

Q) Fifth-generation warfare is posing a perpetual threat to Pakistan's peace and prosperity. How Pakistan can counter fifth-generation warfare impacts on Pakistan. Suggest remedial measures.

Ans) Fifth-generation warfare is the most evolved form of warfare which has transcended military boundaries and operate primarily in non-kinetic, psychological and information domains. Unlike conventional warfare, which targets physical assets, fifth-generation warfare (5GW) is a "war of information and perception" that makes human mind the ultimate battlefield. It includes sophisticated cyberattacks, social engineering and large-scale disinformation campaigns.

Being a developing country, Pakistan is vulnerable to face lasting impacts of this kind of war.

Weak IT sector and digital policies, digitally illiterate citizens, poor governance and fewer digital agreements compound the threat. To counter and limiting the impacts posed by this surging threat, the country needs to adopt following remedial measures:

1) Strengthening the legal and Institutional Framework

The National Cyber Security Policy 2021 is a commendable starting point, but its efficacy requires addressing identified weaknesses. There should be a clear demarcation of the roles of the Ministry of IT and the Ministry of Defence to ensure a unified response against cybercrimes and cyber warfare. In addition, the authorities must shift the policy from reactive to proactive framework. This is important because a state cannot win a war of perception by playing solely on the defensive. Along with debunking misinformation, the institutions should address and rectify the fissures that adversaries exploit.

Fostering Social Resilience through Media Literacy

As SCW targets individuals, cultivating a resilient society will be a long-term solution to combat the threat. For this purpose, media literacy should be integrated into the national curriculum. Educating next generation at younger age will be an effective step against any future gambit. Alongside formal education, the government must launch mass public awareness campaigns in small villages and towns where the vulnerability to misinformation is higher. In this way, the state can strengthen the social fabric and mitigate the influence of misinformation.

3) Public-Private Partnerships

Collaboration with the private sector to share threat intelligence, and to develop joint

Solutions for cybersecurity and information warfare will be a strategic step. Since much of the battlefield of SCW is cyberspace, media and economy — areas where the private sector has a strong hold — the state alone cannot fight against it effectively. By collaborating with private sector, state can create a united front against hostile narratives and digital threats. Moreover, the cooperation will ensure that both the government and private stakeholders share responsibility in protecting national security and public trust from such invisible threats.

Improvement in Intelligence and Surveillance System

Develop advanced systems to detect and monitor potential threat, including disinformation campaigns and cyberattacks.

this requires technological modernization which includes AI-assisted models, trained analysts, robust field networks and stronger inter-agency fusion centers.

However, timely information sharing is equally important to detect any suspicious activity and upcoming threat.

Hence, a well-developed intelligence and surveillance system can serve as a backbone of a secure state, preventing threat before they materialize.

5) International Collaboration

The transnational nature of ISW necessitates a strategy that extends beyond national borders. Pakistan should actively seek and develop international agreements with allied nations and multinational

Companies to combat the rise of misinformation. Pakistan can also use such platforms to expose malicious activities. In this way, Pakistan will not only develop a shield around itself but also contribute to a more stable and secure international information environment.

Conclusion

Fifth-generation warfare is a present and existential challenge that fundamentally reshapes the concept of conflict. For Pakistan the threat is magnified by internal fragilities. To combat the threat, it needs robust institutional and legal reforms, digital literate citizenry, unified command structure and international cooperation.