

Question

How Pakistan can combat Fifth Generational Warfare (5GW) successfully?

INTRODUCTION

Gone are the days when battles were fought with bullets and bayonets. Today, wars are waged with bytes and technology blurs the line between peace and conflict. Modern warfare is not confined to geographical borders; it exists within the minds of people. **Fifth Generational Warfare** targets the fault lines of a society: ethnicity, religion, economy and information. In Pakistan, vulnerabilities like political and economic instability, polarization, weak governance, social divisions and fault lines in cyber department are exploited to undermine national cohesion and international credibility. Therefore, Pakistan can turn its weaknesses into strengths by national integration, good

governance, securing cyber space and fostering digital literacy. As Sun

Tzu said,

"The supreme art of war is to subdue enemy without fighting."

NATURE OF FIFTH GENERATIONAL WARFARE AND RELEVANCE TO PAKISTAN

Fifth generational warfare refers to ^{conflict where} a battlefield is not physical but cognitive and informational. Instead of fighting with conventional military forces, it relies on propaganda, disinformation, cyber attacks, economic coercion, and psychological manipulation to weaken a state from within rather than direct military confrontation.

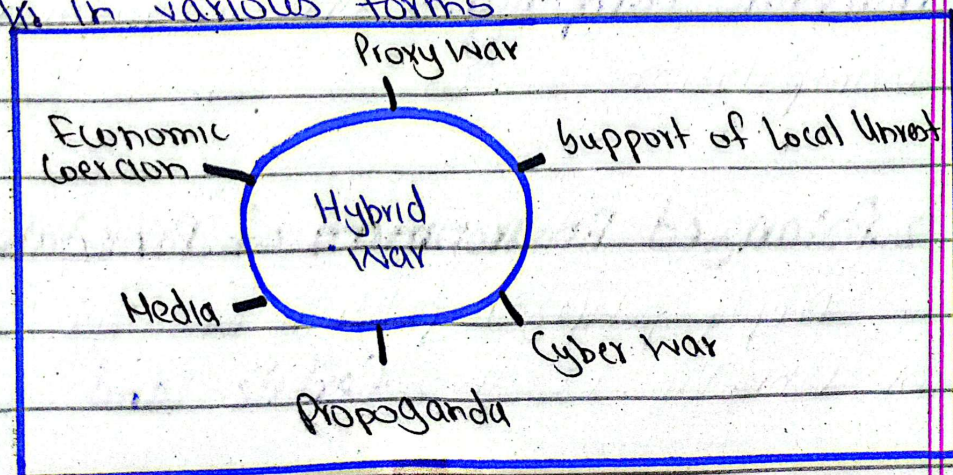
It is also known as hybrid warfare, asymmetrical warfare and cyber warfare as it closely related to narrative building.

Important components of Hybrid War

Non State Actors and **Perception Management** are the important components of hybrid warfare. By **social engineering**, individuals and groups are manipulated. In extreme cases, narratives induce **fear, terror** and **intimidation** to bring **disorder** and chaos. In Pakistan, various non-State Actors like **TTP, BLA, BRA** and **IS-KP** induce fear in locals and target social, ethnic and economic fault lines.

Major Challenge of 5th Generation - al Warfare

It works on various fronts and is in various forms.



Due to its unpredictable nature, adversaries are undetected and thus a proper retaliation pattern and synchronized response cannot be devised.

CURRENT CHALLENGES FACED BY PAKISTAN

1. Cyber Security and Policy Gaps

Cyber Security Policy of Pakistan was presented in 2021. However, the policy faces gaps in its execution. Weak enforcement, lack of trained professionals and inadequate infrastructure leave critical **vacuum**s to exploit. As a result, India and other hostile actors engage in **target intrusions, target data breaches, malware campaigns** and information manipulation.

