

**The Scope of Peace in South Asia in the Era of Fifth-Generation Warfare**

By

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## **DEDICATION**

"I dedicate this research to those whose unwavering support and guidance have been instrumental in shaping my academic journey and character. To my esteemed professor, Dr. Attiq ur Rehman, your wisdom, mentorship, and belief in me made this research possible. To the resilient people of my homeland, who have inspired me with their strength and determination. To my parents, whose tireless efforts and sacrifices have paved the way for my education. To my uncles, who provided a loving home and upbringing. To my siblings, who have been my lifelong companions. To the dedicated staff of my beloved institution, NUML, whose support has been invaluable on this academic voyage. And to my dear friends around me who remained a pillar of support through all the challenges and triumphs of this journey. This research stands as a tribute to your collective influence and encouragement. Thank you for being the pillars of my success."

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## **Abstract**

South Asian regional security environment cannot be separated from the inflexible standings of New Delhi and Islamabad against each other, in which the nuclear arms race between contestants has changed the nature of warfare in the region. The dynamics of the India-Pakistan conflict under the atomic shadows have compelled the leaders of two nuclear powers to rely on new means of warfare and jump into a new domain of strategic competition in the domain of Fifth Generation Warfare. This new domain of warfare has resulted in a conflict of low intensity between India and Pakistan, parallel to launching the multileveled propaganda operations of both states against each other. As a result, a new era of information warfare consisting of various disinformation campaigns has complicated the regional security environment of nuclearized South Asia, where New Delhi is taking the lead. This scenario directly impacts the scope of peace and stability in the South Asian region and forces Pakistani state authorities to appropriate countermeasures against Indian offensive regional designs. As predicted by the contemporary theories in the field of international relations, the changing nature of international and regional structures significantly impacts the positions of states involved during rivalries and intense strategic competitions. In this way, this research provides a comprehensive understanding of prevailing scenarios of Fifth Generation Warfare in South Asia, where the Indian desire to maintain an influential role in its home region is shaping Pakistan's defensive position. Thus, the scope of peace and stability has deteriorated where the regional political structure is the prime factor causing an intense security environment.

## 1. Introduction

Peace in South Asia is basically a complex and dynamic issue, this shapes by the deep historical, cultural, political and an economic factor. In recent years, by the advent of Fifth-Generation Warfare (5GW), a scope of peace in the regions that has undergone for the significant transformation and 5GW was characterized by decentralized, these are non-state actors by increasing an information warfare, cyber tactics and also hybrid strategies that influences a population in the absence of traditional military confrontation to achieving and also to maintain a peace in South Asia and that region with the presence of nuclear arms arm states like India and Pakistan, that was required new approaches and their insights <sup>1</sup>.

South Asia has always remained unstable because of the hostile relations of two nuclear neighbours, India and Pakistan. The decades-long conflict between both states has introduced various conflicting points of difference in regional and extra-regional affairs. After the British colonial retreat in the form of decolonization of the subcontinent, an unending era of multifaceted disagreements started between both states. The departure of British colonial forces from the subcontinent laid the foundations of an irreversible conflict between New Delhi and Islamabad, which pushed both neighbours towards various trends of weaponization. As a result, a transformation from conventional to non-conventional weaponization occurred in 1998 when both contesters acquired nuclear weapon capabilities to keep the regional political order in their favour. Indian regional hegemonic ambition was the primary factor behind the nuclearization of the subcontinent, which was always opposed by Pakistan's counterbalancing efforts. To counter the persistently evolving Indian regional dominating aspiration, Islamabad always tried to contain credible counterbalancing potential against New Delhi's offensive regional ambitions. Indian aims of dominating the territorial and maritime affairs of its domestic region further augmented New Delhi's offensive behaviour with the rise of Islamabad's counterbalancing potential.<sup>2</sup> As a result, Indian leadership developed strategic thinking to undermine the role of territorially adjoining nations by adopting an anti-neighbourhood policy. This development

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<sup>1</sup> Krishnan, Armin. *Fifth Generation Warfare: Dominating the Human Domain*. Taylor & Francis, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Stanley Wolpert, *India and Pakistan: Continued Conflict or Cooperation* (California: University of California Press, 2010), 210.

started leaving worse impacts on the regional security environment of South Asia, parallel to deteriorating the scope of peace in the region under the nuclear shadows.

In a hybrid warfare theory, that integrates a conventional military tactics with their irregular warfare strategies like cyber-attacks, and this disinformation campaigns and their economic coercion that offers a critical framework and analyse 5GW. In a South Asia, where traditional military standoffs, like the India-Pakistan border conflict has been existed for decades, hybrid warfare blurs and these lines between war and peace, and this theory underscores the use of non-conventional means for gaining a strategic advantage, which would be destabilized region and this is effecting a prospects of peace <sup>3</sup>. This is also understanding a hybrid warfare that is essential to grasp how this is regional actors to South Asia manipulate to vulnerabilities and this deploys to both the state and non-state mechanisms. The quest for containing the role of counterbalancing forces in the region equivalent to implementing its regional hegemonic designs ultimately resulted in various war-fighting strategies of New Delhi wherein presently the Indian leadership has decided to empower its security infrastructure in the era of Fifth Generation Warfare (5GW).<sup>4</sup> An overwhelming wave of 5GW further degraded the scope of peace in the nuclearized subcontinent and created a new strategic environment in the region against its territorially adjoining states, where Pakistan is the prime target of India. The Indian leadership has decided to adopt different updated contesting initiatives against Pakistan to place Islamabad in a disadvantageous position in its domestic region. A clandestine global network of various disinformation means has created an international trend of critically examining Pakistan's standing in regional and extra-regional affairs. As evidenced by the investigations of the international community, there are enormous means of misinformation developed and advanced by India across the world to serve New Delhi's interests.<sup>5</sup> In a 5GW, information warfare that plays a pivotal role and by the use of social media, different fake news and psychological operational activities that has increased, with a non-state and non-state that was aimed by controlling narrative and this manipulated

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<sup>3</sup> Krishnan, Armin. "Fifth Generation Warfare, Hybrid Warfare, and Gray Zone Conflict." *Journal of Strategic Security* 15.4 (2022): 14-31.

<sup>4</sup> Wirsing Robert, *India, Pakistan, and the Kashmir Dispute: On Regional Conflict and its Resolution* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1998), 245.

<sup>5</sup> T.V. Paul, *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 220.

public opinion. South Asia, with a vast population and this is increasing a penetration, that is especially vulnerable for such tactics <sup>6</sup>. So both the India and Pakistan have been accused by the use of disinformation by shaping the narrative around a Kashmir conflict, creating for further mistrust in between the two nations. This manipulation of the public disclosure through hybrid warfare techniques to complicate a peace process, making it harder to engage in constructive dialogues <sup>7</sup>.

In this way, a proper understanding of the ongoing trend of strategic competition between two rival neighbours with equal nuclear deterrent capabilities has become the need of the time. An adequate comprehension of the evolving India-Pakistan protracted conflict in the era of 5GW is capable enough to provide an accurate picture of the South Asian security environment which will help support and strengthen the role of peace in the region. The revelation of the Indian disinformation campaign by an independent European institute is an appropriate example. The process of the non-state actors and a cross-border terrorism adds to another layer to hybrid warfare in South Asia. Militant groups like the Taliban and Lashkar e Taiba and another historic been proxy actors which is creating a conflict between neighbouring countries. So these groups are emblematic to how a hybrid warfare functions in South Asia. A non-state actors have engaged to asymmetric warfare, this is influencing security dynamics in the absence of direct state involvement and this covert a state support. A tactic while part of the 5GW created the longer instability and this hinders a diplomatic effort that aims to foster peace in a region <sup>8</sup>.

The prevalence of 5GW in the South Asian complex regional security environment has launched a war of information and perception in which both states have started relying on using multiple propaganda and fake information tools against each other. The increasing security dilemma between both contesting powers of South Asia is the fundamental factor disturbing the conventional patterns of India-Pakistan strategic thinking and its unprecedented growth in diverse directions. The governments of both states have jumped into a longstanding strategic competition against each other while adopting different techniques of undermining each other in their domestic region, South Asia.

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<sup>6</sup> Khan, H. A. M. I. D. "Critical Study of Propaganda & Hybrid/5th Generation War For the Purpose of Narrative Building." (2021).

<sup>7</sup> Gichki, Aqeel Ahmad. "The Role of Media in the Fifth Generation Warfare: The Indian Information War against Pakistan." *Journal of Mass Communication Department, Dept of Mass Communication, University of Karachi* 27 (2022).

<sup>8</sup> Krishnan, Armin. *Fifth Generation Warfare: Dominating the Human Domain*. Taylor & Francis, 2024.

The geographical proximity is the main factor causing intense security competition between states. In the contemporary age of 5GW, the formal defence planners of both states have preferred to adopt new means of fighting where the spread of fake news and inaccurate information have become the preferred war-fighting tools.

A nuclear deterrence in between India and Pakistan has been traditionally serving by means to prevent a large scale wars, but a hybrid warfare undermines these balances, and to treating with a nuclear conflict looms larger by both the nations that engages in sub-conventional conflicts, and cyber warfare terrorism and an economic coercion, that test the boundaries of peace in the absence of triggering a full-scale war<sup>9</sup>. This is delicate a balance to ensure a peace through nuclear deterrence by engaging to hybrid tactics and that creates an unstable and this unpredictable security environment in South Asia. By achieving a peace in South Asia under the shadow of 5GW that requires the multidimensional to approach. This diplomacy channels should have strengthened the regional cooperation that against cyber and this information threats must have been prioritized<sup>10</sup>. An international community has a role to mitigate the effects a hybrid warfare by purpose to ensure accountability for state-sponsored terrorism and the cyber initiatives. Only through a comprehensiveness strategy by addressing the underlying issues of hybrid warfare that is lasting for envisioned a region<sup>11</sup>.

In this strategic competition, the Indian government always remained a trend-setter due to its strong strategic connections with the outside world. New Delhi has aligned its strategic thinking with the 5GW to increase the fake news regarding Pakistan.<sup>12</sup> New Delhi's strategy aims to hamper Pakistan's defensive role in regional politics and Islamabad's quest for managing its countering-Indian standing

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<sup>9</sup> Hagerty, Devin T., P. Hagerty, and Pusca. *Nuclear Weapons and Deterrence Stability in South Asia*. Baltimore, MD: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

<sup>10</sup> Singh, Lieutenant General AK, and Lieutenant General Raj Shukla. "Changing Nature of Conflict in the 21st Century." *Military Strategy for India in the 21st Century*, New Delhi: KW Publishers (2020).

<sup>11</sup> LESENCIUC, Colonel Prof Adrian, and Corneliu Mugurel COZMANCIUC. "CONCEPTUALISATION, OPERATIONALISATION AND CONNECTION BETWEEN "HYBRID THREATS" AND "SECURITY CULTURE"." *ISSN Print: 1841-4451 ISSN Online: 1842-824X* (2021).

<sup>12</sup> J. N. Dixit, *India-Pakistan in War & Peace* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 48-49.

in the region.<sup>13</sup> Apart from New Delhi, the approach of, Islamabad is quite defensive due to Pakistan's emerging economic crisis, which has engaged Pakistani policymakers in managing the country's internal affairs. Moreover, the Indian objective of downgrading the status of Pakistan in its home region has been multiplied by several new initiatives in which New Delhi has started stigmatizing Pakistan's vision of creating a peaceful and stable regional political order in South Asia.

