



CENTRE for AEROSPACE & SECURITY STUDIES

HYBRID WARFARE AGAINST PAKISTAN: CHALLENGES AND RESPONSE OPTIONS



February 2021

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February 2021

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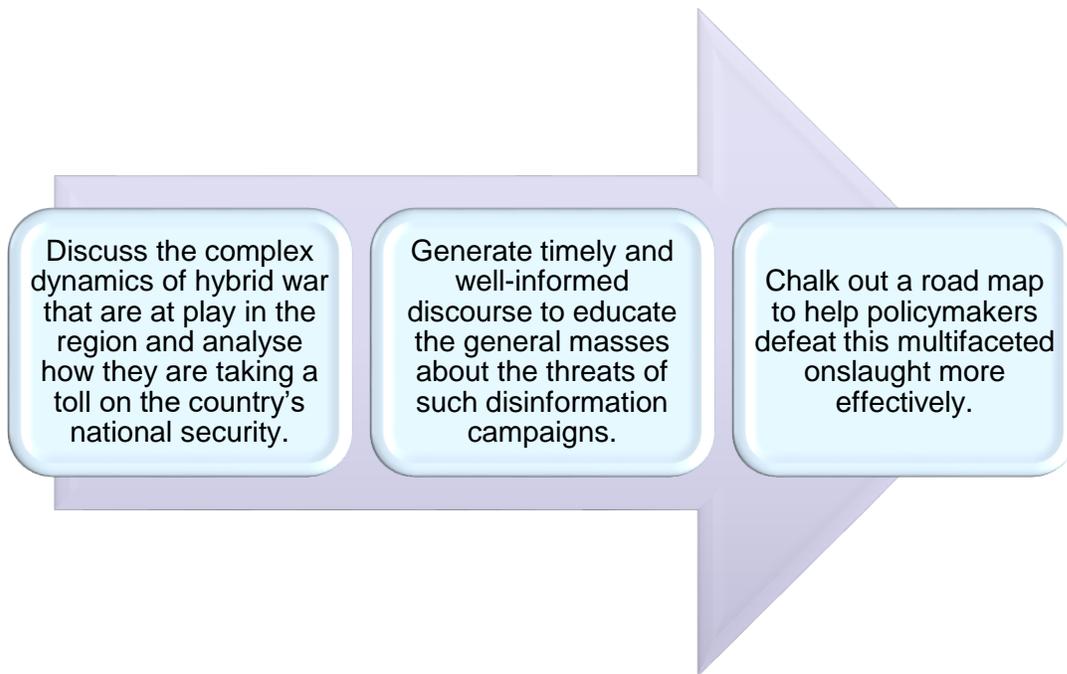
INTRODUCTION

Hybrid warfare as a term entered the modern strategic lexicon in early 2000, despite having been practiced in various forms for a long time. Commonly defined as a blend of both kinetic and non-kinetic options to offset conventional power dynamics, hybrid warfare includes extensive use of tools like disinformation, propaganda, economic coercion, backing of proxy militia and cyber-attacks etc. by an adversary state to achieve its strategic interests. Although an old concept in military strategy, the growing costs of men and material in traditional warfare and the related jurisdictional concerns encourage states to opt for this peculiar mode of warfare. Besides, influx of new 21st Century technologies also incentivize a blend of different modes of warfare making hybrid warfare a practical option to meet political objectives in today's world.

Pakistan, like any developing country, has its own set of vulnerabilities, with major challenges being identity conflict, ethnic and sectarian divide, poor economy, poor governance, political instability and weak institutions. All these serve as ominous assets of exploitation for the country's adversaries through gray zone tactics.

Spearheaded by non-traditional use of power centers, not only great powers but various middle powers also engage in hybrid warfare to destabilize, demoralize and disintegrate their core adversaries. For example, India has continuously been waging hybrid war against the country since its inception. This has been expedited more recently with increased involvement in funding and training separatist militias in Pakistan, conducting economic subversion by politicizing international bodies like FATF and carrying out diplomatic sabotage in the form of disinformation campaigns.

In the current era of subversion and sabotage, it is crucial to understand the realities of hybrid warfare, especially by target states like Pakistan to formulate a comprehensive national response. This international webinar on ***Hybrid Warfare against Pakistan: Challenges and Response Options***, therefore, focused on the following key objectives:



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hybrid warfare offers a blend of both, diverse kinetic and non-kinetic options that enables global and regional powers to pursue their strategic interests more efficiently. Hybrid means include extensive and simultaneous use of several tools like disinformation, propaganda, economic coercion, support of proxy militias, lawfare and cyber-attacks.

In the South Asian context, India has been waging hybrid warfare to politically destabilize, economically weaken and internationally isolate Pakistan.

Pakistan, like any developing country, has its own set of vulnerabilities, including identity conflict, ethnic and sectarian divide, poor economy, poor governance, political instability and weak institutions. These vulnerabilities provide adversaries opportunities for exploitation through gray zone tactics.

The webinar evaluated the complex dynamics of hybrid war and its implications for Pakistan's national security. It also offered well-informed and rich conceptual, diplomatic and military perspectives from one of the world's leading strategic thinkers, Sir Lawrence Freedman; a renowned Pakistani diplomat, Ambassador Abdul Basit (Retd); and a seasoned military officer, Lieutenant General Aamer Riaz (Retd).

From a conceptual perspective, it was observed that war was still being conducted through regular and irregular means, albeit involving newer instruments. Emerging non-kinetic means offer innovative ways to influence the adversary but the use of force, attribution and identification of the adversary and his demands are still necessary for territorial control and eventual conversion of military means into political gains. An extensive overview of how India had been waging hybrid war against Pakistan was also undertaken, and it was pointed out that its present phase mainly focuses on

implementation of coercive tactics aimed at political destabilization leading to economic slowdown and maligning Pakistan at regional and international forums.

From a policy angle, it was suggested that Pakistan's main focus should be on reducing its own internal vulnerabilities by strengthening the social contract between the state and the people, putting its own house in order, improving governance and addressing internal societal fissures. While exposing India's real face to the world was considered important, it was argued that countering hybrid warfare required a more imaginative and creative approach based on the effective and astute use of diplomacy and information. To ensure national security, there was a need for soul searching about why Pakistan had not pursued and achieved the goals set forth by its founding fathers in the Objectives Resolution.

The speakers warned that Indian hybrid warfare was likely to continue. Hence, it was imperative for Pakistan to amend its internal fault lines. Additionally, Pakistan needed to calibrate its strategy based on enhancing the synergy between different elements of national power and various institutions to effectively counter Indian designs.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Sabotage, propaganda and deception have always been part of war strategy and no modern war can be conducted without elements of hybrid warfare.