2. Polarized Environment of Pakistan

Deeply polarized political landscape of Pakistan is the **fertile land**

For hostile actors to manipulate By using **false information** and **propaganda**, it fosters mistrust among the state and citizens. This rift is further amplified by hostile actors on social media. Polarization, thus, ^{does} not stop at the political system; it extends to ethnicity, sects and regions. For example, adversaries often portray Pakistan as a **fragmented state** where smaller provinces are ignored by **Islamabad**.

3. Low Digital Literacy

In Pakistan, around **120 million** people have access to **broadband networks**; however, no courses are available for youth for media literacy. On social media, where narratives spread with speed of light, youth can easily be exposed to **hate speech**, **biased opinions** and **deceptive content**.

4. External Adversaries

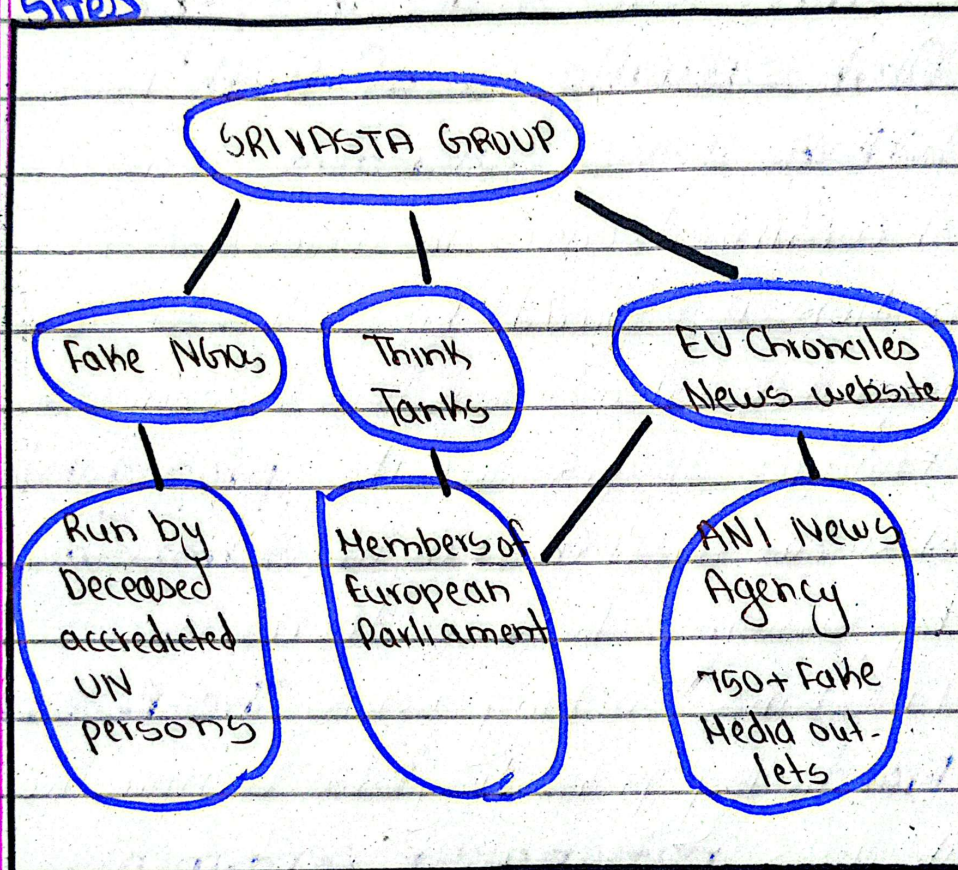
In a nuclear armed region, a

single lie can spark disasters. Multiple examples are there where solid evidences of Pakistan's image exploitation have been found. For example, in 2013, **Army Chief Vijay Kumar** admit after **2008 Mumbai attacks** India developed a **Tactical Support Division** with the aim of conducting non-state terrorist attacks. India financially supports groups like **BRA, BLA** and **Majeed Brigade** to destabilize Balochistan. For example, **Kulbushan Yadav**, former naval commander of India, when arrested accept India's involvement in destabilizing CPEC (China Pakistan Economic Corridor)

