



Unseen Battles: The Strategic Role of Psychological Operations and Information Warfare in Pakistan's National Security Framework

Majid Mohsin¹, Muhammad Imran², Jannat Rashid³, Urooj Iqbal⁴ and Dr. Syedah Sadia Kazmi⁵

Abstract

This study critically explores the role of Psychological Operations (PsyOps) in strengthening Pakistan's national security framework irrespective of its complex socio-cultural and informational landscape. As Pakistan undergoes with challenges such as terrorism, radicalization, misinformation, and political instability, the absence of a formalized PsyOps strategy has rendered the nation vulnerable to external and internal threats. The study identifies significant gaps in the country's information management, including the lack of inter-agency coordination and the absence of a centralized body to oversee PsyOps initiatives. These deficiencies exacerbate the impact of hostile information campaigns and undermine public trust in state institutions. The research employs qualitative methodologies, including semi-structured interviews with security experts, military personnel, and policymakers, alongside document analysis and case studies. This triangulated approach reveals critical vulnerabilities in Pakistan's information environment and underscores the urgent need for a strategic PsyOps doctrine. Key findings highlight the potential of PsyOps in countering misinformation, promoting national cohesion, and mitigating the psychological dimensions of contemporary warfare. The study concludes that a well-structured PsyOps framework, integrated into Pakistan's national security policy, is essential to addressing emerging threats. Recommendations include the creation of a centralized coordinating body, enhanced inter-agency collaboration, and the adoption of advanced digital communication strategies to combat misinformation and extremist narratives. By leveraging strategic communication, Pakistan can strengthen its resilience against psychological manipulation and ensure a unified national narrative. This research provides actionable insights and practical recommendations to policymakers and security practitioners, advocating for the incorporation of PsyOps into a comprehensive national security strategy to safeguard Pakistan's stability and sovereignty in an increasingly complex global environment.

Keywords: *Psychological Operations, National Security, Strategic Communication, Information Warfare.*

¹Director Security National Transmission and Dispatch Company and Department of Political Science & International Relations, University of Management & Technology, Lahore.

^{2,3,4,5}Department of Political Science & International Relations, University of Management & Technology, Lahore.

Introduction:

In the era of modernistic warfare, the power is no longer managed in terms of states' armies or treasury but in terms of shaping perceptions and dominating their narratives. The technique of deceive and influence people's attitude, mostly generally with the name Psychological Operation (PsyOps), has come into being as one of the essential components of domestic and foreign policy. It is noteworthy that the range of perception management functions started and remained exclusively in modern and high-tech warfare. To quote Niccolò Machiavelli: "It is necessary to achieve domination; it is necessary to know how to seduce". This adage seems fitting in today's war, where the fight for minds is usually as important as the fight for land. Nicholas Machiavelli's insight into political power and dominance was amplified by Sun Tzu who cardinal to control as deceit and intelligence dominance in conflict. Sun Tzu said, "All warfare is based on deception" This justifies the strategic positioning of information management as a critical component of a warfare strategy. Although these two intellects founded the fundamentals of early psychological theories, ultramodern warfare has devolved fully into a multi-dimensional theatre where narrative control can often causatively upset conflict.

Psychological operations characterize the modern version of implementing this basic principle. Today, the governments and most of the military associations around the globe realize that influencing perceptions can be as effective as the power in achieving goals. However, in the last few decades, the countries such as the USA, Russia and China have developed complex more mature PsyOps modalities and have institutionalized it as part of their strategic security systems. These operations include the use of propaganda, information bandwagon, and psychological maneuverers in changing the attitudes and behaviors of foreign and domestic publics. The objective is straightforward yet profound: to influence how individuals, groups, or even nations interpret a stance, often guiding them to follow a path that benefits the initiating nation.

