**Beware of the invisible war**

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Noam Chomsky said, “Propaganda is to a democracy what the bludgeon is to a totalitarian state.” This article is a sequel to my previous pieces titled “Disinformation Warfare Counter Strategy Needed for Pakistan” and “What makes a country collapse?” This article is prompted by the ongoing blitz unleashed against the political and military leadership and in particular targeting the Armed Forces of Pakistan to undermine national morale and create uncertainty and despondency in the country. All of this is being done with one obvious purpose i.e. to get relief for the under-the-hammer corrupt political elite, who are wilfully and quite wittingly blurting out propaganda themes, which had been launched by some hostile countries since long, unsuccessfully though. The false narratives of the enemies of Pakistan currently spoken by former allegedly corrupt rulers are being given widespread circulation on the electronic and social media by India and other antagonist forces, spoiling the image of Pakistan; besides undermining national security interests both home and abroad. It is a very sorry state indeed that cannot be allowed to continue by taking all political, legal and counter-psychological warfare measures on priority. It is also imperative that the people of Pakistan are made aware about the invisible war called Psychological Warfare (PSYWAR), or the basic aspects of modern psychological operations (PSYOPs), which have also been known by many other names or terms, including ‘political warfare’, ‘Hearts and Minds’, and ‘propaganda’. The term is used “to denote any action which is practiced mainly by psychological methods with the aim of evoking a planned psychological reaction in other people”. Such awareness is important so that every Pakistani is obligated to fight out this menace individually as well as becoming collectively in sync with the government of Pakistan’s efforts.

[Global coronavirus cases top 50 million](https://nation.com.pk/09-Nov-2020/global-coronavirus-cases-top-50-million)

Psychological warfare is the planned use of propaganda, threats, and other non-combat techniques during wars, or periods of geopolitical unrest. Various techniques are used, and are aimed at influencing a target audience’s value system, belief system, emotions, motives, reasoning or behaviour. It is used to induce confessions or reinforce attitudes and behaviours favourable to the originator’s objectives, and is sometimes combined with black operations or false-flag tactics. It is also used to destroy the morale of enemies through tactics that aim to depress troops’ psychological states. The target audiences can be governments, politicians, national institutions, organisations, groups, and individuals; and is not just limited to soldiers. Civilians of foreign territories can also be targeted by technology and media so as to cause an effect in the government of their country. Psychological warfare mainly played through propaganda is a common peace policy practiced between nations as a form of indirect aggression. This type of propaganda drains the public opinion of an opposing regime by stripping away its power on public opinion. This form of aggression is hard to defend against because no international court of justice is capable of protecting against psychological aggression since it cannot be legally adjudicated.

[Can’t shake hands with those who bring country into trouble: Ali Muhammad](https://nation.com.pk/08-Nov-2020/can-t-shake-hands-with-those-who-bring-the-country-into-trouble-ali-muhammad)

There is evidence of psychological warfare throughout written history. In modern times, psychological warfare efforts have been used extensively. Mass communication allows for direct communication with an enemy populace, and therefore has been used in many efforts. In recent times, the internet allows for campaigns of disinformation and misinformation performed by agents anywhere in the world. The start of modern psychological operations in war is generally dated to World War I. By that point, Western societies were increasingly educated and urbanised, and mass media was available in the form of large circulation newspapers and posters. It was also possible to transmit propaganda to the enemy via the use of airborne leaflets or through explosive delivery systems like modified artillery or mortar rounds. During World War-II, Adolf Hitler became committed to the use of mass propaganda to influence the minds of the German population in the decades to come. By calling his movement the Third Reich, he was able to convince many civilians that his cause was not just a fad, but the way of their future. Joseph Goebbels was appointed as Propaganda Minister when Hitler came to power in 1933, and he portrayed Hitler as a messianic figure for the redemption of Germany.

[PM Imran Khan presents real concept of state of Madinah: Speaker NA](https://nation.com.pk/08-Nov-2020/pm-imran-khan-presents-real-concept-of-state-of-madinah-speaker-na)

Hitler also coupled this with the resonating projections of his orations for effect. The British also set up the Political Warfare Executive to produce and distribute propaganda. Through the use of powerful transmitters, broadcasts could be made across Europe. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill made use of radio broadcasts for propaganda against the Germans. The United States ran an extensive programme of psychological warfare during the Vietnam War. The CIA made extensive use of Contra soldiers to destabilise the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. The CIA used psychological warfare techniques against the Panamanians by delivering unlicensed TV broadcasts. The United States government has used propaganda broadcasts against the Cuban government through TV Marti, based in Miami, Florida. In the Iraq War, the United States used the shock and awe campaign to psychologically maim and break the will of the Iraqi Army to fight. In cyberspace, social media has enabled the use of disinformation on a wide scale. Analysts have found evidence of doctored or misleading photographs spread by social media in the Syrian Civil War and 2014 Russian military intervention in Ukraine, possibly with state involvement. Military and governments have engaged in psychological operations (PSYOPS) and disinformation warfare on social networking platforms to regulate foreign propaganda, which includes countries like the US, Russia, China and India.

[Banker arrested in Islamabad after being filmed groping woman](https://nation.com.pk/08-Nov-2020/banker-arrested-in-islamabad-after-being-filmed-groping-woman)

George Orwell said, “But if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought.” Pakistan’s arch foe India, after getting some covert traction in former East Pakistan through her intelligence bureau in early 60s, subsequently created RAW in September 1968 and launched the most successful propaganda based PSYOP/covert war that resulted in creation of Bangladesh in 1971 by dismemberment of United Pakistan. Looking at the ongoing greed and malice ridden political slander against Armed Forces of Pakistan by the descendants of almost the same plus similar self-interested political dynasty, one is reminded of the politico-security environment of former East Pakistan. What is however reassuring is that today’s Pakistan is far stronger, geographically not isolated as was former East Pakistan, has the most battle-hardened armed forces duly backed up by potent nuclear deterrence, and is blessed with more aware and better educated masses compared with the sad past.

[Perception inversion: India’s paranoia with Pakistan Navy’s expanding footprint](https://nation.com.pk/08-Nov-2020/perception-inversion-india-s-paranoia-with-pakistan-navy-s-expanding-footprint)

Besides, due to tectonic shifts in geo-strategic environment, strategic partners like China and Turkey are standing shoulder to shoulder with Pakistan with many other friendly countries ready to support newly emerging political, economic and security alliances. Therefore, any numbers of neo-Mujib-ur-Rehman type politicians and new faces of former Mukti-Bahni type terrorist outfits like BLA, BRA, PTM, TTP, and other so called sub-nationalist militant wings playing in the hand of R&AW have bleak future, despite their occasional pinpricks here and there. Nevertheless, India in collusion with some other intimidating countries continues to target Pakistan unabated with most modern methods of covert war called 5th generation warfare through use of White, Grey and Black propaganda.

To nip the evil in the bud, the Government of Pakistan needs to do much more by right away implementing a comprehensive National Counter PSYWAR Strategy rather than being content by contesting verbal brawls on electronic and social media alone. The government as well as people of Pakistan ought to be conscious that due to hostile cant, our popular culture is a place where pity is called compassion, flattery is called love, propaganda is called knowledge, tension is called peace, gossip is called news, and auto-tune is called singing. The tirade against Armed Forces or superior judiciary and the snakes and scorpions of terrorism and other schisms raising their ugly heads anywhere must be crushed with iron hands. In this regard, over thinking or inaction is prone to be extremely devastating and consequential as we most unfortunately experienced in 1971. “The most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history.”