The adversary always picks up and amplifies societal divisions, therefore, the response option also has to be based on reducing fissures and divisions within society.

Earlier, nuclear weapons transformed strategic thinking, and now the modern digital sphere has diversified the traditional ways of signaling, where state entities exert pressure by other measures, including behavioral objections resulting in economic sanctions.

India has three key objectives in its hybrid war:

- I. keep Pakistan politically unstable,**
- II. keep Pakistan economically weak, and**
- III. malign Pakistan regionally and internationally.**

The fundamental target of India's hybrid warfare is the social contract between the people of Pakistan and the state.

RESPONSE OPTIONS

In order to counter India's hybrid war, Pakistan needs to:

- Explore innovative strategies, and learn how narratives are built and false narratives countered.
- Develop integrated organizational structures in order to develop a common understanding of hybrid threats and foster a cohesive and synergetic response.
- Not indulge in verbal duels and name-calling of the adversary's leadership, rather leave the door open for diplomacy.
- Address issues such as blasphemy, rights of minorities, human rights violations and other such vulnerabilities to avoid further exploitation by India.
- Address India's narrative about the country's democracy and development as well as work to correct the structural flaws in governance systems on priority basis.
- Follow a consistent Kashmir policy as India would endeavor to create undesirable situations in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan.
- Take India's disinformation campaigns that the state has lost its interest in occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Afghanistan, seriously. If this continues and gains ground, especially in occupied Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan would indeed become irrelevant.
- Adopt a defensive-offensive posture against India's hybrid warfare, and make the country's immune system (the social contract between the state and its citizens) strong and resilient.

- Build a common understanding of threat and response across the entire political spectrum.
- Review some of Pakistan's constitutional amendments to make the country's financial governance manageable.
- Deliver governance down to the grassroots level by coming up with federal and provincial structures with constitutional backing to deal with critical internal fault lines.
- Re-establish deterrence stability.
- Expose India's real face to the world through a more imaginative and creative approach using the tools of diplomacy and information.
- Foster networks of opinion that are impervious to outside influence, that reinforce each other and can play an important role in countering false information.
- Devote considerable resources and efforts to build capacity of Pakistani media and sensitize them about the negative propaganda being spread by India in light of the emerging challenges.
- Teach the younger generation at individual and institutional level to practice patience and not to respond instantaneously to any and every piece of information online, rather to be discerning and respond intellectually to false information.
- Create credible clusters within society which could act as trusted sources of information.
- Conduct a government-sponsored counterintelligence operation to get access to more information regarding Indian actions as revealed by the EU DisinfoLab reports.

DIALOGUE ANALYSIS

AIR MARSHAL M. ASHFAQUE ARAIN (RETD), DIRECTOR STRATEGIC DEFENCE AND SECURITY, CENTRE FOR AEROSPACE & SECURITY STUDIES

According to Air Marshal Arain, hybrid warfare as a term entered the modern strategic lexicon in early 2000, despite having been in practice in various forms for a long time. He was of the view that the cost of traditional war techniques had persuaded large and middle powers to engage in hybrid warfare to destabilize, demoralize and disintegrate their core adversaries.

Since its inception, India has been continuously waging hybrid war against Pakistan, which it has accelerated recently with increased funding, training of separatist militias and conducting economic subversion by politicizing international bodies such as FATF.

He shared his concern that India had also carried out diplomatic sabotage in the form of disinformation campaigns against Pakistan, as was recently revealed in disclosures by the EU DisinfoLab.

SIR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN, EMERITUS PROFESSOR, KING'S COLLEGE LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM

Professor Sir Lawrence Freedman discussed the strategic issues associated with hybrid warfare, and explained that no modern warfare could be conducted without elements of hybrid war. He argued that it was impossible to imagine a war of any size or significance conducted in one way alone, and explained that sabotage, propaganda, and deception had always been part of war strategies hence, the concept of hybrid warfare was not new.

According to him, the term “hybrid warfare” came back into use in the earlier part of the 21st Century when regular forces and irregular forces, through guerrilla warfare or even terrorism came more into play. However, he contended that while additional capabilities had entered the digital space through cyber-attacks, information warfare as well as economic measures, there was still nothing particularly new about this as they were part of any war strategy. He argued the similar strategies were used during the Normandy Landings of 1944 when deception was a critical part of that conflict, by using measures that did not have the advantage of the digital age, but were not particularly different than those in use now.

According to Professor Freedman, from a look at the history of warfare, where there was an attempt to bring in different modes of fighting and pressure together, certain standard problems always emerged even then, and the major one was command and control. He gave the example of Russia, in Ukraine, where it was bound in a conventional threat, and had used regular forces extensively at one point. But, most of the action (which Professor Freedman assumed was on behalf of Russia) had been by groups only loosely linked to Moscow. In fact, he pointed out that Moscow has had a difficult time trying to exercise control over these groups because they had different agendas. Moscow saw these groups as a useful way of putting pressure on Ukraine; while the objectives of these groups was to integrate with Russia. As they had different political objectives, one saw tension between the two, he stressed.

South Asia may have similar examples, where the regular and irregular parts don't always sing from same hymn sheet, as they have different objectives.

While discussing why hybrid means had become more important, and why more attention was spent on them, he said this was largely because of the problems with major war. Those problems had pushed activity away from entering into conflict as easily as it was done in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The whole experience of 20th Century, with its two World Wars, but also the arrival of nuclear weapons (even more relevant for countries like India and Pakistan) has transformed thinking. If you are very worried and anxious about a major war and its consequences, then you are naturally going to try to exert influence by other measures.

He claimed that this had been developing for some time, particularly the use of economic measures, especially in the United States, where the first hint of disagreement about another country's behavior, turned into economic sanctions as a first resort because it was a way of signaling something without having to impose something that entailed a lot of cost on the US.

The arrival of what's called Gray Zone conflicts has been an important factor - countries now don't stop having conflicts, don't stop having disputes, rather they want to try to move them along by measures short of war.

Apart from entry into the nuclear age, the second most important factor was entry into the digital age. In Sir Freedman's view, since the 1990s, there had been increasing fascination with whether or not, the dependence of modern societies on the Internet, on the web had created opportunities for opponents to cause problems that were not there before.

Sabotage, propaganda is not new, but there are opportunities now to explore and exploit them digitally which did not exist earlier.

He explained that at the start of any conflict now, for example, between Russia and Ukraine, one immediately saw denial of service attack on government computers or attacks on power supplies through the Internet often through breaches in security, being used just like economic sanctions, as a first resort.

Plus, now using various social media platforms (which were still quite new and really only exploded when smart phones came along in 2007), were providing opportunities to spread information as well as disinformation on a wide scale.