Claims of EU Disinfo Lab

In 2020, EU Disinfo Lab exposed **Indian chronicles**, a vast, long term, pro-Indian disinformation network that run for **15 years** in **115 countries**

This disinformation network constitute of 750 phony media networks, reconstituted NGOs and even hijack the identities of deceased UN-accredited persons to spread misinformation that is again replicated by 500 plus local sites



Domains covered by Indian chronicles

Exploiting Pakistan's international image is the main goal for which India works on Diplomatic Isolation of Pakistan Nuclear Subre-rattling

cyber intrusions, fueling ethnic divides,
and targeting government and
financial systems

Casualty of Truth - Case Study of Operation Sindoor

As Arthur Ponsonby wrote,
'When war is declared, the
first casualty is of truth'. According
to **Fake News Watchdog**, there are
31 confirmed cases in which misinfor-
mation is spread by India. It uses
deepfakes, false claims and recycled
footages to promote its **propaganda**
of accusing Pakistan of **terrorism**,
by showing fake evidences of
Pakistan's linking with **The Resistance**
Front. By promoting false narrative
it rises **nationalist sentiments**
in Indian public while ignoring
civilian loss. In this way, it
legitimizes its war domestically.
India's disinformation
machinery flooded false cases

like Shehbaz Sharif deepfake of accepting defeat and Rawalpindi Stadium Explosion to such an extent that many reputable channels like The New York Times failed to debunk it.

STRATEGIC MEASURES TO COMBAT 5th GENERATIONAL WARFARE

Pakistan must adopt multi-layered strategy to combat hybrid warfare.

1. Cyber Security

Pakistan must adopt a strict cyber security policy to strengthen its infrastructure. For this, a fusion network of academia, data scientists, Pakistan Telecommunication Network will ensure security and cyber resilience in Pakistan.

• Train Professionals to Counter Threats

Scholarships for training in cyber defense, AI and digital

Security is important to make trained data scientists in Pakistan.

• Need of AI Detection Tools

16% cases in 2025 according to Fake News Watchdog of misinformation fall into the category of deepfakes. There is need of AI detection tools to reduce harmful content.

• National Digital Literacy

Need to add digital literacy in K-12 and first year university courses that will make youth aware of source verification, image/video forensic, and algorithm awareness. This will make them capable of critical skills.

What is the Source of the information?



Is the issue current or is it resurfacing?

What is the view of experts on this news?



Is the author or source authentic

Micro-learning campaigns like 60-90 second reels in Urdu or regional languages can train citizens to detect deepfakes, manipulated headlines and bot swarms. A more informed public is less likely to be deceived by deceptive content.

2. Political and Media Cohesion

• Upholding Ethical Journalism Standards

By maintaining accuracy, fairness and responsibility instead of sensationalism. Alternative method is to promote empathy by sharing human experiences.

• Unity in Politics and Society

Adversaries exploit fault lines in

In order to counter **state neglect narratives**, government need to address grievances and increase its social protection programs like **BKSP, Sehat Sahulat and skill initiatives**

3. Fact Checking and Regional Cooperation

As Misinformation can spread fastly there is need of fact checking system government should provide grants for small **news rooms** to build **verification desks**.

In order to ensure transparency government should launch **Rapid Attribution Protocol (RAP)** to issue evidence base briefs within **72 hours** to fill information gaps. Pro-active communication builds trust and reduce reliance on rumors

University Labs should be dedicated to expose propaganda supported by data base for researchers

4. Economy and Energy Resilience

Economic instability of Pakistan give leverage to adversaries to exploit. It should maintain its reserves including **fuel, medicine, wheat and LNG** to buffer shocks. Pakistan should diversify its **export basket** in order to buffer any unexpected **economic pressure**. Economic stability will also reduce Pakistan's dependence on foreign loans as well.

CONCLUSION

Pakistan cannot afford to ignore 5 Generational Warfare as they undermine stability and security without using a single bullet with transparency, resilience and unity, Pakistan can convert this challenge into opportunity.
