

ETHNO NATIONALISM AND HYBRID WARFARE: ROLE OF INDIA IN GALVANIZING ETHNIC TENSIONS IN BALOCHISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Conventional and unconventional tactics, proxy wars, clandestine operations, cyberwarfare, fake news, propaganda, media warfare, and surgical strikes are all part of India's hybrid warfare. It is clear that waging a limited or full-scale conflict in a nuclear environment is dangerous. This research explains why the Indian strategic thinkers brought about a significant change in doctrine from limited war to surgical strikes in Balochistan. The biggest and most strategically situated province in Pakistan is becoming more and more entrenched in the vicious cycle of India's hybrid war against Pakistan. India's concerted efforts are intended to take advantage of Pakistan's ethnolinguistic and ethno-nationalism fault lines. To undermine peace and security in Pakistan, the Indian government routinely provided financial, military, and diplomatic support to the militant elements in Balochistan. This research employs Chanakya Kautilya's tactics of warfare to understand India's involvement in Balochistan Conflict to find out Indian strategies of hybrid warfare in galvanizing nationalist conflict in Balochistan. Pakistan must find indigenous solutions to these problems, which call for communication or security measures. However, to combat the erroneous impression that the Indian deep dive operation against CPEC and Pakistan created, Pakistan and China must collaborate and devote a specific proportion of financial and human resources.

Keywords: Balochistan, Hybrid Warfare, CPEC, Insurgency, Ethno-Nationalism.

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century has seen the start of another social, political, financial and mechanical progression. The idea of warfare has additionally changed in the advanced world. Similarly, the most recent hybrid warfare is the skirmish of discernment and data. It is pursued when it becomes incomprehensible for a state to obliterate its opponent state by direct military assault. Thus, promulgation, disinformation, utilization of non-state entertainers, and media crusades are sent off to create turmoil, disorder and feelings of disdain. Media propagandas are messed up and past the control of a state. The ascent of virtual entertainment has prompted recent fads in area of fighting. Virtual entertainment apparatuses

especially social media have become instrument of the fifth-generation warfare. Counterfeit news, deceiving reports and misrepresented publicity are spread through these cutting-edge media instruments. India, an emerging major power and arch-rival of Pakistan, is using such measures in Balochistan to destabilize Pakistan.

Balochistan is the largest province of Pakistan covering 44% of the total land area, and the least populated province of Pakistan covering 5% of

total population of the country.¹ Baloch are the region's most populous ethnic group followed by Pashtuns. The majority of the people are Muslims and there are also some Hindus. Balochistan connects border with Iran and Afghanistan. Despite being rich in resources such as chromite, gold, copper, gas and oil, it is the poorest and undeveloped province of Pakistan.

The province has been marginalized, and insurgency has been a part of the region's history since Pakistan's independence in 1947. The federal government of Pakistan has highlighted the ongoing insurgency in Balochistan, much to the frustration of the area's feudal lords; who fear that the major development projects would reveal the area's submissive local population to the outside world, jeopardizing their control. However, a careful examination of the historical background reveals that ethnicity, coupled with a sense of governmental isolation and grievances, has been an effective power in provoking the Baloch mobilization. Concerning the long-standing issue of insurgency and spreading fear in province, State, as well in the Region and Internationally, the insurgency in Balochistan needs due consideration and viable policies for the peace and prosperity in Pakistan.

Several dissident insurgent groups are fighting a guerrilla war against the government. In the region, several nationalist and terrorist groups have emerged, calling for strikes and explosions against Pakistan's armed forces and the general public. India being the arch enemy of Pakistan is involved in galvanizing and supporting insurgents to fulfil its geopolitical and strategic interest and to make hurdles in peace and prosperity of the country. India has been using all aspects of fifth-generation warfare against Pakistan in an effort to destabilize certain areas of the country, sowing seeds of hatred and disseminating false information to obstruct Pakistan's path to prosperity. It has been focusing on Pakistan's information systems, international image, economy, and armed forces in an effort to destabilize the country.

Using a combination of kinetic and non-kinetic tactics against a state to achieve its strategic objectives is known as hybrid warfare.² Disinformation, misinformation, support for proxy militias, cyberattacks, law enforcement, and propaganda are some of the tools used in hybrid tactics. The EU DisinfoLab report revealed India's recent disinformation campaign against Pakistan.³ The campaign attempted to persuade international bodies such as the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and the European Parliament to oppose Pakistan by spreading false information to reputable media outlets and news channels via the fake news media network. It also revealed that the Srivastava Group, based in India, operated nearly ten fictitious non-governmental organizations and 15 fake media outlets. The revelations from the EU DisinfoLab demonstrated that India's hybrid war against Pakistan is not totally effective. Furthermore, India has attempted to sabotage the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) on several occasions.

India is well aware that CPEC will revolutionize the region by providing connectivity throughout the region, turning Pakistan into a hub for connectivity. This clearly demonstrates how India is skillfully playing on all fronts against Pakistan. India consistently fabricates the story of terrorism as well, to block Pakistan's attempts to use bilateral negotiations to resolve the Jammu and Kashmir issue.

Balochistan is strategically best placed in Pakistan to serve as a gateway to the Indian Ocean for Afghanistan, South Asia, and Central Asian nations. Furthermore, it is an indisputable fact that the mineral-and naturally-rich Balochistan region serves as an international transit corridor, offering a route to the landlocked Republics of Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East for the purpose of supporting their respective trade and business endeavors in the region. Above all, Balochistan is home to the Gwadar Deep Sea Port, which is predicted to become the primary hub for global trade in the future. China plans to maintain its international trade through Pakistan

¹ Government of Balochistan, "About Balochistan," *Balochistan.gov.pk*, accessed 07 December 2024, <https://balochistan.gov.pk/about/about-balochistan>.

² Frank G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars* (Arlington, VA: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007).