A scope of peace in South Asia has intricately for an evolution of fifth generation warfare and its hybrid strategies. By understanding and addressing a hybrid warfare's multifaceted threats that is ranging from an information warfare for role of non-state actors that is crucial for building up the lasting peace<sup>14</sup>. A hybrid nature of a modern conflict in South Asia necessities innovative solutions, and a robust dialogue and this keeps a region complexity by navigating a path toward stability and peace. A concept of peace in South Asia has been traditionally viewed through a lens of a geopolitical rivalries, religious conflicts and a territorial dispute, this is particularly between nuclear-armed nations like India and Pakistan<sup>15</sup>. By the onset of Fifth-generation warfare (5GW), a peace of scope has been significant shifted. This is unlikely conversational wars, 5GW thriving on asymmetry, this exploits an economic, cyber, and psychological tools for destabilized opponents, this is often without a direct military engagement. A hybrid warfare theory explains a blending of conversational and unconventional strategies, this provides a crucial analytical framework to understand and assess a change nature of peace in that region<sup>16</sup>.

The objective of ensuring the scope of peace in the nuclearized subcontinent depends on a precise and correct understanding of the New Delhi-Islamabad strategic competition in the domain of 5GW. In other words, a rational understanding of the India-Pakistan conflict and its changing strategic nature is the prerequisite to ensuring regional peace. It is widely believed that maintaining peace will prevent the hostile attributes of both nuclear powers against each other and facilitate both states to

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<sup>13</sup> Sumit Ganguly, *Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions Since 1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 38.

<sup>14</sup> Mascolo, Stefania. "NATO's response to hybrid warfare and threats: state and non-state actors." (2018).

<sup>15</sup> Bachmann, Sascha. "Hybrid wars: The 21st-century's new threats to global peace and security." *Scientia Militaria: South African Journal of Military Studies* 43.1 (2015): 77-98.

<sup>16</sup> Aoi, Chiyuki, Madoka Futamura, and Alessio Patalano. "Introduction 'hybrid warfare in Asia: its meaning and shape'." *The Pacific Review* 31.6 (2018): 693-713.

develop bilateral collaborative interaction in mainstream political, diplomatic, economic, and social affairs. Hybrid warfare that combines a military power with the elements of cyber warfare, and a disinformation, and political coercion and an economic coercion, which blur a line between peace and their conflicts. In a South Asian context, hybrid tactics have been prominent for the decades. Moreover, the India Pakistan conflicts that campaign the effective perception from both the sides. Furthermore, the hybrid warfare theory emphasized a multidimensional approach where a military confrontation is rare, but for the strategic pressure that is exerted through a non-military means. A hybrid warfare framework critically explains a peace in South Asia that remains a fragile despite to a limited larger scale wars. By both the India and Pakistan that relies to a conventional tactic like cyber-attacks to support a non-state actor, by avoiding over conflicts to maintain a geopolitical tension. This strategy was ambiguity that complicates a peace effort, and there is of no clear distinction in between a wartime and peacetime conditions in the region.

In this way, a coherent conceptualization of the India-Pakistan strategic contest and its nature in the domain of 5GW is essential to widen the scope of peace in the region. In the absence of fostering the role of peaceful forces between both neighbouring rival nations, the increasing Indian offensive capabilities in the form of various disinformation campaigns will compel Pakistan to take appropriate counterbalancing measures. Therefore, this research is fundamentally structured to examine the role of peace in the nuclearized subcontinent when Indian offensive strategic thinking has led its leaders towards 5GW parallel to forcing Pakistan to counterbalance India in the absence of fragile forces of peace in the region. South Asia, this is the region that is long marred by conflict and its and its geopolitical tension finding itself as a crucial juncture in the era of Fifth-Generation Warfare (5GW). Unlike the traditional warfare, a 5GW focuses on undermining adversaries through non-kinetic means like psychological, cyber and information warfare, targeting a political, economic and a social structure. A scope of peace in South Asia was intricately tied to the ability of states to adapted a realities of hybrid warfare. Hybrid warfare, that is incorporated conventional for military strategies alongside an irregular and its cyber operations, that becomes a framework for analysing a peace prospects for violating the regions.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The scope of peace in the South Asian region has become a serious question for the entire region due to the rise of a multi-layered India-Pakistan hostility. Presently, the enduring India-Pakistan hostility has resulted in a 5GW scenario where India is a trend-setter without calculating its impacts on Islamabad's security. In this way, an unending action-reaction nature of India-Pakistan hostility will require Pakistan to design certain counterbalancing measures against New Delhi's consistently swelling anti-Pakistani obsession. Therefore, this research primarily revolves around peace and its association with India-Pakistan rivalry in the nuclearized regional environment under the prevailing scenarios of 5GW. In a South Asian context, hybrid tactics have been prominent for the decades. Moreover, the India Pakistan conflicts that campaign the effective perception from both the sides. Furthermore, the hybrid warfare theory emphasized a multidimensional approach where a military confrontation is rare, but for the strategic pressure that is exerted through a non-military means. The research problem was resolved and supported by an unprecedented growth of strategic competition in the age of information warfare between both nuclear powers is leaving worse impacts on the South Asian regional political order, which is eventually deteriorating the scope of peace between New Delhi and Islamabad. The above problem was resolved or supported by the hybrid warfare theory offers a comprehensive lens by providing an understanding and this intricate dynamic of modern conflicts. This theory also emphasizes combining conventional military tactics with unconventional strategies like cyber security attacks, economic pressure, and psychological operations

### **Objectives of Research**

This study is designed to investigate the reasons behind the deteriorating role of peace in South Asia due to a major shift in the strategic competition between New Delhi and Islamabad in the domain of GW. Developing a comprehensive understanding of peace in the age of information warfare is structured to achieve the following research objectives in this research;

1. To study the recent trends in India-Pakistan strategic competition in the era of 5GW.
2. To comprehend the South Asian version of 5GW under the nuclear shadows.
3. To examine the consistently growing India-Pakistan competition in the era of 5GW.

4. To analyse the role of peace in the South Asian region in the absence of a conflicted environment.

### **Research questions**

Based on the above-mentioned research concerning the evolving strategic competition between New Delhi and Islamabad, this research is an academic endeavour to address the following research questions.

1. What is the nature of the India-Pakistan conflict in the contemporary world in the light of hybrid warfare model?
2. How Indian-Pakistani governments are increasing reliance on the 5GW as per hybrid warfare theory.
3. How is Fifth-Generation warfare used to achieve strategic objectives by India and Pakistan that, in turn, intensify their rivalry?
4. How peace can be preserved in the era of fifth-generation warfare between India and Pakistan.

### **Literature Review**

The quest for conducting this research on an impartial and rational basis has led this study towards conducting a view review of available literature regarding the transformation of the South Asian regional security environment under the shadows of 5GW. The available literature on the changing attributes of the India-Pakistan strategic contest and its unprecedented growth in diverse directions has shown that the leading circles of international intellectual communities are more concerned with the changing South Asian regional security environment.<sup>17</sup> In this way, the literature accessed at the initial stage of this research mainly consists of Stanley Wolpert's *India and Pakistan: Continued Conflict or Cooperation* (2010), T.V. Paul's *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry*

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<sup>17</sup> Victoria Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan and the Unending War* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), 18.

(2005), J. N. Dixit's *India-Pakistan in War & Peace* (2002), and Sumit Ganguly's *Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions Since 1947* (2001). These books present a brief overview of the India-Pakistan conflict and its varying phases throughout the history of the subcontinent. Wolpert and Paul emphasized the roots of India-Pakistan's enduring rivalry and the widening diplomatic spaces between both contesting neighbours of South Asia. The hybrid warfare theory was grounded in the notion that it was a modern conflict that was no longer confined to the battlefield but extended to various military domains. This approach integrated conventional military actions with unconventional tactics like guerrilla warfare, cyber warfare, and psychological operations. A hybrid warfare framework critically explains a peace in South Asia that remains a fragile despite to a limited larger scale wars. By both the India and Pakistan that relies to a conventional tactic like cyber-attacks to support a non-state actor, by avoiding over conflicts to maintain a geopolitical tension. This strategy was ambiguity that complicates a peace effort, and there is of no clear distinction in between a wartime and peacetime conditions in the region. In contrast, Dixit and Ganguly focused on the probable scenarios of war and peace between the two nuclear powers of South Asia. Both Indian writers mainly explained the position of New Delhi in the evolving security competition of the South Asian region, where the extra-regional has a permanent presence. For evaluating the deepening role of extra-regional power, a few books have been considered effective in understanding the nature of the India-Pakistan decades-long conflict in the presence of external actors.

Specific books are consulted in this regard, which are *India, Pakistan, and the Kashmir Dispute: On Regional Conflict and its Resolution* (1998) by Robert Wirsing, *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan and the Unending War* (2010) by Victoria Schofield, *From Kutch To Tashkent: The Indo-Pakistan War of 1965* (2013) by Farooq Bajwa, *Conflict between India and Pakistan: An Encyclopedia* (2008) by Pete Lyon, *The People Next Door: The Curious History of India's Relations with Pakistan* (2019) by T. C. A. Raghavan, *Avoiding Armageddon: America, India, and Pakistan to the Brink and Back* (2013) by Bruce Riedel, and *India-Pakistan Negotiations: Is Past Still Prologue* (2006) by Dennis Kux. These books are written on the changing characteristics of India-Pakistan conflict and its impacts on the regional security environment of South Asia. The books of Wirsing, Schofield, and Bajwa discussed the unprecedented growth of enduring rivalry between the pairs of contesting nuclear weapon states of South Asia. The former tried to explain the role of extra-regional powers in the

intense South Asian regional security environment. In contrast, the later academic account explained the details of the India-Pakistan conflict under the presence of external players such as the United States and China. There is a longer rivalry between India and Pakistan that encompasses not just direct military confrontations but also conventional methods such as cross-border terrorism and cyber-attacks. A conflict in Afghanistan featuring a mixture of traditional military engagement and unconventional tactics.

In the era of 5GW, the very nature of peace is disrupted by means of non-military means and this information warfare, a cyberattacks and this economic coercion have become prominent tools that was weakens adversaries in the absence of engaging the open conflicts <sup>18</sup>. So the South Asia reliance on a digital platform that has made to vulnerabilities to misinformation and different cyber threats by both state and non-state actors exploiting these avenues. Misinformation and cyber threats by state and non-state actors that has been exploiting the avenues. The examples misinformation that has intensified around disputed regions like Kashmir, this is depending upon ethnic and national divides, and this is to inflame a public sentiment <sup>19</sup>.

Bajwa also touched on the issues of Russia concerning the role of external players in the India-Pakistan conflict. The scholarly investigations of Lyon, Raghavan, and Riede deal with the American perspective on the changing nature of strategic contests between the two neighbouring key Pacific Asian players. Ridel has explained his views based on his involvement in the policy circles of the US government, and Raghavan marinated the account of diplomatic views concerning the India-Pakistan relations. As Raghavan has served in the Islamabad-based Indian diplomatic mission, his book generally described the experiences of diplomatic communities serving in two hostile states of the South Asian region. Additionally, the academic analysis of Kux focused on the scope of peaceful negotiations between New Delhi and Islamabad, believing that initiating peaceful India-Pakistan talks could be an appropriate scenario for generating the debate of peace and stability in South Asia. In South Asia, this theory is specific for the relevant as it captures the region for the complexity of the security and its dynamics. A longer rivalry between India and Pakistan encompasses not just direct

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<sup>18</sup> Krishnan, Armin. *Fifth Generation Warfare: Dominating the Human Domain*. Taylor & Francis, 2024.

<sup>19</sup> Boga, D., & Ranjan, R. (2022). Presenting an alternative theoretical framework on Kashmir in the context of print media: From Ethnonationalism to Civic Nationalism. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies (JCEPS)*, 19(3).

military confrontations but also conventional methods such as cross-border terrorism and cyber-attacks.

Hybrid warfare theory was not only explaining a persistent instability in South Asia but this is also to highlight the challenge by achieving the sustainable peace. By the non-state actors such as the militant groups and a terrorist, that has been created an enduring a security dilemma<sup>20</sup>. States like Pakistan and Afghanistan have been accused by using the groups to project power to contested areas like Afghanistan and Kashmir. This tactic by central to hybrid warfare that is prevented for the formation of stable peace as these actions of the groups undermine a formal diplomatic effort.

