**Tentacles of 5G warfare**

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For the past many years, the idea of fifth-generation narrative warfare has been ridiculed in Pakistan. The few—who argue that non-military narrative instruments are being used by ‘enemies of Pakistan’ to undermine our domestic stability and international standing—have been called mascots of the ‘deep State’. They have been derided as enemies of free speech; as warmongers, who oppose free exchange of ideas. The ostensible liberal left in Pakistan—who enjoys a peculiar monopoly over our electronic and social media platforms—has long denied the existing of fifth-generation narrative warfare in Pakistan, and insisted that their critique of the State is bona fide and devoid of any agenda.

Of course, a large part of the State’s critique, by domestic individuals is, in fact bona fide, and not part of a larger international scheme to undermine the State of Pakistan. However, in equal measure, it cannot be denied that domestic critique of the State, knowingly or unknowingly, often reinforces an international (mala fide) attempt, on part of the enemies of Pakistan, to damage our national outlook.

[Defeat evident on Maryam Nawaz's face: Dr Firdous](https://nation.com.pk/15-Dec-2020/defeat-evident-on-maryam-nawaz-s-face-dr-firdous)

To this end, earlier this week, as an indisputable corpus of fifth-generation narrative warfare against Pakistan was unmasked by the EU Disinfo Lab, “an independent NGO focused on researching and tackling sophisticated disinformation campaigns targeting the EU, its member states, core institutions, and core values”. Titled “Indian Chronicles”, the said investigation details the saga of a fifteen yearlong (and continuing) operation by the Indian deep State, which involves more than 10 UN Human Rights Council accredited NGOs, mostly resurrected from obscurity, and includes expert opinion as well as participation of one Professor Louis B. Sohn., a prominent human rights activist who has been dead for almost 15 years.

This operation, which involves the resources of Indian intelligence agency, RAW, as well as individuals at the highest level of the Indian government, includes utilization of 750+ fake media outlets, in 119 countries, with 500+ fake domain names, registered with the sole purpose of creating and spreading ‘news items’ that damaged the international credibility and standing of Pakistan.

[President Alvi ratifies Anti-Rape Ordinance 2020](https://nation.com.pk/15-Dec-2020/president-alvi-ratifies-anti-rape-ordinance-2020)

Per the released report, this initiative was led by the Srivastava Group, and was amplified by one of India’s leading mainstream media agency—The Asian News International (ANI). In the words of the EU Disinfo Lab team itself, “ironically, this level of fakery may be the very reason why the operation could last for so long: how could anyone imagine that this is even possible?”.

The specific mission of this enterprise, as recounted by EU Disinfo Lab, was to “discredit nations in conflict with India”, in particular Pakistan and China. To this end, it aimed to: i) “reinforce pro-Indian and anti-Pakistan (and anti- Chinese) feelings”; and ii) “consolidate the power and improve the perception of India, to damage the reputation of other countries and ultimately benefit from more support from institutions such as the EU and the UN”.

For this purpose, this Indian intelligence agencies funded operation used “Members of the European Parliament to create a mirage of institutional support from European institutions […] in favour of Indian interest and against Pakistan (and China).” Also, members of this Indian operation impersonated “extinguished UN-accredited NGOs”, and through “creation of fake media in Brussels, Geneva and across the world”, they packaged and disseminated, “via ANI and obscure local media networks”, in 97 countries, “online negative content about countries in conflict with India, in particular Pakistan”.

[PIA to dismiss 50pc of staff under its restructure plan](https://nation.com.pk/15-Dec-2020/pia-to-dismiss-50pc-of-staff-under-its-restructure-plan)

The detailed report of Indian Chronicles reveals that, at several occasions, Pakistan-damaging (fake) news items, once published by mainstream new agencies such as ANI, were picked up and circulated by social media handles of several prominent Pakistani journalists and politicians, who had their own axe to grind with the State and establishment of Pakistan. As such, these individuals, owing to their petty partisanry, became convenient instruments for the Indian covert agencies to further disseminate and spread their anti-Pakistan message amidst the people and polity of Pakistan.

The revelations made by EU Disinfo Lab, through the Indian Chronicles, has decimated the argument that questioned the presence of fifth-generation narrative warfare in this region. It has put to rest, once and for all, the proposition that foreign agendas play upon the divisions within our country, in order to further their mala fide objectives of undermining our State. It also puts to rest the debate about whether or not enemy agencies are using non-conventional and ‘softer’ instruments, at their disposal, to wage war against the people and interests of Pakistan. And the fact that individuals in Pakistan frequently fall in their trap, perhaps unknowingly, under the garb of human rights and other western liberal ideologies.

[Putin congratulates Biden on election victory](https://nation.com.pk/15-Dec-2020/putin-congratulates-biden-on-election-victory)

The truth is that we live in a world that is divided across entrenched ideological battle-lines of agendas and narratives (i.e. fifth-generation warfare). We live in the information age, where physical borders (protected by tanks and soldiers) are sometimes less consequential than the intangible frontiers of ideas, economy and narrative. A world where the lines between war and politics, between combatants and civilians, between governance and subterfuge, have become blurred. A place where bombs and bullets are no longer the currency of war. Instead, modern weapons have morphed into trade sanctions, international isolation, economic hitmen, and media narrative.

They say that America won the Cold War without firing a single bullet. That is true. But were bullets the only weapons that America used in the Cold War? Did Soviet Union really collapse under its own weight, without any help or urging from US-centric forces? Of course not. The US did everything in its power—from economic embargoes to inciting ‘revolutionaries’ in Ukraine—for bringing down the Soviet Union.

[Security personnel defuse bomb near Bilawal House in Karachi](https://nation.com.pk/15-Dec-2020/security-personnel-defuse-bomb-near-bilawal-house-in-karachi)

So this begs an important question: are countries no longer engaged in the sort of ‘soft war’ that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union? Is all the talk about ‘fifth-generation warfare’ simply a slogan drummed up by the military-types, to scare us into being suspicious of civilian governments? Or, is it possible that (some) people in Pakistan, and across the world, are actually engaged in this new form of warfare?

Taking the PML(N) narrative machine and its sympathisers, as an example: has it not caused damage to Pakistan’s constitutional institutions—all in the name of saving the King, his daughter, and his personal wealth? Of course it has. Did Maryam Nawaz & Co. wish to be part of this fifth-generation war against Pakistan? Probably not. But has their blinding pursuit of personal ambition and wealth, made them susceptible to being a pawn at the hands of forces that are waging this war? Absolutely. Was Nawaz Sharif’s silence to ever mention Kalboshan (for whatever self-contrived reasons) anything other than silent support of the international narrative against Pakistan? Even if you ignore the Dawn Leaks, can Nawaz’s comments about the Mumbai attacks be justified as anything other than fifth-generation warfare—even as his own Prime Minister (Abbasi), and Interior Minister contradicted him on the issue? Did it not undermine Pakistan’s stance on the issue, strengthen the enemy, and lend credence to the international narrative about Pakistan being a rogue State?

[Turkey strongly rejects US sanctions decision](https://nation.com.pk/15-Dec-2020/turkey-strongly-rejects-us-sanctions-decision)

We must accept the reality for what it is. If for no other reason than simply to be able to grapple with it, and devise a way forward.

Fifth-generation warfare, especially in terms of narrative creation, is the new and elusive challenge for Pakistan. It cannot simply be confronted with efforts of the government alone. It must be met with individual and collective efforts of each Pakistani, in every sphere of life.

Let (this) good fight begin.