³ Gary Machado, Alexandre Alaphilippe, Roman Adamczyk, and Antoine Gregoire, "Foreword," in *Indian Chronicles: Subsequent Investigation: Deep Dive into a 15-Year Operation Targeting the EU and UN to Serve Indian Interests*, EU DisinfoLab, accessed February 2, 2025, <https://www.disinfo.eu>

in general and Balochistan in particular, it is undeniable that Balochistan is an important factor in the long-standing friendship between Pakistan and China and it is so difficult to establish political equality and balance among Balochistan's ethnic groupings, ethnic nationalism has a significant impact on the country's ability to govern itself, which is a dangerous sign for peace and harmony in the region. This allowed some bureaucratic experiments and political engineering, which frequently led to political rage, a sense of deprivation, and ethnic hatred.⁴

Balochistan's politics is undoubtedly complicated and multidimensional because the region is home to several powerful ethno-national political groups, such as the Balochistan National Party-Mengal, National Party, the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, the Hazara Democratic Party, and the Jamhoori Watan Party, which have fostered a politicized atmosphere centered on ethno-nationalism and tribal politics. However, it must be acknowledged that Sardar and Nawab politics have never aided in the development of Balochistan's, because Sardars have always sought to increase their revenue streams and consolidate their personal wealth. Most dishearteningly, they allowed Balochistan to continue to be illiterate, primitive, and undeveloped. Furthermore, Sardars have historically hindered discussing Balochistan's politics and ethno-nationalism in the federal government for their own personal political and economic interests in the province.

Addressing the internal and external elements and causes that are creating the conditions for yet another wave of militancy in Pakistan is vital. This paper attempts to address three questions in this context: 1) How India is waging a hybrid war in Balochistan? 2) What are the strategies of Indian Hybrid warfare in Balochistan? 3) What are the objectives of India behind hybrid warfare in Balochistan?

This study has utilized both primary and secondary sources in its contextual understanding though the main analysis part is based on the secondary sources due to the limitations of field-based research in one of the most volatile province of Pakistan, Balochistan. The research employs a qualitative research design, which is descriptive

and explanatory, and, thus, will be used to examine the intricate phenomenon of hybrid warfare. Placing the study at the spatial domain including Pakistan and India, and temporal domain over the period between 2010 and 2024, the study is critical in discussing state and non-state actor strategies in Balochistan.

The use of secondary sources as the major mechanism of gathering information, such as academic literature, policy papers, think-tank reports, media analysis, and official statements, allow triangulation of the different opinions and reduce the threat to the safety of the researcher and data validity. It should be emphasized that the qualitative method enables a subtle understanding of political, military, informational, and socio-economic aspects of the concept of hybrid warfare, focusing on the construction of narratives, strategic intent, and the geopolitical environment in general. The explanatory dimension aims to find some patterns, causal relationship, and implications of the hybrid warfare tactics on Pakistan national security whereas the descriptive part provides an extensive cartography of the events.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Hybrid warfare has existed for as long as humanity. Statecraft, war, and diplomacy are all covered in Chanakya Kautilya's Arthashastra, which has influenced Indian strategic culture and thought. Three types of war are described by Kautilya in this masterpiece. The first is open war, which is a full-scale conflict in which you can either win or lose.⁵ This kind of conflict is dangerous in the South Asian nuclear environment and has the potential to wipe out both nations. However, due to the nuclear factor, both states would avoid direct conflict. The second kind of warfare that Chanakya Kautilya discussed in his book is secret war, which emphasizes swift, unexpected attacks. Without mentioning time or location, it focuses on multi-front attacks.

These days, this kind of warfare may be associated with proactive military operations, surgical strikes, or Cold Start. India sought to compromise Pakistan's security through these covert war operations, but this was also not a viable option

⁴ Frederic Grare, *Balochistan: The State versus the Nation* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2022), 42-44

⁵ Roger Boesche, *The First Great Political Realist: Kautilya and His Arthashastra* (New York: Lexington Books, 2002), 43-46

following the introduction of Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNWs) in 2011.⁶ The third type of warfare that Chanakya Kauṭilya mentions in Arthashastra stood for "Undeclared Warfare." "Use of secret spies and occult practices against the enemy" is the main focus of this conflict.⁷

This idea of undeclared warfare is closely related to India's renewed hybrid warfare strategy, which involves employing spies and clandestine operations to defeat Pakistan. Indian Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) trained, supported, and nurtured 150,000 Mukti Bahini militants, waged an undeclared war against Pakistan, disseminated false propaganda, and ultimately took advantage of Pakistan's strategic, political, economic, geographic, and ethnic weaknesses.⁸ In order to further splinter Pakistan, India later engaged in hybrid warfare in Balochistan. Many Indian spies were apprehended in Pakistan in later years, demonstrating unequivocally that Indian hybrid warfare is not a recent development in the Indo-Pak context. India is destabilizing Pakistan by exploiting domestic fault lines, including political, economic, and social ones, with the best use of hybrid tools. In an effort to quell domestic and civil unrest, India is using its resources in the framework of hybrid warfare. RAW, the Indian intelligence agency, has been coordinating its like-minded opportunists for their shared benefit. In order to cause instability in Pakistan, the Indian intelligence agency has considered every potential material and non-material resource.⁹

The study's subsequent section will go into greater detail about how the renewed hybrid warfare differs from earlier and how it is compromising Pakistan's internal security.

3. POLITICS OF ETHNO NATIONALISM IN PAKISTAN

Instead of seeing ethnic groups as cultural and linguistic entities, the politics of ethno-nationalism perspective sees them as political actors. Ethnic groups strive for political rights and objectives that they believe are being deliberately withheld from them. These rights would include, among other things, greater representation in the federal, provincial, and military branches; a larger portion of the federally distributed financial resources; authority over local natural resources and river water sharing by the state, and demands that local languages be used in public offices and educational institutions. Ethnic groups frequently establish political organizations of their own to express these demands, and it is during these times that ethnicity becomes politicized.¹⁰

Additionally, while some ethnic groups may advocate for greater provincial autonomy or the application of the federalism principle in letter and spirit, others may combine their political demands—such as those outlined above—with a call for complete secession and independence.

