

Q) How should Pakistan combat 5th generation war successfully?

1) Introduction :

"Warfare is no longer defined by the simple physical clash of forces, but rather by the collision of perceptions, images and narratives" - General Sir Rupert Smith. The dictum set forth by the erstwhile British officer appositely, and well ahead of its time, elucidates the evolving warfare pattern. In the contemporary age, the antediluvian way of full-fledge frontal assault

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and warfare of such ilk are deemed inefficient. This is way the world is resorting to new and covert means of inflicting damage to adversaries while maintaining their anonymity

2) What is fifth generation warfare and its types:

2.1) What is fifth generation warfare (5GW):

5GW is a concept that refers to a form of asymmetric warfare that involves non-traditional tactics, often exploiting technological, psychological, and information-based methods to achieve strategic objectives. It goes beyond the traditional military engagements and encompass a broader range of tactics to influence opponents such as information, economic and cyber warfare.

2.2) Types of Fifth-Generation Warfare:

2.2.1) Information Warfare:

This involves manipulation of information and disinformation that is aimed to

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shape perceptions and influence public opinion. It includes activities such as disseminating fake news, propoganda and use social media to shape narratives.

Example:

In 2020, A Brussels-based NGO working to combat disinformation against the European Union has unearthed a 15-year old operation run by Indian entity that used hundreds of fake media outlets to target Pakistan.

2.2.2) Cyber Warfare:

Includes the usage of cyber attacks to infiltrate or disrupt digital systems, networks, and infrastructure. This includes hacking into government databases, critical infrastructure, financial systems, and military networks.

Example:

In 2020, a prominent news channel was disrupted by an Indian hacker., Albeit the attack was innocuous as

it only rendered the channel to display Indian flag and no confidential information was compromised, it furnished a much needed impetus to Pakistan's govt to enhance network security in order to preclude such tendencies

2.2.3) Economic Warfare:

This refers to the using of economic tools to weaken the opponents economy. It can involve economic sanctions, trade restrictions, currency manipulation, and targeting key industries to undermine stability.

2.2.4) Psychological Warfare:

Involves tactics aimed at influencing the psychology of individuals, groups, or populations to create fear, confusion, or demoralisation. This may include spreading fear through threats or psychological manipulation.

2.2.5) Proxy Warfare:

Sponsoring or supporting proxy forces, insurgent groups, or militias to destabilise

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2.2.5) Proxy Warfare:

Sponsoring or supporting proxy forces, insurgent groups, or militias to destabilise

and weaken an opponent indirectly. These proxies can operate on behalf of the sponsoring state while maintaining plausible deniability.

Example:

The magnitude of such threats can be discerned by the attack on Peshawar mosque, where a suicide bomber blew himself up, claiming lives of as many as 84 people while more than 200 were injured.

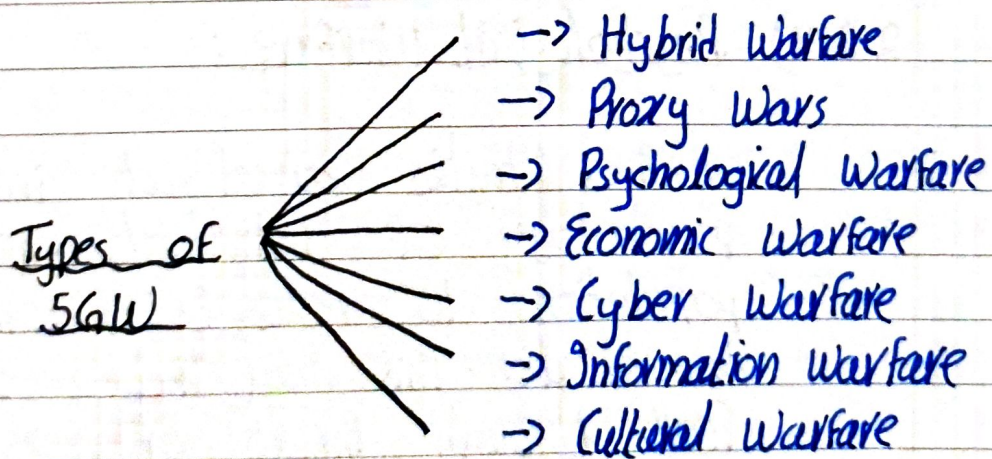


Fig 1: Overview of SGW

3) How should Pakistan combat SGW:

