

# Pakistan's Susceptibility to 5<sup>th</sup> Generation Hybrid Warfare due to its Prevailing Fault Lines: A Comparative Analysis with Yugoslavia

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## Abstract

Warfare has witnessed a paradigm shift ever since the fall of USSR. The examples of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Sri Lanka are depictions of how this warfare destroys the opposing force. The world witnessed disintegration of former Yugoslavia in early 1990s due to internal warring factions. Literature argues that besides multitude of causes, a major role was played by socio-economic, religious and sectarian fault lines. Multiple scholars have argued that similar fault lines and problems are present in the contemporary Pakistan. These problems are prone to exploitation due to our inbuilt problems such as sectarianism, religious radicalization, and economic disparities. However, to a great extent, Pakistan has fared better than former Yugoslavia because of its ability to launch a multi-faceted offensive strategy, ranging from direct military action to counter-propaganda, and economic counteractions. To this end, this paper is a qualitative analysis of the exploitative component of 5<sup>th</sup> Generation Hybrid Warfare. It explicates how Pakistan has been successful in thwarting the threat and maintaining peace. Using existing literature and case studies, this paper also signposts the need to take certain measures which will be instrumental in preventing such issues from taking roots.

## Key Words

5<sup>th</sup> generation hybrid warfare, economic and religious fault lines, propaganda, Pakistan, Yugoslavia

## Introduction

On April 14, 2018, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, the Pakistani Army Chief first time confessed that Pakistan is facing a hybrid warfare. While addressing the audience at the passing-out parade at Pakistan Military Academy, General Bajwa was of the view that a hybrid war has been imposed on the country to weaken it internally, by dividing it along ethnic lines (Syed, 2018). Although the ceremony was being broadcast live throughout the country, the primary audience of his message, apparently, was the graduating batch. Therefore, when the Chief re-emphasized the need for Pakistan's future soldiers to be prepared for a high-tech, decentralized, and unconventional warfare, it created an opportunity for one to analyze the nature of this warfare in the country.

The aftermath of the 9/11 attacks and the resulting war of terror have significantly marred the security situation of Pakistan. While the country did not have

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any conventional war or a large-scale skirmish during this period, Pakistan has still incurred hundreds of military and thousands of civilian casualties (“Pakistan lost over 50,000 civilians in war on terror”, 2018). Moreover, this instability has also taken a toll on Pakistan, at the economic forefront (Mustafa, 2018). This paper, therefore, is an attempt to investigate nature, causes, consequences, and counterstrategy for Pakistan to tackle this faceless, multifaceted war that has embroiled the country for the past 17-years.

While considering the case of former Yugoslavia, an analytical comparison with Pakistan is made which helps one to identify the causational similarities among both countries, such as religious sentimentalism among various population groups, ethnic, and economic discrepancies. Furthermore, the case studies of Sri Lanka and Afghanistan act as preview and historical examples that enable one to fathom the sort of war Pakistan has been facing in recent times. It is a war in which internally dispersed and visually undistinguishable enemy use guerilla tactics to implode a country and weaken its security forces.

If one considers the current situation of Pakistan with consideration to the case of former Yugoslavia, the questions arises that, given the congruence between both countries in terms of their existing fault lines, how is Pakistan faring considerably better in this war (Agha, 2016). Additionally this paper also finds out how Pakistan continues to gain traction in this war where Yugoslavia failed and disintegrated eventually. This paper is also an attempt to identify the counteractive measures, adopted by the state of Pakistan to thwart the terror groups and areas where the country still needs to improve, in terms of fighting this 5<sup>th</sup> generation hybrid war.

This paper primarily focuses on the existing literature to extrapolate findings for the case of Pakistan. The time period for Pakistan’s security challenges spans post September 2001, and the examples from previous decades are intended to provide a historical context to the reader. The fundamental comparison is drawn between Yugoslavia and Pakistan due to the fact that both faced exploitation due to their ethnic, religious, and economic fault lines. The cases of Sri Lanka and Soviet-Afghan War are discussed to provide the reader some background about specific aspects of hybrid war that are relevant to Pakistan.