Thanks to social networking and constant news coverage, these campaigns have been made more resonant and more efficient, turning the issue of information management into one of the security priorities in the modern state. Pakistan still remains at a decisive position in this regard. Despite having numerous threats on home soil in the terms of insurgency, terrorism, and foreign influence carrying propaganda whispers, Pakistan is still ill-equipped with structured PsyOps

framework organization or doctrine. This erosion is equally huge when viewed from the prism of national security, particularly so as more and more adversaries seek to exploit the Pakistani weakness in the information domain. The lack of a coordinated and systematic approach to confronting misperceptions and framing reduces Pakistan's Defence against perceived threats being domestic brewed as well as foreign influenced.

In the past Pakistan has been confronted with several protests that have put the emphasis on the need to have a mean psychological warfare strategy. The country has been on the receiving end in insurgent propaganda as well as efforts made to conduct foreign influence operations targeting internal insecurity. Religious fundamentalisms, ethnic strife, and political instability have been employed negative force factors by unfriendly actors to sowing division. Lately the adversaries and non-state actors have been actively using information weapons to spread discontent, spread misinformation, and undermine the populace trust in the Pakistani state institutions. The lack of an actual structured PsyOps architecture leads Pakistan to respond in a reactive manner. What it does not have is the strategic outlook necessary to counter these threats effectively. The lack of a comprehensive PsyOps structure means several shortcomings in Pakistan coalplementation of a coherent nationality narrative or Defence against opposing information operations. The military has embraced limited psychological operations, which; however, tend to be either restricted or haphazard and could benefit the level of organization necessary to actually be effective. Alas, this escalation of influence of social media and digital communication stages added another layer of difficulty to Pakistan's capacity to manage the storytelling. Fake news, fake information and fake propaganda circulate and these penetrate the society and do not maintain people's trust to state institutions and they worsen existing social gaps.

This study seeks to understand how absence of a well-structured PsyOps organization in Pakistan is a problem towards its national security in this perspective. Its objective is to assess the threats within current information warfare and offer further approaches for a reasonable and effective PsyOps that could work with internal and external threats. The study also posits that in the absence of such a doctrine Pakistan continues to be vulnerable to being shaped and manipulated by unfriendly powers with potentially disastrous impacts on its stability, security and the sovereignty. This research intends to cover this area and make a small addition to the overall talking

about national security strategies. PsyOps are the sophisticated psychological means of preparing people and developing particular trends, nationally and globally. However, it should be pointed out that the lately disclosed American, Russian, and Chinese theories and practices of PsyOps have formalized PsyOps as an integral part of the national security frameworks of these countries to deploy these strategies to combat disinformation, create societal messages, and influence opponents' mental environment. But it is regrettable that Pakistan has no formal PsyOps institution or doctrine although the country suffers variety of threats. Due to the ethnic, religious and political cleavages in Pakistan the country is open to hostile information operations from state and nonstate actors. Unfortunately, Pakistan cannot protect its image, prevent unwanted propaganda or respond to the disinformation campaign without a PsyOps setup. It becomes rather difficult to address these challenges episodes under Pakistan's prevailing ad hoc approach towards PsyOps as adversaries utilize information operations to shape the public verdict, seditious attempts and destabilize State institutions and society fabric.

To appreciate the essence of psychological operations (PsyOps) and its related effects on public security, the research pairs several interrelated research questions. First, it aims at identifying the impact of absence of homogeneous psychological operations doctrine on the effectiveness of Pakistan's national security policies. Similarly, the employments of PsyOps in influencing perception during modern wars especially in counter insurgency operations. Likewise, the psychological strategies can also be used in the improvement of military influence and in the achievement of political goals and also in determining weaknesses which come with the poor do Posting of PsyOps. Last, the research aims at shedding light on the fact that PsyOps are among the critical activities in the modern and particularly the ultramodern warfare and the need for countries to adapt to an information geography environment.