The discussion on the changing attributes of warfare between India and Pakistan and the contemporary trend of 5GW in South Asian has been rarely examined in the existing literature. Summit Ganguly in *Deadly Impasse: Indo-Pakistani Relations at the Dawn of a New Century* (2016), Robert J. McMahon in *The Cold War on the Periphery: The United States, India, and Pakistan* (1994), Pushpa Doddani in *Elusive Peace: India and Pakistan* (2006), and Howard B. Schaffer in *The Limits of Influence: America's Role in Kashmir* (2009) slightly touched the emerging scenarios of India-Pakistan conflict and the probable future pictures of the South Asian politics under the intense rivalry of two nuclear neighbours. In the book, Ganguly discussed the unavoidable prevalence of new threats to India-Pakistan in which the combination of traditional and non-traditional security threats will become the ultimate future of South Asian regional politics. So both the India and Pakistan have been accused by the use of disinformation by shaping the narrative around a Kashmir conflict, creating for further mistrust in between the two nations. This manipulation of the public disclosure through hybrid warfare techniques to complicate a peace process, making it harder to engage in constructive dialogues. In contrast, McMahon has viewed South Asian regional politics through Cold War politics. In his books, McMohan tried to convey his standing on the future circumstances of India-Pakistan and its unprecedented growth in non-traditional dimensions. Doddani and Schaffer mentioned the roots of the India-Pakistan conflict and its development throughout history while advocating the emerging scenarios of non-traditional security threats. The non-traditional methods have been added for the new dimensions to conflicts affecting the peace pursued and maintained. This underscores the

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<sup>20</sup> Hoffman, Frank G. *Conflict in the 21st century: The rise of hybrid wars*. Arlington: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007.

role of 5GW in complicating peace efforts, and this is to integrate our influence on operations and informed warfare by the difference of actors that was illustrated a complexity by achieving stability in such a context.

All these writers agree that the overwhelming forces of globalization and the twenty-first century will reshape the New Delhi-Islamabad hostility, and the leaders of both states will remain less reluctant in adopting new trends of fighting against each other. In this way, both South Asian contestants started relying on new means of warfare and gradually jumped into a strategic competition based on a non-traditional nature. Ganguly's *Deadly Impasse* is an accurate explanation of this factor due to the futuristic approach of Ganguly in his book.

Hybrid warfare tactics obscure responsibility, and cyberattacks or disinformation campaigns that cannot be an always an easily tracing back to their origin and this makes it difficult for South Asian states to responds within an international law framework <sup>21</sup>. As a result, states become locked in cycles for blaming and counter-blame, fueling antagonism rather than peace. This is the ambiguity, that is integral to 5GW and hybrid warfare theory, and this is serving as the barrier for conflicting the resolution, that allows the states to maintain a plausible deniability while continuity subversive activities <sup>22</sup>. Non-states actors, this is essential feature of hybrid warfare, this plays a crucial role for to destabilization of peace in South Asia and this is insurgent organization have longer served as the tools for hybrid strategies. These actors do not have an operation within a broader South Asian stated by extent to influence on neighbouring countries, that fosters an instability and undermining the regional peace <sup>23</sup>.

The literature on the technological advancements in the subcontinent and the strategic competition between New Delhi and Islamabad have started discussing hybrid warfare or the 5GW in South Asia. The debates on the 5GW appeared in the academic accounts of Christophe Jafferlot *Pakistan at the Crossroads: Domestic Dynamics and External Pressures* (2016) and Ahsan I. Butt *Secession and Security: Explaining State Strategy Against Separatists* (2021) mentioned that the Indian and Pakistan governments are going towards the information warfare in which New Delhi has preferred to oppose

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<sup>21</sup> Tsiklauri, Giorgi. "Hybrid Warfare in Cyber domain: Case Study of hybrid threats in cyberspace." (2021).

<sup>22</sup> Krishnan, Armin. *Fifth Generation Warfare: Dominating the Human Domain*. Taylor & Francis, 2024.

<sup>23</sup> Paul, Thazha Varkey, ed. *South Asia's weak states: Understanding the regional insecurity predicament*. Stanford University Press, 2010.

Pakistan in the broader South Asian security environment while believing that the Pakistan government is determined to counterbalance New Delhi in its domestic regional politics. Butt focused on the use of new means of warfare and explained the role of new warfare has started an unending era of information war. As per hybrid warfare model this is unlikely to be an earlier form of warfare that prioritized a confrontation, and the 5GW emphasized information of the dominance that is narrative control and a technological influence that affected public opinion and political stability. A hybrid warfare theory is helpful by explaining these groups that continues for playing the role in South Asia strategic environment and this allows for conducting the hybrid war. This also allows the states for conducting a proxy war, this maintains tension in the absence of engaging to direct military conflicts. This prolongs conflict and this makes sustainable peace elusive, as this influences the actors blur a boundary between state and the non-state actions<sup>24</sup>. This ambiguity role they play a destabilize to both an internal governance and this regional diplomatic effort. 5GW was operated to a same principle, by the use of networks, data and this psychological manipulation to affects the change and this erode a peace<sup>25</sup>. In this sense, a hybrid warfare theory is not just to provide a framework for analysing South Asia that is conflicted that offers a critical understanding of how a peace was destabilized in an era where the traditional warfare was no more a primary tool of statecraft. That theory highlighted a subtle that is often a mechanism that was undermines peace and this is making to highly relevant context in the light of security dynamics<sup>26</sup>.

In this information war, Indian has launched a global network or various anti-Pakistani campaigns, mainly consisting of multiple models of fake news and inaccurate information. Jafferlot discussed the hybrid means of warfare between both states while mentioning Islamabad, a severe victim of Indian-sponsored anti-Pakistan information operations across the globe. This ambiguity role they play a destabilize to both an internal governance and this regional diplomatic effort. 5GW was operated to a same principle, by the use of networks, data and this psychological manipulation to affects the change and this erode a peace. The academic accounts of both authors agree on the point that the

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<sup>24</sup> Qureshi, Waseem Ahmad. "The rise of hybrid warfare." *Notre Dame J. Int'l Comp. L.* 10 (2020): 173.

<sup>25</sup> Farooqi, Mudassir. "Jihadi Wars and Hybrid Security Threats in Asia: Lessons from Pakistan." *Non-Western Global Theories of International Relations*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022. 251-279.

<sup>26</sup> Askari, Muhammad Usman, and Lal Khan Niazi. "Indian Hybrid War against Pakistan: A Strategic Theory Perspective." *Journal of Indian Studies* 8.01 (2022): 189-208.

adaptation of new means of warfare is the preferred strategy of India-Pakistan in the regional security environment under the nuclear shadows. Akin to Jafferlot and Butt's scholarly investigations, *Secret Wars: Covert Conflict in International Politics* (2018) by Austin Carson and a co-authored book by George Perkovich and Toby Dalton, *Not War, Not Peace: Motivating Pakistan to Prevent Cross-Border Terrorism* (2016) analysed the degrading forces of peace and stability in the evolving competition of India and Pakistan. In the contemporary information age, the phase of 5GW has created an environment of propaganda and disinformation between New Delhi and Islamabad where India is taking the lead over Pakistan parallel to hampering Pakistan's security calculations. The worse impacts of these New Delhi-based disinformation campaigns have compelled the government of Pakistan to take appropriate counterbalancing measures to address the increasing India-sponsored anti-Pakistan worldwide disinformation operations. Islamabad-based strategic thinkers have started emphasizing the effective counterbalancing measures against New Delhi, increasing worldwide antipathy towards Pakistan, inherited in the India-Pakistan enduring rivalry.

A scope of peace in South Asia, and this examines through the lens of Fifth – Generation Warfare and hybrid warfare theory, that was revealed a complex as well as fragmented landscape. A traditional notions of peace, this centered a military deterrence and a diplomatic negotiation that was being replaced by a new paradigm where the non-military tools play significant role to shape conflict <sup>27</sup>. Hybrid warfare theory was critically highlighted a barrier by achieving a sustainable peace to a region, this is emphasizing the covert, and this multidimensional tactic that was eroded a trust and stability. A nuclear deterrence in between India and Pakistan has been traditionally serving by means to prevent a large scale wars, but a hybrid warfare undermines these balances, and to treating with a nuclear conflict looms larger by both the nations that engages in sub-conventional conflicts, and cyber warfare terrorism and an economic coercion, that test the boundaries of peace in the absence of triggering a full-scale war.

### **Research Gap**

In the existing literature concerning India-Pakistan's enduring rivalry and unprecedented growth during various phases, most authors tried to analyse the nature and evolution of the New Delhi-

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<sup>27</sup> Aamir, Omer. "Warfare's Future in the Coming Decade: Technologies and Strategies." *Available at SSRN* 3854390 (2021).

Islamabad conflict. The literature produced by leading circles of international intellectual communities mainly emphasized the role of multifaceted conflicting bilateral attributes of both South Asian nuclear powers. A brief layer of literature appeared from the strategic circles of international intellectual communities regarding the prevailing scenarios of modern information technologies in intensifying the South Asian regional security environment. In this way, this research is primarily designed to evaluate the role of information technology in determining the contemporary nature of India-Pakistan rivalry generally, and the increasing reliance of New Delhi and Islamabad on 5GW specifically. There are a few books written by specific writers on the role of 5GW in shaping the India-Pakistan strategic competition in information technology. Thus, this research seeks to evaluate the scope of peace in the evolving nature of 5GW between New Delhi and Islamabad, parallel to providing a comprehensive account of different arguments regarding the degrading status of the regional strategic matrix between two nuclear neighbours of South Asia.

### **Core Argument**

Indian worldwide disinformation has validated that New Delhi has launched an international campaign consisting of multi-layered fake information operations to stigmatize the national image of Pakistan in regional and extra-regional affairs. New Delhi's attempt to deteriorate Pakistan's status in the politics of its home region has inaugurated a new race between India and Pakistan parallel to engaging the mainstream defense planners of both states in the domain of modern information technology. This scenario has pushed both contesting South Asian nuclear powers towards a broader environment of 5GW where the means of propaganda and disinformation have become the preferred strategies of New Delhi in its competition with Pakistan.<sup>28</sup> This scenario has damaged the scope of peace in the region due to the changing nature of South Asian regional security under the shadows of advanced communication technologies. By navigating a reality, South Asia would need to move beyond a conventional peace-building strategies and address and hybrid threats that was challenging a security <sup>29</sup>. There is an understanding that interplays between the 5GW and its hybrid warfare, policymakers that develops to more nuances the approaches for peace by accounting for changing to

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<sup>28</sup> Farooq Bajwa, *From Kutch To Tashkent: The Indo-Pakistan War of 1965* (London: Hurst & Company, 2013), 88.

<sup>29</sup> Hroch, Jaroslav. "An Interplay of Narratives: How Do the Czech Journalists Perceive Securitized Disinformation?." (2020).

nature of conflicts in 21<sup>st</sup> century. Therefore, this research attempts to address the question of peace in the age of 5GW in South Asia and the changing nature of the India-Pakistan conflict due to the negative role of modern means of communication technologies in the nuclearized subcontinent. This modern phase of warfare persistently decreased the focus of direct armed conflict between two strategic contestants. It increased the reliance of both nuclear rivals on non-traditional means of warfare, mainly consisting of disinformation operations, information manipulation, and cyber-attacks on sensitive state infrastructures. Therefore, the research revolves around the status of peace in the evolving 5GW between New Delhi and Islamabad under the nuclear shadows. It is an academic endeavor to evaluate the growing strategic tendencies of India and Pakistan in the 5GW and its potential to hinder the scope of regional stability as well. By addressing the future of peace in South Asia that remains a precarious in the context of hybrid warfare and a 5GW by addressing these challenges, South Asian states that have invested to develop a resilience against hybrid threats. This includes the strengthening of cyber defenses, promoting media literacy for combating disinformation and engagement in economic diversification by reducing vulnerabilities to economic warfare<sup>30</sup>. In addition, regional cooperation is essential, and forums like the South Asia Association of Regional Cooperation needed to adapt to realities of hybrid warfare, focusing not only on traditional conflict resolution but also to mitigate the effects of economic, cyber and psychological warfare<sup>31</sup>.