## **Hybrid Warfare**

The concept of nation states and their territorial sovereignty has been in order for centuries now (“Treaty of Westphalia”, 1648). One of the most significant outcomes of the World War II was the creation of the United Nations, with an aim of reducing conventional wars. Therefore, a new era of warfare began, which unlike those of its preceding eras was dominated by using tactics that could eventually implode a nation from within. The 5<sup>th</sup> generation war, which is also regarded as hybrid warfare, may be defined as a multi-faceted, invisible war, in which the adversary is unaware of the enemy, and perception management ensure deception, and manipulation (Puyvelde, 2015). The 5<sup>th</sup> generation warfare can be distinguished from any ordinary war as the purpose is not to acquire territorial mileage from a country, rather to denigrate its very ideological, cultural, and economic foundations, hence causing an implosion, possibly a civil war within, which would make it susceptible to hostile foreign intervention.

If the primary aim of a war in previous times was to capture territory and overthrow the government, the decentralized hybrid war seeks to annihilate a nation and all of the intangible dimensions that unite its people, through the creation of rogue elements that are generally religiously or ethnically motivated (Dhankhar,

2017). This change in objective, therefore, resulted in change of tactics to achieve said objectives. Guerilla warfare, economic terrorism, psychological operations, and propaganda, through cyber means, low-intensity conflict, and amalgamation of politics, media, and general citizenry are aspects of 5<sup>th</sup> generation war, which are as complex as they are novel, making it appropriate to first understand the historical framework.

### **Historical Context**

The idea of avoiding a direct conflict with the enemy and engaging in a series of low-intensity conflicts in order to capitalize on its strategic vulnerabilities, the ‘death by a thousand cuts’ approach, dates back to the ancient Rome (Hickman, 2017). This strategy was first observed during the Second Punic War (218-202 BC) when General Fabius Maximus, the Roman dictator entangled the qualitatively superior army of General Hannibal, in a series of small skirmishes and guerilla attacks, with an intent of exploiting the tactical drawbacks of his army, which eventually exhausted the morale and resources of Carthaginians, hence thwarting their advances. Since the inception of the Fabian Strategy (Peckard, 2017), multiple facets of 5<sup>th</sup> generation warfare have been used historically, in congruence with the geopolitical and strategic idiosyncrasies of the involved stakeholders.

Considering how the Fabian Protocol was first implemented, more than two millennia ago, one can establish a premise that for any entity to launch a successful hybrid, decentralized war on their enemy, there needs to be a prevailing set of vulnerabilities or fault lines. These fault lines must emerge within the enemy ranks that can be exploited to use an appropriate warfare scheme, which may range from terrorism to psychological operations for the creation of ideological discrepancies.

In the pre-Soviet era, world witnessed a drastic proclivity among the nations of the world to engage in such tactics. As the bipolarity ended and the United States emerged as the sole superpower of the world, the possibility of an all-out, large-scale war reduced significantly, if not diminished entirely. Factors such as globalization and the resulting economic and geostrategic interdependency further bolstered the argument that a conventional, face-to-face battle of armies had become a thing of past.

The caveat, however was that the prevailing conflict of national interests, along with paltry capacity of the United Nations to prevent conflicts, made war inevitable, even if had to be re-orchestrated according to the peculiarities of the unipolar world. Recent history has quite aptly helped one decipher that all the major facets of this hybrid war, such as propaganda, economic exhaustion, ethnic and sectarian violence are not sufficient individually, if one intends to defeat a nation, instead of a country. This distinction is pertinent to fathom as the existence of a nation is not dependent upon the army of state, rather the foundations of a nation are primarily based on its culture, ideology, and codes of conduct. However, one or more of the elements of this sort of warfare may and have been used in recent times to acquire important strategic objectives and at times cause an outright defeat to the enemy.

### **The Soviet-Afghan War**

During the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the USSR enjoyed an overwhelming military superiority as compared to the local factions resisting it.