Literature Review:

Perception management is considered the fourth power tool, alongside diplomatic, economic, and military power capable of imposing and conditioning the perceptions of the target audience in favor of certain objectives. Lack of formation of perception management strategies or failure to counter influence operations leads to the state becoming a target for hostile actors who seek to sap the morale, culture and authority of the state and its government. It is to this end that

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such vulnerability presents huge risks to the security and economic wellbeing of nations (Le Roux, 2007). Finally, good coordinated and backed information psychological operations (PsyOps) would also improve the diplomatic force of a state making other diplomatic assets wider pledges (Monograph & Acevedo, n.d.). PsyOps as defined in Joint Doctrine JP3-13 include operations aimed at the communication of a preferred type of information to audiences of interest with the intention of affecting emotions, motives, and reasoning and consequently behavior. PsyOps can be categorized into three distinct levels: National PsyOps focusing on foreign populace regarding a countries' strategies other than military; Theatre PsyOps to support regional military and political strategies; and Battlefield Support PsyOps targeting local populace to support military or civil authorities for instant (Army, U.S., 2003). The dual nature of PsyOps is characterized by hard and soft approaches. The hard approach aims to foster negative perceptions of a target's own government or society to cultivate dissent and alienation, while the soft approach seeks to project positive images of the orchestrating state or group to gain influence and loyalty. The ultimate objective is to subtly align the target audience's behaviour with the goals of the state or entity conducting the operation (Le Roux, 2007).

As with most militarized tactics, PsyOps are subdivided into defensive and offensive. Defensive approach of PsyOps targets at defending a state's forces from admiring PsyOps and looking for their problematic signs including poor leadership or low morale. On the other hand, Offensive PsyOps pursue to generate favorable perception which is lethal to the enemy goals and propitious to one's strategic goals (Le Roux, 2007). In modern conflicts that are more population focused, the role of PsyOps is significant more as nation states attempt to shape the attitudes of civilian populations, the center mass in current warfare (Amorós& Guillaume-Barry, 2019). PsyOps do not only demoralize the enemy and separate them from domestic and international support but also minimize damage to life and property by conditioning the adversaries to behave in a manner that I in accord with the operation's objectives (Karamanoli, n.d.). Moreover, strategic PsyOps act as a middle link between political–diplomatic declarations and military operations, promoting integration of influence operations (Monograph & Acevedo, n.d.). However, Christopher L. Leyda has pointed that PsyOps are organized in most countries without a clear doctrine and

coherent among the different branches and levels, which certainly constrains its efficiency (Leyda, 2002).

According to Kilcullen (2010), psychological activity is the main avenue in counter insurgency operations whereby perception management is vital for insurgency success. Freedman (2006) does the same with information warfare arguing for the incorporation of propaganda into today's security systems. Bunker (2015) build on the concept of shifting from traditional warfare to warfare that is fought through information and perception to note that while PsyOps is not conventional combat force that is used to physically destroy an opponent's fighting capabilities, it is used to sap the adversary psychologically. Heretically, the adequacy of using psychological warfare Linebarger (1948) grounded seminal knowledge of how psychological warfare can be tactically applied on the field while on the other hand; Grey (2007) highlighted the contemporary national security strategic the vulnerability of modern national security strategic without a coherent psychic operation framework. During the new days Arquilla and Ronfeldt (2001) define the term "netwar," where informational combat defines strategic environment along with emphasis on perception management in it. Taylor (2003) notes that mass media is now utilized as one of the most standard techniques in the manipulation of PsyOps to sway opinions on the electorate's level to desired political results. As Treverton (2009) pointed out psychological operations are becoming more important, because in the situation of information abundance exact strategic communication is needed. Paul (2011) shares this view by arguing that PsyOps are very important in today's wars, particularly when conducted jointly with other SC campaign frameworks. In counter-terrorism: Forest (2009) In PsyOps, the extremists employ the same in personalities and messaging to recruit people and aggravate situations that require counter-narratives from the states. For that same reason, Corman and Schiefelbein (2008) also emphasize that narrative warfare is useful for maintaining the regulation of the general community during the processes of conflict. Farwell (2012) reveals the role of PsyOps in cyber war, that is, the intersection of digital espionage and, once again, stress on PsyOps in unconventional warfare.