An ethnic political movement is the transformation of an ethnic group into a political rival that aims to defeat ethnic enemies or advance ethnically defined interests on the state's agenda. Although the community may be divided into multiple tendencies or specific organizations, each vying for the community's loyalty and the right to serve as its sole representative, an ethnic political movement claims to represent the community's collective consciousness and aspirations.¹¹

Sub-nationalism was the initial manifestation of ethnic politics in Pakistan, but localized ethnic conflict eventually took center stage. Even though some identifiers may be more resilient than others, ethnic boundaries have been established and re-established as conditions have changed, showing that there is nothing fundamental about the identities of the ethnic groups involved in conflict.

⁶ D. M. Ahmed, *Pakistan's Tactical Nuclear Weapons and Their Impact on Stability* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment, 2016), 53-70.

⁷ Vinay Mittal, *Kautilya's Arthashastra: A Timeless Grand Strategy* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, Air University, 2016)16-17, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1019423.pdf>.

⁸ Kokab Al-Saba, Dr. Noor Fatima, and Dr. Masood Ur Rehman Khattak, "India's Hybrid Warfare Strategy: Implications for Pakistan's Security," *Journal of Xi'an Shiyou University, Natural Science Edition* 19, no. 7 (July 2023)

⁹ Muhammad Usman Askari and Lal Khan Niazi, "Indian Hybrid War against Pakistan: A Strategic Theory Perspective," *Journal of Indian Studies* 8, no. 1 (2022): 189–208.

¹⁰ M. Ahmed, "The Dynamics of (Ethno)Nationalism and Federalism in Postcolonial Balochistan, Pakistan," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, (2020): 1–24

¹¹ Aasim Sajjad Akhtar, "Balochistan versus Pakistan," *Economic and Political Weekly* (2007): 72–78.

In their initial fight for a separate homeland, Indian Muslims decided to prioritize their religion over other facets of their identity, such as geography, language, culture, etc.¹²

The politics of Ethno-nationalism plays an important role in Pakistan, the Awami National Party, supported by a group known as the Red Shirts that resembles a quasi-military group, has consistently called for a Pukhtoon homeland, or Pukhtoonkhwa. In contrast to the nationalist battles in Sindh and Balochistan, however, the Pukhtoons' campaign has been accommodative and unimpressive. One factor contributing to the KP's relative inaction is the Pukhtoon's comparatively strong representation in Pakistan's main government agencies, particularly the Army. Although Baloch and Sindhis are underrepresented in the army, Pukhtoons have continuously contributed between 30 and 40 percent of the corps of senior officers.

The Pashtoons produced Ayub Khan, Abdul Waheed Kakar and Yayha Khan, three of Pakistan's military chieftains. Although less noticeable, the Pukhtoons' 10% share of the highest-ranking bureaucratic positions is roughly equivalent to the KP's percent of all Pakistanis. Furthermore, Pukhtoon migrants have been especially active in Pakistan.¹³ For instance, because of the size of the Pukhtoon community in Karachi, many Pukhtoon families obtain remittances from the city and have a direct stake in the stability and survival of the Pakistani state. The business interests of Pukhtoon are widespread in the nation, and their owners and staff have a vested interest in the prosperity of Pakistan overall. However, despite its propensity for provincialism, the Awami National Party is now seen to have taken on a national stance and to play a major role in national politics. This pattern suggests that Pakistan's newfound nationalism is more pro-Pakistani and rejects regional and separatist agendas. But in May 2014 a new movement started by eight students of Gomal University,

Dera Ismail Khan by the name of ``Mehsud Tahafuz Movement`` which latter changed to Pashtoon Tahafuz Movement (PTM) to refer all Pashtoons. Among the demands the movement made of Pakistan's military and government were the removal of landmines from Pashtoon tribal areas, the prosecution of extrajudicial killings, and the return of missing persons to court. Despite the PTM's claims to be an unarmed, nonviolent resistance movement operating within Pakistan's constitutional framework, the movement grew in strength throughout the country. In addition to pursuing a foreign policy objective, the movement is allegedly trying to sow ethnic division throughout the nation, according to the Pakistan Army and a number of journalists. Afghanistan and India, two countries with tense relations with Pakistan for a long time, have reportedly provided the movement with significant support, according to Pakistani government officials.¹⁴

The barren regions that border Afghanistan and Iran are home to the Baloch tribes. One of their historical claims to fame is that their ancestors destroyed Alexander the Great's army when he tried to return to Greece from India.¹⁵ Baloch separatism was fueled by a student movement and a small number of Sardars, or tribal chiefs. Because it aimed to incite separatist and nationalist sentiment among a culturally unique ethnolinguistic group that had a history of autonomy and had not changed much under British rule, the issue in Balochistan had the potential to be very serious.¹⁶ There have been four insurgencies in Balochistan since partition. The first two, which lasted a few months each in 1948 and 1958, resulted in the Baloch surrender, the fifteen-year imprisonment of the Khan of Kalat at the time, and the execution of additional rebels. Separatism sparked as a result of the third and fourth insurgencies, which were put down by Pakistani paramilitary forces in 1962 and 1973. The Baloch nationalists undoubtedly have legitimate complaints about the treatment they

¹² Rehana Saeed Hashmi, *The Politics of Ethnicity: An Issue to National Integration of Pakistan* (Lahore: University of Punjab, 2013).13-15

¹³ Mansoor Akbar Kundi, "Pakistan an Immigrant Country: Afghan Migration and Its Impact on Balochistan," *Strategic Studies Vol. 25, No. 2* (2005): 53-70

¹⁴ Ayan Achakzai, "Why PTM Is Banned in Pakistan: State Security Concerns," *Counter Terrorism Blog Ground Zero*,

October 9, 2024, accessed March 9, 2025, *Ground Zero Pakistan*, <https://groundzero.pk/why-ptm-banned-pakistan/>.

