

Pakistan – India Security Paradox: Between Deterrence and Coercive Diplomacy

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Abstract

Pakistan and India, as two nuclear neighbors in South Asia with a hostile historical legacy, have limited strategic options to pursue in an environment where uncertainty and threat are constant. In this context, India has moved in the recent past from a traditional deterrence towards a more escalatory posture under Modi led fascist regime. The primary emphasis of this study is to analyze how do India's intimidating tactics, particularly hybrid warfare undermine the security balance between India and Pakistan constantly causing the bilateral relations to swing between deterrence and coercive diplomacy. Indian war gaming tactics are a direct threat to conventional and nuclear deterrence.

Key words: Deterrence, Coercive Diplomacy, Hybrid Warfare, Security, Pakistan, India.

Introduction

Coercion, threat, enmity, and cynicism define the security equation of Pakistan and India. Their frictional relationship expounds on the deep complexities that exist between the two nuclear neighbors. Policy and defense analysts have observed multiple instances of coercive

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diplomacy and deterrence in the framework of Pakistan-India relationship. Shabana Fayyaz explains that India during 2001-2002 military stand-off and after the Mumbai attacks of 2008 took a coercive posture against Pakistan.² She believes that the US' incessant support to India is the main reason behind the stability imbalance between Pakistan and India.³

Another pertinent explanation is given by Michael Krepon who examines India-Pakistan relations within the framework of stability-instability paradox by emphasizing on the fact that both states responded to the 2001-2002 crisis differently, but the post-crisis milieu incorporates increasing short range ballistic missiles, limited diplomatic engagement and a proactive military doctrine. In this context, the avenues of deterrence stability became limited between them.⁴ Moreover, Sander Ruben Aarten focuses on the notion of deterrence stability between India and Pakistan, which according to the writer has been disrupted since 2015. Pathankot incident and alleged claims of India against Pakistan, Indian covert support to Baloch separatist groups, cancellation of 2016 SAARC conference in Pakistan and escalation on the Line of Control have triggered friction between India and Pakistan which has negatively affected deterrence stability.⁵ Similarly, Zafar Nawaz Jaspal is of the view that the non-linear and unconventional nature of hybrid warfare explicates that Modi government has opted a hardline approach towards Pakistan. The writer identified the use of proxy forces in supporting terrorist groups within Pakistan, and deception and information war as primary tools to

² Shabana Fayyaz, "Countering Strategic Coercion: A case Study of Pakistan," *Margalla Papers*, Vol. XXIII, no. II (2019), 88.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Michael Krepon and Julia Thompson (eds.), *Deterrence Stability: Escalation Control in South Asia* (Washington DC: The Stimson Centre, 2013),9.

⁵ Sander Ruben Aarten, *Deterrence (In)stability Between India and Pakistan* (Netherland: Asser Press, 2020), 215.

destabilize the national security of Pakistan by India.⁶ Similarly, Masood ur Rehman believes that the covert actions of India against Pakistan is not a new phenomenon as Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) is operating since 1968. Ajit Doval in this regard gave the notion of Offensive-Defensive strategy through which in the recent times, the exploitation of hybrid domain had been extensively carried out by India.⁷

In quantitative terms, Pakistan shares a disproportionate security equation with India. The latter is spending on its military over US \$70 billion⁸ with a total wealth of approximately US \$12.6 trillion⁹ and possesses a large geography and nukes. Despite this, India has been unable to fulfil its cold start doctrine of using military options against Pakistan. This trend illustrates that nuclearization of Pakistan was an effective strategy to minimize its security compulsions by developing an effective deterrence. Lately however, it has been observed that the bilateral relations between Pakistan and India have moved from a normalization phase to a sensitive phase encompassing a coercive posture particularly since Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister of India in 2014. Political and military incitement by Modi government has directly affected the security equation between Pakistan and India with direct impact on regional security. Therefore, it is significant to assess how the Indian provocation is acting as an independent variable and consequently affecting the bilateral and regional security balance.

⁶ Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, "Pakistan's National Security: Hybrid Warfare Challenges & Countermeasures," *National Security and Anti-Terrorism Information*, 2020, Available at: <https://cati.nwupl.edu.cn/bgpl/ndbg/71279.htm> (accessed on 2 February 2021).

⁷ Masood Ur Rehman Khattak, Muhammad Khan and Ghulam Qumber, "Evolution of New Indian Military Strategy: Implications for Pakistan," *Margalla Papers*, Vol. XXIII, no.1 (2019), 139.