Last, Pomerantsev (2015) discusses PsyOps as a component of hybrid warfare system, with particular reference to the Russian ability of wielding psychological warfare to exert actions against adversaries that may create unrest without outright use of force. Taken together, these pieces all

underscore the increased role of PsyOps in the contemporary strategic environment: undercutting enemies by manipulating the way they see the world may well be more powerful than traditional kinetic force. For states like Pakistan where PsyOps are still in their infancy getting structural and doctrinal framework for the right use of this particular instrument of power is of paramount importance.

Theoretical Background

This research adopts a constructivist framework to explore the intersection of Psychological Operations (PsyOps), national security, and information warfare in the context of Pakistan. Constructivism, as articulated by Wendt (1999), emphasizes the social construction of identities and interests, which are shaped through interaction and discourse. PsyOps is an action taken in order to influence the emotions, motives, and rationality of audiences to achieve strategic goals, according to JP 3-13 Joint Doctrine. This work is based on the principles of communication, propaganda and social influence which underscore the relevance of constructing/controlling of narratives to acquire predicted goals. In the realm of PsyOps, this perspective highlights how narratives can influence the perceptions, motives, and actions of both state and non-state actors. The central premise of this study is that perception management is a critical instrument in shaping the psychological environment of target audiences, both domestically and internationally. PsyOps rely on strategic communication and narrative control to achieve these ends, making constructivism an ideal lens for analyzing its effects. By constructing and disseminating targeted narratives, states can align public sentiment with national interests and counteract adversarial propaganda.

To complement this constructivist approach, the research incorporates network theory to examine the diffusion of information in today's highly interconnected digital environment. Social media platforms, for example, act as dynamic nodes for the rapid spread of narratives, making them both a tool and a battleground in modern PsyOps. This is particularly relevant in Pakistan, where digital platforms have become significant arenas for psychological manipulation, misinformation, and radicalization. The theoretical framework also integrates principles of strategic communication and propaganda, as outlined in Freedman (2006) and Kilcullen (2010), to underscore the importance of narrative warfare in contemporary conflicts. These principles highlight how states can leverage PsyOps to not only defend against psychological threats but also actively shape the

strategic environment to their advantage. By synthesizing constructivism, network theory, and strategic communication, this study provides a comprehensive theoretical foundation to analyze the role of PsyOps in Pakistan's national security landscape. This framework enables an in-depth understanding of how PsyOps can influence identities, foster resilience against external threats, and strengthen the cohesion of the Pakistani state in the face of informational and psychological warfare.

Vulnerabilities of the Pakistani Information Environment:

According to the U.S. Joint Doctrine for Information Operations, the Information Environment (IE) is defined as “characters who seek, produce, transmit, or use information, or who perform some action based on that information.” This environment is of great importance in waging information and psychological operations. When planning psychological operations, the evaluation of the reader includes an analysis of the information network (Taylor, 2007). Specifically, Pakistan target audience has many problems, such as terrorism, political instability, poverty, and, finally, illiteracy. These issues considerably degrade the information infrastructure and thus Pakistani society becomes sensitive to exterior pressures (Rafiq & Raza, n.d.). Third, religious and ethnic differences which are the societal decomposition of the nation aggravate susceptibility to psychological operations implemented by the unfriendly states. Often related to religion these fundamentalist ideas can easily be used by terrorist organizations. Although the enemies are engaged in warfare, their primary goals, unlike in most traditional warfare, are normally attained through manipulation of the psychological aspect of a nation or its people. Psychological operations through social media are another modality that has received an expanded use and leverage in the present world as the youth of Pakistan is among the primary targets. This group of people is most savvy in social networks meaning that it is more susceptible to the influence of radicals.

