Fifth-Generation Hybrid Warfare in Pakistan: Mapping Hybrid Threats, State Interpretation, and the Way Forward

Dr Zeeshan Zaighum* & Dr Farasat Rasool**

Abstract

Communication and warfare have an inevitable relationship and are defined by the “nature and character” of technology. The intersection of contemporary Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and modern trends of warfare is known as the “Fifth Generation (5G) Hybrid War.” This research explores the ‘State’ interpretation of 5G Hybrid Warfare. The study also comprehends the state's threat perception and subsequent response across DIMEFIL (diplomacy, information, military, economy, finance, intelligence, lawfare) spheres both internally and externally. The research has used a qualitative method of data collection. The analyses and discussion is based on the data collected from the in-depth interviews of top officials from national security institutions, the Federal Information Ministry, Intelligence Bureau, leading international and national journalists, and civil society offers state interpretation. The study proposes a Tripartite Defense Strategy in the form of short-term, mid-term, and long-term actions across DIMEFIL spheres. In the short-term, the state must address local issues which are exploited by external

* Dr Zeeshan Zaighum is a PhD in Media & Mass Communication. He is currently working as Assistant Professor at School of Media and Mass Communication, Beaconhouse National University, Lahore. He can be reached at zeeshan.zaighum@bnu.edu.pk

** Dr Farasat Rasool holds a Ph.D. in Communication Sciences from Université de Bourgogne, France, and is currently working as Associate Professor at the School of Media and Mass Communication, Beaconhouse National University, Lahore. He can be reached at: farasat.rasool@bnu.edu.pk

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and internal actors. As a mid-term strategy, regional issues including conflicts with neighbouring countries must be addressed. As a long-term strategy, narrative building at the global level must be initiated.

Keywords: Fifth Generation Hybrid Warfare, Information Warfare, Information Operations, Cyber Warfare, Threat Perception, Vulnerabilities in Pakistan
Introduction

William Lind in 1989 predicted that the upcoming generation of warfare would be more fluid in nature. It would carry less resistance and enjoy smoothness during its spread. The asymmetrical nature of warfare would mean that more state and non-state actors would have an opportunity to shape or mold the face of warfare on an uneven battlefield. This would also prompt warfare in a decentralised military warfare environment. Lind also hinted at the emerging role of non-state actors by the end of the Cold War.\(^1\)

Hybrid Warfare as a term has been under discussion since the early 1990s. The end of the 1991 Gulf War, in particular, paved the way for new scholarship on warfare. Several terms were coined and proposed including the 5th Generation Warfare; Hybrid Warfare, 3Block War, and Compound War. This shift in the taxonomy of warfare was also reflected in the transaction from the strategic level to the tactical level of the theatre environment. This, however, also created ambiguity in the classification of threat and threat perception, enemy, and several levels of warfare.\(^2\) This was identically similar to the mechanisms of unconventional warfare, and therefore, could be classified as an offshoot of the 4th Generation Warfare. The difference between the two generations would be the augmented importance of Information and Psychological Warfare.

Traditionally, a direct attack on an adversary has been seen as a costly affair. The price of such operations has multifaceted dimensions. To begin with, extroverts of hard power are not encouraged. The interconnectedness of mutual interests and regional superiority has shaped the new world order of dominance. An action of one country witnesses global repercussions. Post 9/11, the US-led western attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq, detrimentally changed the socio-political and


economic situation in the whole world. The Russian attack on Ukraine in 2022, negatively affected the global economy.\(^3\) In addition to this, the expression of hard power indicates the failure of diplomacy. The use of hard power in a conflict is a whistle blown for newer challenges. The response to a direct attack by an adversary is violent in nature and, thus, instigates a chain reaction of similar actions. Mass violence and collateral damage are among them. During military operations of modern times where weapons of mass destruction are used, loss of civilians and environmental effects of the war are inevitable. Such collateral damages can debase the rationality or legitimacy of any military campaign. Furthermore, war is a costly affair. A military campaign includes the development or procurement of weapons, training of personnel, mitigation of resources, perceiving threats, and action in an operation theatre. This requires immense human and monetary resources. Given the socio-economic condition of the world in modern times, the provision of such resources is very challenging even for developed nations and military superpowers.