Hence, there is a sense of growing vulnerability to attacks from these sources. What is less easy to work out is how important (and this where the more conceptual questions become significant) is it that though we feel the vulnerability, to what extent does it provide real opportunity to opponents?

The speaker was of the view that despite talks in the '90s of electronic Pearl Harbors and surprise attacks, or that when the plug could be pulled out of the whole society, and air power control, electric grids, banks could stop working, this had not happened. There had been a few serious attacks, but according to Professor Freedman, by and large, the bulk of the hostile activity on the Internet was conducted by criminal groups, or mischief-makers. The main victims were mostly individuals, banks, companies etc. However, he opined that these were not particularly statecraft.

The forms of resilience necessary to develop and to cope with such criminality, can actually provide a degree of resilience against similar state activities, if they occur.

On what such activities could achieve, he said the issue was bound up with the question of attribution. "If in an attack on a company, nobody claims responsibility, which may be disruptive or mischievous, but what does it achieve politically if one does not know who is responsible, and what does one do to get them to stop when one does not know what the demands are or even if they are state or non-state", he questioned. In his view, such an attack would be an irritation, but does not force one to do something different unless certain demands were made.

There are big debates going on in the UN and elsewhere, whether a serious attack using the Internet that can have serious material consequences, could be considered an act of war; and if it is, then one does not necessarily have to respond by digital means, one could use other means. The UK has talked about this in relation to ISIS. One could develop offensive measures that disrupt opponents in return.

However, Sir Freedman said that not enough was as yet known about these issues, and they were still fairly underdeveloped as forms of strategy.

The attribution issue is really quite important as it allows you to do things and get away with them. However, it becomes quite hard to follow up. In this case, if one is not in a wider military conflict, then the follow up issue, becomes more important as one cannot take any territory in a cyber-attack, one can only cause disruption. So, it is not clear how one would follow through. This is similar to debates on air power and land power - one can do a lot of destruction from the air, but you don't seize anything unless you actually follow up on land.

Deliberating on the issue of information warfare, he argued that trust was crucial to influence general masses. For example, the BBC since its inception was seen as an example of the UK's soft power, but it would only continue to be seen as such so long as it could be trusted as a source of news. As soon as it was seen as a propaganda outfit, it would lose its credibility. "So long as it is seen as a source of news, it can carry a great deal of influence because people will trust it," he said.

Trust is very important to the ability to wage and influence through information.

Here too, according to Professor Freedman, it was too early to determine how effective these measures were or could be. Referring to Russian groups that tried to interfere in the 2016 US Presidential elections, he argued that they were successful to the extent of picking up and amplifying the divisions within the target society. He explained that "they did not create a lot of the stories that were important and took Trump to power in 2016. They picked up on debates, magnified and amplified them and this was important. But where e.g., they tried to make up stuff or create fake news as it were, it tended to flop." The same thing happened, according to Dr Freedman, in the UK following the Salisbury attempted killings or attempted assassinations, where Russian attempts at disinformation failed completely.

It all, therefore, depends on the credibility of the messages not just on the ability to sow them. This is an important element in the evaluation of these techniques.

In his concluding remarks, the Professor agreed that there was no doubt that the digital sphere was a very busy one, and very important in modern conflicts. In fact, it was there to be used by all parties to a conflict, one way or another. It could be used for sabotage purposes, and there were examples of that, although none from which the target country could not recover, but in his view, that could become more serious.

In the information sphere, such hybrid activities were “just messy”, according to Dr Freedman because there was “a cacophony of messages.” Citing the example of the COVID-19 anti-vaccination campaigns, he discussed how in some countries the vaccination drives were being contested much more than in others, but one could see similar arguments being used to oppose them. However, the real question posed by Dr Freedman was “whose doing that? Are these home-grown or coming from outside is difficult to say, and it can be quite easy for a country that’s not happy with the internal arguments, to blame external powers or actors for it. So, is it warfare, especially when no one gets killed, when there is no actual violence?” In Professor Freedman’s analysis, the most important uses of hybrid warfare, looking at past conflicts also, was the element of sabotage:

The most important influence has actually come when there has been armed conflict underway, and when it has been possible to disrupt command and control or defense systems. That’s proper hybrid warfare. I would be wary of overstating the importance of these effects away from the kinetic element, but with the kinetic element, they can provide an important boost. However, the reason we pay so much attention to them is because we are still very nervous about getting into too many kinetic wars.

**AMBASSADOR ABDUL BASIT (RETD), PRESIDENT, PAKISTAN
INSTITUTE FOR CONFLICT AND SECURITY (PICSS), PAKISTAN**

Ambassador Abdul Basit broadly discussed India’s hybrid warfare against Pakistan with focus on what hybrid means and irregular methods New Delhi was employing to imperil the country’s as well as South Asia’s security and stability. He also touched upon the role and significance of the international community in the context of India’s hybrid aggression.

While appreciating the conceptualization of fifth-generation warfare by Sir Lawrence Freedman, Ambassador Abdul Basit began his talk by giving an overall picture

of India's hybrid endeavors against Pakistan which predominantly revolve around Ajit Doval's offensive-defense doctrine. Highlighting the involvement of kinetic element in India's fifth-generation warfare, he underscored that the process was not just dangerous and inherently hazardous for Pakistan and India, but for the entire region.

Indian hybrid warfare has three major objectives - keeping Pakistan politically unstable, economically weak and maligning it regionally and internationally. These objectives are aimed at making Pakistan irrelevant when it comes to resolution of issues like Kashmir, Siachen and Sir Creek.

He further added that Indian hybrid warfare against Pakistan and the narrative it was trying to build was also linked to the internal dynamics of India, especially its electoral politics. The narrative to portray Pakistan as a failed or failing state was also aimed towards the Indian Muslims and Kashmiris by instituting the idea that partition of the subcontinent had been a huge mistake. According to Ambassador Basit, India wants to convince the Muslims and Kashmiris that they, despite being marginalized, were better off in India as Pakistan, and even Bangladesh, had their own set of problems.

Ambassador Basit stressed that the crux of India's hybrid warfare was the Pakistan Armed Forces because it had tried to build this narrative that New Delhi had always wanted to have good relations with Pakistan, but it was Pakistan's Army/military which was not allowing this relationship to normalize. In its false narrative, India had been claiming that it was Pakistan's Army which was not allowing a resolution of the Kashmir dispute, he said.

Pakistan Armed Forces and our premier agency ISI are the biggest target of India's fifth-generation warfare.

While discussing Pakistan's fault lines, he added that issues being created in Balochistan or for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) had to be seen in the wider context of Pakistan-India relations, since India's larger objective was to keep Pakistan economically weak and politically unstable; and CPEC was an important project for Pakistan to take off economically.