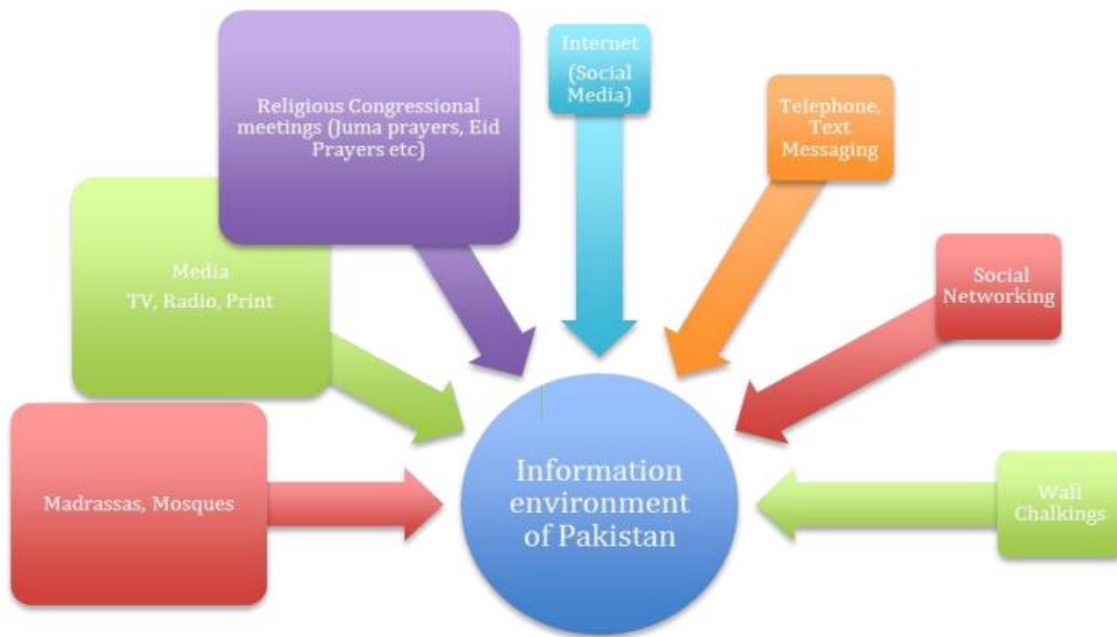


Fig:1 Terrorists in Pakistan benefit from the information and psychological environment

Information Infrastructure of Pakistan:

In Pakistan, the informational domain is filled with numerous organizations and ministries. This involves number of intelligence bodies and some of them are; Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI), Military Intelligence (MI), Air Intelligence (AI), Naval Intelligence (NI). Also, there exists the Intelligence Bureau (IB) which is under the Prime Minister's Cabinet division information collection & analysis & domestic intelligence especially of the political nature. However, these organizations perform most of the intelligence related duties, but their tasks are usually divided. The former two, namely the ISI and MI, are likely to gear towards the military benefit, while the latter, IB is more interested in domestic political operations. Such division of work leads to both a lack of inter-agency cooperation as well as a lack of effort to go after the weaknesses in the information environment, as seen by Khan (n.d.). Collectively, these organizations lack coherence and hence cannot create an information strategy that can effectively respond to psychological operations or defend our interests.

Materials and Methods

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the role of Psychological Operations (PsyOps) in Pakistan's national security framework. Qualitative methods are particularly well-suited to this research, as they provide in-depth insights into the complex dynamics of PsyOps and its implications within Pakistan's socio-political context. The research integrates semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and case studies as part of a triangulation strategy to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including military officials, security experts, and policymakers, who were selected using purposive sampling. This approach ensured that participants possessed relevant expertise in PsyOps and national security. The interview questions were designed to probe their perceptions of PsyOps, its historical use, and the challenges and opportunities for implementing a formalized strategy in Pakistan. In addition to interviews, the study analyzed official policy documents, military doctrines, and strategic reports related to PsyOps and information warfare. This document analysis provided a foundational understanding of existing frameworks and helped identify gaps and opportunities for improvement. To complement the interviews and document analysis, the research examined selected case studies that highlighted both the successes and failures of PsyOps initiatives in Pakistan and comparable socio-political environments. These case studies offered valuable comparative insights into the strategic use of PsyOps.