Moreover, the Soviet air force at that time was one of the most modernized and well-equipped forces of the world. This decade long Russo-Afghan War and the subsequent withdrawal of the USSR, is regarded as one of the watershed moments that brought the downfall of the Soviet Union. One may argue that this war is a classical depiction of how United States, and Pakistan as its ally, launched a proxy war against USSR, and inflicted a decisive defeat to the much larger and resourceful Soviet forces.

This may be regarded as one aspect of hybrid warfare. The Pakistani establishment, in collaboration with the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), protected and trained the Afghan freedom fighters, who used the treacherous terrain to engage in a guerilla warfare against the Soviet forces. At an ideological and propaganda front, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was described by the West as a violation of human rights and a sign of Soviet imperialistic motives. A narrative was created at a national level in Pakistan, which was founded upon the concept of *Islamic* brotherhood and *Jihad* against the infidel foreign forces that sought to occupy a Muslim land. Riedel (2010) argues that the narratives that were painted in these cases seemed to be quite fruitful, as the USSR faced an ever-increasing international pressure against its actions, along with diplomatic isolation. The situation in Pakistan became more conducive to supporting the Afghan Taliban who were fighting a 'holy war' against the Soviet occupants. Both of these aspects of the Russo-Afghan War are examples of how different aspects of a hybrid war work in tandem with each other, on varying front, in order to achieve a unified strategic objective.

If the guerilla war fought by the *Mujahideen*, and other local factions thwarted the Soviet advance in Afghanistan, the information warfare and propaganda created by the enemies of USSR deprived it from leverage. Additionally, the Soviet withdrawal was aggravated by the economic strain faced by the Russians, resulting from maintaining, equipping, and maneuvering a large army. An example of the economic exploitative aspect of the Soviets in Afghanistan is the use of Stinger missiles, by the Mujahedeen against the Soviet aircrafts and helicopters. The stinger missile did not require much technical prowess from its user and was used to eliminate costly, state-of-the-art air assets that costed millions of US dollars per unit.

The lack of counter-propaganda measures and perception management by the Soviet Union proved to be costly exploitation by its enemies, which drained its resources, exposed its economic fault line and made its stay in Afghanistan untenable. Hence, the Soviet Union had to resort to a strategic withdrawal from the country in 1989 (Keller, 1989).

### **Propaganda and Information Warfare**

Perception management and propaganda play an incisive role in launching a successful hybrid war against a country, making that particular country prone to international intervention. The 2003 US invasion of Iraq is one such example. Although the ultimate motives of the United States for invading Iraq are still subject to debate, it is quite clear that the strategy that was used by US and its allies to justify a violation of the territorial integrity of Iraq was made possible only due to precise propaganda and media warfare tactics ("WMD in Iraq", 2004).

The US 'weapons of mass destruction narrative' of Iraq was the focal point of this propaganda and media warfare. While the Iraqi government failed to adequately launch a counter-narrative, the western powers were equally adept at

creating a substantial international pressure on Iraq. It can therefore be argued that the inability of the Iraqi establishment of that time to effectively counter the propaganda exposed the country's fault line to adequately manage the information and media aspect of the hybrid warfare.

### **Socio-Economic Imbalances: The Case of Sri Lanka**

Another example of the effective employment of 5<sup>th</sup> generation warfare tactics to engage an enemy and challenge its operational capacity, is the case of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) of Sri Lanka (Lalwani, 2017). One of the catalysts for this entire civil war can be considered as the colonial era legacy of Tamil-Sinhalese rift. Since the Tamils were in a minority, the colonial rulers used affirmative action, at the expense of the Sinhalese majority, to promote and accommodate Tamils in the public sectors. The animosity, therefore was created between both ethnicities, on the basis of apparent economic inequity. Later on, in the post-colonial Sri Lanka, the Sinhalese majority, that was now in power tried to overcompensate the perceived injustices that had happened to them a few decades ago by introducing many measures which rolled back the incentives enjoyed by the ethnic minority groups of the country.