⁸ Adil Sultan, "Counterforce Temptations in South Asia," *Journal of Security and Strategic Analyses*, Vol. VI, no.2 (2020), 39.

⁹ "Total wealth in India touches \$12.6 trillion," *The Hindu*, October 19, 2019.

Pakistan joined the nuclear club on 28th May 1998 as a response to Indian nuclear tests in order to balance the score with its traditional rival. The nuclear impulse of Pakistan was primarily Indian centric. In this context, Pakistan and India employed the policy of deterrence to restrain any future escalation. Deterrence was the most potent defensive strategic tool during the Cold War relied upon by the United States and the Soviet Union.¹⁰ It has been effective in substantially containing military aggression and conflict escalation between nuclear states. It is based on the idea of restraining the adversary from taking any unwanted action. Traditionally the two ways to ensuring deterrence has been by denial and by punishment. Wherein the intention is to contain the aggressor from resorting to unwanted action, mostly through a balancing act in the former case, and by threatening severe penalties in the latter.¹¹ The psychological impact through inflicting fear of consequences is one of the major goals of deterrence.

Nuclearization of South Asia in 1998 moved Pakistan-India deterrent equation from conventional weapon deterrence to nuclear deterrence. In this context, this paper intends to explain how Indian provocation through coercive and hybrid tactics is affecting the deterrence equilibrium between the two nuclear neighbors of South Asia. Also, this paper illustrates that to what extent in the recent years, the use of coercive diplomacy has intensified, predominantly by India.

¹⁰ Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, "Deterrence and the Cold War," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 110, no.2 (Summer 1995), 157.

¹¹ Michael J. Mazarr, "Understanding Deterrence," *RAND Corporation*, 2018,

Available at:

https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE200/PE295/RAND_P_E295.pdf (accessed on 4 February 2021).

India's Coercive Posture and Escalatory Maneuvers

Tensions between Pakistan and India have considerably increased under the Modi regime. Threat intimidation¹² and limited use of military force have increased as is evident from frequent unprovoked indiscriminate firing on the Line of Control (LOC) and Working Boundary (WB). According to Pakistan's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, India executed 3,012 ceasefire violations at LOC in 2020. Previously, India violated the Line of control 3,200 times in 2019, 1,629 times in 2018, and 860 times in 2017.¹³ Recently in December 2020, India attacked United Nations (UN) vehicle carrying two observers who were on their routine mission in Azad Kashmir.¹⁴ Besides this, the violation of Pakistani air space by India is another issue that escalated tensions between both states. Pakistan shot down Indian plane on 27th February 2019 on account of its violation of air space. It was a major military standoff that fueled the then ongoing tensions between India and Pakistan. Later, it was Pakistan's goodwill gesture that diffused the situation when Pakistan returned the captured Indian pilot. This escalatory trend has brought Pakistan and India to a state of brinkmanship in which friction between both states has negatively contributed to the existing hostilities. Another intimidating posture by India is the threat of a surgical strike which undermines the balancing

¹² For instance, number of statements by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Indian Defence minister, Rajnath Singh, and Indian National security advisor Ajit Doval related to defeating Pakistan in seven to ten days, indirectly threatening a nuclear war against Pakistan and highlighting to expand the battlefield in new India doctrine respectively are intimidating threats by Indian leadership. See, "India defence minister makes veiled threat of nuclear war," *The Express Tribune*, August 16, 2019.

¹³ Amrita Nayak Dutta, "LoC ceasefire violations doubled to 3,200 this year, spiked after Balakot & Article 370," *The Print*, December 27, 2019, Available at: <https://theprint.in/defence/loc-ceasefire-violations-doubled-to-3200-this-year-spiked-after-balakot-article-370/341774/> (accessed on 4 February 2021).

