**Living under Hybrid War**

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The academic literature on the significance of hybrid warfare continues to catch the attention of researchers and practitioners alike across the globe. Pakistan is no exception, perhaps because it is a victim and has faced various elements of hybrid warfare for more than two decades now. From economic coercion at the hands of International Financial Institutions (IFIs) to the war of narratives by the arch-rival: India, as revealed by the European watchdog DisInfoLab through the Indian Chronicles, to the physical penetration of the agents to create sabotage and terrorism in Balochistan and Karachi; Pakistan has faced it all.

Moreover, the Chinese sage, Sun Tzu also gets quoted extensively in the context of the hybrid mannerism of warfare in contemporary wars. Some 2500 years ago, he had prophesied that the supreme acme of skill is to win the war without fighting. Breaking the will of the people of the target state would be the real victory instead of destroying them. Sun Tzu insisted that capturing the enemy forces intact so that those could be used later on.

The latest literature on the subject titled Living Under Hybrid War is co-edited by Pakistan’s renowned economist Dr Ashfaque Hasan Khan and a rising star among young academics, Dr Farah Naz.

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This article is aimed at highlighting only two aspects of the book which nearly cover all the elements of hybrid warfare. These two elements include economic coercion by the IFIs and the significance of developing a national narrative in today’s media-savvy environment.

Dr Khan, in his chapter Economic Coercion and Sabotage: A New Instrument of Hybrid War, dilated upon the impact of economic stress on Pakistan due to the hybrid war imposed by India. Dr Khan quoted India’s External Affairs Minister Jai Shankar (Hindustan Times), who admitted that the “BJP Government led by Narendra Modi ensured that Pakistan remained on the Grey List of the FATF,……, due to us, Pakistan is under the lens of FATF, and it was kept in the Grey List. We have been successful in Pressurizing Pakistan and the fact Pakistan’s behaviour has changed is because of the pressure put by India.”

Dr Khan outlined at least four aspects that were deployed against Pakistan to hurt its economy under the ambit of hybrid warfare: International Monetary Fund (IMF), FATF, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and Karachi. He was of the view that “the best strategy of the enemy is to erode the economic strength of the targeted country.” Dr Khan asserted that Karachi, the economic hub and lifeline was systematically destroyed to choke Pakistan’s economy and make it dependent on international institutions.

Dr Khan sounded extremely worried about the present economic situation of the country and attributed the same to a concerted effort by the enemy under the umbrella of hybrid warfare.

Dr Farah Naz deliberated upon her chapter in the book Narratives Warfare. She was of the view that in the evolved environment where social media plays a dominant role in shaping opinion, the most important thing is to construct a narrative that is appealing and attractive enough to bring change in people’s thinking. Farah asserted the significance of a workable narrative that is proactive in its essence and based on sound footing aimed at unsettling the opponent’s objectives. Farah asserted that “understanding narrative warfare is a necessary precondition for both comprehensive state policy and an informed public debate on issues, particularly security.”

In my opinion, Dr Khan’s assertions are based on sound analysis and need to be discussed as part of national debate to formulate a sound synergetic response by our academia, practitioners, and institutions. Pakistan has immensely suffered at the hands of IFIs by accepting unacceptable demands of raising the interest rates, devaluation of the currency, removal of subsidies, etc. At the moment, Pakistan is not only facing the risks of a possible default but also going through the highest inflation within the region as compared to Afghanistan, India and Bangladesh.

Likewise, it appears as if Pakistan has not been able to convince the donor agencies and the friendly countries to assist them at this difficult time, perhaps due to a weak narrative about its efforts towards peace and progress in Afghanistan. This is certainly very alarming because no country has suffered more than Pakistan in its efforts to promote peace and stability in Afghanistan.

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