Discussing Indian endeavors to malign Pakistan, he explained how New Delhi was tirelessly trying to project Pakistan as a "problem" country, whether it was regionally on the issue of peace in Afghanistan or regional integration, not allowing Afghanistan-India to have trade through Wagah or not giving India Most Favored Nation status, or internationally on the issue of nuclear proliferation. While ignoring the condition and state of its own minorities, India was projecting Pakistan's internal problems such as its blasphemy laws, argued Ambassador Basit.

Highlighting another crucial aspect, the former High Commissioner underscored that India was actively working to drive a wedge not just between Pakistan, US and the Western world, but was also trying to create rifts between China and Pakistan. He stressed that this might become a serious challenge for Pakistan.

Ambassador Basit also shared his fear that the problem with India was also its Cold Start Doctrine against Pakistan under which the kinetic element could create a huge problem for the country and the region.

What happened after Pulwama and how India reacted, and it's failed Balakot operation, and the way Pakistan legitimately and rightly reacted, can escalate such situations.

He agreed with Professor Freedman's hypothesis that a combination of kinetic and non-kinetic factors in a conflict-prone environment was very dangerous, and could create a very dangerous situation.

In Ambassador Basit's view, India's fifth-generation warfare was also being fought in the psychological realm. He opined that India was trying to create internal restlessness

in Pakistan by amplifying issues like governance and development, particularly the development of Balochistan and Sindh's rural areas.

Suggesting a way forward to address these issues, the Ambassador stressed upon the need to put one's own house in order first. He argued that there was an urgent need to address issues such as blasphemy, rights of minorities, human rights violations and other such vulnerabilities to avoid further exploitation by India. He stressed upon the fact that Pakistan should also counter India's propaganda in the psychological domain.

In this scenario, the need for countering Indian narrative on democracy and development as well as working to correct the structural flaws in our systems must be undertaken on priority basis. There is also a need for consistency in our Kashmir policy as India would endeavor to create undesirable situations not only in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan, but also in Azad Kashmir in the months and years to come.

While referring to Pakistan's focus on multilateralism, he highlighted that multilateral fora or institutions were incapable of delivering, because results in the multilateral domain could only be achieved through long-standing, strong bilateral relations.

Unfortunately, in the past we have not focused on building bilateral relations, barring a few countries, and yet we expect too much from the UN, OIC and other international organizations to come and support Pakistan on different issues.

He cited how India used its bilateral relations to successfully politicize the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), and resultantly, Pakistan was added to the grey list even under a caretaker government in June 2018 notwithstanding the fact that diplomatic practice necessitated otherwise.

The FATF decision was obviously politically motivated and India was behind that. If it was not politically motivated FATF could have waited for the elections to take place, and then it should have discussed the roadmap with the new government in Pakistan. But before the new government could take over, Pakistan unfortunately, got grey listed. This shows how India is playing its game so deftly on all fronts against Pakistan.

The speaker was of the view that Pakistan was on a forward-looking trajectory. It had dealt with the issue of terrorism and given countless and huge sacrifices in that fight. Pakistan's record in Afghanistan was also very clear – peace. He also said that even on the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, Pakistan had always wanted to have a negotiated settlement, but it was India which had come up with the narrative of so-called terrorism due to which talks could not be put together. Unfortunately, Pakistan had not come up with an effective counter narrative, he lamented.

To counter Indian designs, Pakistan has to come up with a well calibrated strategy. We have always been apologetic by and large in our responses, and here is where the problem lies. Pakistan needs to have a clear strategy as to how it would be dealing with the problem of India's hybrid warfare.

He however, did not support the idea of exploiting India's internal fault lines as such actions had a limited shelf life, as was witnessed in the case of EU DisinfoLab's revelations about Indian activities against Pakistan. "While such Indian propaganda does have some value, no doubt, and it has given India some advantages over Pakistan in different areas. But, at the end of the day, Pakistan needs to put its house in order in my view. If we can do that, I'm sure we will be in a better position to counter India," he urged.

According to Ambassador Basit, it was vital to take India's disinformation campaigns that Pakistan was losing interest in occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Afghanistan, seriously. If this continued and gained ground, especially in occupied Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan would indeed become irrelevant, he warned.

Though we may continue issuing statements, continue having seminars and conferences, we need to look at these issues realistically. Despite India's Hindutva philosophy, its fascism, it is important to keep things in their proper perspective.

In his view, to counter fifth-generation warfare, instead of emotional rhetoric and statements by leadership, Pakistan needed to learn to build a favorable international image:

If we have to counter India's hybrid war, we have to be more intelligent and try to learn how narratives are built and how false narratives are countered. So, while it is a complex, multidimensional game being played at various levels by India, Pakistan needs to learn from its mistakes and come up to counter this in a well-calibrated manner rather than doing so in fits and starts as that would bring no concrete results.

**LIEUTENANT GENERAL AMER RIAZ (RETD), FORMER PRESIDENT,
NATIONAL DEFENCE UNIVERSITY,
PAKISTAN**

Lieutenant General Aamer Riaz (Retd), while covering Pakistan's vulnerabilities, discussed inadequacies in the country's current strategy to counter India's hybrid warfare. He presented various workable response options in this regard. As a practitioner, he used an analogy to describe hybrid warfare as a virus that enters the human body, first attacks the immune system, weakens it, and then creates a condition wherein the immune system itself starts to attack the body which it is supposed to protect, until the body becomes completely incapacitated. In terms of a state, this immune system, according to Lieutenant General Riaz rested in the relationship between the state and its people.

Elucidating upon the process, he shared that to achieve this kind of an effect, hybrid warfare against a state by another state or a group of states, had to take the form of sustained, unrelenting application of non-military and military means. Military means were generally applied very selectively, according to the speaker.

People have hope, confidence and trust in their state. This trust generally takes the form of a social contract which could be in the form of a written formalized document or an unwritten tradition-based understanding. The state on its part is supposed to ensure territorial integrity and sovereignty, and it is supposed to equalize opportunities for its citizens. It is supposed to protect the rights of its citizens, which is right to life, honor, property and political freedom within the confines of the social contract. And it also looks after the socio-economic needs of its citizens, particularly the less endowed. The fundamental target of hybrid warfare is this social contract. By gradually incapacitating the target state, and eventually disenchanting its citizens to a point where this trust is broken and people start to actively engage against their own state, mostly without calculating its consequences or cost.

For such high-end objectives and sustained application, there has to be a deep-seated and unremitting hostility and very high stakes. Particularly, if the contest is between two nuclear-armed states because the possibility of hybrid crossing over into a major military conflict will always remain, with obviously unintended consequences of unbearable magnitude.

According to the speaker, in the India-Pakistan context, since February 2019, deterrence instability and crisis instability margin had increased and the situation was delicately poised, and even one irrational act could lead to a major military conflagration. He further remarked that all responsible members of the international community needed take serious note of this situation.