The data was analyzed using thematic and narrative analysis. Thematic analysis involved coding and categorizing data into key themes, such as vulnerabilities in the information environment and the role of inter-agency coordination, while narrative analysis focused on understanding how participants construct and communicate their understanding of PsyOps. This dual approach ensured that the findings were both grounded in the data and capable of identifying overarching patterns. The study also employed triangulation to enhance the reliability and validity of the findings, combining insights from interviews, document analysis, and case studies. While this qualitative approach provides rich contextual insights, it is acknowledged that future studies could benefit from incorporating mixed methods, such as surveys, to measure public attitudes and PsyOps effectiveness.

Results and Discussion

This sub section presents the findings from the qualitative analysis of data obtained from interviews with the key gatekeeper on the nature of PsyOps and national security threat in Pakistan. Examining the interview data alongside extant literature, the analysis identifies weaknesses in the Pakistani information space and establishes the need for an embedded PsyOps tactic that is culturally appropriate for the geographical context.

a. The Context of Psychological Operations in Pakistan

PsyOps referring to activities that aim at influencing the perception, feelings and behaviors of target audiences in ‘other’ countries (JP 3-13) have emerged as important contemporary tools of conflict. The CO was clearly echoed through the interviews with the Chief Security Officer as he said, “The results in military operations are no longer seen in terms of the gains in physical territory, but also the battles that are waged and won in the public domain.” Such a view can be supported by the current literature as it reasonable pointed out that the optimized PsyOps can provide a substantial change in the opinions for the target audience and, thus, impact the outcomes of the conflict (Kilcullen, 2010; Freedman, 2006).

b. Threats in the Information Environment

In light of the interaction and survey data analyzed qualitatively, several weaknesses in the Pakistani information environment are discussed that make the targeted population vulnerable to psychological manipulation. According to the General Manager, “The problem with no trust in governmental organizations, political instabilities, and religious fundamentalism leave the door wide open for hostile ones,” This sentiment is not an isolated one at workplace but is the reflection of overall world situation where, as put by the Security Officer of the company under consideration, ethnic diversity along with political unrest, can make a person join the side of those who are of particular interest to extremists.

Thus, the work shows that these weaknesses can be leveraged by the threats that contribute to fragmentation of the societal discourse and loyalty shifts. This concurs with the post-positivist theoretical frame, namely the constructivism that holds that personal identities as well as interests are social realities which can be managed through rhetoric (Wendt, 1999). These vulnerabilities call for the creation of a common nationalist narrative according to the observation of the interviewees.

c. The Growing Importance of Smarter PsyOps

Another common point that was mentioned during the interviews was the need to have a more massively developed approach to the PsyOps, in a way me with totally integrated political-military-psychological-civilian-sociological spectrum. The Security Inspector articulated this point succinctly: In order to counter insurgency crises, as well as terrorism, efforts should be made in order to counter the causes of insurgency and terrorism comprehensively. It is therefore clear that there must be a PsyOps strategic plan properly coordinated. This kind of approach is essential in a situation, where the causes of insurgency always include social and economic inequality as well as ethnic issues. Some of the interviewees, underscore, there is no structured government or national framework for counter-PsyOps but they agree that when this is the case countering psychological operations becomes very difficult. According to the Director of Threat Assessment, “If there is no synergy in approaching the problem, we risk being exposed to actual or staged misinformation leading to the destabilization of governance and societal health.” The need to fill this research gap is driven by the observations based on the narrative analysis needed to strengthen national security.

d. Psychological Operations and Societal Implication

The interview insights of how psychological operations can disrupt the civil society in Pakistan were a revelation. For instance, the Chief Security Officer noted, “Psychological manipulation is a powerful weapon on the side of the terrorist organizations, which act based on social stereotypes recruiting individuals.” Such findings can be attributed to the fact that competing narratives for branding in the organization are influential in shaping the sentiment in politically charged situations as noted by Corman and Schiefelbein (2008). The idea, derived from the qualitative data obtained from the analysis of the Internet resources, is that when applied properly psychological operations may not only help fight the influence of radicalization narratives, but help foster positive values within the targeted communities as well.