The most pertinent case in this regard was that of the 'Sinhala Only Act' (Hoole, 2016), which catapulted the already-present ethnic friction to new heights. Consequently, the Tamil struggle soon took a militant turn and, thus began one of the longest civil wars in recent times lasting more than two decades (Bajoria, 2009). Commonly referred as LTTE, the organization first came to the public eye in 1976, under the leadership of popular, yet infamous Tamil leader Velupillai Prabhakaran. The purpose of this organization was to create an independent national state for the Tamil people, predominately in the northern and eastern parts of the country. This, therefore started a bloody civil war in Sri Lanka, which lasted effectively from 1983 until 2009, when Prabhakaran was finally killed in a military operation ("LTTE Chief Prabhakaran dead", 2009).

The prevailing ethnic divide between the Sinhalese people and the Tamils was exploited by the Tamil warring faction, in order to launch an offensive against the state of Sri Lanka and create a state within a state. Due to their technical and financial shortcomings, the Tamil rebels could not resort to launching a full-scale war against the army of the state, along with the possibility of facing international disdain in case they try to illegitimately overthrow the government (Hickman, 2017).

Another noteworthy aspect of the 5<sup>th</sup> generation hybrid war in case of LTTE was terrorism and suicide attacks. In fact, two world leaders Rajiv Gandhi, in 1991, and, allegedly, President Premadasa (in 1993), were killed by LTTE through their terrorist attacks (Gargan, 1993). In case of Sri Lanka, the existing fault line was the ethnic divide, which was fueled by the perceived economic injustices. This is one of the classical cases in which one understands the vulnerability of the exploited fault lines and their role in weakening the state.

In all of the scenarios, it is evident that the tactics used by various entities against the respective states were all elements of what we regard today as the 5<sup>th</sup> generation warfare. This war is personified by the blurring lines between politics, economics, ethnic and social divides, and geo-strategic objectives. Since focus of this paper is on Pakistan therefore, it would be prudent to consider a relevant example of Yugoslavia where both religious and ethnic fault lines existed.

## **The Buildup for Yugoslavian Disintegration**

The former Yugoslavia was one of the most ethnically and religiously diverse countries of Eastern Europe. Fundamentally, the country consisted of three major ethnic and religious entities: the 'Croats', who were predominately Catholic Christians, the 'Serbs' who followed the Eastern Orthodox Christianity, and the 'Bosnians' who were Sunni Muslims (Hammel, 2010). Although the Yugoslavian wars fought in the early 1990's are considered to have multi-layered, socio-political, and ethnic motives behind them, the religious diversity in the region was a result of the events that rooted back centuries. It was only after the World War I when the country entered an era, which resulted in certain measures that proved to be fatal for the former Yugoslavia. The history of this country is divided into three eras; first Yugoslavia, second Yugoslavia and the third Yugoslavia.

After the defeat of the Ottoman Empire and that of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the World War I, the Balkan region went through a series of reforms and reshaping. The Croat-Serb discord started in the immediate aftermath of World War I when the Paris Peace conference faced significant struggle to devise a new plan for the newly formed state (Đokić, 2010). The Croats were in favor of a federalist form of government, however the Serbs wanted to protect the rights of their population that was spread all across the country.

The ultimate decision was in favor of the Serbs, in which a unitary state was formed, with the power to run the affairs handed to the royal monarch and the legislative council. The king disbanded the existing setup in 1929 through a royal decree, and divided the country into nine administrative regions. This ensured that the new divisions made eliminate the threat of ethnic nationalism in the constituent region. In 1939, merely a decade later, the Serbs and Croats came to an agreement in which the Croats were given significant level of autonomy to govern the region in which they were in a majority. The entire setting was abrupt due to the inception of the World War II. One of the most important developments that occurred during the axis control of the region during the World War II was that they established an ineffective puppet state in Croatia and also legitimized the terrorist organization, known as 'Ustase' ("The Editors of Encyclopaedia", 1998). The group persecuted the Serbs, in the areas where the Croats were dominant, under the pretense of 'protecting the Croats'. Such events created a sense of hostility and animosity between both ethnic groups.