By an international actor, this includes global powers and multinational organizations, which often play a pivotal role in a hybrid warfare landscape of South Asia. An involvement of global power like the United States, China and Russia to pursue a strategic interest in the region, has added layers of complexity to South Asia conflicts, including economic investment, political alliances or support for an insurgent group<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> Naz, Imtiaz Hussain. "Foreign Policy In Hybrid Warfare Environment—Way Forward For Pakistan." *Margalla Papers* 25.1 (2021): 1-11.

<sup>31</sup> Whyte, Christopher, A. Trevor Thrall, and Brian M. Mazanec, eds. *Information warfare in the age of cyber conflict*. London & New York: Routledge, 2021.

<sup>32</sup> Snedden, Christopher. *Shifting geo-politics in the greater South Asia region*. Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies., 2022.

## **Conceptual Understanding of Hybrid Warfare**

States indulge in conflict to protect their interests, and the state-governments always prefer to acquire substantial defensive means against rival nations. The quest to achieve particular strategic objectives in their regional politics led state governments to develop multidimensional security approaches based on various defensive strategies. In other words, the state governments always want to build appropriate war-fighting capabilities against their rival nations, in the up-gradation of conventional military capabilities instructs formal defence planners of states to remain active and vigilant in changing the nature of security threats around them. The prevalence of non-traditional security threats in the international system has changed the conventional nature of the international system without altering the traditional strategic interests of states.<sup>33</sup> In this way, the overwhelming forces of security threats emerging from diverse directions affect the regional and international standings of all states, hampering their conventional defensive mechanisms to counter mainstream security threats. The emerging wave of potential security threats of a hybrid nature has alarmed the ongoing security thinking of the governments involved in intense strategic competitions at the regional and international levels. The combination of regional and international levels changes in the strategic competition of regional and international powers has changed the traditional outlook international security environment by undermining the conventional wisdom attached to the classical security concept.<sup>34</sup> In this sense, a hybrid warfare theory is not just to provide a framework for analysing South Asia that is conflicted that offers a critical understanding of how a peace was destabilized in an era where the traditional warfare was no more a primary tool of statecraft. The new wave of hybrid warfare tactics has prevailed in states' mainstream security calculations. The state governments always prefer to engage their mainstream defence planners in formulating effective strategies against potential security threats. In this way, it is appropriate to maintain that the changing nature of the international security environment has dragged the attention of leading defence planners of states towards integrating the new means of warfare to the conventional military capabilities, and it has altered the existing security mechanism of states against their potential rivals. Moreover, this is

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<sup>33</sup> Tara McCormack, *Critique, Security and Power: The Political Limits to Emancipatory Approaches* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 96.

<sup>34</sup> Torin Monahan, *Surveillance and Security: Technological Politics and Power in Every Day Life* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 88.

delicate a balance to ensure a peace through nuclear deterrence by engaging to hybrid tactics and that creates an unstable and this unpredictable security environment in South Asia. By achieving a peace in South Asia under the shadow of 5GW that requires the multidimensional to approach. The leaders' decisions to integrate the new means of warfare with their conventional war-fighting capabilities have also started changing the military doctrines. The prevalence of hybrid warfare in the leading security calculations of the states has created a blurred line between military and non-military tactics in which a combination of conventional and unconventional approaches emerges in the formal national policies of the states. In this way, the on-going war-fighting formal strategies of the states have gone beyond the conventional role of militaries in the mainstream defines planning of the states. A scope of peace in South Asia was intricately tied to the ability of states to adapted a realities of hybrid warfare. Hybrid warfare, that is incorporated conventional for military strategies alongside an irregular and its cyber operations, that becomes a framework for analysing a peace prospects for violating the regions. The new domain of warfare, consisting of applying hybrid tools, facilitated states to concentrate on a wide range of areas for exploiting the vulnerabilities of rival nations in specific areas. The objective of targeting certain vulnerable areas of the enemy demands the formal policymakers of states to craft adequate policy responses against the emerging multi-layered security conflicts.<sup>35</sup>

This diplomacy channels should have strengthened the regional cooperation that against cyber and this information threats must have been prioritized <sup>36</sup> . An international community has a role to mitigate the effects a hybrid warfare by purpose to ensure accountability for state-sponsored terrorism and the cyber initiatives. Only through a comprehensiveness strategy by addressing the underlying issues of hybrid warfare that is lasting for envisioned a region. it has revealed the Indian disinformation campaign in the world. The emergence of a hybrid mode of warfare is a part of the broader concept of modern warfare and conflict. The combination of traditional and non-traditional security approaches has introduced the hybrid means of warfare in the strategic competition of states. The hybrid warfare led the mainstream defines planners of state to relay on a mixture of war-fight capabilities in the conventional and non-conventional domains consisting of irregular and asymmetric

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<sup>35</sup> Hazem Kandil, *The Power Triangle: Military, Security, and Politics in Regime Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 98-100.

<sup>36</sup> Singh, Lieutenant General AK, and Lieutenant General Raj Shukla. "Changing Nature of Conflict in the 21st Century." *Military Strategy for India in the 21st Century*, New Delhi: KW Publishers (2020).

warfare strategies in the non-military domains. Hybrid warfare is based on a dynamic and multileveled approach to attack the vulnerable areas of the enemy in which misinformation operations, propaganda campaigns, ices for causing the economic crisis alone. An example of these attacks is the Stuxnet attack on the Iranian sensitive computers under the global spread of cyber-attacks in different regions. The emergence of a hybrid mode of warfare is a part of the broader concept of modern warfare and conflict, and the idea of hybrid warfare could be equated with the concept of 5 Generation Warfare (5GW).<sup>37</sup> The theoretical foundations of 5GW explain the role of advanced communication technologies, artificial intelligence, and the rising role of various semi-autonomous and fully-autonomous weapon systems in the conventional military doctrines of states.<sup>38</sup> The application of these war-fighting tactics on the strategic calculations of states has led the state governments to focus on the new domains of information technology with highly sophisticated and effectively decentralized warfare techniques.

A hybrid war holding the conflict today are fought by not only military but might also through the political destabilization, a misinformation campaign, and this economic manipulation. So the South Asia is a complex interstate relationship, that is specifically become India and Pakistan. This offers a case study for hybrid threats and its evolvement and countries are involved a long standing rivalry, while the tradition focuses on conventional military posturing, and this is increasing the shift for hybrid warfare domain. For both the states this is enhancing as cyber capabilities and this employs a social media for shaping the narrative, this is the potential peace becomes more dependent to mitigate these non-traditional threats. The concepts of hybrid warfare and the 5GW are interlinked and designed for the mainstream priorities of states in the interstate strategic competition of different states. Both concepts are an assortment of conventional and non-conventional military tactics supported by advanced communication technology generally, specifically Artificial Intelligence (AI). The prevalence of both concepts in the contemporary international system under the shadows of new

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<sup>37</sup> Raja Qaiser Ahmed, *Pakistan Factor and the Competing Perspective in India: Part Centric View* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2022), 220

<sup>38</sup> Attiq ur Rehman, "Indian Growing Reliance on the Military Application of Artificial Intelligence Technology and its Impacts on South Asian Regional Security," *Journal of Indian Studies* 09, no. 01 (January-June 2023), 92.

security threats has encircled the whole global system.<sup>39</sup> These prevailing strategic trends in the security calculations of states have compelled the formal defence planners of different states to adopt both areas of warfare against their potential rival nations. Both are the states' responses to the emerging security challenges of a new world and its increasing dependency on the indirect means of warfare, commonly known as the non-kinetic conception of warfare.<sup>40</sup> The process of the non-state actors and a cross-border terrorism adds to another layer to hybrid warfare in South Asia. Militant groups like the Taliban and Lashkar e Taiba and another historic been proxy actors which is creating a conflict between neighbouring countries.

Hybrid warfare is fundamentally a mixture of kinetic operations in an inflexible strategic competition of states based on various cyber-attack techniques, disinformation operations, economic coercion, and the projection of proxy elements against each other. The states relaying on the hybrid nature of warfare generally seek to deploy a full spectrum of national power, apart from conventional military capabilities, to pressurize, influence, and undermine the position of a rival nation in a broader strategic competition.<sup>41</sup> There emerging literature on the nature and characteristics of hybrid warfare in the international system has dubbed it a conflict of grey zone in which the states usually prefer to avoid the overt means of confrontation. The prime security planners of states believe that using conventional means is more likely to receive a traditional response from the regular armed forces of rival nations. The conceptual foundations of grey zone conflict generally explain a strategic approach consisting of indirect and covert means of warfare to secure a strategically advantageous position in an inter-state competition by using various coercive ad ambiguous operations. These covert actions of states facilitate their defence planners to keep their conflicts under the threshold of a conventional war while pushing the rival nations to a disadvantageous position.<sup>42</sup> In this way, applying grey zone war-fighting strategies is mainly designed to focus the blurred lines of their strategic contests with other nations to keep their hostility below the risk of a conventional military response. The growth of hybrid warfare

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<sup>39</sup> Sumit Ganguly, *Deadly Impasse: Indo-Pakistani Relations at the Dawn of a New Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 140.

<sup>40</sup> Brin Najzer, *The Hybrid Age: International Security in the Era of Hybrid Warfare* (London: Bloomsbury Academic Publications, 2022), 29.

<sup>41</sup> Saghir Iqbal, *Hybrid Warfare and its Impacts on Pakistan's Security* (New York: Independent Publishing, 2018), 18.

<sup>42</sup> David McFarland, *Understanding Hybrid Warfare: Navigating the Smoke and Mirrors of International Security* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2021), 53.

under the concept of grey zone conflict has become an overwhelming force in the ongoing strategic competition of states. The states involved in longstanding hostilities have started adopting this new domain warfare where the chances of surprise, deception, and ambiguity are high to secure a dominating position over the rival nations where the leaders of the rival nations will be unable to use their conventional military power. In the grey zone, strategic competition between two rival nations generally prevails in an inter-state conflict when their formal military forces are empowered with nuclear capabilities, according to a co-authored study of Jakub Eberle and Jan Daniel *Politics of Hybrid Warfare: The Remaking of Security in Czechia after 2014* (2018).<sup>43</sup> Hybrid warfare is fundamentally a mixture of kinetic operations in an inflexible strategic competition of states based on various cyber-attack techniques, disinformation operations, economic coercion, and the projection of proxy elements against each other. The states relying on the hybrid nature of warfare generally seek to deploy a full spectrum of national power, apart from conventional military capabilities, to pressurize, influence, and undermine the position of a rival nation in a broader strategic competition. The acquisition of nuclear weapons in a strategic competition of state creates a strategic balance between two rival nations under the undeniable role of deterrence in their hostility. The arrival of atomic deterrence has convinced the formal defence planners of the states to rely greatly on indirect means of warfare under hybrid warfare. Consequently, this scenario generates a conflict between two nuclear powers on multiple fronts, and the appropriate explanation of this argument can be obtained from the South Asian region where India and Pakistan are presently relying on the hybrid nature of warfare.

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<sup>43</sup> Jakub Elberle and Jan Daniel. *Politics of Hybrid Warfare: The Remaking of Security in Czechia after 2014* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2023), 28.