The present Indian ruling elite, led by the RSS-hooked BJP with their fascist, extremist and irrational exposition were posing a serious threat not only to their own state and society, but also to its neighbors. He also underscored that India had for quite some time now embarked upon a policy of forcing its smaller neighbors into submission. This had worked for a while, but now even its smaller neighbors were becoming wary of this unscrupulous aggression, and had started to retort.

Pakistanis will have to understand this fully that the country is being subjected to a full-scale hybrid assault by India, which is unfortunately, also supported in varying degrees by some Western allies because of their own geo-economic and geopolitical reasons.

He added that the current Indian leadership had made its anti-Pakistan agenda central to its domestic political discourse, and hence, had employed all elements of its national power to varying degrees in this pursuit.

Indian hybrid warfare against Pakistan is built on the construct of DIMEFIL, that is, active diplomacy against Pakistan; information warfare including propaganda and cyber warfare; low-intensity military application as evident at the Line of Control as well as in Balakot; financial squeeze of Pakistan; accentuating all fault lines through intelligence agencies and use of law fare through FATF etc.

While discussing Indian objectives, Lieutenant General Riaz agreed with Ambassador Basit's assessment that they were aimed at maligning Pakistan externally and to exploit all possible fault lines within the country, whether ethnic, social or sectarian, with the prime target being the country's institutions. The goal, he reckoned was to create despondency, and to eventually force Pakistan to give up on its legitimate interests and submit to New Delhi's will. However, he also noted that currently, India's ruling elite had "kicked up so much dust within their own country, while disturbing other states around it, that the world despite its economic lure, may not be able to stand with her for too long."

He opined that while Indian hybrid war against other states, particularly Pakistan, may become costly and unsustainable with the passage of time, but in the meanwhile, Pakistan could not sit, wait and hold its response. He outlined four key elements for Pakistan to configure its response:

Develop true understanding of the nature of hybrid war being unleashed against Pakistan.

Analyse the situation of political and social harmony, as well as discord within the state.

Improve the governance system to overcome vulnerabilities, and focus on delivery-based governance.

Understand that hybrid warfare was there to stay in one form or the other; and so establish integrated organizational structures at the federal and provincial levels to develop a common understanding of threats, and formulate a cohesive and synergetic response.

Pakistan has to adopt a defensive-offensive posture against this threat, and under the defensive posture, we have to put our house in order and keep Pakistan's immune system strong and resilient so that we can deal with this offensive Indian hybrid campaign effectively.

He further suggested that, the key remedial areas included a common understanding of threat and response across the entire political divide; reviewing some of Pakistan's constitutional amendments to make the country's financial governance manageable since in its present construct, this was difficult, and was being exploited. He also suggested empowering the local bodies with financial authority and responsibilities.

It is not possible to govern such large provinces in terms of territory and population and deliver governance down to the grassroot level. We have to come up with the federal and provincial structures with constitutional backing to deal with our critical fault lines – ethnic, sectarian and others.

Similarly, at the highest political and military level, he emphasized the need for re-establishment of deterrence stability. He added that in the offensive domain, apart from exposing India's real face to the world, the approach had to become more imaginative and creative using the tools of diplomacy and information. He warned that should India continue on its offensive hybrid war; Pakistan's hand might be forced one day and a matching offensive response would have to be put in place accentuating India's fault lines which were abound. Considering Indian vulnerabilities, he cautioned New Delhi that when sitting in a glass house, one should not throw stones at others.

While discussing the desired objectives of Pakistan's response options, he said they needed to be two-fold: first, to make India give up its offensive hybrid warfare against Pakistan; and second, to force India's ruling elite to conduct its affairs with Pakistan through diplomacy within the norms of international law.

Concluding his talk, he reiterated the need to protect the immune system of Pakistan by strengthening the social contract, plugging exploitable vulnerabilities and building internal resilience in society.

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL KALEEM SAADAT (RETD), PRESIDENT, CENTRE FOR AEROSPACE & SECURITY STUDIES

Air Chief Marshal Kaleem Saadat (Retd), President CASS in his *Closing Remarks* agreed with the speakers that hybrid warfare had been going on forever. However, earlier the agent was identified and declared *persona non grata* but in modern times, because of anonymity, perpetrators remained unidentified, and this made them more reckless and adventurous.

He remarked that people often felt victimized for what was done to them through hybrid means, but they failed to understand what they themselves might have done to others because of the clandestine nature of such activities. He was of the view that the recent EU DisinfoLab revelations indicated that India was not entirely victorious in its hybrid warfare efforts. He appreciated Lieutenant General Aamer Riaz's analogy of a virus attacking the human immune system when referring to hybrid warfare. He was in agreement with all the speakers that as the bottom line of Pakistan's defense efforts, it was essential to put one's own house in order, and build a dependable social contract between the state and the citizens.

A workable model could be achieved by determining how far Pakistan had succeeded in attaining the five salient features mentioned in the Objectives Resolution - freedom, democracy, equality, social justice, and tolerance - as stipulated by the founding fathers. A dispassionate assessment would indicate Pakistan's failure in attaining those objectives.

He observed that India or any other adversaries would do what they thought was right for them. The important consideration was to see what Pakistan had done, what was good for the country, or had it done something in return or along the same lines.

Questioning the notion that Pakistan would be blamed for failure of the intra-Afghan talks, he argued that when the Afghan government, their Western backers, and the Afghan people could not positively influence the negotiations from within Afghanistan, how could Pakistan as an external stakeholder be held accountable for the failure?

In the context of US-China rivalry, President CASS said that Pakistan had been engulfed in this intensifying competition.

The West and India were targeting CPEC, the centerpiece of the Belt and Road Initiative by alleging that it would lead Pakistan into a debt trap, like Sri Lanka and some African countries. On the contrary, it is an opportunity for Pakistan to develop its economic prowess through industrialization stability. To deal with anti-CPEC narrative, Pakistan needs to lay down its debt profile out in the open.

Air Chief Marshal Saadat added that an offensive information operation could follow after a temporary period, falsehood could work for some time, but ultimately, truth catches up, and the perpetrator's credibility suffers. However, to defend against the same, he urged that counter-narratives had to be truthful. He agreed with Sir Freedman's assertion that when waging kinetic war becomes too costly, the antagonists' resort to non-kinetic means, but the latter can never be decisive. He also supported Ambassador Basit's recommendation that Pakistan's leadership at the highest level must not indulge in verbal duels and name-calling of the adversary's leadership, rather should leave the door open for diplomacy. Air Chief Marshal Saadat pointed to Lieutenant General Riaz's conclusion as noteworthy that India's hybrid warfare was becoming cost-ineffective, so India should stop moving in that direction, and give diplomacy a chance to resolve outstanding differences between the two nuclear-armed neighbors.