The indirect attack strategy is subtler in nature. The indirect attacks are carried out through militia, state, and non-state actors. US Special Army Special Operations (USASO) has categorised direct and indirect approaches through several operations. The indirect approach includes psychological warfare, special operations, and non-military affairs.\(^4\) Also known as proxy attacks, indirect attacks are not completely attributable as a direct military attack. There are comparatively less strong reactions.\(^5\) The adversary at the time of attack remains in confusion and ambiguity. Therefore, the role of supranational organisations and military alliances also appear to be the least. There is insignificant mass violence and collateral damage and, therefore, such attacks go unnoticed on the global

\(^3\) Koypko, Andrew, “Hybrid Wars: The Indirect Adaptive Approach to Regime Change,” Moscow: People’s Friendship University of Russia, 2015.


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stage. The provision of resources for such attacks is also to the lowest side during a campaign. Unlike the covert nature of actions, diplomatic crises do not appear catastrophic and indirect warfare holds key significance in this regard. The US is believed to use unconventional warfare strategies in indirect attacks through the use of non-state actors against selected countries. This 'leading from behind' strategy of the US put governments of the 'under attack nations' against non-state proxies. The fifth-generation warfare does not necessarily require traditional use of power to start a war against an adversary. Rather, it focuses on capitalising on existing conflicts and fault-lines in a state by triggering them to violent and nonviolent disputes. The chaos and unrest initiated by such disputes can choke a country’s social, political, and economic growth.

Problem Statement
Pakistan is a country that exists on innumerable fault-lines. The country faces multiple challenges with complex dimensions. Ethnolinguistic, interreligious, sectarian, political, and interprovincial conflicts are widespread in the country. The fifth-generation warfare does not necessarily require the traditional use of power to start a war against an adversary. Rather, it focuses on capitalising on existing conflicts and fault-lines in a state by triggering them into violent and nonviolent disputes. The chaos and unrest initiated by such disputes can choke a country’s social, political, and economic growth. In Pakistan, the political and military leadership has time and again suggested that Hybrid Warfare is being enforced on Pakistan. The country’s adversaries and enemies are actively engaged in campaigns and missions which have been planned to destabilise Pakistani society, clog its economic growth, smear its image, and spread anarchy. Therefore, it becomes immensely important to examine how the state of Pakistan looks at the vulnerabilities and existing fault-lines in the country to first define nature and then design a strategy to respond to hybrid war threats. It is also relevant to explore various

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approaches adopted in the form of legislation, policy formulation, and legal frameworks.

Objectives of the Research
The research has the following objectives:
1. To understand the ‘States’ interpretation of the Fifth-Generation Hybrid Warfare.
2. To comprehend potential/exploited Pakistan’s fault-lines in the context of Hybrid Warfare.

Literature Review
Fifth-Generation Hybrid Warfare is unconventional in nature. Its very nature makes it effective. The very principle through which the base of a Hybrid War could be qualified as a ‘War’ is debatable. The discussions remain inconclusive as to whether the conflict can be classified as war. If affirmative, is the conflict legitimate or legal? Such analytical debates never have a unanimous end. The US Department of Defense defines an Information Environment as an accumulation of all the citizens, institutions, and structures in an information ecosystem. This ecosystem deals with the collection, production, and dissemination of information. Individuals are an important part of IE because they act on information. An official document of the US Army defines the information environment through seven elements.

The first element is the terrain and or weather of the area. This is important because before conducting any military or non-military operation, terrain and weather of the area plays a decisive role. For instance, during stormy weather, information infrastructure may not perform. In remote and far-fetched desert areas, the Internet may not work. Individuals may not be physically motivated to participate in the political demonstration because of bad weather.

The second element is the populace. For this element, the constituent groups of society are studied. One approach to studying the composition of the populace is demography through the prism of age, gender, education, language, ethnicity, race, religion, sect, and occupation. Another approach is psychology which includes ideology, affiliation, mindset, opinions, emotions, etc.

The third element is the social structures. This deals with the collective and mass composition of individuals. This covers religious groups, racial groups, ethnolinguistic groups, and other social and cultural lines. The analysis of social structures observe the way these groups think, feel, and act. The analysis also explores how information is exchanged, narratives are created and exchanged in intra-group and inter-group dimensions.

The fourth element is the government and military information infrastructure. In this element, the information infrastructure of the government and military is studied. The infrastructure includes available information and communication technologies for the collection and dissemination of information during the decision-making process.

The next element is Civil Information Infrastructure. This is also similar to its predecessor. The way civil society and individuals collect and disseminate information and the available technology, are key focuses of this analysis.