## Theoretical Framework

### Hybrid warfare theory

The hybrid warfare theory offers a comprehensive lens by providing an understanding and this intricate dynamic of modern conflicts. This theory also emphasizes combining conventional military tactics with unconventional strategies like cyber security attacks, economic pressure, and psychological operations. A complexity for contemporary warfare that was lied as a blend, where the traditional military engagement is intertwined with a non-traditional method.<sup>44</sup> So, in South Asia, hybrid warfare theory was provided a pertinent that gives a region's multifaceted security environment, including enduring conflicts between states, insurgencies, and the influence of the major global powers. A hybrid war theory was grounded in the notion that it was a modern conflict that was no longer confined to the battlefield but extended to various military domains. This approach integrated conventional military actions with unconventional tactics like guerrilla warfare, cyber warfare, and psychological operations.<sup>45</sup> The theory of hybrid warfare initially introduced by Frank Hoffman in his study *Conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars* (2007) and marked it as a prominent military strategy containing significant potential for serving the strategic objectives of nations.<sup>46</sup> The idea of Hoffman treats hybrid warfare as a military strategy in the age of newly emerging digital realities and the worse impacts of these weapons of information on the strategic positioning of states involved in major armed conflicts. The intellectual insights of Hoffman formally structured the conception of hybrid warfare and explained its relevance with the contemporary world power politics where the cyberspace has emerged a new domain of competition between states. Hoffman's work has been considered internationally as one of the pioneer intellectual accounts on the conceptual understandings of hybrid warfare and its overwhelming influences on the international system. The work of prominent military strategies, Colin S. Gray has been considered valuable in

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<sup>44</sup> Weissmann, Mikael, et al. *Hybrid warfare: Security and asymmetric conflict in international relations*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2021.

<sup>45</sup> Greg, Simons. "Operational implications and effects of informational and political dimensions of western hybrid warfare." *Российский социально-гуманитарный журнал* 3 (2021): 106-116.

<sup>46</sup> Frank G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars* (Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007), 10–12.

understanding the conceptual foundations of hybrid warfare and its increasing appreciation in the military doctrines of states. Gray's argued the hybrid warfare is combination of conventional and irregular war-fighting capabilities of states parallel to inflicting a sense of insecurity in enemy's inflexible behaviour.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, the intellectual efforts of James N. Mattis, David Kilcullen, Michael Barrett, William Nemeth, Russel Glenn, and Philipp S. Meilinger provided valuable insights on the role of hybrid warfare in shaping the new strategic behaviours of states located in diverse regions.

The central theme of the hybrid warfare theory is based on the notion of applying mixed war-fighting tools in a strategic competition based on conventional and non-conventional tactics. The basic principles of theory focus on the application of a wide range of armed tools and military strategies to attain specific strategic objectives. Then the multidimensional and cross-domain operational designs of hybrid warfare primarily support the idea of a comprehensive and multidimensional war-fighting framework. This approach create a broad spectrum application of military strategy involving all the possible domains of warfare such as land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace. The involvement of these kinds of operations in a combined military strategy developed an ambiguous security environment to push the potential rivals at the disadvantageous positions. The exploitation of ambiguous or unclear security environment denying the rival's war-fighting capabilities provide certain strategic benefits to the nations believing in hybrid nature of conflict. The attachment of psychological operations plays vital role in the military operations centred in the idea of hybrid warfare because the core principles of hybrid warfare focused on the employment of psychological operations in an armed conflict.

The application of this theory on the contemporary international system revealed its application in the different regions such as South Asia. In South Asia, this theory is specific for the relevant as it captures the region for the complexity of the security and its dynamics. A longer rivalry between India and Pakistan encompasses not just direct military confrontations but also conventional methods such as cross-border terrorism and cyber-attacks. A conflict in Afghanistan featuring a mixture of

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<sup>47</sup> Murat Caliskan, 'Hybrid Warfare and Strategic Theory\* | Beyond the Horizon ISSG', 25 April 2019, <https://behorizon.org/hybrid-warfare-through-the-lens-of-strategic-theory/>.

traditional military engagement and unconventional tactics that was employed for various functions, including the Taliban and ISIS <sup>48</sup>. Integrating hybrid warfare methods into these conflicts was illustrated for theory and practices for applicability to make the region stable. An era of fifth-generation warfare (5GW) that represented hybrid warfare focused on non-kinetic methods and psychological operations <sup>49</sup>.

This is unlikely to be an earlier form of warfare that prioritized a confrontation, and the 5GW emphasized information of the dominance that is narrative control and a technological influence that affected public opinion and political stability. In South Asia, this needs to understand the scope of peace amidst 5GW that was required an examination of both traditional hybrid warfare tactics that were newer strategies by associating with 5GW <sup>50</sup>. That includes some recognized information operations and cyber capabilities and this influences a campaign shaped regional dynamics and impacts a peace process.

In a South Asia complex, the regional dynamics were a testament to the challenges posed by a hybrid and its fifth-generation warfare. There is an example of the India-Pakistan conflict that has historically become involved in conventional military skirmishes that included a range of hybrid tactics like cyber espionage and started disinformation campaigns <sup>51</sup>. The non-traditional methods have been added for the new dimensions to conflicts affecting the peace pursued and maintained. This underscores the role of 5GW in complicating peace efforts, and this is to integrate our influence on operations and informed warfare by the difference of actors that was illustrated a complexity by achieving stability in such a context. Moreover, the emergence of threats and opportunities was associated with a 5GW that presented both the challenges and possibilities for peace in South Asia <sup>52</sup>. Cyber warfare is an

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<sup>48</sup> SHAIKH, SHIRAZ, and DR KHURAM IQBAL. "ANALYZING AFGHAN TALIBAN INSURGENCY THROUGH INSURGENCY ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK."

<sup>49</sup> Kalnitski, Viktor. "Experiences at the strategic level of the Afghanistan operation." (2021).

<sup>50</sup> Behera, Anshuman. "India's Security Response to the Maoist Insurgency." *Indian Studies Review* 2.1 (2021): 1-16.

<sup>51</sup> Saud, Adam, and Nehal Kazim. "Disinformation and Propaganda Tactics: Impacts of Indian Information Warfare on Pakistan." *Journal of Indian Studies* 8.02 (2022): 335-354.

<sup>52</sup> Askari, Muhammad Usman, and Lal Khan Niazi. "Indian Hybrid War against Pakistan: A Strategic Theory Perspective." *Journal of Indian Studies* 8.01 (2022): 189-208.

instance that has become a significant concern with increasing capabilities and attacks that promote potential disruption in national security.

## **Research Methodology**

This study aims to explain and analyse the recent trends of India-Pakistan competition in the domain of 5GW under the broader shadows of modern warfare technologies. It is qualitative research based on a combination of explanatory and analytical methods consisting of a combination of data sources, primary and secondary. The explanatory attribute of this research provides a comprehensive understanding of Indian increasing reliance on the 5GW generally and the use of various anti-Pakistani campaigns by New Delhi specifically, whereas the analytical feature presents a brief account of multiple arguments analysing the impacts of this new domain of warfare on the scope of peace in the region. Thus, the explanatory and analytical research methods mutually maintain the methodological foundations of this research with the support of primary and secondary data sources. The quest for maintaining a balance between both data sources has led this research to overcome the problem of obtaining primary data through accessing various online links of different government departments and official websites of the India-Pakistan governments. Moreover, the online available policy documents and the official statements of several government institutions have also been considered the primary sources of information in this research.

## **Significance of Study**

With a new wave of 5GW, the chances of peace between India and Pakistan have deteriorated further, and it has complicated the regional security environment of the subcontinent. The campaign by an independent European institute clarified to the whole world that New Delhi is active in sponsoring multileveled anti-Pakistan campaigns across the globe. The report says that an Indian-sponsored web of different global networks of disinformation means has created an international trend of critically examining Pakistan's standing in regional and extra-regional affairs. The revelation of the Indian disinformation campaign by an independent European institute clarified to the whole world that New Delhi is active in sponsoring multileveled anti-Pakistan campaigns across the globe. Therefore, an appropriate understanding of the ongoing trend of strategic competition between two rival neighbours and its association with the Indian regionally hegemonic behaviour can help understand the nature of South Asian regional politics. Non-states actors, this is essential feature of hybrid warfare, this plays a crucial role for to destabilization of peace in South Asia and this is insurgent organization have longer served as the tools for hybrid strategies. These actors do not have an operation within a broader

South Asian stated by extent to influence on neighbouring countries, that fosters an instability and undermining the regional peace. Thus, a thorough study of the evolving India-Pakistan protracted conflict in the era of 5GW will provide an accurate picture of the South Asian security environment. It will provide a rational understanding of the Indian South Asian policy and its upgradation in under the influences of contemporary information age. It is widely believed that maintaining peace will not only prevent the regionally destabilizing factors, but it will reveal the complexities of New Delhi's contemporary strategic posture. Therefore, this study will facilitate mainstream Islamabad-based leadership to understand New Delhi's strategic posture laced with hybrid tools of warfare. The leading state authorities, political leaders, and diplomatic communities in Pakistan may treat this study as one of the dimensions of evolving strategic competition between two nuclear neighbours of South Asia.

### **Delimitations**

This study describes the evolving strategic competition between India and Pakistan in the information age under the nuclear shadows. The new domains of warfare between both nuclear contestants of South Asia are comprised of hybrid and fifth-generation warfare, where the Indian government is taking the leading. The Indian anti-Pakistani obsession has been transformed into a global campaign of various disinformation operations against Pakistan to downgrade the standing of Pakistan in regional and international affairs. The debate on India's worldwide disinformation campaigns started internationally in December 2020 when a European independent research organization proved the spread of Indian international propaganda to serve its core national interest in the South Asian region. While selecting the 5GW as the most significant area of New Delhi's contemporary war planning, this research focuses on the Indian use of modern information communication technology for strategic purposes, which have generated a global debate in the post-2020 environment after the revelation of the European report. The 5GW covers a wide range of areas of Indian Anti-Pakistani planning, but the focus of this research is the advanced stage of the information war between India and Pakistan. Akin to various other India-led strategic developments of the South Asian region, New Delhi has taken the lead in the evolving India-Pakistan competition in the domain of information. In other words, the evolving scenario of information war in South Asia is mainly dependent on the modern faces of Indian strategic thinking and its worldwide promotion to serve the core strategic interests of New Delhi. The use of various propaganda operations across the world has been identified as the

gravitational point of contemporary Indian defense planning in this research. The focus of New Delhi on the spread of an inaccurate picture of Pakistan's standing in its home region has started serving Indian national interests parallel to damaging the scope of peace in the broader South Asian region. In this way, this research focused on the relevance of peace to South Asia's persistently damaging regional security environment.

### **Organizational Structure**

Based on the research mentioned above question and the stated research objectives, this research tries to explain the nature of New Delhi's newly adopted Pakistan-specific international disinformation campaign and its worse impacts on the values of peace between India and Pakistan. The main structure of this research is divided into four chapters apart from having a few pages of Introduction and Conclusion. The first chapter of this research explains the contemporary nature of India-Pakistan strategic competition and its unprecedented growth in the age of non-traditional security threats. The debate on the increasing reliance of New Delhi on the new means of warfare has started the main discussion of this research in the first chapter. The second chapter explains the role of 5GW in shaping specific defence behaviours of New Delhi and Islamabad against each other. On an impartial and rational basis, this chapter describes the Indian position in designing the new basis of India-Pakistan competition in information warfare. The core theme of the third chapter deals with the impacts of New Delhi-Islamabad-specific modern warfare techniques generally and the global spread of disinformation around the globe specifically. This chapter mainly focuses on the persistently deteriorating regional security environment and the degrading status of 5GW in the nuclearized subcontinent's intense regional security environment. The last fourth chapter of this study focused on the question of peace in South Asia under the influences of 5GW, in which India has created a global web of different Pakistan-specific disinformation operations.

## **Chapter 01: The Nature of Contemporary India-Pakistan Hostility**

The South Asian region, where an unstoppable and irreversible strategic competition between the pair of nuclear-armed states has become a permanent feature of regional politics, portrays an awful picture of peace due to the contrasting strategic ambitions of both South Asian competitors. India's quest for acquiring a regional hegemonic status is posing grave threats to the national security of Pakistan, whereas Islamabad always preferred to adopt a defensive stance. The combination of offensive and defensive strategic choices of New Delhi and Islamabad has created a complex regional security environment in which the leaders of both nations have developed incompatible positions in regional and extra-regional affairs. In the contemporary situation, an overwhelming wave of technological advancement has pushed South Asia towards a new strategic environment. The dramatic changes in information technology altered the conventional foundations of India-Pakistan hostility, and the leaders of both nations started preferring new means of warfare against each other.<sup>53</sup> The offensive strategic desires of New Delhi-cemented in an anti-neighbourhood policy inflicted a sense of insecurity in Pakistan's mind-set. They forced the Pakistani leadership to augment their defensive policy choices. As a result, the Indian security establishment inaugurated a new era of South Asian politics by designing various propagating initiatives to undermine Pakistan's position in its home region.