¹⁴ Naveed Siddiqui, "FO summons Indian envoy to lodge protest over LoC ceasefire violations," *Dawn*, December 23, 2020.

posture between Pakistan and India. It refers to a precisely calculated and targeted military attack. In 2016, India claimed surgical strike in Pakistan in the aftermath of an attack on an Indian army base in Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir. Recently, Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Shah Mehmood Qureshi shared quoted an intelligence sources according to which India is planning a surgical strike against Pakistan.¹⁵

Coercive diplomacy through diplomatic act, confrontational speech, aggressive posture, and threat of use of force have become a recurrent practice between India and Pakistan on the diplomatic front. These coercive acts fuel tensions and escalate the political heat at the bilateral level. It has been observed that ever since the election campaign of Narendra Modi, his statements reflected hatred and animosity towards Pakistan. After winning the elections, his government has been actively employing coercive language and content at the diplomatic front. Therefore, the war of words has been extensively increased between India and Pakistan, which in turn has restricted the space of negotiations and dialogue. Various statements by Indian apex political and military leadership including Narendra Modi and General Manoj Mukund Naravane, Indian Chief of Army Staff offer an insight into the belligerent rhetoric. Modi in an address to an election rally in Chhattisgarh said, "We have the mother of nuclear bombs. I decided to tell Pakistan, do whatever you want to do but we will retaliate."¹⁶ On another occasion he stated that, "India has succeeded in isolating you [Pakistan] in the world. We will ramp it up and force you [to] live alone in the world."¹⁷ In another statement,

¹⁵ Asad Hashim, "Pakistan alleges India preparing for 'surgical strike'," *Aljazeera*, December 18, 2020, Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/18/pakistan-alleges-india-preparing-for-surgical> (accessed on 9 February 2021).

¹⁶ Claire Anderson, "India-Pakistan nuclear WAR fears as Modi threatens Pakistan with 'mother of bombs'", *Express Tribune*, April 25, 2019.

¹⁷ "Modi threatens to 'isolate' Pakistan globally," *The Express Tribune*, September 24, 2016.

Prime Minister of India said that India can make Pakistan “bite the dust” in less than 10 days in any new war.¹⁸ Similarly, a statement by General Manoj that, we reserve the right to preemptively strike across the Line of Control (LoC),¹⁹ reveals an aggressive tilt in India’s posturing.

Understanding Nuclear Deterrence in South Asian Setting

Nuclear threshold became a new security question for India and Pakistan along with the South Asian security. Nuclear deterrence mainly prevents the states from any military action with the threat of nuclear attack.²⁰ Therefore, the threat of use of nuclear weapons intends to restrain adversaries from any undesirable action, thus maintaining a survivable retaliatory force. Pakistan and India opted for credible minimum deterrence (CMD) which aims to maintain a defensive posture. The main objective of CMD is to attain and balance the number of nuclear weapons against its potential adversary. Within the doctrine of CMD, credibility incorporates the command and control system, safety measures related to nuclear program along with the capacity of the state to deter, resist and sustain any penalty.²¹ In the recent past, Pakistan incorporated Full Spectrum Deterrence (FSD) in arrangement with CMD which further diversifies the nuclear capability of Pakistan by introducing tactical nuclear weapons (TNW) into the

¹⁸ “PM Modi says India can now defeat Pakistan 'in 10 days!,” *Gulf News*, January 19, 2020.

¹⁹ Naveed Siddique, “Pakistan rejects new Indian army chief’s ‘irresponsible statement on pre-emptive strikes across LoC’,” *Dawn*, January 2, 2020.

²⁰ Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, “India-Pakistan Paradox of deterrence strategic relations,” *Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad*, Vol. 29, no.4 (2009), 29.

²¹ Rajesh Rajagopalan, “India’s Nuclear Doctrine Debate,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, June 30, 2016, Available at:

<https://carnegieendowment.org/2016/06/30/india-s-nuclear-doctrine-debate-pub-63950> (accessed on 20 February 2021).

deterrent equation.²² Under this policy, Pakistan plans to attain full range weapons to contain the adversary at the strategic, tactical, and operational level. This extension from CMD to FSD can be explained vis-à-vis three main threats identified by the National Command Authority (NCA). These include nuclearisation of the Indian Ocean, Indian conventional military buildup and Indian development of Ballistic Missile Shield (BMD).²³ Keeping in view these realities, the following framework provides an understanding of nuclear deterrence and its associated issues between India and Pakistan. Prominent theorists including Kenneth Waltz, John Mearsheimer, Stephen Van Evera and Peter Lavoy predicted that nuclear weapons would prevent wars between the states because of cost calculus. On the other hand, a number of pessimists apprehend the ineffectiveness of nuclear deterrence in preventing war and conflict escalation due to several reasons. Scott D. Sagan in this regard provides a different view stressing that most of the military organizations due to their biases and interest failed to adhere to nuclear deterrence. In addition, those political leaders who lacked cognitive capability, emotional stability and rational thinking may end up provoking conflict and ending nuclear deterrence.