The socialistic rule marked the beginning of a new era for the former Yugoslavia. In 1946, Joseph Broz Tito, along with his communist 'comrades' gained control of the country. The kingdom was abolished and there was an introduction of the federation, comprising of six nominally equal constituencies: Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia. As much of the Eastern Europe at that time, there was a natural proclivity in Yugoslavia to join Soviet camp. Tito introduced many economic and legislative reforms, such as nationalization of the public assets, new union and labor laws, and tax and revenue laws. In the early 1950's the country experienced considerable economic prosperity, especially in the realm of the average and lower class workers of the country. However, the socialistic model proved to be unsustainable. The absence of free market and private ownership of property proved to diminish the efficiency of the average worker and slowed the growth of the country (Uvalić, 2018).

It is also pertinent to note that with the passage of time Tito had become authoritarian and had accumulated too much power. An instance of this was observed in 1974, when the presidency of the state was, in essence, gifted to Tito until his death (Browne, 1974). This centralization of power, coupled with the inability of the government to adequately utilize the resources of the state nationalized a few decades ago, only bolstered the economic fault line of Yugoslavia. It also proved to be one of the factors of the civil wars in 1990's that eventually disintegrated the country. Moreover, there was a historical disparity among the regions of Yugoslavia as the north had always enjoyed a significant economic focus, partly due to the fact that it was closer to the great European powers of that time. Nevertheless, this economic and developmental discrepancy was only bolstered during the times of royalty and socialism, which further deteriorated the situation. The unsustainable model of communism resulted in inflation, foreign debt, and a decline in the quality of life of the average citizen. This further enhanced the already-existing rift between the wealthy North and Northwest, and the South and Southeast. On June 25, 1991, the Slovenian and Croatian units declared their succession from Yugoslavia. Bosnia and Herzegovina followed soon after. In the meanwhile, Montenegro and Serbia created a separate state, which like other newly formed neighboring states, was drenched in a nationalistic spirit. The conflict therefore was inevitable.

### **The Terror Financing Across the Border**

Fearing the persecution of the Serbs in the Croatian region, the Serb government supported in the local Serb rebels, and provided them with resources and ammunition. The Croatian War of Independence can be viewed from the lens of the 5<sup>th</sup> generation hybrid warfare, as the fault lines in the case of Croatia were considerably similar to those of Pakistan. The Croatian army had a unitary force, along with the country's bureaucracy but the people at the helm of affairs were mostly Serbs, who were either direct or tacit supporters of the Serb nationalism narrative (Ramet, 2010). Also, the local Serbs who were in a definite minority were used by the Serbian state as a tool of information and propaganda war to justify their intervention the region, under the pretense of protection of Serb minority. Moreover, the local rebel groups that caused terror and violence against the newly formed state of Croatia could not have thrived as much, if they were not supported from the neighboring state. This exact model can be observed in the case of Pakistan where the local militias, such as Baloch National Army and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan have used the protective umbrella of Afghanistan (Marty, 2018).

In Slovenia, the Yugoslavian army faced a standstill as the local police and paramilitary had blocked all the major passages to enter the region. As a result, after a series of conflicts and low-intensity battles, both parties agreed to a three-month moratorium. The Bosnian war, which lasted from 1992 until 1995, was a mix of ethnic and religious disparity among the fighting forces. Also, this war was unique as it may also be regarded a 'proxy war' of Croatia and Serbia' fought in a different country, by different people, under the tacit or, at times, with open support of both of these countries. The war was primarily fought for territorial gains between the renegade army of Radovan Karadzic, with the help of Serbian government in Belgrade, (Inavukic, 2018) and the Bosnian and Herzegovinian forces. Initially the war started as a proxy, where the Bosnian-Serb Army, the Republika Srpska (RS),

was supported by Serbia and the other faction was supported by the Croatian military and government.

The tactics used by the RS can be classified as a decentralized hybrid war. For example, the use of propaganda was observed conducted by the Serbian army and the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), to violate the territorial integrity of Bosnia. Moreover, after consolidating the control of the area, there was a systematic ethnic cleansing of the people, which relates to the sectarian and ethnic exploitative aspect of this sort of warfare.

