



## CENTRE for AEROSPACE & SECURITY STUDIES

### CASS International Webinar Press Release

#### **HYBRID WARFARE AGAINST PAKISTAN: CHALLENGES AND RESPONSE OPTIONS**

***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', here 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 grey zone tactics to destabilize and harm Pakistan.

In his *Introductory Remarks*, **Air Marshal M Ashfaq 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 Disinfo Lab 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.

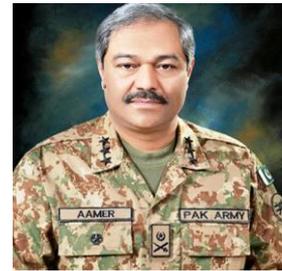


On the subject of 'India's Hybrid Warfare against Pakistan', **former High Commissioner of Pakistan to India Ambassador (Retd) Abdul Basit** observed that the ongoing 5th generation warfare was all about keeping Pakistan politically unstable, economically weak and regionally and internationally maligning 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) HI(M), 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 (Retd) Aamer 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 (Retd) Kaleem Saadat** 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 axes. "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.