Additionally, the quest for isolating Islamabad in the international community further directed New Delhi to stigmatize its nuclear neighbour in world politics. The Indian government has become less reluctant to adopt new means of warfare in the broader South Asian region where the security has already been degraded by the New Delhi-Islamabad rivalry. The Indian leaders are determined to downgrade the position of Pakistan in its domestic region due to Islamabad's quest for counterbalancing Indian offensive South Asian policy.<sup>54</sup> The changing patterns of Indian South Asian policy and its worse impacts on the nuclearized subcontinent's regional security environment have inaugurated a new debate on New Delhi's use of information technology for strategic purposes. This behaviour of New Delhi is primarily an outcome of New Delhi's persistently evolving security

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<sup>53</sup> Tariq Ali, *The Duel: Pakistan on the Flight Path of American Power* (Toronto: Scribner, 2008), 28.

<sup>54</sup> Sinisa Malesevic, *The Sociology of War and Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 102.

competition with Pakistan and the use of 5GW as an appropriate domain for stigmatizing the soft image of Pakistan around the globe. Understanding the growing reliance of India on the 5GW techniques and its advancement in multiple directions needs an appropriate comprehension of New Delhi-Islamabad strategic competition in the age of globalization.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, the main focus of this chapter is on the changing nature of the India-Pakistan rivalry and its evolution under the shadows of post-globalization or post-twenty-first-century environments of international power politics. Parallel to explaining various changing patterns of India-Pakistan hostility in the intense regional security environment, the impacts of post-information developments of the global system and their South Asian directions are the main discussion points in this chapter.

### **The Genesis of the India-Pakistan Conflict**

South Asian regional politics cannot be separated from the decades-long India-Pakistan rivalry, which has a history of protracted conflict between two key neighbouring South Asian players. The hostility between the two states played a significant role in shaping South Asian regional politics, and this rivalry engaged India and Pakistan in a strict bilateral competition to manage their influence in the region.<sup>56</sup> The approaches of both states for managing regional politics have contrasting values. The Indian leaders always tried to make New Delhi a powerful player in the area while having regionally dominating designs. In contrast, the government of Pakistan always preferred to contain a counterbalance in the regions to keep regional politics stable and balanced.<sup>57</sup> Pakistan's quest for managing the politics of its home region in a balanced and stable way developed a contrasting combination with the Indian strategic regional aspirations, and it has created a multileveled conflict with India. The leaders of both states are strict with their national interests, which are inherited in contrast to strategic thinking and incompatible political behaviours. The evolution of their bilateral hostility has resulted in various territory disputes, religious differences, and geopolitical rivalries, and the governments of both states adopted strictly incompatible standings against each other in regional

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<sup>55</sup> Owen Bennett-Jones, *The Bhutto Dynasty: The Struggle for Power in Pakistan* (California: Yale University Press, 2020), 20-22.

<sup>56</sup> Hassan Abbas, *Pakistan's Drift into Extremism: Allah, the Army, and America's War on Terror* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2005), 102.

<sup>57</sup> Peter A. Kiss, *Winning Wars Amongst the People: Case Studies in Asymmetric Conflict* (Nebraska: Nebraska University Press), 102.

and extra-regional affairs. The history of their bilateral interaction is inherited in the 1947 partition of the subcontinent when the withdrawal of colonial forces from the subcontinent created independent India and Pakistan based on their ideological difference.<sup>58</sup> The partition of British India in 1947 resulted in the formation of two independent countries: India, which has a population that is predominately Hindu, and Pakistan, which has a population that is predominately Muslim. However, the separation was accompanied by severe violence and mass migrations, resulting in deeply ingrained enmity and a legacy of never-fully resolved concerns. Since India and Pakistan gained their independence from British rule in 1947, the two countries have been involved in some conflicts, limited wars, and military standoffs, including the Indo-Pakistani wars of 1947, 1965, and 1971, as well as the Kargil crisis in 1999. These conflicts have not only led to great amounts of human misery and economic losses, but they have also exacerbated the long-standing antagonism that exists between the two countries.<sup>59</sup> Throughout history, the controversial issues of Jammu and Kashmir's disputed territories and other territorial claims along the Line of Control (LoC) have remained contentious, further fuelling tensions and generating intermittent conflicts. The significance of the Kashmir issue between India and Pakistan has been rationalized by various academic community figures accessed through various declassified documents such as the Archives of US Department of State. The document *Foreign Relations, 1961-63, South Asia* was based on a telegram stating the position of Pakistan in South Asia and the strong associations of Islamabad with the Kashmir issue.<sup>60</sup> The changing nature of the regional security environment of the post-partitioned subcontinent and the increasing points of disagreement between India and Pakistan pushed both neighbouring states of South Asia towards hostile interstate interaction.<sup>61</sup> The persistently evolving security competition between states has pushed their respective defense planners under the shadows of a conflicted regional security environment. The leaders of both contesting regional players decided to stand against each

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<sup>58</sup> Attiq ur Rehman, "The Emerging Era of Minilateralism in India Foreign Policy and its Impacts on South Asian Security," *South Asian Studies* 38, No. 01 (January-June 2023), 105.

<sup>59</sup> Attiq ur Rehman, "The Emerging Era of Minilateralism in Indian Foreign Policy and its Impacts on South Asian Politics," *South Asian Studies* 38, no. 01 (January-June 2023), 104.

<sup>60</sup> Bureau of Public Affairs Department Of State. The Office of Electronic Information, 'Documents 201-351' (Department Of State. The Office of Electronic Information, Bureau of Public Affairs.), accessed 26 August 2024, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/kennedyjf/46456.htm>.

<sup>61</sup> Paul M. McGarr, *The Cold War in South Asia: Britain, the United States, and the Indian Subcontinent, 1945-1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 201.

other by adopting various formal defensive doctrines. The Indian leaders always remained cautious about the status of Pakistan in its home region as the Islamabad-based strategic community is determined to counter Indian regionally hostile behaviour.<sup>62</sup> The evolution of the South Asian conflict between India and Pakistan and its strict attachment to the regional security environment of the subcontinent has created an intense regional security environment which could be measured on the following lines.

### **India-Pakistan Major Conflicts and Disputes**

**Partition of British India (1947)** The division of British India into two independent countries, India and Pakistan, occurred due to the partition of British India in 1947. The divide was accompanied by widespread bloodshed and enormous migrations, both of which led to the development of long-standing hostility and unresolved problems between New Delhi and Islamabad. The division of territory, sectarian, and the status of princely states, most notably Jammu and Kashmir, were among the difficult topics which emerged gradually between India and Pakistan.<sup>63</sup> In the debate over the partition of the subcontinent, the status of bloodshed in the form of massive migration across the border laid the foundations of India-Pakistan hostility, which was based on the ideological divide.

### **Wars between India and Pakistan in the Pre-1998 Era**

The emerging rivalry between India and Pakistan has resulted in certain conventional armed confrontations, which could be understood with the help of certain points, such as the outbreak of major armed clashes between New Delhi and Islamabad. The first Indo-Pakistan war broke out not long after India and Pakistan gained their independence. Jammu and Kashmir were at the centre of this armed confrontation. The conflict led to the territory being divided into portions controlled by India and parts administered by Pakistan, which led to a protracted dispute about the region's status. It was the first post-partitioned clashed between India and Pakistan, and both states' leaders adopted a multileveled approach to dealing with each other. The second war between New Delhi and Islamabad started in 1965 when the Indian troops violated the Pakistani border and forced the

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<sup>62</sup> Husian Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2010), 154.

<sup>63</sup> Tariq Rahman, *Pakistan's Wars: An Alternative History* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 210.

Pakistani forces to respond accordingly.<sup>64</sup> The Pakistan forces were activated under Operation Gibraltar, and the two forces jumped into a limited armed clash with each other. After 1965, the next clash between the two powers occurred in 1971 when East Pakistan was separated from its western part and became Bangladesh. The war, an indirect clash between India and Pakistan because of Indian covert involvement in the conflict and the support of India to the Bengali militants, proved that the Indian government was committed to dividing Pakistan. The post-1971 scenario made India and Pakistan strict rivals. The hostility between both states proved that the probability of a border clash between both contesting states proved that the leaders of both states were empowering their strategic muscles against each other.<sup>65</sup> The continuation of hostility in the post-1971 environment inflicted a sense of insecurity in Pakistan's mindset. It allowed the Pakistani government authorities to strengthen its strategic muscles to overcome their security concerns. The emerging clashes and the prevailing hostilities at multileveled between New Delhi and Islamabad complicated their interstate interaction and started relaying on their intense relations. The continuation of intense hostility between India and Pakistan brought various changes in the regional security environment of South Asia. It led the governments of both states to develop their effective defensive capabilities persistently. The major shift in the regional security environment occurred in 1974 when the Indian government conducted its first nuclear explosions under the title of 'Smiling Buddha' and communicated New Delhi's aspiration to become a nuclear power.

### **India-Pakistan Clash in Post-1998 Era**

The Indian decision to become a nuclear power in the region hampered Pakistan's security calculations and compelled the government of Pakistan to start its nuclear program. The Indian-inflicted sense of insecurity in Pakistan's mind set forced Islamabad to match its capabilities with India and start its nuclear program. In this way, an overt phase of nuclearization prevailed in South Asia in 1998 when the government of Pakistan declared its nuclear weapon status in response to

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<sup>64</sup> Pallavi Raghavan, *Animosity at Bay: An Alternative History of the India-Pakistan Relationship, 1947-1952* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 148.

<sup>65</sup> Manjeet S. Pardesi and Sumit Ganguly, "The Rise of India and the India-Pakistan Conflict," *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 31, No. 01 (Winter 2007), 135.

Indian testing of its nuclear devices.<sup>66</sup> The arrival of nuclear weapons in the South Asian region changed the nature of the India-Pakistan conflict and made war less likely between New Delhi and Islamabad. The arrival of nuclear weapons in the subcontinent inaugurated a new era of bilateral confrontation between India and Pakistan parallel to making a direct armed conflict less-likely. In this way, the arrival of nuclear weapons in the subcontinent launched an era of indirect clashes between two nuclear weapon states without minimizing their conventional points of disagreement. The post-nuclearized phase of India-Pakistan relations started witnessing an era of indirect clashes in which the Kargil crisis was the first clash between New Delhi and Islamabad.

In 1998, the outbreak of the Kargil Conflict proved that the India-Pakistan clashes had been augmented after the arrival of nuclear weapons in the India-Pakistan rivalry.<sup>67</sup> The clash was based on territorial issues as well as the strategic competition that was going on between the two states. Unresolved concerns and historical battles have played a significant role in shaping the South Asian area, and these tensions are at the heart of the strategic competition between India and Pakistan. The subsequent years of the nuclearization of the subcontinent witnessed high tensions under the nuclear shadows in South Asia due to the constantly augmenting multi-layered disagreements between New Delhi and Islamabad. The absence of war between both possessors of nuclear weapons let their respective strategic communities remain strict to their points of dispute for the achievement of their security objectives. The continuation of India-Pakistan created a broader trust-deficit environment by making both states hostile in the region with the support of their constantly growing war-fighting capabilities. The post-nuclearized environments created deterrence in the region without reducing the bilateral hostility of the two key players of South Asia. The deterring role of nuclear weapons made war-less likely despite having opposition of Islamabad and New Delhi at the regional and international levels.<sup>68</sup> There are certain developments in the strategic domain between India and Pakistan which have degraded the role of deterring forces in the South Asian region parallel to damaging the scope of peace and stability in the nuclearized region. There are a number of

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<sup>66</sup> Anatol Lieven, *Pakistan: A Hard Country* (London: Public Affairs Publishers, 2012), 302.