The sixth element is media. The media landscape of the area/country is widely studied. The media landscape includes different mediums i.e., television, radio, and newspaper, and may also include Internet. Media landscape also encompasses the way media covers an issue, shapes opinions and generates news.
The last and seventh element of an information environment is third-party organisations. These organisations include nongovernmental organisations, international donor agencies, development agencies, and relevant private organisations. According to US Army Training Doctrine and Command (US TRADOC), the elements of the information environment, following dimensions can be analysed:

The physical dimension includes tangible and intangible structures of society. These structures are important because they enable an exchange of information, ideas, and opinions in the society. These include traditional media, the Internet, social media, gadgets, devices, mobile phone networks, political parties, religious parties, activist groups, advocacy groups, non-governmental organisations, etc. The informational dimension includes processes like collection, dissemination, storage, exchange, and flow of information by individuals. The cognitive dimension encompasses the influence of information on human behaviour. War is a contest of wills. The cognitive dimension observes how information influences the human will to take action. The dimension covers the contextualisation of information and its relation with the decision-making process of individuals. It also deals with creating, supporting, manipulating, or distorting existing intangible assets of human cognition which includes morals, values, perception, public opinion, emotions, awareness, etc.

Political leaders, military experts, security gurus, journalists, and scholars have time and again discussed it. Yet, it remains an enigma in academia. Several researchers have studied it nationally and internationally. Nevertheless, the lens of these studies have remained military-centric. There is a lack of focus on its communication as well as academic aspects. Therefore, in communication research, it still remains an unchartered territory. The term has widely been used in

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political speeches, state addresses and policy statements. Yet, there is a sufficient gap in its development as an academic subject.\textsuperscript{10}

Furthermore, the contemporary media environment has changed both at the structural and functional levels. Unlike its predecessor, the digital media industry has a newer fraternity of owners and stakeholders where new elites are forming. The process of content creation, dissemination, and consumption has also witnessed a huge shift. This has also developed a new relationship between media and society. Furthermore, contemporary media ecology is an intersection of several media and communication technologies. This new media environment has faded away from territorial and geographical boundaries of the national and international context, professional and non-professional journalism, and mainstream and non-mainstream actors. In addition to this, the amount of information and content that is being created and shared digitally is unmatched in media environments of the past. This has catalysed newer yet significant introspection of the media ecology. The use of such information is evident in all public, personal, and professional lives. The expression and coverage of war have changed in mainstream media. Newer modes of representation have changed the traditional way of representing wars merely through photographs and images. However, the change is not restricted to the representation of war only, the contemporary media environment has changed the very relationship between media and warfare. Digitisation and availability of data and new ways of expression have changed the way the media environment was traditionally studied. Databases and trends have paved the way for new scholarship to be developed in media and warfare.\textsuperscript{11} Nevertheless, the digitisation of information and availability of “big data” has not only inspired new scholarship on media ecology but it has also changed the concept of warfare with newer but “remote” forms and techniques of war.


are now being improvised. Besides this, the experience of war is changing. Mostly individuals gain experience of war through the accretion of war experiences of other individuals (through representation, coverage, statistics, etc.). However, this is changing after the digitisation of information and data.

One of the earliest social media operations was Operation Earnest Voice, which was launched to “counter” extremists’ narratives in the social media sphere by disseminating desirable narratives in Pakistan and the Middle Eastern countries by the United States. During the operation, a software “Persona Management System” was developed. It was significant because it used techniques like bot accounts, astroturfing, creating fake accounts, and maintaining fake identities. In 2013, a cyber-espionage operation and infrastructure of India was revealed by a Norwegian cyber security team under Norman Shark. The report named the operation “Operation Hangover,” based on the name of one of the files carrying malware during attacks. Indian hackers carried out attacks against Telenor and Tameer Bank in Pakistan. Whereas there is no evidence that the operation was backed up by the Indian State actors, nevertheless, investigators indicated that industrial-level espionage for a hacking group is questionable. Seventy-nine per cent of the total infected victims were found to be Pakistani individuals and citizens.