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

During the Q&A session, **Professor Sir Lawrence Freedman** was asked about the difference between "fifth-generation warfare" and "hybrid warfare" based on his definition of hybrid warfare in his book *"The Future of War"*. Professor Freedman explained that the term "fifth-generation warfare" was slightly confusing as war did not happen in generations. There were technological changes, but the actual activities of warfare remained the same. Regarding hybrid warfare, he further added that a lot of concepts were not new rather they had been in play for a long time. He identified cyber domain as an area which might prove to be considerably damaging.

On the relevance of nuclear deterrence vis-à-vis hybrid warfare in view of the assumption that hybrid wars could not be deterred, Professor Freedman was of the view that deterrence was considerably different in terms of new technologies. He acknowledged that deterrence by denial was an effective tool with newer forms of technologies, where one could make it harder for an enemy to achieve gains by showing resilience rather than by being punitive.

Addressing another question regarding the co-relation of terraforming and potentially disruptive geo-engineering with hybrid warfare campaigns, Professor Freedman expressed that new technologies were used as soon as they became available. However, he acknowledged that if divisions did not exist within the concerned societies, these technologies would have minimal impact.

Talking about the possible measures that media and educational institutions should take to strengthen the “immune system” at the national level against hybrid warfare, Professor Freedman pointed out that the most important aspect in this regard was trusted sources of information. If the government enjoyed public confidence, it would be relatively easy to educate people on false information and vice versa. He highlighted that in the Western countries, presence of networks of opinion that were impervious to outside influence reinforced each other, and played an important role in countering false information.

Answering a question related to what constituted an act of cyber offence and the tools which could be employed to regulate the offensive side of cyber sphere, Professor Freedman described it as an action where one feared what the other side was doing i.e., sabotage of some sort. According to him, there were a variety of ways cyber offence could be regulated other than just the punitive ones.

On the evolution of non-kinetic means for achieving various political objectives, Professor Freedman said that events could be influenced by non-kinetic means and it was better to use non kinetic tools rather than kinetic ones, but there was a limit to what could be achieved through them as they were not decisive tools.

Ambassador Abdul Basit (Retd) addressed a question regarding Pakistan’s pivotal role in CPEC and the response it was generating. He explained that being the

flagship project of Belt and Road Initiative, CPEC was seen as a challenge by the US and other Western countries. He noted that the BRI was crucial for China's rise and sustained economic growth, and added that India would continue to create problems in Balochistan through Afghanistan. According to him, Afghanistan would remain a key problem for Pakistan. He identified proscribed organizations like Balochistan Republican Army (BRA) and Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) as effective Indian tools which could create problems in Pakistan.

In response to a question regarding the inability of the media to portray a positive image of Pakistan, Ambassador Basit opined that the Pakistani media was least sensitive about the country's national interests. He identified lack of professionalism and the absence of an effective interaction between the government and media as major factors responsible for media's inability to counter Indian propaganda. He emphasized that the government needed to devote considerable resources and make efforts to build capacity of Pakistani media in light of the emerging challenges.

Answering a question on the intensity of the language that should be used against India as its behavior was preventing any type of positive engagement, Ambassador Basit stressed that diplomacy had its own way of working. According to the speaker, one should play one's part in exposing India and its fascist Hindutva-inspired regime. However, he stressed, that using harsh language at the leadership level should be avoided as it could adversely impact diplomacy and future engagement.

Responding a question regarding the possible response to false information or any information which could create an emotional response within society, **Lieutenant General Aamer Riaz (Retd)** suggested that there was a pressing need to teach the younger generation at individual and institutional level to practice patience and not to respond instantaneously to any piece of information incompatible with their core values. According to him, it was imperative to respond intellectually to such false information. He further added that creation of credible clusters within society, which could act as trusted sources of information would be an effective initiative in this regard.

On differentiating between political dissent and false narrative aimed at sabotaging Pakistani nationhood, the speaker stated that any idea within the political philosophy and

ideology of the state would be acceptable. However, if it created divisions in social and political domains, then it needed to be observed carefully.

On the EU DisinfoLab report “Indian Chronicles” and the role of think tanks in countering Indian propaganda, the speaker was of the view that it was a very cohesive operation which had the full backing of the Indian state. He stressed that Pakistan needed to conduct a counterintelligence operation against it to get access to more information regarding Indian actions. He stressed that the initiative must be supported by the government.

Lieutenant General Aamer Riaz agreed that the media in Pakistan lacked the capacity or capability to understand the real issues which were arising out of India’s hybrid warfare against the country. He further pointed out that the larger narrative was not the sole responsibility of any one media cell, rather it required joint effort by all segments of society including intellectuals, think tanks, media, digital media and so on.

For a comprehensive counter-response from the Pakistani polity, he said that the political construct of political parties was such that they could be pulled together and given an exhaustive account of India’s hybrid warfare, its implications and how our political behaviors and critical weaknesses would may increase the state’s internal vulnerabilities, which would be exploited by the enemy. He acknowledged that this effort could also be institutionalized via creation of institutions which could study Indian social, political and military thought vis-à-vis Pakistan.

PRESS RELEASE

Internal divisions and chasms within Pakistan need to be addressed on the basis of sound governance in order to tackle the impacts of hybrid warfare.

18 February 2021



The Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS) organised an international webinar on ‘Hybrid Warfare against Pakistan: Challenges and Response Options’, in Islamabad to discuss the complex dynamics of hybrid war that are at play in South Asia and analyse how they are taking a toll on the country’s national security.

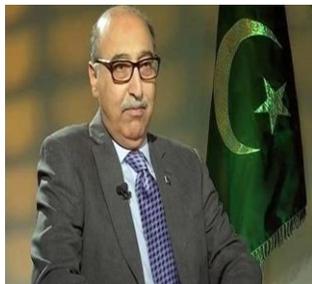
Speakers from Pakistan and the United Kingdom highlighted that Pakistan, like any developing country, has its own set of vulnerabilities, with its major challenges being identity conflict, ethnic and sectarian divide, poor economy, poor governance, political instability and weak institutions. All these serve as ominous assets of exploitation for India which has been using gray zone tactics to destabilize and harm Pakistan.

In his *Introductory Remarks*, **Air Marshal M Ashfaque Arain (Retd), Director, Strategic Defence and Security at CASS**, said that spearheaded by non-traditional use of power centres, not only great powers but various middle powers were also engaging in hybrid warfare to destabilize, demoralize and disintegrate their core adversaries. He added that India has been continuously waging hybrid war against the country since its inception. This has been expedited more recently with increased funding and training separatist militias in Pakistan, conducting economic subversion by politicizing international bodies like FATF and carrying out diplomatic sabotage in the form of



disinformation campaigns, revelations by EU DisinfoLab are the latest example of Indian endeavours.