In this context, keeping in view the close geographical proximity of India and Pakistan, Indian scheming approach under the Modi regime

²² Tactical nuclear weapons include short range ballistic missile (SRBM) capability. For instance, Nasr battlefield ballistic missile. For details, see, Mansoor Ahmed, "Pakistan's Tactical Nuclear Weapons and Their Impact on Stability," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, June 30, 2016,

Available at:

<https://carnegieendowment.org/2016/06/30/pakistan-s-tactical-nuclear-weapons-and-their-impact-on-stability-pub-63911> (accessed on 22 February 2021).

²³ India developed a two-tiered BDM system reportedly in 2012 and 2016 for its two main cities, i.e. Mumbai and Delhi. See, Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Pakistan to retain full spectrum deterrence policy," *Dawn*, December 22, 2017.

through conventional and non-conventional means has become an existential threat as it could dislodge the credibility of nuclear deterrence.²⁴ Therefore, the recent developments in India including its increasing strategic partnership with the US and spending on conventional weapons has considerably increased the asymmetry between India and Pakistan on conventional weapons which would undermine the existing deterrence equilibrium.²⁵ In 2016, India and the US signed The Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), which allowed the US to use Indian bases and vice versa; India can use US bases across the globe. In addition to using the facilities, US and India can use each other's services and refueling facilities.²⁶ Strategically, this agreement was to contain China, but it also raises genuine security concerns in Pakistan. Recently, following the 2+2 bilateral high-level talks between India and the US, The Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement on Geospatial Cooperation (BECA) was signed in October 2020. This agreement will allow India to have access to sensitive geospatial and aeronautical data including data required to deter and hit missiles, drones and other targets with precision.²⁷ This would seriously challenge Pakistan's security and military strategy ultimately adversely affecting the deterrence equation between India and Pakistan.

²⁴ Scott D.Sagan, "The Perils of Proliferation: Organization Theory, Deterrence Theory, and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons," *International Security*, Vol. 18, no. 4 (Spring 1994), 69.

²⁵ Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, "New Indo-US defense agreement BECA is a military challenge for Pakistan," *Arab News*, December 14, 2020, Available at: <https://www.arabnews.pk/node/1777246> (accessed on 22 February 2021).

²⁶ Anwar Iqbal, "US-India defence pact to impact Pakistan, China," *Dawn*, August 30, 2016.

²⁷ "US-India 2+2: Crucial defence deal signed," *BBC News*, October 27, 2017, Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-54655947> (accessed on 24 February 2021).

Indian Coercion in Kashmir

Pakistan-India relations have been at the lowest ebb since August 2019 when India annulled article 370 and 35(A) in an attempt to increase federal control in the Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir (IIOK). India, as part of its political and security strategy, has been using coercive diplomacy to build pressure on Pakistan to dissuade its support to the people of IIOK. After the abrogation of Article 370 and 35(A), India imposed more than a yearlong communication blackout IIOK, denying basic human and fundamental rights to the people of Kashmir. Moreover, incidents of torture, state violence, abduction and an additional deployment of 8,000 troops in IIOK²⁸ illustrates Indian coercion in the area. The issue of Kashmir will remain a pivot and escalatory source in India-Pakistan relations which must and can only be dissuaded through diplomatic strategies.

Hybrid Tactics

Hybrid warfare has altogether changed the theater of war. It refers to the employment of conventional and mostly unconventional methods by using all elements of national power to inflict coercion and damage to the adversary. Hybrid warfare tactics aim to exploit the national vulnerabilities of the adversaries through political, psychological, economic, informational, social, and infrastructural attributes.²⁹ In this context, for the past several years, India has been extensively involved in hybrid tactics to destabilize Pakistan at the internal and external front. Dissemination of fake news and propaganda, building a

²⁸ Mangeet Negi, "8,000 more troops deployed in Jammu and Kashmir after govt moves to revoke Article 370," *India Today*, August 5, 2019.