Research Methodology
In Pakistan and around the world, Fifth-Generation Hybrid Warfare needs military doctrinal and academic interpretation that can provide a better understanding of actions, operations, and responses of contemporary warfare in the information and communication domain holistically. To preserve the research profound, comprehensive, and empirical, an effort

13 Ibid.
has been made to infiltrate traditional and social media platforms to establish soft intrusion. Hence, the role of journalists, content creators and distributors, civil society, and critical observers has been ardently recognised as key stakeholders in policy-making. Similarly, to ensure heterogeneity and in-depth sampling, the researchers used principles to rationally select/invite interviewees for the study, which included interviews of the top officials from national security institutions, the Intelligence Bureau, the Information Ministry, and also leading international and national think tanks. The purposive sampling method is used in the current study. Researchers have used "expert sampling” as a technique within the method. This method helps ensure the generalisation of the data with an analytical and logical approach. To maintain the diversity of opinions, both rightist and leftist viewpoints from the civil society, observers, think tanks and legal experts were made certain. As a neutral subject specialist, an international journalist and subject expert were selected to maintain an academic balance.

**Fifth-Generation Warfare: Pakistan’s Perspective**

Fifth-Generation Hybrid Warfare is different from propaganda in several aspects. First of all, propaganda is a tool in this warfare. Comparing it with the Hybrid War would be inconsequential. Secondly, Fifth-Generation Warfare is conducted at an informational and physical level across military and non-military spheres through soft intrusion followed by hard intrusion. Thirdly, the scale and effectiveness of Hybrid Warfare are higher than propaganda warfare. Real-time support, actions, subversions, and intrusions have paved the way for new warfare doctrines. Fourthly, Hybrid Warfare also encompasses cyber warfare and electronic warfare. Fifth, the intelligence level of Hybrid Warfare is one of the most distinctive and salient aspects which distinguishes it from propaganda warfare. It is a gradual and synergetic application of subversive efforts (fake news, diplomacy, law, foreign electoral intervention), and coercive measures (diplomatic, economic, and social) with a coordinated blow by kinetic effort (support to violence, terrorism, civil war through state/non-state actors or armed intervention).
Interpreting Fifth-Generation Hybrid Warfare

The state of Pakistan through its security, intelligence, and public policy institutions, has carried out several actions to cohesively formulate an operational meaning of the concept. The National Security Policy of Pakistan (NSP) 2022-26 was formulated by the National Security Division of the Federal Government in consultation with the National Security Committee, civil and political leadership, academic institutions, and think tanks. The policy was approved in December 2021. National Security Policy considers Hybrid Warfare as a threat to national security. The policy, however, reinforces the impression that Hybrid Warfare is not fully explored as a concept, and it still endures as an uncharted territory for many. Furthermore, NSP also acknowledges that Hybrid Warfare is widely escalating, therefore, it lacks a viable cover in the nature and character of the warfare. NSP recognises Hybrid Warfare as a technologically determined and executed concept. It regards the “revolution in information technology” as the driving force behind the emergence and growth of the War. According to the policy document, "information warfare, cyber warfare, disinformation, influence operations, lawfare, economic coercion..." are a few of the instruments employed in Hybrid Warfare. Contact and No Contact Warfare are two categories to interpret the character of warfare. Contact Warfare can be interpreted as warfare in proximity. This is relevant when two adversaries are either geographically close or can physically reach out to each other. From sword fighting to missile warfare, all are techniques of Contact War. Contact War is dangerous for several reasons. First, according to the Game theory of warfare, an aggressor challenges an opponent with two options: Comply or Resist. If the respondent complies, war may not occur. If it resists, actions would be reciprocal. Owing to the cost, lethality, and accuracy of Contact Warfare, reciprocation is undesirable. Contact Warfare is attributable and reciprocal. No-Contact Warfare on the other hand, is non-attributable, cost-effective, and detrimental but less lethal and much more accurate. Therefore, it is desirable. Pakistan being a nuclear

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state is a deterrent in Contact Warfare. But in No-Contact Warfare, it is a vulnerable target. Fifth-generation warfare is no-contact, non-kinetic, and indirect warfare which is fought through no physical tools in multiple spheres.