Conceptualizing the theory and practice of hybrid warfare, **Sir Lawrence Freedman, Professor Emeritus, King's College London**, outlined that sabotage, propaganda and deception had always been part of war strategy and there was nothing new in hybrid warfare. However, he argued that duration, more than decisiveness had become a critical factor in war because if the enemy proved to be resilient, then over time non-military factors become progressively more important. In such cases, the ability to absorb a surprise attack and draw out a war was the winning strategy, he emphasized. In his view, modern society's dependence on the Internet had provided new opportunities to opponents to cause problems that were not there before, not only to spread information, but also disinformation on a wide scale. "An adversary would always pick up and amplify divisions within a state, so the response option has to be based on reducing fissures and divisions within one's society", he remarked.



On the subject of 'India's Hybrid Warfare against Pakistan', **former High Commissioner of Pakistan to India Ambassador Abdul Basit (Retd)** observed that the ongoing 5th generation warfare was all about keeping Pakistan politically unstable, economically weak and regionally and internationally maligning the country; and its objectives ranged from Kashmir to Afghanistan. But this warfare had become more dangerous since India's Cold Start Doctrine was integral to it. He added that India needed to understand that Pakistan would always respond in kind as it had after the failed Balakot operation. Ambassador Basit also stressed that 5th generation warfare was a double-edged sword as false narratives could not be sustained for long. The recent DisInfo Lab revelations were a case in point. To tackle such campaigns, states like Pakistan needed to formulate a well-calibrated national response backed by a well-defined foreign policy, he remarked.

According to **Lieutenant General Aamer Riaz (Retd), former President of the National Defence University**, the fundamental target of hybrid warfare was the social contract between state and citizens in order to gradually incapacitate the target state, and eventually disenchanting its citizens to a point where this trust was broken. Stakes were particularly high if the contest was between two nuclear-armed states because the possibility of hybrid crossing over into a major military conflict always remains, he said. Lieutenant General Riaz was also of the view that the present Indian ruling elite, led by



the BJP with its fascist, extremist and irrational exposition was posing a serious threat not only to its own state and society, but also to its neighbours. He stressed that India was exploiting all available fault lines within Pakistan - ethnic, social or institutional. He was of the view that media and academia needed to play a more effective and vigilant role in arming the public about fake news being propagated to hurt Pakistan's interests.

During the interactive *Question and Answer Session*, speakers warned that India, with the support of other global powers, would continue to create problems in Balochistan through Afghanistan. It was pointed out that the Pakistani media was least sensitive about Pakistan's interests due to lack of professionals and adequate interaction between the government and media that can provide tools to counter India's false propaganda. To a question, Professor Lawrence Freedman opined that the reason why non-kinetic means of warfare had become important was because kinetic means were far too deadly, but while one could influence events by non-kinetic means, there were limits to what could be achieved. Given the current information overload, he pointed out that containing the spread of digital disinformation had become very difficult. According to Lieutenant General Riaz, the response to Indian actions against Pakistan lay in the domain of intelligence and information coming together backed up by the state. "We are living in a post-truth world and we need to teach our citizens and children to be very discerning and careful about everything they see, hear or read; and to not accept it at face value," he advised.

Offering his Concluding Remarks, **President CASS, Air Chief Marshal Kaleem Saadat (Retd)** emphasized that Indian hybrid war against Pakistan was a well-conceived and deliberate plan to harm and undermine the country through other means. He said it was a long-duration operation along multiple axis. "Indian political and military leadership as well as the mainstream media are involved and supportive of this operation,"



he warned. He said it was important that the social contract between the state and its citizens was implemented and given the emphasis it required, and emphasized that it was also imperative to see which of the five key issues as given in the Objectives Resolution - freedom, democracy, social justice, tolerance and equality - as laid down by the country's forefathers had been attained, partially, wholly or not at all to understand the internal fissures and cleavages that had been created or being experienced. He agreed that it was not for the state leadership alone to confront the other side directly, rather other links in the chain also needed to be more proactive and build a coherent strategy to tackle India's disinformation campaign. To deal with anti-CPEC narrative, Pakistan should lay down its debt profile out in the open, he recommended.

سینٹر فار ایروپیسس اینڈ سیکورٹی سٹڈیز

پریس ریلیز

پاکستان کے خلاف ہائبر ڈجنگ : چیلنجز اور مواقع

۱۸ فروری ۲۰۲۱ - اسلام آباد

سینٹر فار ایروپیسس اینڈ سیکورٹی سٹڈیز نے 'پاکستان کے خلاف ہائبر ڈجنگ : چیلنجز اور مواقع' کے موضوع اور جنوبی ایشیا میں ہائبر ڈجنگ کے پیچیدہ محرکات اور ملکی قومی سلامتی پر اسکے اثرات پر ایک بین الاقوامی ویبینار کا اہتمام کیا۔ پاکستانی اور برطانوی مقررین نے کہا کہ دیگر ترقی پذیر ممالک کی طرح پاکستان کو بھی مخصوص خطرات کا سامنا ہے جبکہ اسکے اہم چیلنجز میں شناخت کے حوالے سے تنازعات، نسلی اور فرقہ وارانہ تفریق، کمزور معیشت اور طرز حکمرانی، سیاسی عدم استحکام اور ناتواں ادارے شامل ہیں۔ بحیثیت مجموعی یہ تمام عوامل بھارت کو وہ موقع فراہم کرتے ہیں جنہیں وہ 'گرے زون' حربوں کے ذریعے پاکستان کو عدم استحکام اور نقصان سے دوچار کرنے کے لئے استعمال کرتا رہا ہے۔

انیر مارشل محمد اشفاق آرائیں (ریٹائرڈ)، ڈائریکٹر (ترویجی دفاع اور سلامتی) سینٹر فار ایروپیسس اینڈ سیکورٹی سٹڈیز نے اپنے ابتدائی کلمات میں کہا کہ اپنی غیر روایتی طاقت کو استعمال کر کے نہ صرف بڑی طاقتیں بلکہ درمیانے درجے کی طاقتیں بھی اپنے اہم حربوں کو غیر مستحکم، مایوس اور تحلیل کرنے کے لئے ہائبر ڈجنگ کو بروئے کار لارہی ہیں۔ مثلاً پاکستان کے روایتی حریف بھارت نے قیام پاکستان سے لیکر آج تک مسلسل پاکستان کو ہائبر ڈجنگ کا نشانہ بنایا ہے۔ علیحدگی پسند ملیشیا کی بڑھتی ہوئی مالی معاونت اور تربیت، FATF جیسی بین الاقوامی تنظیموں کا سیاسی حربوں سے معاشی دباؤ کے لئے استعمال اور غلط معلومات کے ذریعے سفارتی زک پہنچانے کی کوشش میں حال ہی میں مزید اضافہ دیکھنے میں آیا ہے۔