²⁹ Patrick J. Cullen and Erik Reichborn-Kjennerud, "Understanding Hybrid Warfare," *A Multinational Capability Development Campaign project* (2017), 4, Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/647776/dar_mcdc_hybrid_warfare.pdf (accessed on 24 February 2021).

particular media perception of Pakistan, provoking anti-state sentiments and identity-based conflicts through informational domains, support to certain separatist and militant groups and attempts to sabotage the CPEC project are some of the core tactics being employed by India against Pakistan. In 2018, COAS General Qamar Javed Bajwa said that “We are now confronting hybrid conflict where the focus is shifting to subversion on religious, sectarian, ethnic and social issues. This needs a comprehensive national response.”³⁰ This statement reflects the complicated domain of coercion and conflict which Pakistan is facing along with the traditional conventional security threat from India. Recently, DG ISPR Major General Babar Iftikhar stated that “Unfortunately, it’s a major onslaught, it’s a major part of the fifth-generation warfare. Pakistan is being subjected to [...] hybrid applications in a massive way and we are aware of that.”³¹ With this in view, the following explain the nature of Indian hybrid warfare against Pakistan which is being extensively used by India for destabilization.

- **Fake News and Informational War**

It has been observed that India employs fake news and propaganda technique against Pakistan by using electronic and social media. One such example is the proliferation of disinformation and anti-state content through Twitter, Facebook, Web links and YouTube accounts. In December 2020, a European group based in Brussels revealed an alleged Indian disinformation network, which works to destabilize Indian adversaries, particularly Pakistan. According to the report, there were total of 265 fake local media networks, suspicious NGOs and

³⁰ “Media first line of defence in hybrid war: DG ISPR,” *The Nation*, November 28, 2018.

³¹ “Pakistan being subjected to 5th-generation warfare in 'massive way' but we are aware of threats: DG ISPR,” *Dawn*, December 3, 2020.

Think tanks operating in 65 countries.³² Their main aim was to undermine the image of Pakistan and China by producing and disseminating their fake content within India and across the globe. This network was previously exposed in 2019 but they continued their activities by renaming their website domains. For example, 'EP today was relaunched as EU Chronicle in May 2020.'³³ EU Chronicle Twitter account extensively posted material about alleged abuses against minorities and terrorism in Pakistan. Recently, Twitter suspended that account but the website of EU Chronicle till the writing of this paper is still functional.³⁴ This trend of disinformation, use of fake pictures, videos and chaos based content to build an anti-narrative against the state has been investigated in a report by Digital Rights Foundation. The report illustrates that Pro-Indian Twitter accounts were identified in campaigning against Pakistan particularly from 21st October 2020 to 23rd October 2020, when the case of Pakistan's status in the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) was under review. According to the report, the main trends to execute deception through this campaign included the following elements:

- i. There were two kinds of twitter accounts, i.e., verified and unverified accounts which were used to organize the campaign. Verified accounts uploaded content related to civil war and unrest in Pakistan by

³² Gary Machado Alexandre Alaphilippe and Roman Adamczyk, "Indian Chronicles : Deep Dive into a 15-Year Operation Targeting the EU and UN to Serve Indian Interests," *EU Disinfo Lab*, Report-2020, 76, Available at: <https://www.disinfo.eu/publications/indian-chronicles-deep-dive-into-a-15-year-operation-targeting-the-eu-and-un-to-serve-indian-interests/> (accessed on 13 March 2021).

³³ Ramsha Jahangir, "Indian network lobbying against Pakistan exposed," *Dawn*, December 10, 2020.

³⁴ "EU Chronicle: News from the European Union," Available at: <https://euchronicle.com/> (accessed on 12 February 2021).

manipulating the Karachi bomb blast incident³⁵ and the protests of opposition. In addition, they tried to propagate that how Punjab, the largest province and Karachi, the hub of financial activity is being subject to chaos and unrest.

- ii. Mostly, pictorial content has an immediate and considerable psychological effect. Fake pictures were uploaded on the Twitter accounts to disseminate misinformation.

In October 2020, Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) requested Twitter to respond and take action against the anti-Pakistan propaganda on Twitter. It was revealed that the Hashtag (#) “civil War in Pakistan” and “civil war in Karachi” was used in more than 18,700 and 3,384 tweets respectively.³⁶

- **Dissemination of fake news through Twitter**

Another tactic of propaganda and disinformation employed by India is the outsourcing of news content in support of Baloch separatist groups in Pakistan. It was observed that a number of Indian websites publish sympathetic and glorifying content for anti- Pakistan groups. The following table explicates Indian news outlets which extensively posts on Balochistan mostly in support of militant groups.

³⁵ Qazi Hassan And Imtiaz Ali, “At least 5 dead, 20 injured in an explosion in Gulshan-i-Iqbal building in Karachi,” *Dawn*, October 21, 2020.