Figure 1: Conceptualisation of 5GW shared by a participant in the study

5GW is conceptualised in three spheres: Ways, Means, and Ends. Ways include exploiting internal fault-lines which can lead to an internal implosion of the state in the form of mass violence, political chaos, and social havoc. Furthermore, by propagating identity-challenging narratives, HIAs are putting Pakistani nationals into an identity crisis. Means includes mapping of internal and external fault-lines which are categorised into diplomatic, information, military, economy, finance, internal, and lawfare sources. The end result of these actions is achieved in the form of gaining political concessions, regime change, and overall structural change in the state by triggering revolutions.
Aggressors of fifth-generation Hybrid War in Pakistan are using social media, the Internet, and communication networks to attack relationships and linkages between the Government (democratic institutions, groups, parties), military (army and military institutions), and public (individuals, ethnolinguistic, sectarian, religious groups, media) internally and externally to destroy trust, support, legitimacy, legality, etc. This is being done by propaganda, disinformation, fake news, leaked information, unreliable comparisons, illogical political propositions, ridiculing, and mockery as expressions of such activities. Such propaganda campaigns gained momentum during the War on Terrorism (WoT). Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and extremist groups used this instrument by running smearing propaganda campaigns against the government and armed forces and called them "infidels." In Balochistan, separatist groups, anti-sate and anti-army ran campaigns following the killing of Akbar Bugti in 2006, during a military operation. This propaganda is continuing. However, such campaigns have also been sometimes rubbed by mainstream political parties to build their political narrative.
War can be defined by two perspectives: nature and character. The nature of war includes the purpose of several strategic, operational, and tactical actions which may include fear, intimidation, suggestion, compliance, subversion, coercion, etc. The nature of war is enduring and sometimes constant. Prussian General and military theorist Clausewitz argued that the nature of war would remain constant and would never change. However, Clausewitz's work is mostly translated and is limited to interpretation. For instance, the writer meant 'enduring' and not 'constant.' The nature of war could never remain constant as interests may differ; adversary's reaction may vary. The nature of war may also vary among generations of warfare. The second perspective to look at war is "character" which is displayed by the given technology of the war.

If we look at the nature and character of Hybrid War, it is not a new phenomenon. The nature of Hybrid War includes fear, coercion, intimidation, hatred, etc. The character of Hybrid War includes propaganda, hate speeches, disinformation, Psyops, IOs, etc. Looking at both perspectives of war, it can be concluded that Hybrid Warfare is not new. Rather, every war in the history of the world is hybrid in nature. Hybridity is the inculcation of two or more species. Hybrid War is the integration of Kinetic and Non-Kinetic Warfare. No war in the world lacks any of the two spheres. All wars have had propaganda, fear, intimidation, threats, etc. Going by the definition of Hybrid Warfare, what we witnessed in 1971 was the preparation, provocation, and successful execution of a first-rate Hybrid War. Even historically also, every war had a narrative. Therefore, calling only Hybrid Warfare a fifth-generation warfare would be unjustified.

Fault-lines in Pakistan in the Context of Hybrid Warfare
Hybrid Warfare threats are in numerous domains, some of which are as follows:
DIMEFIL (Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economic, Finance, Internal, and Lawfare) instruments of power. The aforementioned maps the most exploited fault-lines in the DIMEFIL spheres.

There are usually two patterns of escalation in the DIMEFIL spheres. The first pattern is vertical escalation, wherein, an aggressor selects one of the spheres for an attack. Whereas, in the other pattern is horizontal escalation, an aggressor attacks multiple spheres simultaneously for maximum mutilation of the state. In Pakistan, horizontal escalation has been a pattern as discussed in the following paragraphs:

**Diplomatic**

In the diplomatic domain, an aggressor designs and employs a multifaceted strategy. The use of supranational organisations, regional alliances, and lobbying in relevant states is done. Embassies, representatives, and support groups are used in recognition or de-recognition of the interstate and intrastate issues, legitimacy of the groups and actors, and nation branding and de-branding are generally the fodder. In a globalised world, wars are more fought on the diplomatic front than on borders. The doctrine can be interpreted from a lecture given by Ajit Doval in 2014, at Sastra University. During the lecture, the then National Security Advisor of India, stressed the significance of isolating Pakistan.
The doctrine is also reflected in the disinformation campaign against Pakistan as investigated by the EU. The Disinfo Lab, India, has been running a disinformation campaign against Pakistan for over a decade and a half. With the use of social media platforms, imposter media organisations, social media accounts, dubious NGOs, and advocacy groups have widely created a complex nexus of content dissemination and narrative-building activities. For example, a Twitter account with the name "Louis B. Sohn" was an American human rights advocate and died in 2006. However, the account using his name on Twitter was active till 2011. The account would share contents regarding Pakistan mostly. Similarly, several fake media organisations were created including "The Times of Geneva," "European Parliament Magazine," and "EP Today" to misinform the people. Similarly, Pakistan’s image in the world is being widely disfigured by the Indian lobbyists in the US decision-making circles to perpetuate the long-standing acrimony between Pakistan and India.