<sup>67</sup> Stephen Alter, *Amritsar to Lahore: A Journey Across the India-Pakistan Border* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 230.

<sup>68</sup> Thorsten Wojczewski, "The Persistency of the India-Pakistan Conflict," *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 01, No. 03 (December 2014), 322.

declassified documents of international intelligence community regarding South Asian changing dimensions of regional security politics which is strictly dependant on the New Delhi-Islamabad strategic competition. CIA's General Record also realised certain declassified documents verifying the emerging threats from the nuclearized subcontinent where the Indian and Pakistani governments have developed several incompatible formal standings against each other. The document no. 308 *India-Pakistan* mentioned the structural nature of hostilities between New Delhi and Islamabad, which has been placed the entire regional politics under nuclear shadows.<sup>69</sup>

### **The Advanced Nature of India-Pakistan Conflict**

The South Asian regional security environment has undergone various phases in which the post-nuclearized environment remained a significant part of the India-Pakistan conflict. The hostile interaction between two competing states remained active and multileveled even in the post-nuclearized phase, where the contesting two-sided leaders of states jumped into sub-conventional level conflicts. The start of the twenty-first century and the tragic incident of 9/11 changed the traditional security outlooks of states parallel to compelling their respective governments to change their mainstream defense priorities<sup>70</sup>. The changing attributes of two contesting powers under an era of global changes introduced various contesting models of both states against each other. The hostility under the nuclear shadows remained an essential element of international power politics because the possession of atomic weapons by India and Pakistan dragged the attention of the global community towards South Asia, and the leaders of different states started paying attention to South Asian regionally developed nuclearized politics. The leaders of other states generally and the advocates of arms control and disarmament particularly began focusing on the South Asian version of an arms race between two arch-rivals. The territorially adjoining two arch-rivals are active in increasing their strategic capabilities due to the prevailing security threats of regional politics, even in the presence of

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<sup>69</sup> 'INDIA-PAKISTAN | CIA FOIA (Foia.Cia.Gov)', accessed 26 August 2024, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp78-01617a001600010001-2>.

<sup>70</sup> Pankaj Dodh, "India-Pakistan Relations," *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues* 21, No. 04 (October-December, 2017), 120.

nuclear weapons. Indian leaders are determined to keep the regional politics in its favour while placing Islamabad at a disadvantageous position in its home region.<sup>71</sup> Thus, Pakistan became a severe victim of the Indian disinformation campaign. The Indian strategic thinking is primarily making Indian hostile against Pakistan through adopting different defensive strategies. The changes at the global level become an additional factor in determining India-Pakistan relations in South Asia due to New Delhi's strategic ambition to upset Islamabad's India-centric position in the region. The acquisition of nuclear weapons remained an effective element for reducing the possibility of direct war in South Asia. Still, it widened the diplomatic and politic gaps between India and Pakistan.

### **The Post-Nuclearized era**

The war raised the concern of the international strategic community. It attracted the proponents of peace and stability towards South Asia, where New Delhi and Islamabad were less reluctant to address their fundamental points of disagreement. The post-nuclearized phase created a new security environment competition in the region where the values of peace and stability started vanishing due to the increasing levels of diplomatic and political disagreements between New Delhi and Islamabad.<sup>72</sup> The Kargil war was the immediate clash after the nuclearization, which provided a realization to the international community and the South Asian contestants about the continuation of interstate tensions in the region. Akin to Kargil, the changes in the international security environment after 9/11 introduced a global counter-terror campaign by inviting all the states to join the US-led global war on terror. The South Asian extension of the US-led global war on terror invited India and Pakistan to support the US vision of creating a terror-free international system. Indian decision to join the US-led war on terror forced Pakistan to follow India in the global system, and the Musharraf government preferred to remain with the United States in the twenty-first century, which was a reflection of the US-Pakistan decades-long cooperation. Based on a decade-long cooperative history of US-Pakistan relations, the Musharraf government from Pakistan accepted the US as a reliable

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<sup>71</sup> Moonis Ahmar, "War Avoidance between India and Pakistan: A Model of Conflict Resolution and Confidence Building in the Post-Cold War Era," *Strategic Studies* 16, No. 1/2 (Autumn & Winter 1993), 12.

<sup>72</sup> Myra Macdonald, *Defeat is an Orphan: How Pakistan Lost the Great South Asian War* (London: Hurst & Company, 2017), 108.

partner in its war on terror. It formally declared its support to the broader US counter-terror campaign in Afghanistan. The support of Pakistan to the US in its global war on terror and the Afghanistan-specific US counter-terror efforts made a strong point in constructing US-Pakistan bilateral relations.<sup>73</sup> Parallel to Pakistan, the Indian government supported the United States in its global counter-terror campaign due to the New Delhi-Washington's emerging bilateral strategic collaboration. The bilateral cooperation between Washington and New Delhi led their respective leaders to expand the nature of their cooperative interstate relations. This situation resulted in Washington's decision to sign a strategic partnership with New Delhi while declaring India a close US strategic partner in Asian power politics.

### **The Role of Extra-Regional Powers**

The role of extra-regional powers cannot be separated from South Asian regional politics since the history of South Asian regional politics has always remained at the mercy of great power politics. The extra-regional powers always remained ambitious in expanding their South Asian engagements, believing that access to South Asia would let them access the Indian Ocean.<sup>74</sup> The access to South Asian oceanic politics further proved that South Asian regional politics always remained a central point of great power politics where the contesting claims of great power are important to understand. The roots of South Asian attachment to great power politics can be traced in the history of Cold War politics when the newly declared independent status of the subcontinent after the British colonial withdrawal resulted from the end of the Second World War. The end of World War II and the prevention of British colonial rule from the subcontinent changed the nature of the whole international system and introduced the bipolar division of the world with the creation of the Iron Curtain in Europe. The creation of the Iron Curtain resulted from growing US-Soviet rivalry and an unprecedented growth of US-Soviet hostility that divided the international system into two parts

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<sup>73</sup> Srinivasan, "Tangible-Intangible Factors Interaction on Hostility Escalation and Rivalry Endurance," *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 02, No. 02 (August 2015), 160.

<sup>74</sup> Muhammad Sajjad Malik, "Pakistan-India Relations: An Analytical Perspective of Peace Efforts," *Strategic Studies* 39, No. 01 (Spring 2019), 62.

under the Eastern and Western blocs.<sup>75</sup> The intensifying politics of Eastern and Western blocs encircled the international system. They forced the states in different regions to join the US-Soviet-specific bipolar divisions of the world. It was an era of alliance-counter-alliance politics in which the leaders of other nations started joining both divisions of the international system. The US-Soviet competition for expanding their alliances worldwide affected states' positions in diverse regions. The inevitable role of US-Soviet designs of alliance politics during the Cold War affected the politics of various regions, where South Asia was not an exception. The impacts of Cold War-centric bipolarity in the world affected the positions of India and Pakistan because the development of a multi-layered conflict between New Delhi and Islamabad attracted the leaders of great powers toward South Asia. In response to the emerging forces of the Cold War in the South Asian region, the initial leadership of India under the Nehru administration decided to stand with the Soviet Union in its publicly known non-aligned stance due to New Delhi's political inclination towards Moscow.<sup>76</sup>

The government of Pakistan also decided to become an important player in international politics cemented by the Cold War designs. The leaders of Pakistan preferred the United States as a close cooperative ally in the politics of a bipolar world. In this way, the Indian and Pakistani governments preferred to stand in opposite blocs during the intense era of Cold War politics. Pakistan's decision for joining United States in the decades-long Cold War politics accepted by Washington, and this has been validated through several official documents in the declassified form. The document *Memorandum for the President: Action 27870* highlighted the role of Islamabad in the US-supported western alliance.<sup>77</sup> The opposite policy choices of both states for the great power politics led their respective leaderships to empower their regional positions against each other. Thus, combining regional and international interests was the primary factor attaching South Asian regional politics to international power politics.<sup>78</sup> The great powers align their foreign policies with the South Asian

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<sup>75</sup> Pratap Bhanu Metha, "India-Pakistan: Enduring Stalemate," *Economic and Political Weekly* 38, No. 21 (May 24-30, 2003), 2015.

<sup>76</sup> Sharat Sabharwal, *India's Pakistan Conundrum: Managing a Complex Relationship* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 220.

<sup>77</sup> 'The Tilt: The U.S. and the South Asian Crisis of 1971', accessed 26 August 2024, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/>.

<sup>78</sup> C. Christine Fair, *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 87.

regional powers to keep the South Asian region an important centre of great power politics due to its unique geo-strategic position in the international system.

During the Cold War, the great powers emphasized the South Asian region for the achievement of their geo-strategic interest due to the geographical proximity of two big anti-American powers, China and the Soviet Union. The common communist ideologies of Chinese and Russian governments decide became the potential threats to the American global standings, and the US policy makers preferred to land in South Asia for the achievement of their core geo-strategic interests. The American decision makers treated South Asia as an important point of their geo-strategic struggle with Soviet Union under the strict bipolar divisions of the international system.<sup>79</sup> The US threat perception was linked with the increasing influences of communist forces in the world and the determinations of Chinese and Russian governments for expanding their shared ideologies. These spread of this ideology in the international system was fundamentally linked with the global market trends in which the communist ideology was a close market-based ideology preferring to denounce the Western capitalist markets. It was becoming a prime security threat for the US geo-economic interests around the globe. In this way, the American security calculation of the Cold War era decided to develop close cooperative ties with South Asia's two contesting regional players.<sup>80</sup> As a result, the US-Pakistan multifaceted and bilateral relations came into being, and both governments started cooperating in different fields.

In contrast to Islamabad's preference for joining the US as a close cooperative partner, New Delhi created a close partnership with the Soviet Union. This scenario attached the regional politics of South Asia with the international power politics, parallel to placing India and Pakistan under the shadows of great power politics. The Indian-Pakistan decision to join the great powers was a reflection of their regional strategic contest in which the contesting governments of South Asian regional powers development a close alignment with the great powers. The end of the Cold War and the disappearance of the Soviet Union from the face of the earth led India towards the United States. The growing US-Indian strategic partnership inflicted a sense of insecurity in Pakistan's mind set and pushed

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<sup>79</sup> Attiq ur Rehman, "Maritime Politics in South Asian and Naval Compulsions of CPEC for Pakistan," *Policy Perspective* 15, no. 01 (2018), 81.

<sup>80</sup> Anam Zakaria, *The Footprints of Partition: Narratives of Four Generations of Pakistanis and Indians* (Haryana: Harper Collins, 2015), 152.

Islamabad towards China. In this way, the role of great powers as the extra-regional factors always remained important in shaping the regional conflicted politics of South Asia due to the intensifying regional security environment. The attachment of the great power's interests with the South Asian region convinced the two contesting powers of South Asia on the following of great power politics. A detailed analysis of this factor has been discussed in the later parts of this chapter which could be sufficient to understand the growth of South Asian regional politics under the great power's politics. The scenario mentioned above has cleared that South Asian regional politics are primarily based on the changing patterns of India-Pakistan hostile relations and the persistent growth of these patterns in diverse directions. The elements of strict hostility laid the foundations of an unending strategic competition between New Delhi and Islamabad, resulting in an intense security environment of the nuclearized subcontinent. The intense security of the region under nuclear shadows has established deterrence between both nuclear powers without reducing their fundamental points of disagreement.<sup>81</sup> The increasing reliance of both states on modern warfare has become a common practice in South Asia due to New Delhi and Islamabad's quests for adopting modern means of warfare against each other. The improvement in information technology and the advanced cyberspace across the globe is an important factor in this regard. The improvements in information technology have provided various new means of empowering their contesting policies against each other. The use of technology in the strategic domain has inaugurated a new race in the nuclearized subcontinent, where India is a trend setter. Some academic figures from various parts of the world have proved that technology has started playing an important role in shaping New Delhi's strategic thinking patterns. New Delhi's increasing reliance on modern information communication technology and Indian bilateral strategic designs worldwide have introduced an environment of GW in South Asia. New Delhi has launched a multileveled campaign of various anti-Pakistan operations. These operations are primarily designed to downgrade the standing of Pakistan in regional and international affairs. The launching of these campaigns is inherited from Indian traditional antipathy towards Pakistan, consisting of different disinformation operations and fake news propaganda. The spread of these propaganda campaigns has been fostered in the contemporary era of the Modi government, where the Indian leaders are highly

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<sup>81</sup> Yasim Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 112.

committed to carrying the ideological designs of New Delhi against Pakistan. Non-states actors, this is essential feature of hybrid warfare, this plays a crucial role for to destabilization of peace in South Asia and this is insurgent organization have longer served as the tools for hybrid strategies. These actors do not have an operation within a broader South Asian stated by extent to influence on neighbouring countries, that fosters an instability and undermining the regional peace.