3.1) Invest in Cybersecurity :

Strengthening cybersecurity is crucial to safeguarding critical infrastructure, sensitive information, and digital networks. Developing robust cybersecurity measures and expertise can help defend against cyber attacks. In a bid to enhance cybersecurity, the government of Pakistan, in 2016, enacted Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act.

3.2) Promote Media Literacy :

The government should launch awareness campaigns aimed at educating the public to analyse and critically evaluate information they come across on social media platforms. This could empower the citizens to distinguish between fake and authentic news and not fall prey to information warfare.

3.3) Strengthening Counterterrorism Efforts :

Asymmetric threats often overlap with terrorism. Combining efforts to combat terrorism and 5G/W can lead to more effective responses against hybrid threats. Pakistan has

carried out many military operations to nip such terrorist tendencies in the bud, with a notable operation called 'Zarb-e-Azb' that commenced in the wake of APS school attack in 2014.

3.4) Shift Focus from Military Might:

Warfronts have shifted from conventional battlefields to cyber space and the usual weapons of war will not be useful in combating 5GW. Pakistan's civil and military leadership should need to rework strategic perspectives and need to shift from strengthening military might through weapons to coming up with technology to identify fake news & organisations.

3.5) Safeguard National Data:

Pakistan has yet to establish a digital system to safely store sensitive data. Data, in this age, is of paramount importance and can be used by ill-intentioned organisations and media outlets to malign governments.

3.6) Not leave Information Voids:

leaving voids in information that is necessary and important to be shared with the citizens creates a space for mischievous outfits to fill those voids with false information. If the government and other institutions avoid leaving voids in information sharing and are transparent with the process, then this would build a trust between the citizens and government entities.

3.7) Public-Private Collaboration:

Encourage collaborations between government agencies, private sector entities, and academic institutions. Joint efforts can pool resources, expertise, and innovations to combat 5GW.

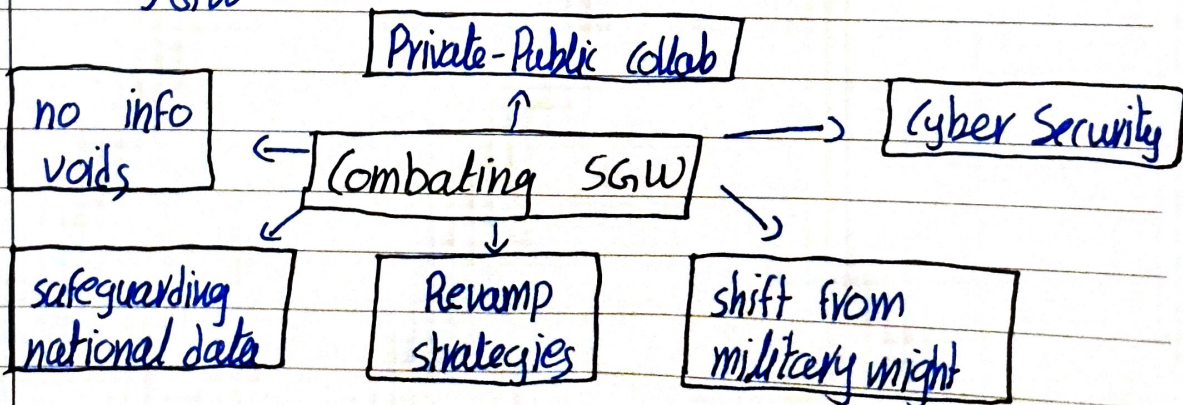


Fig 2: Combating 5GW

Day / Date

4) Conclusion:

There remains no ambivalence that Pakistan is engulfed with fifth generation warfare. Despite experiencing heavy losses in different sectors, the country is becoming conversant with this new ilk of warfare and serious policy amendments are underway to combat such threats.