³⁶ “PTA asks Twitter to punish those behind anti-Pakistan propaganda,” *Dawn*, October 23, 2020.

Table 6.1: Indian news outlets that support Baloch insurgency

Websites	Content
<p>News Intervention (website and Twitter account) https://www.newsintervention.com/blf-bla-launch-massive-attacks-against-pak-army-across-occupied-balochistan/</p>	<p>Extensive material related to the activities of Baloch militant groups is posted on their website and twitter account</p>
<p>The Hindu (website) https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/explained-the-baloch-liberation-army/article28273960.ece</p>	<p>News reporting related to Baloch insurgent attacks on Pakistan security forces</p>
<p>The Hindustan Times www.hindustanimes.com</p>	<p>Content related to free Balochistan, Baloch groups demanding support from India is occasionally posted</p>
<p>OpIndia www.opindia.com https://www.opindia.com/2019/07/exclusive-interview-dr-allah-nazar-baloch-balochistan-liberation-front-blf-on-pakistan-usa-china-india/</p>	<p>Exclusive interview of Dr. Nazar Baloch, head of BLF, banned militant group in Pakistan. His exclusive interview and glorification by Indian media houses is observed to be a common practice</p>

Source: Table composed by the author

- **Indian support to Militant Networks**

The Modi-Doval³⁷ nexus in India explicitly supports the use of kinetic and non-kinetic tactics against Pakistan. In 2014, Ajit Doval while talking about a policy response to Pakistan stated that “Indeed,

³⁷ Ajit Kumar Doval is the national security advisor of Prime Minister Modi. He is known for supporting an offensive, aggressive strategy particularly towards Pakistan.

terrorism is a tactic to achieve ideological or political advantages.”³⁸ Consequently, Indian involvement in manipulating identity-based conflict within Pakistan has been frequently reported by political and military leadership. For instance, Indian support to militant networks in the Tribal belt and Balochistan has increased with time. Moreover, particularly since 2013, Indian efforts to disrupt the CPEC project have considerably increased as India from this strategy can inflict damage to her two main rivals, i.e. Pakistan and China. An operational CPEC corridor would eventually reduce Indian economic and strategic influence in the Asian belt. For this reason, India is reportedly supporting certain Baloch separatist militant factions to conduct terrorist activities in Gwadar, Turbat and Ormara. For instance, in 2019, Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) attacked a five-star hotel in Gwadar. Later, the National Security Advisor of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mooed Yusuf, stated that in addition to this attack, India has been involved in four high profile terrorist attacks in Pakistan.³⁹ In this context, Pakistan has often provided dossiers to the United Nations related to Indian involvement in the internal affairs of Pakistan.⁴⁰ Ambassador Munir Akram of Pakistan while presenting the dossier to the UN Secretary-General stated that, “We urge the Secretary-general to play his role in persuading India to halt its terror and subversive campaign against Pakistan.”⁴¹ The dossier also revealed Indian financial

³⁸ “The Doval Doctrine,” *Frontline: Indian National Magazine*, November 13, 2015.

³⁹ “India behind at least 4 high-profile terrorist attacks in Pakistan; 'We have evidence to the T',” *Geo News*, October 13, 2020, Available at: <https://www.geo.tv/latest/313067-india-behind-at-least-4-high-profile-terrorist-attacks-in-pakistan-we-have-evidence-to-the-t> (accessed on 28 February 2021).

⁴⁰ Pakistan has been repeatedly providing dossiers to United Nations regarding Indian involvement in supporting terrorist activities in Pakistan. In 2015, Pakistan provided three dossiers to the United Nations which contained evidence related to Indian involvement in Balochistan, Tribal belt and Karachi. Then in 2017, the then UN Ambassador Maleeha Lohdi presented a dossier to UN secretary general.

⁴¹ Anwar Iqbal, “Dossier on India’s terrorism shared with UN,” *Dawn*, November 26, 2020.

support to Baloch separatist groups.⁴² The recent statement of the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Shah Mehmood Quershi endorsed this issue. He stated that, “the evidence provided by Pakistan provides concrete proof of Indian financial and material sponsorship of multiple terrorist organizations, including U.N.-designated terrorist organizations Jamaatul Ahrar, Baloch Liberation Army and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan.”⁴³ Though Pakistan has stressed on the link between militant groups and India before as well, in 2020 Pakistan’s strategy to deal with this issue has become more vigorous, pronounced and open. In addition to that, apex political and military leadership has also highlighted India’s alleged involvement and its repercussions on the future relations of India and Pakistan.⁴⁴ However, despite these efforts, Pakistan has not been unable to get a prompt response by the United Nations which reflects that Pakistan needs to focus more on its diplomatic efforts in projecting Indian malicious agenda.