¹⁵ Tilak Devasher, *The Balochistan Conundrum: The Real Reason Why Balochistan Is in Turmoil* (Gurugram: HarperCollins India, 2021), 28-29

¹⁶ Gulshan Majeed, "Land of Balochistan: A Historical Perspective," *Journal of Political Studies* 22 (2015): 143.

received under the various military and civil governments that have ruled the nation. At the central and provincial levels, the successive governments have not made any real attempts to improve the declining condition of Balochistan's poor people.¹⁷ The ruling elite of Balochistan, mostly comprises of tribal heads and sardars of different clans, who have ruled the province for many decades, made the situation even worse, because of their internal animosity, personal economic and political gains. Such tribalism created more hatred and divide between the general public and gave birth to nationalist sentiments, especially in youths.

4. INDIAN HYBRID WARFARE IN BALOCHISTAN

Pakistan is likewise quite concerned by Indian indirect presence in the area. India's malign intentions and covert role in stoking the insurgency in Balochistan have come to light. The Indian intelligence service has been meddling to aid militant factions in Balochistan for years. For many years, the Indian intelligence service has been conducting clandestine operations in Balochistan through a network of terrorists and proxies. A dossier detailing RAW's involvement in terrorist activities within the province was turned over by Pakistan in 2009. Pakistan regularly provides the United Nations with these dossiers. These dossiers disclose how the Indian intelligence agency aids terrorists in the former FATA region and Balochistan by using Afghan territory for training and financial support. An Indian spy agency agent named Kulbushan Jadhav admitted on camera that his responsibility in Balochistan was to meet with insurgents and conduct operations with their assistance.

The former Indian Navy officer was arrested by the Pakistani government in Balochistan on March 3, 2016. But according to the Indian side, he was abducted from Iran, where he was operating a business in the port city of Chabahar after retiring. In his confession, Jadhav acknowledged that he is still in the Indian Navy and has been in charge of

operations in Karachi and Balochistan. He confessed to a number of heinous crimes, including financing, arming, and supporting BLA militants, upsetting the peace in Karachi, Pakistan's financial center, and ultimately conspiring to sabotage the CPEC. It is implied that a Navy Commander in Chabahar, Iran, was preparing to launch maritime assaults against merchant ships, oil tankers, or the port of Gwadar that were headed for Pakistan. Although it is believed that the BLA would take credit for these attacks, Indian R&AW would have actually been the ones responsible.¹⁸

These actions were illegal and resulted in the deaths of numerous Pakistanis. He added that the RAW has a role in Balochistan's separatist movement. He acknowledged that all of these actions in Balochistan were carried out by RAW, which backed the Baloch liberation movement in an effort to free Balochistan and the surrounding area from Pakistan.¹⁹

India's military has consistently failed to back its nation's aspirations for regional hegemony, as evidenced by the Indian Army's 1962 defeat against China and its 1965 and 2019 forays against Pakistan. Thinking about their Army, Indian leadership has long used "hybrid warfare" against Pakistan in order to further its national interests due to ineptitude. The hybrid threat that India currently poses to Pakistan consists of its sponsorship of terrorism, extremism, and separatism through false propaganda and fake news, as well as its use of various institutions for political and economic blackmail.²⁰ On the other hand, Pakistan has continuously repelled and highlighted India's hybrid warfare strategy on a national, regional, and international scale.

Numerous Indian spies were apprehended in Pakistan in later years, demonstrating unequivocally that Indian hybrid warfare is not a recent development in the Indo-Pak context. For a very long time, India has been engaged in hybrid warfare within Pakistan. This is the greatest threat given Pakistan's current political and economic circumstances because it is extremely difficult to

¹⁷ Muhammad Usman Amin Siddiqi, Rafiullah Kakar, "Baloch Ethno-Nationalism: The Quest for Understanding for a Peaceful Future," *The Journal of Political Science* 28 (2010): 48-55.

¹⁸ Al-Saba et al., "India's Hybrid Warfare Strategy." 341-371, <https://www.xisdxjxsu.asia/V19I07-19.pdf>.

¹⁹ Asif Salim, Raid Khan, Surat Khan, and Muhammad Adeel Khan, "Insurgency and Great Power Politics: An Appraisal of Hybrid Warfare in the Context of Balochistan's Insurgency," *Remittances Review* 9, no. 1 (2024).

²⁰ Khetran, Mir Sherbaz. "Indian interference in Balochistan." *Strategic Studies* 37, no. 3 (2017): 108-125.

wage a hybrid war in such a setting. It is convenient for India to take advantage of simple and pre-existing fault lines. It appears that India is benefiting greatly from Pakistan's current situations of political, economic instability and terrorism due to ethnic fault lines and insurgency. This threat will only increase and endanger Pakistan's internal security unless it organizes their affairs and take decisive action.²¹

According to one of Ajit Doval's interviews, there are three ways to approach the enemy. The first is offensive, where one goes out in the right direction and wage an open war on the enemy, which implies a full-scale conflict, that is currently impossible in relation to Pakistan due to nuclear weapons. The second choice is the defensive defense strategy, which involves strengthening your home defenses and confronting the adversary at your doorstep. This is a defensive strategy that largely offers no advantages. Nonetheless, the third strategy is defensive offense, that involves going to the source of the threat and reducing it. Ajit Doval, India's national security advisor, stated that to take advantage of Pakistan's political, social, economic, and ethnic weaknesses, India must adopt a defensive-offense strategy.²²

External intervention in Balochistan is one of the many serious threats to the integrity and unity of the Pakistani state. To capitalize on the division within Pakistan and highlight its vulnerabilities in Balochistan, FATA, and Azad Kashmir, India has drawn a line around the region and created a policy tailored to Balochistan. To increase international pressure, particularly from the US, India has launched a persistent diplomatic campaign, claiming that it is prepared for war if these attempts fail. Prime Minister Modi made explicit reference to Balochistan in his speech on Independence Day, demonstrating Indian intervention in the region.²³

India's rivalry with Pakistan, China and its hegemonic intentions make Indian presence more viable in Pakistan, particularly Balochistan. Discrediting CPEC both domestically and internationally is the primary goal of the Indian information campaign. The relationship is now solely economic in nature as a result of CPEC. Through this project, Gwadar in Balochistan will be connected to Kashgar in China, giving China an alternate supply of energy and oil. Many nations that oppose the project attempt to sabotage CPEC, particularly India, which is actively fostering a massive crisis of perception regarding the project through various campaigns. Through YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and weblinks.