All the interviewees were clear that proper PsyOps should bring into focus call for unity of all the citizens into their nation. The General Manager went on to say, “The organization also requires easily relatable endorsement and advocacy that foster unity and pride in the country for cancelling out narratives from hostile actors.”

e. The Use of Facebook and Twitter in Psychological Operations

New social media technologies have changed the nature and the possibilities of information sharing and psychological persuasion. Interview information suggested that virtual sites provide key zones of the psychological warfare, especially with youth in Pakistan. The recently appointed Vigilance Officer pointed out that, the youths are especially vulnerable to extremism because of their heavy presence on the social media platforms. This demographic can also be comprising a target market while at the same time a source of strength. One of the advantages of social media for a terrorist organization is that it avails a method through which its propaganda can trend almost immediately thus the need for the Pakistani government to develop narratives that capture the attention of this demographic. The Director of Threat Assessment said it in the strongest terms: “We must regain ownership of social media for constructive messaging, for countering the grievances of our youth.”

f. The implementation of the single coordination body

PsyOps operations always aims at achieving a unified structure. Thereby, for practical countermeasure of the difficulties brought about by psychological operations, developing a formalized PsyOps system is required. Based on the findings from the qualitative assessment, it is posited that such a structure should allow different intelligence and security agencies to work hand in hand so that prevent and counter psychological threats. According to the one of interviewee, what the case of tactical PsyOps means is that ‘a coherent approach to PsyOps involves a lot more than input from military officers, but also from sociologists and communicologists’. During interviews, interviewees stated that the problem between the ISI MI the IB and others is that there is still no competition or collaboration between them to achieve a single, common information warfare plan. This is according to the words of the one of ex-military officer: “With fragmentation there are more silos and there are less opportunities to address misinformation creatively, and thus, there is less opportunity to fight the hostile narratives”. If all the agencies, hence departments, worked cohesively in operations, PsyOps would also be made more efficient, not forgetting the area of trust by citizens on their government to respond to insecurities in the country.

g. National Security Implications

Such findings of the research have significant consequences for national security. The findings also highlight the necessity of a radical change in current trends of Pakistan’s approach to PsyOps and

security. In the words of many respondents, PsyOps, if conducted anticipatively, can help prevent terrorism and insurgency by steering the public, 'the masses', in the right direction. This conforms to the theoretical understanding postulated for this research, which holds that optimal PsyOps affect the identities and interests of states and other actors.

Further, they stressed the requirement of a cultural change in Pakistan, specifically, the ability to protect against a psychological war. Chief Security Officer added that, "The creation of a national or organizational pride is the most important thing that should be done." Thus, those people who have certain emotional ties toward their nation cannot be so easily driven by the calls of extremists. This suggest that there is a need to launch policy reforms that support social inclusion and related communal activities.

Recommendation

Having considered the findings of the analysis and the vital part of PsyOps in the improvement of the national security within the Pakistani information environment and its social-cultural peculiarities, some of the strategic recommendations are derived. These recommendations may seem very basic but they are very important given the current environment that is characterized by use of technology and change in demographics. Since the problems are emerging as urgent, Pakistan needs to grasp the opportunities that are offered by proper PsyOps.

1. The Need for a Central Coordinating Body

Thus, a single coordination entity for all the intelligence agencies should be created in order to strengthen information operation capacity. This body would serve as the supreme governing body for the PsyOps framework since the management of Psychological Operations is under Information Operations. This way the central body creates conditions for a single approach to the organization of work in managing the information environment of the state to improve the efficiency of protecting national interests. For example, The US department of Defense integrates PsyOps through its Special Operations Command, which oversees the planning and execution of psychological campaigns. A similar body in Pakistan could be housed under the Joint Chiefs of Staff, responsible for aligning PsyOps objectives with national security priorities.