### **The Case of Pakistan and Lessons from Yugoslavia**

The historical and the socio-political peculiarities of the former Yugoslavia were pertinent to consider as the model of 5<sup>th</sup> generation warfare was quite similar to the one that Pakistan has been facing. Before understanding the current state of affairs in Pakistan, one has to consider the historical perspectives that have shaped the social, political, economic, and religious dimensions of the country. An economic disparity has been visible in different regions of the country. For example, Baluchistan, which is rich in terms of natural resources, is one of the most impoverished provinces of the country (Bari, 2017). However historical trends reveal that the region of Baluchistan in particular and that of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in general have not been regarded as hospitable and climatically appropriate for agriculture. Even in the medieval times, the conquerors usually bypassed this region in a search for a more fertile and livable land, which is arguably one of the reason why Punjab, Sindh, and their other eastern parts of the former United India were more populated and economically developed.

#### ***The Economic Fault-line of Pakistan***

In the context of Pakistan today, there are many aspects that have led to the creation of a vulnerable economic fault line in the country. For example, as per economic indicators, Baluchistan usually comes in the last place (Staff Report, 2018). This phenomenon can be related to the former Yugoslavian situation faced during the early and mid-twentieth century. The under developed South and Southeast were envious of the economically advantaged North and Northwest, a parallel of which can be observed in the case of Pakistan where similar tensions have existed. This historical perspective does not justify the lack of development and economic opportunities for the people of impoverished regions. It is a fault line that was created and enhanced due to negligence or downright bias, by the state, against the people of these areas (Mustafa, 2012).

#### ***Religious and Ethnic Extremism***

Pakistan, similar to erstwhile Yugoslavia, is also a nation of ethnic and sectarian diversity, which has been exploited by the enemies and terrorism. If Republika Srpska was an ethnic terror group in the case of Yugoslavia, then 'Lashkar-e-Jhangvi' and the militant wing of 'Sipah-e-Shaba Movement' are the ethnic terrorists from Pakistan (Mahsood, 2017). The question is that, these ethnic and sectarian differences have existed in the country since its inception, but *why* have they become more visible now? To answer this, one can argue that the ground was paved for such violence during the Russo-Afghan War, when a few factions were favored by the ruling class.

Once such players gained strength, it was only a matter of time that they would engage in identity politics to gain traction among the masses of Pakistan. Since



most of these factions did not have any national agenda and their existence in the political sphere was entirely dependent upon their identity politics, the rise in ethnic and sectarian violence, therefore was inevitable. Also, the timeframe and the larger geostrategic picture in the 1980s played an indirect role in the strengthening of such groups as well. With open Pak-Afghan border, small arms proliferation was rampant. As the Mujahedeen were armed inside Pakistan, there was an opportunity for the local groups in Pakistan to create and arm their own militias too.

### ***Information Warfare and Counterpropaganda***

One aspect of this hybrid war that Pakistan is facing, which differentiates it from the former Yugoslavia, is the more aggressive nature media and informational component. Moreover, there has been an effort to create an ideological fault line in the country, which can be attributed to the role that media and the propaganda played in shaping the opinions of the people. The ideological divisiveness was first created by a systematic attack on the spiritual dimensions of Pakistan. It was observed only in the post 9/11 era that the majority of Pakistani media and opinion-makers were found, rather surprisingly, attacking the very ideals upon which this country was created. The narratives, such as *Islam holding back Pakistan's path to modernity*, along with a foreign cultural invasion, especially in terms of the family content, was aired, which often times was in a direct conflict with the cultural and religious norms of our own country (Shaukat, 2015; Ispahani, 2017).

It can be argued that the rise of religious extremism in Pakistan, after the American invasion of Afghanistan, along with the media and cultural warfare are not coincidences, rather a deliberate and precise plan to create an 'ideological fault line' in Pakistan, and to create a situation in which both ideological extremes are in a state of conflict with each other (Hussain, 2011). If a nation is doubtful about the very foundations of its identity, it becomes relatively easy to divide it along ethnic, economic, and religious lines.