India uses mass online media to spread anti-CPEC content and false information about CPEC.²⁴ India used FATF forum in 2020 to target CPEC, accusing Pakistan of terrorism, civil war, and unrest in India. Additionally, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) alerted Twitter authorities about anti-Pakistan tweets. Furthermore, the imitative think tanks, primarily situated in Brussels and New York, attempted to characterize CPEC as a new variation of the East India Company and Chinese neocolonialism in Pakistan.²⁵ Additionally, according to DisinfoLab, India exploited Baloch separatist organizations to denigrate Pakistan's human rights by exalting their violent actions and portraying separatist leaders as heroic.

There are few areas where Pakistan is susceptible and can be used by its foes.

Firstly, economic strategic contact is important, since Pakistan's economic situations are susceptible in the context of CPEC, a \$62 billion dollars' investment by China in Pakistan's energy and infrastructure sectors, which is of international relevance because China is a developing global and regional force, and foreign

²¹ Natasha Matloob, Nayab Matloob, and Sumbal Ishaq, "Hybrid Warfare: Strategies and Counterstrategies in the India-Pakistan Rivalry," *Journal of Peace and Diplomacy* 4, no. 1 (2023): 74-84.

²² Ms. Kokab Al-Saba, Noor Fatima, and Masood Ur Rehman Khattak, "India's Hybrid Warfare Strategy: Implications," *Journal of Xi'an Shiyu University, Natural Science Edition* 19, no. 07 (2023).

²³ India Today, "Human Rights Violated, Natural Resources Exploited," India Today, August 16, 2016, <https://www.indiatoday.in>. Accessed 04 Feb, 2025

²⁴ Azam, Maryam. "Pakistan-India Security Paradox: Between Deterrence and Coercive Diplomacy." *Journal of Security & Strategic Analyses* 7, no. 1 (2021): 160-180.

²⁵ Francesca Marino, "Beijing's CPEC Is the New East India Company in Balochistan," excerpt from *Balochistan: Bruised, Battered and Bloodied*, ThePrint, November 14, 2020, accessed February 7, 2025, <https://theprint.in/pageturner/excerpt/beijings-cpec-is-the-new-east-india-company-in-balochistan/543391/>

nations compete in the region for strategic objectives. Pakistan, as a regional ally of China, is subject to proxy conflicts, cyber and political warfare deployed by India and its supporters. The presence of RAW in Balochistan, as well as the arrest of Kulbhushan Yadav, demonstrates such concerns.²⁶

A stronger economy leads to more development, and development leads to greater security. In the instance of Pakistan, which has a rival state 'India' on its eastern border, poor economic conditions make it more susceptible and less safe. CPEC is an economic opportunity for Pakistan, Terrorism and informational warfare, such as anti-business speculations, are some of the techniques that make Beijing and Islamabad untrustworthy in their economic dealings. Furthermore, terrorism funded by India in Pakistan creates a negative image of the country, making it undesirable for business and tourists, thus impacting the country's already precarious economic status.

Secondly, Ethnic and sectarian conflicts as a significant weakness within a country improve the adversary's hybrid warfare capabilities. Pakistan is currently experiencing a terrible problem of fanaticism and ethnic strife. These confrontations have profound origins in the dissatisfied groups' concerns. The complaints may be materialistic or cognitive, and cognition may be shaped to increase the conflict, thereby weakening the state. The separatist movement in Balochistan is growing, and some sponsored groups harbour ill will against the state and the establishment. Poverty and a lack of education aggravate the dilemma. According to a recent research, 60 percent of Pakistan's population lives in the rural areas, with their fundamental needs unfulfilled, are easily exploited against the state.

Thirdly, With the advancement of technology, the cyber security paradigm is also becoming increasingly important. The method of warfare has changed, and cyber security breaches pose significant challenges and have an impact on state foreign policy and bilateral ties. The element of

deniability gives officials an advantage here because it is easy to blame breaches in cyber security on private citizens, for which the state may not accept responsibility.²⁷

4.1 Funding, Training, and Provision of Arms to Separatists Groups by India

Over the past few decades, the Pakistan's government has consistently pointed out Indian and foreign meddling in Balochistan. A commander of the militant group known, who had turned himself in to the Pakistani government, revealed in December 2023 that India had been covertly funding separatist and militant forces and supporting terrorist activities in Balochistan.

Pakistan has repeatedly drawn the world's attention to the issue of foreign meddling. Following their exposure as members of an Indian spy network, the members of the Indian High Commission in Islamabad were expelled from Pakistan. They were found to be working undercover for the intelligence bureau and causing social unrest. Pakistan's Foreign Office claims that the members of Indian High Commission have contacts with the terrorist organization Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Baloch separatist groups in Balochistan. India's increased presence in Afghanistan has highlighted their support for the Baloch Separatists and TTP in their efforts to destabilize Pakistan.²⁸

Additionally, Afghanistan is charged with aiding the insurgents, it has been reported that money, weapons, and training camps are being moved through Afghanistan. India offered military and financial support to militants in Afghanistan and, they found refuge in Afghanistan as well. Afghan Tolo News claims that the leader of separatist group from Balochistan was given asylum in Kandahar for a number of years.²⁹

Pakistan believes that India may be using Baloch insurgents as proxies. The Pakistani press frequently claims that insurgents possess sophisticated weapons, implying that foreign

²⁶ Hussain Ali, Babar Ali, and Ayesha Tassawar, "War on Terror Impacts on Social Fabric: Intra-State Sectarianism and Social Cohesion in Pakistan," *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs* 7, no. 1 (2024):29-33

²⁷ Ali, Ali, and Tassawar, "War on Terror Impacts," 36-38.