2. Integrated Measure for Counter Terrorism

As a result, Pakistan lacks only a coordinated comprehensive strategy that must encompass both a

military campaign against terrorists' infrastructure and institutions as well as persuasion through psychological operations. Although the violent operations remain important for identifying and countering terrorists and their organizations, it is possible to develop well-coordinated psychophysical operations aimed at eliminating the sources of terrorism. Therefore, through shaping the opinions of the citizens and shaping the narratives of these operations one would be able to address the preconditions that lead to development of the extremism. For instance, Russia's "Gerasimov Doctrine" integrates psychological and information operations into hybrid warfare, demonstrating how strategic frameworks can achieve tactical and strategic goals. Pakistan can adapt such models to its unique security landscape.

3. The Development of a PSYOPS Planning and Coordination Organization

It is advised that a special organization for carrying out psychological operations at the strategic level should be created and come directly under the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Ideally, this organization needs to bolster a sound and flexible doctrine that will address the nature and challenges of the Pakistani theatre. Having such focused and coordinated strategic PsyOps organization would provide the necessary synergy with theater and other psychological operations and goals that are on the same strategic level as national. Drawing from the example of China's Strategic Support force, which combines cyber, space, and psychological warfare under one umbrella, this organization in Pakistan could operate as a central hub for crafting narratives, countering misinformation, and influencing public opinion effectively.

4. Leverage Digital Media for Strategic Communication

The rapid growth of social media necessitates a robust digital strategy for countering extremist narratives and promoting positive messaging. Pakistan should emulate Estonia's approach to combating disinformation, which includes real-time monitoring of online content, collaboration with social media platforms, and government-backed campaigns to educate citizens about fake news. This strategy should focus on engaging the youth demographic, which is particularly vulnerable to online radicalization.

5. Enhance Inter-Agency Collaboration

Effective PsyOps require seamless coordination between military, intelligence, and civilian agencies. Regular training programs, joint task forces, and communication channels must be

established to foster trust and operational synergy. Israel's model of integrating military intelligence with civilian agencies to counter psychological and cyber threats offers valuable insights for Pakistan in addressing its unique challenges.

4. Including Psychological Threats into the National Security Strategy

Therefore, it is crucial to expand and raise the status of psychological dangers within Pakistan's 'National Security Policy [2004]'. While the current understanding of the NSP in the struggle against disinformation and influence operations covers the spheres of space, information, and cybersecurity, more encompassing vision is required. It will improve Pakistan's counter-psychological capabilities and policy aims to tackle the issue of psychological warfare. This integration will ensure that national security efforts are holistic, addressing both conventional and non-conventional threats. For Example, Finland's comprehensive approach to "psychological defense" includes education campaigns and community initiatives to strengthen societal cohesion against external propaganda. Such measures can guide Pakistan in mitigating the impacts of psychological threats.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research underscores the critical need for a culturally nuanced strategy for Psychological Operations (PsyOps) in Pakistan, recognizing the country's unique socio-cultural landscape. Findings indicate significant vulnerabilities within Pakistan's information environment, highlighting the need for a comprehensive and structured PsyOps strategy to address these weaknesses effectively. By identifying coordination gaps among intelligence and security agencies, this study reveals areas where enhanced inter-agency collaboration could bolster national security efforts. The research further suggests that a cultural shift towards greater awareness of psychological threats can enable society to build protective mechanisms against these risks. With Pakistan facing ongoing challenges such as terrorism, insurgency, and external threats, the inclusion of a formalized PsyOps framework within the national security strategy emerges as essential for promoting stability, reinforcing social cohesion, and strengthening national identity. Establishing a well-organized PsyOps structure, supported by strategic media engagement on social platforms, is identified as an effective approach for safeguarding vital national interests and countering psychological threats.

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