficking, and narcotics. The merger of ex-FATA into settled districts must be undertaken at a faster pace.⁹⁰

Conclusion

As societies evolved throughout human history, so did contemporary warfare. It underwent a morphosis through its five generations and has undergone yet another mutation lately, taking the form of hybrid warfare.

⁹⁰ Osama Ahmad, 'Former FATA's Mainstreaming Remains Elusive,' *South Asian Voices* (blog), 11 July 2023, <https://southasianvoices.org/former-fatas-mainstreaming-remains-elusive/>. 15 July 2023.

With the current geopolitical contestation at play, Pakistan is caught in the eye of the storm and is increasingly facing hybrid attacks from its enemies. Today's hybrid onslaught cuts through all domains of the human experience including diplomatic, informational, and economic domains.

Understandably, hybrid threats merit hybrid responses. A whole-of-the-government approach is therefore fundamental in fighting hybrid. The government must strategize at the highest level employing the National Security Council, tasking each ministry to identify the threats in its domain and devise responses to them accordingly. A broad-based well-articulated and coherent response will be able to successfully take the country out of this hybrid quagmire. Capacity building of LEAs including Police, Civil Armed Forces, and Armed Forces will be an essential prerequisite to this end. It must also be appreciated that a government with a stable political and economic standing and popular support — will remain less vulnerable to hybrid threats, and will be able to resist disinformation, interference, and blackmail with unwavering determination.