²⁸ Nasreen Akhtar, "India's Regional Strategic Outlook and Influence via Afghanistan," *Revista UNISCI* 49 (2019):

<https://revista.unisci.es/index.php/UNISCI/article/view/UNISCI49201909>

²⁹ "The Ministry of Interior Affairs Says Six People Were Killed in the Suicide Bombing in Kandahar on Monday," *Tolo News*, 2005, <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan/baloch-separatist-leader-killed-kandahar-attack-reports>.

intervention in the conflict is feasible.³⁰ According to military officials, the Indian government trained 200 militants in Pakistan, providing a pretext for Pakistani military operations in the province. Accounts from third parties lend credibility to these claims. Christine Fair, a Pakistan expert at Georgetown University, emphasizes the importance of taking regional perceptions into account. "Indian officials have privately informed me that they are sending money to Balochistan."³¹

4.2 Strategies of Indian Hybrid warfare in Balochistan

According to Pakistani officials and analysts, India's purported hybrid warfare tactics in Balochistan appear to be a multifaceted strategy meant to destabilize the area and erode Pakistan's internal unity. These tactics reportedly involve the use of psychological and information operations to inflame anti-state sentiments as well as the covert provision of money, weapons, and training to Baloch separatist organizations. Through international forums, media campaigns, and disinformation campaigns, India has been charged with supporting dissident voices and spreading stories about violations of human rights in Balochistan.



Figure 1. Hybrid Warfare in Balochistan

³⁰ Raman, B. "Balochistan Continues to Haunt Musharraf," *South Asia Analysis Group*(Dec. 29, 2004 available <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/papers13/paper1205.html> (accessed 14 December, 2024).

³¹ C. Christine Fair, *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 166.

4.3 Dissemination of fake news through Twitter

Outsourcing news content to support separatist groups in Pakistan is another propaganda and disinformation strategy used by India. Numerous Indian websites have been found to post content that is sympathetic to and exalts anti-Pakistan organizations. Hashtags like #FreeBalochistan, #BalochGenocide, and #SaveBalochistan were promoted in concert to raise awareness of purported human rights violations by Pakistan's military on a global scale. Bots and phony accounts are frequently used to artificially magnify these trends, giving the appearance of broad support. Networks of phony Twitter accounts are used to pose as activists or spread narratives that support Indian strategic interests, according to research conducted by disinformation watchdogs like the EU DisinfoLab. To control conversation, many of these accounts employ stolen images, fictitious identities, and repetitive content. Tweets frequently contain edited photos or videos that purport to depict violence or repression in Balochistan.

4.4 Proxy Warfare/Revolutionaries

India has accelerated its efforts to defame Pakistan internationally and spread the myth that it is not only a terrorist nation but also a haven for terrorist organizations. The 1971 war is a glaring example of how India supports the Mukti Bahini against Pakistan. Pakistan asserts that in an effort to undermine Pakistan, India is also extending its influence in Afghanistan. Furthermore, Pakistan claims that India has been investing in infrastructure and trade with Afghanistan in addition to providing financial support to the Kabul government.³² Not only does India support the anti-Pakistan groups in Afghanistan but also provided training camps to insurgents who have been trained near the border area of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Furthermore, Pakistan alleges that India has been using sectarian and ethnic tensions to incite violence in Pakistan for many years. Ajit Doval's appointment as national security advisor has

accelerated the pace of sectarian violence in various parts of Pakistan, resulting in a chaotic situation in Balochistan.

India's alleged use of proxy war tactics against Pakistan elicited a multifaceted response that addressed both domestic and international issues. India's threat to Pakistan is frequently interpreted as support for insurgent groups in Balochistan, involvement in the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and alleged coordination of terrorist activities across its borders.³³

4.5 Information Warfare (IW):

The use and administration of information and communication technologies (ICT) to obtain a competitive edge over a rival is known as information warfare (IW). It has a lot in common with psychological warfare. By eliminating geographical boundaries, digital technologies, the Internet, and social media platforms have made an already congested battlefield worse.³⁴ IW can be used by both state and non-state actors to spread ideology or hatred based on ethnicity or religion at a low cost. Terrorist organizations use propaganda to attract funding, recruit new members, and instill fear in the public. Ideologies can be spread through online platforms like social media, websites, blogs, dark web, and video streaming services. States can use IW to divide societies, tarnish reputations, undermine interests, and threaten stability of adversaries.

By supporting different separatist groups in Balochistan, India has deliberately spread misleading information to damage Pakistan's and its military's reputation. In their 2020 "Indian Chronicles" report, the EU DisinfoLab found copious evidence that over 750 fake media outlets operated in 116 countries over a 15-year period. The dissemination of an anti-Pakistan message was greatly aided by these outlets, which made use of questionable networks like the World News Network and the Big News Network.

The protocol addresses for these outlets came from New Delhi, according to the investigation it was discovered that prominent domains linked to this

³² "Proxy War against Pakistan," The Nation, February 26, 2021, <https://nation.com.pk/26-Feb-2021/proxy-war-against-pakistan>.