برطانوی کنگز کالج ہانڈن کے معروف پروفیسر ایمرٹس سر لانس فریڈمین نے ماضی، حال اور مستقبل کے حوالے سے ہائبر ڈجنگ کے تصور، نظریے اور اس پر عمل کا تاریخی تجزیہ پیش کیا۔ انہوں نے کہا کہ اگر کسی تنازعے میں ایک حریف دوبارہ ابھرنے کی صلاحیت رکھتا ہو تو اس کا دورانیہ ایک فیصلہ کن جنگ سے زیادہ اہم عنصر بن سکتا ہے اور غیر فوجی محرکات زیادہ اہمیت اختیار کر جائیں گے۔ اس طرح کی صورت میں ایک غیر متوقع حملے کو برداشت کرنے اور جنگ کو طول دینے کی صلاحیت ایک کامیاب حکمت عملی ثابت ہو سکتی ہے۔

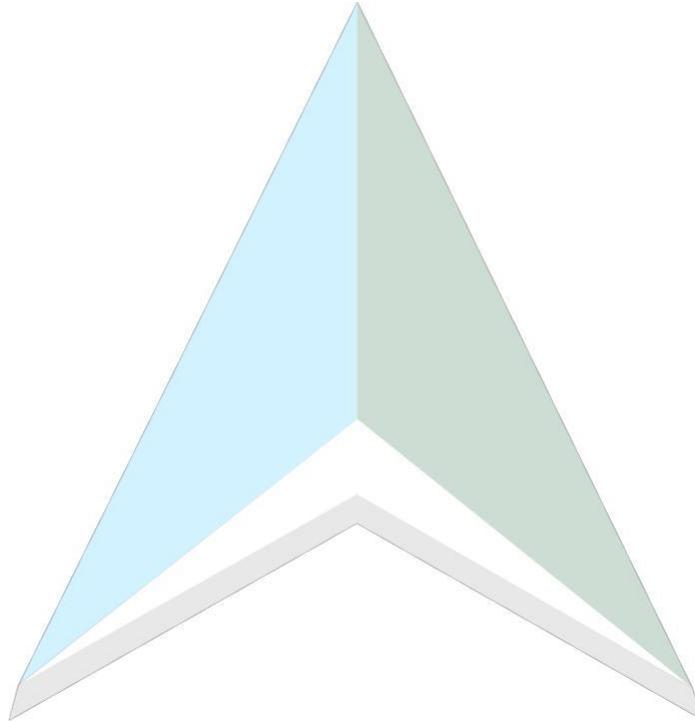
پاکستان اور بھارت کے لئے سابق ہائی کمشنر اور سفیر نے 'پاکستان کے خلاف ہائبر ڈجنگ : چیلنجز اور مواقع' کے موضوع پر کہا کہ بغاوت اور تخریب کاری کے اس دور میں ہائبر ڈجنگ کے حقائق کو سمجھنا بہت اہم ہے تاکہ پاکستان جیسی ریاستیں ایک جامع قومی رد عمل، جسے ایک واضح خارجہ پالیسی کی معاونت حاصل ہو، مرتب کر سکیں۔ انہوں نے مزید کہا کہ بھارت ہائبر ڈجنگ کے مقاصد میں پاکستان کو سیاسی عدم استحکام سے دوچار کرنا، معاشی طور پر کمزور کرنا اور علاقائی اور بین الاقوامی سطح پر بدنام کرنا شامل ہے۔

نیشنل ڈیفنس یونیورسٹی کے سابق صدر لیفٹینینٹ جنرل عامر ریاض (ریٹائرڈ) نے ہائبرڈ جنگ کے خلاف پاکستانی ردِ عمل کے حوالے سے کئی تجاویز پیش کیں۔ انہوں نے پاکستانی مفادات کے خلاف جھوٹی معلومات پر مبنی مہم کے حوالے سے ابلاغ عامہ اور شعبہ تدریس کے مزید منوش اور چوکس کردار کی اہمیت پر زور دیا۔ انہوں نے ہائبرڈ جنگ کو انسانی جسم میں موجود ایک مہلک وائرس سے تعبیر کرتے ہوئے کہا کہ جس طرح ایک خطرناک وائرس جسم کے اپنے مدافعتی نظام کو اپنے ہی خلاف استعمال کرنے کی کوشش کرتا ہے، بالکل اسی طرح ہائبرڈ جنگ کے ذریعے دشمن ملکی عوام کو ریاست کے خلاف استعمال کرنے کی کوشش کرتا ہے اور سماجی معاہدے کو تاراج کرنے میں لگن رہتا ہے۔

بھارتی عزائم کو سامنے لاتے ہوئے انہوں نے کہا کہ ہائبرڈ جنگ میں بھارت سفارتکاری، معلوماتی جنگ، کم شدت کے تنازے، معاشی حربے، حساس اداروں کے ذریعے معاشرتی مسائل میں اضافے اور بین الاقوامی قوانین کو پاکستان کے خلاف استعمال کر رہا ہے۔

ایئر چیف مارشل (ریٹائرڈ) کلیم سوادت، صدر سینٹر فار ایروپیس ایبڈ سیکورٹی سٹڈیز نے اس ویبینار کی صدارت کی اور اپنے اختتامی کلمات میں زور دیتے ہوئے کہا کہ بھارتی ہائبرڈ جنگ پاکستان کے خلاف ایک گہرے غور و غوص اور سوچے سمجھے منصوبے کے تحت لڑی جا رہی ہے جسے بھارتی سیاسی اور فوجی قیادت کی رہنمائی اور ذرائع ابلاغ کی معاونت حاصل ہے۔

انہوں نے مزید کہا کہ تمام پاکستانیوں کو اس بات پر غور کرنا چاہئے کہ وہ کون سے داخلی مسائل ہم نے خود پیدا کئے ہیں جن کا ہمارے دشمن ہمیں مزید نقصان پہنچانے کے لئے فائدہ اٹھا رہے ہیں اور وہ کیا وجوہات ہیں جن کی بنا پر ہمارے کچھ، ہم وطن ملک اور قومی بنائے سے مایوسی کا شکار ہیں۔ آخر میں انہوں نے کہا کہ ہائبرڈ جنگ کا تجزیہ یہ ظاہر کرتا ہے کہ روایتی فن حرب کا استعمال نت نئے اور غیر روایتی انداز جنگ کے مقابلے میں مزید دشوار ہوتا جا رہا ہے۔



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