

Prophets of Cyber War: Examining the Role of Pakistan’s Private Sector in a Strategic Cyber Context

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Abstract

Developed nations have historically leveraged the productivity and efficiency of the private sector to drive R&D and growth in several sectors. This, in turn, has been used as a driver of national economic, diplomatic, and military power. The same is true for the cyber domain, where the private sector has made significant contributions to cyber defence, development of offensive cyber capabilities, and support for cyber operations. Developing nations struggle to follow a similar path due to several challenges. A prerequisite to solving these challenges is an accurate understanding of the strategic problems before tackling them effectively to avoid wasting scarce resources, a viscous constraint for developing nations. The reality states must acknowledge that deterrence has failed to dissuade adversaries from taking aggressive actions in cyberspace. This is a direct result of two factors. One, cyberspace is interconnected, implying that the terrain is continuously updated and contact with the adversary is constant. Two, states have realized

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that they can manage strategic gains through cyberspace by conducting cyber offensive operations with effects below the threshold of armed conflict. This is significant as activity below the threshold carries a risk of escalation, which is non-existent. Hence, this is an attractive avenue for states pursuing a redistribution of power in the international system. Developing states such as Pakistan must incorporate the implications of this understanding before designing any national strategy or policy for cyberspace, including policies that can leverage the private sector to meet these Challenges.

³ Kelly Krebaum, "Capital from Carnage: An Analysis of the Military-Industrial Complex," *ESSAI*, Vol.13, no.1 (2015), 23. "Prophets of War" is an expression used to describe the affinity between the military and the private defense sector, which may sway public policy.