- **Espionage and the role of Intelligence agencies**

Espionage and the activities of Indian intelligence agency RAW is another technique through which India has tried to interfere and manipulate the internal affairs of Pakistan.⁴⁵ On March 3rd 2016, Pakistani law enforcement agencies caught a serving Indian navy officer Kulbhushan Yadav at the Pakistan-Iran border.⁴⁶ During the

⁴² Sikander Ahmed Shah, “Sponsoring Terrorism,” *Dawn*, November 18, 2020.

⁴³ Naveed Siddique, “‘Irrefutable evidence’: Dossier on India’s sponsorship of state terrorism in Pakistan presented,” *Dawn*, November 14, 2020.

For Indian interference in Balochistan, see, Maryam Azam, “Mapping Militant Manifestations in Balochistan,” *IPRI Journal*, Vol. XX, no. 2(2020), 82-83.

⁴⁴ For details, see, Madiha Afzal, “Terrorism in Pakistan has declined, but the underlying roots of extremism remain,” *Brooking Institution*, January 15, 2021, Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2021/01/15/terrorism-in-pakistan-has-declined-but-the-underlying-roots-of-extremism-remain/> (accessed on 28 February 2021).

⁴⁵ Muhammad Bilal, “India’s Hybrid War against Pakistan,” *Modern diplomacy*, April 15, 2020.

⁴⁶ He was infiltrating from the Saravan border area in Iran to Balochistan.

investigation, he confessed that he was working for RAW and his assignments included intelligence gathering and building links with Baloch insurgents as well.⁴⁷ This act of human intelligence (HUMINT) has been one of the major incidents revealed since the end of the Cold War. The case of Kulbhushan Yadav⁴⁸ explicates the intentions of RAW to infiltrate in Pakistan through covert activities.

- **Indian sphere of influence in Afghanistan**

Indian presence and sphere of influence in Afghanistan is explicitly a destabilizing factor for Pakistan. Cross border militant infiltration has been the main security concern for Pakistan. Therefore, competition between Pakistan and India to gain influence in Afghanistan has emerged as an important domain between both states. India's main strategic objective in Afghanistan is to support such a political setup in which Pakistan has minimum political influence. Besides this it supports anti-Pakistan militant groups such as Tehrik i Taliban Pakistan to get them a safe hideout in Afghanistan.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ For details, See, "Transcript of RAW agent Kulbhushan's confessional statement," *Dawn*, March 30, 2016.

⁴⁸ In 2017, India filed an application in International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Pakistan for denying consular access to Yadav and regarding the Pakistani court decision of sentence. Though ICJ in 2019 asked Pakistan to provide consular access to Yadav as per the Vienna Convention on consular relations, 1963 but on the other hand rejected India's plea to annul the Pakistani court decision. For details, see, "International Court of Justice, Reports of Judgments, Advisory Opinions and Orders," *Jadhav (Pakistan vs India)*, Judgment 17 July 2019, Available at: <https://www.icj-cij.org/en/case/168> (accessed 5 March 2021).

⁴⁹ Larry Hanauer and Peter Chalk, "India's and Pakistan's Strategies in Afghanistan: Implications for United States and the Region," *RAND Corporation*, 2012, Available at: https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional_papers/2012/RAND_O_P387.pdf (accessed 5 March 2021).