Information

The world has entered into the second stage of an inclusive political model where every individual has easy access to information. People seek, create, and share information to build perception, expand cognitive repertoire, increase knowledge, reinforce opinions, and vice versa despite having no direct access and exposure to original issues and conflicts. Issues are identified, reported, and then explored at almost individual levels. The dependence on information and communication technologies mostly makes information pregnable. Those who control technology can control information and therefore, perception, cognition and opinions. The majority relies on the Internet, social media platforms, television, newspapers, and books to satisfy their cognitive needs. Manipulated

information aggressors and HIAs are using information and communication technology platforms to target local population and global audiences simultaneously, through disinformation, fake news, propaganda, alternative, and fabricated facts, and campaign reports.

Military
On the other hand, the military attacks are mostly kinetic in nature. Pakistan's territorial disputes with neighbouring countries are good examples of military attacks. These disputes include conflicts with India, and Afghanistan. Nevertheless, due to nuclear deterrence, HIAs and other conflicting adversaries have avoided a direct war with Pakistan. Therefore, cross-border infiltration, isolated attacks, cease-fire violations, violations of international borders, and lines of control are generally the means used against Pakistan. Under the circumstances, the non-kinetic front of Hybrid Warfare carries greater weight. Alternatively, propaganda and disinformation against military institutions are widely imbued to weaken the institutional reputation and negatively influence the morale of the soldiers.

Economy
Economy and defense are interrelated and complement each other. A country with a poor economy cannot sustain a good military. Similarly, a country with a good economy but with multiple threats, would not be able to withstand conflicts in the doctrine of mosaic warfare. Multiple fronts are used to target a country. After COVID-19, the world is jointly struggling with the economy. Unfortunately, Pakistan’s economy portrays an even dismal picture due to a perpetual war against terrorism, extremism, poor economic policies, and an internationally hostile attitude towards Pakistan are a few of the various reasons that have impacted its economy severely. Pakistan is also regrettably caught in an economic competition between the emerging economic powers. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), being a flagship component of China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) initiative, has attracted more hostility from the world’s economic competing forces. The combination of unconventional
warfare (terrorism), with information attacks (anti-business speculation) is being employed to target CPEC. False information regarding its route is being incessantly spread. Similarly, Baloch nationalists are being used to inject trust deficit between the province and the federation. HIAs have been carrying out sabotage of the project through their agents.

**Finance**
Owing to the interconnected nature of global economies, an adversary constantly tries to inflict grievous harm to the economy without getting engaged in an armed conflict. The opposing forces use sanctions by the influence of their intelligence sources to restrict the supply of critical economic resources to cripple the functioning of the state structure. Lobbying is done by the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, Financial Action Task Force, International Rating Agencies, Corporate Groups, Multinational Corporations, and Global Finance Agencies to coerce governments.

**Internal Fault-lines**
Ever since its inception, Pakistan has faced acrimonious relationships both with its eastern and western neighbours. The schisms permeated by sectarianism, religious and political intolerance, separatist movements, bad governance, political instability, a dependent and frail economy, poverty, law and order situation, and messy justice system further added to its vulnerabilities with the passage of time. They were accentuated by the WoT in Afghanistan and its domino effect on Pakistan since more than 300,000 Afghans took refuge in Pakistan while burdening both the already faltering society and economy. It provided an easy playground to its adversaries’ adventure with Hybrid Warfare. Today, Pakistan is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world that are the victim of Hybrid Warfare launched by various states and non-state actors. Most of its vulnerabilities are exacerbated due to its massively shrunk economy and its sensitive strategic location which puts it in a highly volatile neighbourhood. It is surrounded by hostile India on its east,
more than 2000 long porous borders with Afghanistan on its west, Iran on its southwest, and China and Russia on its north.

On its internal front, Pakistan’s vulnerabilities are spread over religious diversity (since Pakistan's population consists of diversified religious groups), sectarian divide (there are numerous sectarian groups in the country that subscribe to different schools of Islamic thought), ethnic and linguistic variety, social division, and political polarisation. Bad governance & lack of rule of law, territorial disputes with the regional states, unsatisfying division of national resources among federating units, gender discrimination, identities, and rights have all added to Pakistan’s vulnerable spaces for exploitation by either kinetic or non-kinetic forces.