### ***The Complementation of Territorial Gains with Perception Management to Ensure Sustainability***

Pakistan today is facing hybrid war on multiple fronts. It may be assumed that the state has now realized that the nature of this faceless war demands a multi-faceted counteraction. The military action in the tribal areas of Pakistan is just one component of defeating the enemy, as has been the case with previous military operations. This argument can be validated by the recent shift in the popular narrative in Pakistan regarding these violent non-state actors, more importantly, the ideology that they represent. Additionally, one may argue that despite the territorial recovery made by the Pakistan Army in the Northwest and Baluchistan regions, the apparent sustainability of these gains has become possible due the counter-propaganda and information campaign launched against such radical ideologues. The same Pakistani Taliban that were branded as the flag-bearer of Islam are now being regarded as the outcasts, the 'Khawarij' ("Fatwa against Taliban", 2012). The situation in Baluchistan and Karachi is not different. The Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA) and other factions have lost local support in the region, which is an unprecedented occurring in the region's contemporary history. In Punjab, the religious extremist groups either have been banned from political activity or have failed to accumulate any significant vote bank, in the general elections of 2018.

Most of the gains made by the state of Pakistan, in the retaliation of the hybrid war relate to the media and information aspect of it. It can be argued that the current state of relative calm in the country can also be attributed to the development of a counter narrative to 5<sup>th</sup> generation hybrid warfare. It is only because of the political and national unity that the military and other law enforcement agencies have been able to uproot the hostile elements that were previously deeply entrenched in our society.

### **Economic Vulnerabilities of Pakistan**

Regardless of all the military, ideological, and political gains in Pakistan, the economic realm is where the country needs to engage in developing a practical counterstrategy, which would set it free from the shackles of foreign debt. Considering the current economic situation, a state that can be bankrupt in a few weeks without any foreign loan, Pakistan has hit the economic rock bottom (Kay, 2018; Gopinath, 2018).

The silver lining, therefore is that Pakistan needs to focus primarily on its economic vulnerabilities alongside its military countermeasures to hybrid warfare. The measures mentioned in the National Action Plan of 2014, which pertain directly to the economy and terror financing can be amalgamated with creating another national consensus among the people of Pakistan, to start a unified national campaign against corruption and ensure ruthless justice on every front, as was the case in starting operation 'Zarb-e-Azb' (Butt, 2016).

### **Conclusion**

For actions such as the military operations to be effective and sustainable, there needs to be an unquestionable national consensus first, as any room for disagreement can result in creation of new fault lines. Any nation that is engaged in such a decentralized and multi-pronged war, needs an effective combined counterstrategy against all facets of such warfare. It is a unique form of war because the conventional military wisdom may not necessarily apply. Mere territorial acquisitions and elimination of terrorists may not help a country win. In a battle of ideologies, the perceived victim tends to gain sympathy among the masses. The understanding of perception, information, and common national narratives play a significant role in determining a country's eventual fate in a hybrid war. It is one of the most pertinent lessons from the history and this study, especially if one considers that the main difference between Pakistan and Yugoslavia is that of effective perception management.

The perception management tactics used by the establishment of Pakistan has to uproot the ideological bases of the terror groups. Another underlying lesson from the case of Yugoslavia and contemporary Pakistan is that the military or territorial gains may not be sustainable if the national narrative is absent or does not resonate with the masses. The *fatwas* against the terrorists and the effective use of NAP to build counter national narrative are the actions with lasting effects. Therefore, it can be argued that the perceived successes of recent Pakistan Army's operations are more effective as compared to the ones launched previously, precisely due to effective use of media and information sources to gain public support (Nabi, 2016).

The scenarios of Yugoslavia and Sri Lanka depict that the people of a nation become more prone to engage in violence and, thus allow foreign actors to exploit their discontent and existing fault lines. The long-term economic prosperity of

Pakistan depends upon how aspects, such as internal security, law and order situation, ease of doing business, fiscal transparency, and investment opportunities pan out in the future. Moreover, accountability and corruption prevention will primarily result in diminishing prevailing monetary line losses. It is evident that the only way for Pakistan to tighten up loose ends is to focus on neutralizing its economic vulnerabilities. In essence, the very factors that were used to bring Pakistan on the brink of disintegration can be used to help it escape this quagmire.

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