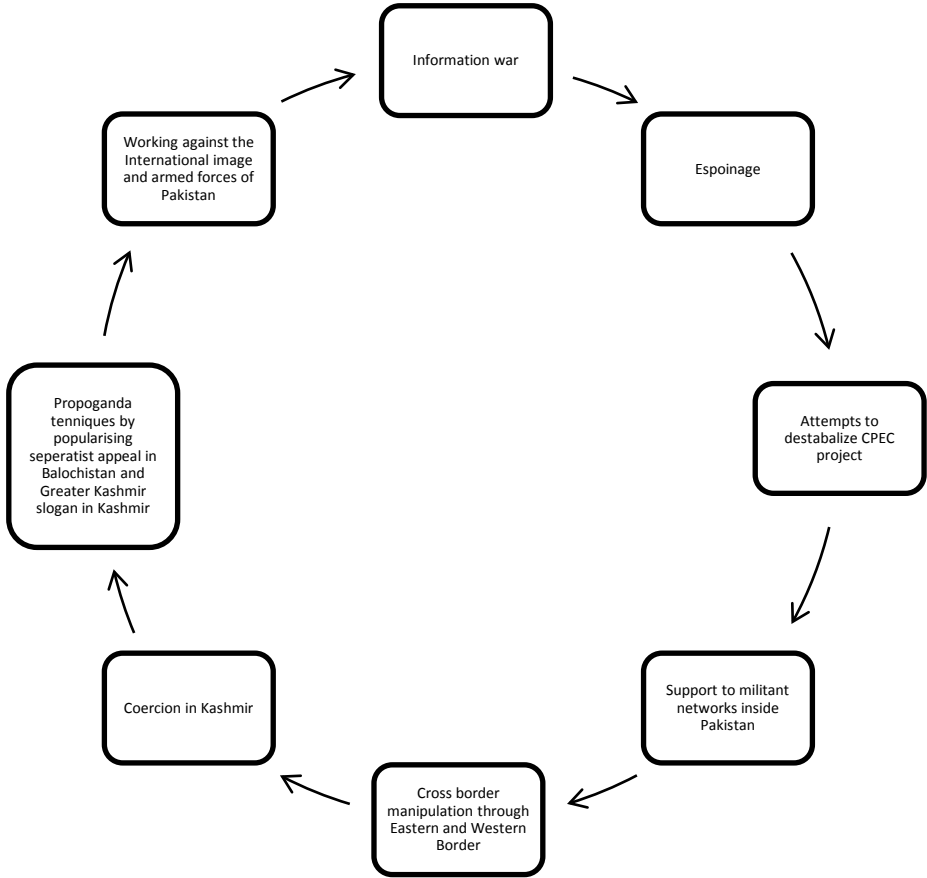


Fig 6.2 Indian Hybrid Warfare against Pakistan
Source: Composed by the author

DG ISPR, Major General Baber Iftikhar in a statement said that “Uncontrivable evidence reveals that Indian embassies and consulates operating along Pakistan’s borders have become the terror sponsoring hub against Pakistan.”⁵⁰ The liaison between Afghan intelligence KHAD

⁵⁰ Ayaz Gul, “Pakistan Claims 'Irrefutable Evidence' of Indian Links to Terrorism on Pakistani Soil,” *Voice of America*, November 14, 2020, Available at: <https://www.voanews.com/south-central-asia/pakistan-claims-irrefutable-evidence-indian-links-terrorism-pakistani-soil> (accessed 5 March 2021).

and RAW⁵¹ has been central in creating Afghanistan a safe hideout for militant groups.

Conclusion

The above discussion entails that Indian coercive acts and hybrid tactics in the recent past have been a major contributing factor in escalating tensions between Pakistan and India. Therefore, misperception, distrust along with Indian intimidating tactics can undermine bilateral and consequently the regional security balance. An extension from coercive diplomacy would limit the chance of reconciliation and dialogue between both states. Therefore, a basic deterrence needs to be maintained to avoid any major conflict escalation. In addition to that, as a counter move to Indian coercive and hybrid stratagem, Pakistan needs to adopt an overall defensive containment strategy to deter India through conventional and non-conventional means. In this respect, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Pakistan must strengthen its cyber security system and its associated legislation to contain Indian assaults,
- Sustainability in border security arrangements is central to Pakistan’s security,
- Pakistan should continue the Intelligence-based operations against militant networks and their handlers. These operations are integral to the containment strategy for India’s hybrid tactics,

⁵¹ The links between KHAD and RAW are not new. They have been operating jointly since the mid-1980s. For this reason, RAW has been able to build a strong foothold in Afghanistan which provides them easy geographic access to Pakistan as well. For details, see, Jayshree Bajoria, “RAW: India’s External Intelligence Agency,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, November 7, 2008, Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/raw-indias-external-intelligence-agency> (accessed 8 March 2021).

- Pakistan should maintain the policy of full-spectrum deterrence in accordance with CMD,
- An active diplomatic activity and engagement is required to respond to the war of words, false flag operations and fake news. Pakistan may use the policy of diplomacy by conferences and should call an annual International conference on Kashmir at the state level by inviting diplomats and heads of the state,
- The policy of cautious response on the line of control and working boundary against unprovoked Indian firing must continue as a balancing act.