**Lawfare**

"Lawfare, or the use of legal force and devices for military and diplomatic advancement, has become a critical component of South Asia's dynamic conflict landscape. In the context of the India-Pakistan conflict, India's efforts to use a policy of “lawfare” designed to support non-military actions against Pakistan, by supporting state-sponsored terrorism in Pakistan, ratcheting armed oppression of Kashmiri civilians, and pushing for Pakistan’s diplomatic isolation. Meanwhile, Pakistan, with a virtually nonexistent international law team, continues to remain politically passive while reacting to even strategic “issue-framing” by India.”

**Threat Perception of Hybrid Warfare**

According to a respondent, “Hybrid threats combine military and non-military, as well as covert and overt means, including disinformation, cyber-attacks, economic pressure, and deployment of irregular armed groups and use of regular forces. Hybrid threats are often tailored according to the vulnerabilities of the target state or inter-state political communities. The purpose is to exploit them insofar as they are deepened to create and exacerbate polarisation both at the national and international levels. This translates into perilous erosion of the core values of coexistence, harmony, and pluralism in and amongst democratic societies
as well as the decision-making capability of the political leaders. Ultimately, what hybrid threats undercut is the trust of the citizens in their state institutions.” Nevertheless, Hybrid attacks can put the whole state machinery into rational panics when the state becomes either indecisive or reacts extravagantly. Furthermore, fault-lines and fissures in Pakistani society are at times results of the government’s failure. It can also be argued that political parties, non-governmental organisations, media, and even government departments are also found to be exploiting internal fissures for their interest.

Hybrid threats can be categorised into two types: Internal Threats and External Threats.

Tools and the manifestation of internal threats include

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Tools of Hybrid / Hybrid Warfare</th>
<th>Manifestation in Pakistan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>• Social, Political and Religious Polarization</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Exploitation of Vulnerabilities</td>
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<td>• Agenda Setting</td>
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<td>• Discrediting State Institutions (Army, Judiciary, Government)</td>
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<td>Social Media</td>
<td>• Discrediting State and State Institutions</td>
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<td>• Ridiculing and mocking state officials</td>
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<td>• Hate Speech</td>
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<td>• Glorifying Terrorism, Separatism</td>
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<td>Intellectuals</td>
<td>• Anti-State Self Righteousness</td>
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<td>• Anti-Religious</td>
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<td>• Indoctrination by foreign institutes</td>
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<td>• Propaganda in guise of education</td>
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<td>Corrupt Politicians and Officials</td>
<td>• Association of Politics with Army</td>
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<td>• Use of political parties to make important national issues controversial, e.g., CPEC and Kalabagh Dam</td>
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<td>• Delaying Tactics in important deals</td>
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<td>• Espionage</td>
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<td>Diplomacy</td>
<td>• Use of diplomat to lobby against their own country</td>
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<td>• Recently former ambassador arranged a gathering in London in which famous activists, media anchors and intellectuals having anti army and anti-state sentiments were invited</td>
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<td>Proxies / Non-State actors</td>
<td>• TTP and BLA (Under HiAs)</td>
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<td>• Separatist Movements</td>
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<td>• Anti-State Protests</td>
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*Figure 4: Internal tools and manifestation of hybrid attacks in Pakistan*
Tools and the manifestation of external threats include

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<tr>
<th>Tools of Hybrid / Hybrid Warfare</th>
<th>Manifestation in Pakistan</th>
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| **Media**                      | • Negative Coverage to Pakistan  
                                  | • Propaganda against Pakistan’s nuclear program  
                                  | • Political motivated with vested interests  
                                  | • Discrediting State Institutions (Army, Judiciary, Government) |
| **Social Media**               | • Logitimizing Proscribed Organizations  
                                  | • Disinformation, Fake News  
                                  | • Trend Creation  
                                  | • Narratives |
| **Intellectuals**              | • Anti-Pakistan  
                                  | • Intellectual Meddling  
                                  | • Propaganda in guise of education |
| **HIAs**                       | • CPEC  
                                  | • Involvement in Baluchistan, Sindh, Punjab, KPK  
                                  | • Cyber Attacks and Espionage  
                                  | • Covert and Overt Operations |
| **Diplomacy**                  | • Lobbying in UN, EU, USA etc.  
                                  | • Use of International NGOs, Think Tanks  
                                  | • Events and Activities |
| **Proxies / Non-State actors** | • TTP and BLA (Under HIAs)  
                                  | • Separatist Movements  
                                  | • Anti-State Protests all over the world  
                                  | • Violent Instigation |

*Figure 5: External tools and manifestation of hybrid attacks in Pakistan- designed by the researchers.*

**Recommendations**

Existing literature and responses from participants indicate that the Pakistan Online Information Environment is under attack from multiple aggressors. These attacks are carried out by internal and external actors. The complex nature of threats calls for a “Whole Nation Approach” and “Whole of Government.” approach.