³³ Yasir Malik, "India's Hybrid Warfare against Pakistan," Global Village Space, July 30, 2018,

<https://www.globalvillagespace.com/indias-hybrid-warfare-against-pakistan/>

³⁴ Daniel Cohen, "Cyber Terrorism," Cyber Crime and Cyber Terrorism Investigator's Handbook (2014), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/computer-science/cyber-terrorism>.

operation, such as foreignaffairs.times.com, jammuKashmir.eu, friendsofKashmir.eu, baluchistantoday.com, and baluchday.com, came from Indian IP addresses.³⁵

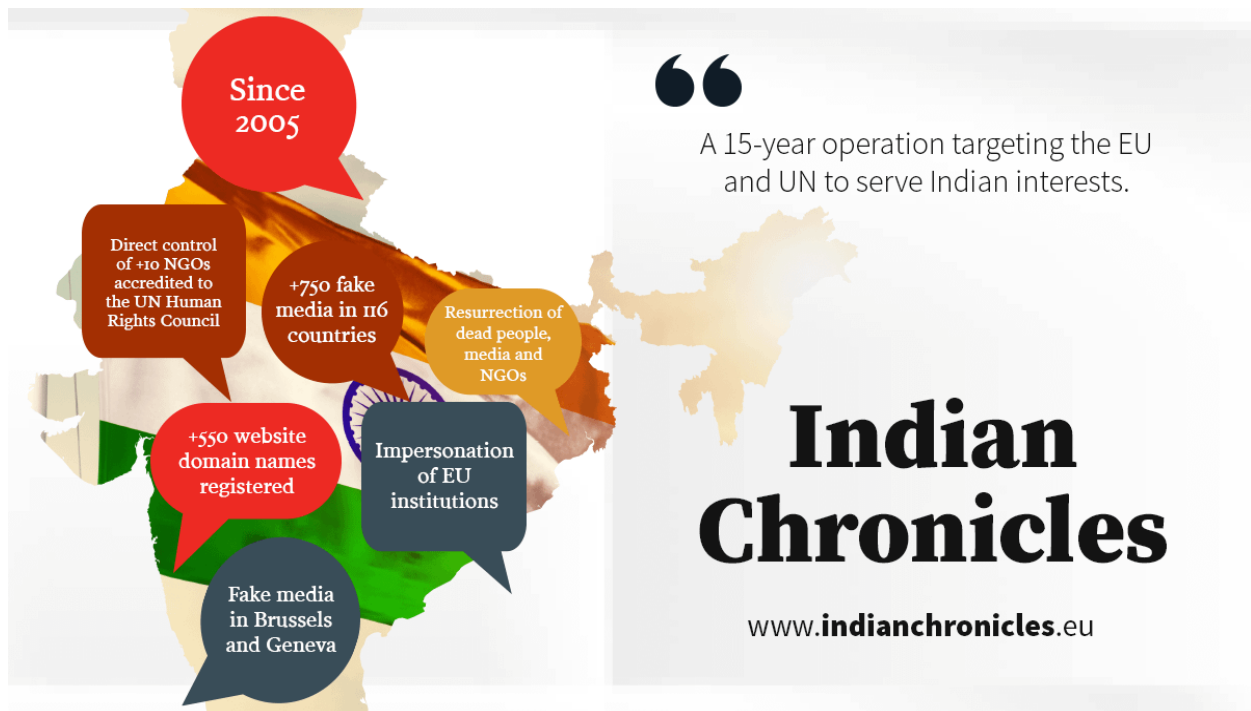


Figure 2. A 15 Year Operation targeting the EU and UN to server Indian Interest

Source: [EU DisinfoLab](http://EUDisinfoLab)

4.6 Propaganda

Using loaded language to evoke emotional rather than logical reactions to information or selectively presenting facts to support a particular synthesis or perception are examples of propaganda. For this, social media and mass media are used. Propaganda, counterintelligence, and espionage have historically relied on weaponized information. India's interference in Pakistan's domestic affairs has made it a target of subversive activities, including espionage, sponsorship, and support for dissident organizations.

Pakistan's cybersecurity infrastructure must be strengthened to protect against cyberattacks that could disrupt critical systems, spread misinformation, or steal sensitive data.³⁶ To counter these threats, a national cybersecurity framework that includes real-time threat

intelligence sharing, frequent audits, and public-private partnerships should be established. Moreover, information environment management is essential. By promoting truthful and uplifting narratives both domestically and internationally, Pakistan must counteract disinformation campaigns. Through social media, Pakistan's stance on regional and international issues can be shared, the public can be engaged, and false information can be refuted.

5. Objectives behind hybrid warfare of India in Balochistan

India's leadership has relied on non-military means to achieve national objectives against Pakistan, recognizing their military's incompetence. The separation of East Pakistan to Bangladesh and subsequent insurgencies in Balochistan strengthened Indian policymakers' beliefs.³⁷

³⁵ Hammad Sarfaraz, 'How India unleashed targeted social media campaigns against Pakistan', T-magazine, accessed 17 Dec, 2024. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2335685/how-india-unleashed-targeted-social-media-campaigns-against-pakistan>

³⁶ Khalid Iqbal, "ICJ's Interesting Verdict on Commander Kulbhushan Jadhav," Defence Journal 23, no. 1 (2019):57

³⁷ "Indian forces fought along Mukti Bahini: Modi," The News International, June 8, 2015, accessed 10 December

Inaccurately, India sees Gwadar Port and the CPEC as rivals and obstacles to the Chabahar Port, which it funds. The Chabahar Port has been constructed and upgraded with millions of dollars by New Delhi in an effort to increase trade with Central Asian Republics, Afghanistan, and Iran. India is concerned that Gwadar Port and the CPEC's future growth will eclipse Chabahar Port, giving China and Pakistan control over the markets in Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia.³⁸ The Modi government tasked RAW with preventing the project from being completed on time. In order to obstruct the CPEC's advancement, a dedicated cell at RAW's headquarters in New Delhi has been charged with supporting terrorism and inflaming insurgency in Pakistan. According to Kulbhushan Yadav, one of his primary objectives was to thwart CPEC and resurrect the separatist insurgency in Balochistan.³⁹

5.1 Sabotaging Peace in Pakistan:

For several years, India has played a significant role in using a combination of internal and external destabilization strategies against Pakistan. As a result, Indian involvement in manipulating identity-based conflict in Pakistan has been widely reported by political and military leaders. For example, Indian support for militant networks in the tribal belt and Balochistan has grown over time. Furthermore, since 2013, Indian efforts to disrupt the CPEC project have increased significantly, as this strategy allows India to inflict damage on her two main rivals, Pakistan and China.