The suggested framework has been categorised into dual approaches: Offensive and Defensive.
Fifth-Generation Hybrid Warfare in Pakistan: Mapping Hybrid...

Defense Strategy
Mapping hybrid threats in the DIMEFIL approach indicates that Pakistan sits at the intersections of multifaceted vulnerabilities and fault-lines. These fault-lines exist historically and as well as are the outcomes of poor policies, mismanagement, and internal exploitation. Therefore, no single institution can devise and formulate a counter strategy. No individual institution can be at the forefront to address hybrid threats from multiple forces which are initiated from different façades. Pakistan needs to adopt a “whole of government” and “whole of nation” approach as a short, mid, and long-term defence strategy.

Pakistan must develop an ‘aggressive’ defense strategy that includes “Identification” of the hybrid threats, actions, and targets, “Prevention” of vulnerable and potential groups from attacks, using deterrence techniques, including diversion and counterattack, and defending those who are being targeted.

Defensive strategy can be further divided into three phases:
In a short-term strategy, Pakistan needs to address and overcome its domestic vulnerabilities. Pakistan's vulnerabilities are gigantic but not invincible. A comprehensive public policy aiming at filling social fissures can achieve this goal. In the mid-term, Pakistan must act proactively to overcome its regional vulnerabilities which include relations with neighbours, better territorial monitoring to counter cross-border insurgency, a peaceful Afghanistan, etc. In the long term, Pakistan must act to establish its international identity and 'favourable' peacetime relevance through dynamic yet positive diplomacy.

Offensive Strategy
Pakistan needs to adopt a proactive and offensive strategy to counter current and potential hybrid threats. One way of this approach can be based on social media and the Internet. Pakistan can adopt the following multifaceted approach by using social media as a weapon.
Strategic Level
Pakistan can use social media platforms, video-sharing sites, over-the-top (OTTs) services, the Internet, and other digital media platforms to devise an aggressive "Narrative Building" campaign. Strategic Narratives would ensure that collective Cognitive Security (COGSEC) is integrated and less vulnerable for HIAs. Simultaneously, counter-offensive narratives should be built and promoted toward adversaries in order to infiltrate the adversary's IE. It will also engage the adversary in its own IE.

Operational Level
At the operational level, Pakistan can employ the EBT model to achieve strategic goals. This would include activities that are targeted at both internal and external target audiences. A few of these suggested activities are digital storytelling, gamification, multilingual content, inclusion, engagement, etc.

Tactical Level
Similar to hashtag creation against itself, Pakistan can deploy automated sources, and AI-based applications not only to create content but also to
infiltrate hostile OIE. Photos, images, posters, trolls, memes, discussion threads, flame bait to create content ‘in’ and ‘for’ the adversary OIE.

Intelligence Level
Pakistan must take motivation from the countries and agencies which are using information communication technologies, data sciences, and digital media platforms not only for intelligence collection but also for policy and strategy building. Based on the DARPA model, the Pakistani Government can engage with corporate groups, academia, researchers, and innovators to indigenously develop and innovate projects, which can be helpful in narrative building, intelligence collection, and policy formulation.

Conclusion
Fifth-Generation Hybrid Warfare is a real phenomenon. It does not stem from a single front, and adopts singularity in approach. It is a multidimensional no-contact, non-kinetic, and indirect warfare. Whereas, there is a disagreement about the use, and operationalisation of Fifth-Generation Hybrid Warfare as a nature of war and as the character of war is universal. James Mattis, former Secretary of the Defense USA, in an official memorandum in 2017, stressed the importance of the Internet and social media platforms in contemporary warfare. He discussed how global accessibility of information communication technologies is not only influencing army operations but also changing the “character” of wars.18

In Pakistan’s case, as the study postulates, Fifth-Generation Hybrid Warfare is being initiated through different spheres. The first and most recent pattern is state subversion by attacking the relationship between people and the armed forces. The other pattern is using citizens’ personal, political, religious, and social biases against themselves. Social media intelligence (SOCTMINT) is another pattern of fifth-generation attacks in Pakistan. The target/victim of such attacks are common citizens as well as

decision-makers. For future research, the study proposes ‘COGSEC in free digital space’ as one of the areas which should be studied.