In the long run, an operational CPEC corridor would lessen India's strategic and economic clout in Asia. According to reports, India is helping separatist factions to carry out terrorist attacks in Gwadar, Turbat, and Ormara. The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), for instance, attacked a five-star hotel in Gwadar in 2019. In 2018, the Chinese Consulate in Karachi was attacked by the

BLA. In addition, the Pearl Continental Hotel was attacked in 2019 while a high-ranking Chinese delegation was there. Moeed Yusuf, the former national security adviser to the former prime minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan, has also linked India to four high-profile terrorist attacks in Pakistan in addition to this one.⁴⁰

5.2 Indian opposition to CPEC and its implications for Balochistan's stability:

According to the European Union DisinfoLab, India is attempting to spread misinformation about Pakistan on a global scale. The Indian information operation aims to discredit CPEC both domestically and internationally. With a \$62 billion investment in Pakistan's infrastructure and energy sectors, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) includes projects related to tourism, agriculture, Gwadar port, energy, economic zones, and other areas. The second phase of CPEC has started, and the first phase is finished. Although China and Pakistan have close diplomatic and strategic ties, the CPEC has changed the focus of their relationship to the economy.

This project connects Gwadar, Balochistan, to Kashgar, China, offering China an alternative route for oil and energy.⁴¹ The United States has maintained its presence in the region due to the South China Sea dispute between China, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Malaysia. A blockage of the Strait of Malacca by the United States and its allies could jeopardize China's economy.

Strait of Malacca and the Strait of Hormuz will be bypassed by CPEC. The distance between Gwadar and Kashgar is only 1500 km, and energy supplies will be cut by 12,000 km. Opponents of CPEC, particularly India, have launched various campaigns to undermine the project's credibility. To disseminate a false narrative about Pakistan, India has imitated international think tanks, websites, and UN human rights organizations.⁴²

2024, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/12923-indian-forces-fought-along-mukti-bahini-modi>

³⁸ "Modi Spoke India's Mind Over CPEC," Express Tribune, August 20, 2016. Accessed 10 December 2024

³⁹ GS Aditya, "Use Coercive Diplomacy on Pakistan," Statesman, July 9, 2020, Accessed 12 December 2024 <https://www.thestatesman.com/opinion/use-coercive-diplomacy-pakistan-1502884862.html>.

⁴⁰ Maryam Azam, "Pakistan-India Security Paradox: Between Deterrence and Coercive Diplomacy," *Journal of Security & Strategic Analyses* 7, no. 1 (2021): 140-160.

⁴¹ Muhammad Asad Rafi, Farid Khan, and Sabah Aslam, "CPEC: Pakistan's Way to Success," The Islamabad Institute of Conflict Resolution (IICR), no. September (2016): 1-25.

⁴² Gary Machado et al., "Indian Chronicles: Subsequent Investigation: Deep Dive into a 15-Year Operation Targeting the EU and UN to Serve Indian Interests," December 2020.

Manohar Parrikar, Indian Defence Minister, has admitted to funding terrorism as a state policy and providing a double financial budget to terrorist organizations in Pakistan as part of India's proxy war strategy. Pakistan has exposed a network of hostile agencies working against the CPEC.⁴³

6. CONCLUSION

Terrorist attacks, economic and political blackmail, fake news, false propaganda, inciting discontent among the populace to provoke chaos, and cyberattacks aimed at undermining the state by causing social unrest and political instability are among the many threats Pakistan is currently facing. India has been using every tool at its disposal to undermine Pakistan's political and economic stability by posing internal security risks. Additionally, it conspires with nations hostile to Pakistan in order to carry out her plans. Given the likelihood that these threats will only intensify and have a greater impact in the future, it is imperative that people recognize the risks in their entirety as soon as possible and make a concerted effort to take action against any perceived obstacles. Regardless of political differences, this threat to Pakistan's security must be given top priority when formulating policy. To combat this threat, policymaking must involve all political parties. State security and national identity must be linked, with particular attention paid to Pakistan's current and upcoming security challenges. It is necessary to take into account the connection between national identity, security, and all facets of national power. In order to formulate policies that take into account both regional and extra-regional developments, the emphasis should be on state-centric security, taking into account factors like state identity, economy, governance, and civil-military relations. Most importantly, evidence of India's hybrid warfare needs to be collected, put together, and continuously and persistently shown to the world. Given the ever-changing global geostrategic landscape, it would be beneficial in the long run even if it didn't yield results immediately. A key component of hybrid warfare is the battle of narratives. In Pakistan, conspiracy theories have a strong tendency to be accepted and spread. Policies must be developed and measures taken to prevent

the Internet and social media platforms from being used for personal gain, particularly during politically sensitive times like elections, public protests, or periods of significant political upheaval and instability, because they are a unique source of both information and disinformation.

Fake information coming from outside websites must be checked, blocked, or countered by a system. Social media platforms found to be disseminating hate speech, rumors, fake news, or any other narrative that goes against state interests should face harsh penalties. Dissidents should be involved instead of having their voices silenced.

The greatest contribution to anti-Pakistan propaganda comes from disgruntled individuals. Trolls who support the government should abstain from insults and crude remarks. More significantly, criticism of the government for its shortcomings must be distinguished from anti-state discourse, and the two should not be combined.

Initiating successful and long-lasting compensatory measures for reform is necessary to make up for the deprivation and alienation of undeveloped regions and communities. Employment prospects, health, education, and economic development ought to be prioritized. Since interest groups, the elite, and outside actors don't want to lose their hold, this will be a difficult effort. To the satisfaction of all parties involved, other problems that are causing division among the provinces must likewise be settled peacefully.

⁴³ Zahid Umar, Shaista Taj, and Saqib Adnan, "CPEC: Security Threats and Measures," *The Dialogue* 14, no. 1 (n.d.): 2-17