### **Concluding Analysis:**

The central theme of this chapter tried to provide a summary of the South Asian regional security environment in which India and Pakistan are the two arch-rival nations with multi-layered points of disagreement. The conflicting positions of Indian and Pakistani leaders in regional and extra-regional politics have created an environment of political mistrust, diplomatic tensions, and strategic competition in South Asia. The decades-long conflict between two bordering nations of South Asia is rooted in their contrast political ideologies, conflicting histories, and social incompatibilities. The main clash of both states started from the territorial disagreements on the bordering areas along with the Line of Control (LoC) which was further intensified with the emergence of Kashmir as a disputed territory between them. In this way, the Kashmir issue became the bone of contention between New Delhi and Islamabad, and their respective government always remained active in augmenting their influences on the Kashmir issue parallel to cultivating diplomatic support for their positions on the Kashmir issue. A major turn occurred in the history of South Asian regional politics when the Indian leaders decided to declare their nuclear weapon status and forced Pakistan to take appropriate counter measures. As a result, the declared nuclear weapons capabilities of New Delhi and Islamabad inaugurated a new strategic competition in the region while making Kashmir a nuclear flashpoint. The arrival of atomic weapons in the South Asian region added a new layer of competition in the area. It compelled the conflicting governments of the two neighbouring states to remain consistent with the strategic disagreements in the region. The deterring role of nuclear weapons in the region outdated the probability of direct armed confrontation between India and Pakistan and started causing multifaceted contesting interaction of both states against each other.



## Chapter 02: The Fifth Generation Warfare and South Asian Politics

South Asian regional politics reflects strict power competition between two arch-rivals under the nuclear shadows. The contesting nature of their bilateral interaction is the fundamental cause behind their persistently emerging disagreements over different points. Their alarming threat perception and the political disconnects between the governments of both states always convinced the leaders of both states to empower their defense capabilities against each other. The role of their contesting defense planning is important in this regard because the leading political authorities of both states are actively engaged in developing multi-layered defense systems to keep regional politics in their favour. The struggle to keep the regional politics in their favour has resulted in various war-fighting advanced capabilities of their regular armed forces.<sup>82</sup> Both states' formal defense planners are deeply engaged in constructing different conventional and non-conventional ways of fighting with each other. The formulation of hostile behaviours of both states in the traditional and non-traditional domains has let their contesting leaders acquire modern warfare strategies for pushing each other into disadvantageous positions.

The territorial disagreement, mainly over the border issues and the disputed status of Kashmir, are the factors causing contesting strategic policies of New Delhi and Islamabad in their domestic region. The geographical proximity of both states is an additional point causing distrust and animosity between the governments of both states.<sup>83</sup> The contesting positions of both states are primarily inherited in the ideological difference of India and Pakistan, inherited in the subcontinent partition. The partition of the subcontinent and the creation of Pakistan initially defined the anti-Pakistan formal policies of India because the Indian government was against the creation of Pakistan, which was the division of India. The initial unpleasant feelings of Indians on the ideological-driven creation of Pakistan translated into an overt era of New Delhi's anti-Pakistani policies. In this way, the start of the India-Pakistan conflict after the partition of the subcontinent laid the foundations of enduring New Delhi-Islamabad rivalry in its unprecedented growth in diverse directions.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Moeed Yusuf, *Brokering Peace in Nuclear Environment: U.S. Crisis Management in South Asia* (California: Stanford University Press, 2018), 106.

<sup>83</sup> Chandra Rekha, *India-Russia Post Cold War: A New Epoch of Cooperation* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 113.

<sup>84</sup> Arjun Subramaniam, *India's Wars: A Military History, 1947-1971* (Washington: Naval Institute Press, 2017), 88-89.

The role of technological advancement and the improvement in the existing defense structures of both states is pertinent to mention here. The unstoppable impacts of information technology on the mainstream defense planning of the state are the important factors causing high tensions between India and Pakistan. The role of technology has empowered the conventional models of India-Pakistan defense systems which have added an element of non-traditional security threats in South Asia's intense regional security environment.<sup>85</sup> The diverse uses of modern technologies in defense systems have become an essential element of South Asian regional politics. In the age of advanced communication technologies, the Indian formal strategic decision-makers have preferred to adopt the use of various disinformation operations against Pakistan to stigmatize the national image of Pakistan and mislead the international community about the status of Pakistan in its regional and extra-regional affairs.<sup>86</sup> Thus, this chapter tries to highlight the adopted propaganda operations of New Delhi under the broader shadows of 5GW in South Asia.

### **What is Fifth Generation Warfare (5GW)**

The concept of 5GW refers to an area of military conflict away from the traditional domain of armed conflict. It explains the engagements of states in crafting various war-fighting strategies without troops' involvement. It describes the war of non-kinetic war-fighting techniques to place the enemy at a disadvantageous position without the physical confrontational participation from regular armed forces. The strategies of social engineering, disinformation, cyber-centric attacks, and the use of advanced communication technologies for various propaganda purposes mainly define the domain of 5GW.<sup>87</sup> The adaptation of these strategies mostly convinced the leaders of states to target various vulnerable areas of the enemy for the objective of preventing the enemy's capabilities of challenges and maximizing power. Applying these strategies in interstate-level conflict generally lets the state's leaders counter the enemy in the non-traditional domain because social engineering typically leads a state to design multileveled operations for manipulating the societal structure of the enemy. This strategy causes an operation of changing the varying levels of social perceptions about a specific

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<sup>85</sup> Raja Ehsan Aziz, "India-Pakistan Relations: A Field Trip Report on Indian Perceptions," *Strategic Studies* 05, No. 04 (Summer 1982), 46.

<sup>86</sup> Khalida Qureshi, "Diplomacy of the India-Pakistan War," *Pakistan Horizon* 18, No. 04 (Fourth Quarter 1965), 360.

<sup>87</sup> Nabiha Gul, "Post-9/11 Pakistan-India Relations," *Pakistan Horizon* 57, No. 03 (July 2004), 68-69.

enemy to gain an advantage in multiple domains. The spread of inaccurate information consisting of various formats of fake data and manipulated facts is also part of 5GW, in which the preferred strategies of the states target the society and general public for the proliferation of specific propaganda material.<sup>88</sup> In this 5GW strategy, the strategic planners of states try to create a conceptually convincing and logically acceptable narrative based on false sets of information. The widespread promotion of such narratives against an enemy creates confusion about a specific government action or its particular policy. In addition to the social engineering and the spread of disinformation, the strategy to target various vulnerable lines of the enemy in the domain of cyberspace is also considered a form of 5GW strategy because of this strategy's emphasize on the soft targets of an enemy.<sup>89</sup> The existing studies on the 5GW technology include many war-fighting techniques in the non-traditional domain while considering the emerging technologies as the effective tools and main part of 5GW. The application of defense strategies in the domain of 5GW facilitates a state to attack the blurring lines of the enemy because the 5GW identifies the blurring lines between war and peace, combatants and non-combatants. It also instructs the state leaders to exploit the blurred line between physical and digital domains of conflict to cause massive damage to the enemy.<sup>90</sup> In the domain of 5GW, the use of non-kinetic areas creates an environment of grey-zone conflict where the use of inaccurate information and multiple propaganda techniques have presently become the preferred strategies of the states because the formal strategic planners of the states have started paying substantial attention to the modern means of warfare consisting of multileveled propaganda operation. The manipulation of existing facts generally led the formal defines planners of the states to promote a specific agenda laced with multiple convincing arguments. The spread of these arguments in a targeted area empowers the position of one state over another through indirect means or by changing the perception of the specific public about a particular behaviour of a state. The arrival of indirect war-fighting strategies in the interstate strategic competitions of states has changed the conventional nature of international

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<sup>88</sup> Fred Greene, "The Indian-Pakistan War and the Asian Power Balance," *Naval War College Review* 25, No. 03 (January-February 1973), 20.

<sup>89</sup> Armin Krishnan, "Fifth Generation Warfare, Hybrid Warfare, and Grey Zone Conflict: A Comparison," *Journal of Strategic Security* 15, No. 04 (2022), 16.

<sup>90</sup> Douglas C. Makeig, "War, No-War, and the India-Pakistan Negotiation Process," *Public Affairs* 60, No. 02 (Summer 1987), 272.

security. The rising dependency of state leaders on this non-conventional domain of security has changed the nature of various interstate conflicts in the contemporary world.<sup>91</sup> The mushroomed growth of these global conflicts has challenged the traditional wisdom attached to the concept of security and power. The newly emerged world of digital realities has introduced these advanced and non-conventional security patterns under the domain of 5GW. In this way, the concept of 5GW has become an overwhelming force in the contemporary international system where all states are equally vulnerable, and the leading defines planners of all states have started empowering their position in the realm of 5GW.<sup>92</sup>

### **Post-Information Age and Data Politics**

The rise of various digital infrastructures of states across the globe and the increasing dependency of states on the newly emerged age of post-informational realities has become an essential dimension of the contemporary international system where the power dynamics of states have been transformed into digital infrastructure. The promotion of digital infrastructure of states around the globe and the spread of various formats of information about a specific event or reality has created a world of complex digital realities in which the multidirectional spread of information has encircled the whole international system. The spread of uninterrupted information consisting of varying viewpoints has created a new world of post-information where access to particular information is no longer difficult due to the availability of information on countless digital platforms.<sup>93</sup> The problem in the contemporary world of digital realities is access to accurate and error-free information. The multiple digital channels of information use the available set of actual information in contrast formats to influence the general public. The use of information in the post-information world was mainly inherited from the classical concept of propaganda in which the psychological operations of states were the prominent defense strategies. The history of warfare is full of numerous propaganda operations of states that functioned parallel to the operations of the armed forces and their battlefield

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<sup>91</sup> Nalini Kant Jha, "India and Pakistan: Prospects of War and Peace," *India Quarterly* 58, No. 02 (April-June 2002), 50-51.

<sup>92</sup> M. V. Naidu, "Models of Conflict-Generation and Conflict-Resolution: India and Pakistan as Case Studies," *Peace Research* 33, No. 01 (May 2001), 03-04.

<sup>93</sup> John Robb, *Brave New War: The Next Stage of Terrorism and the End of Globalization* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), 108.

contests.<sup>94</sup> The application of multileveled propaganda campaigns of the states against particular enemies has always been the preferred war-fighting technique of the states in different regions. The states involved in interstate hostilities use propaganda techniques that have been transformed in the digital domain due to the rise of 5GW around the globe and the increasing appreciation of states to the growing new means of warfare in the post-information age. The purpose of targeting the sensitive information of the enemy is the reflection of the centuries-old notion of psychological warfare.<sup>95</sup> Recently, the arrival of cyberspace and the advancement in information communication technologies have altered the nature of the ancient concept of psychological warfare. This change has caused a major shift in the traditional domain of security in the world and the emergence of non-traditional security threats around the globe.

The available multiple data formats on various online digital platforms have increased states' vulnerabilities in the newly emerged world of digital realities. Various formats of available online data sources have become the most fascinating areas of strategic significance for the states. The leading circles of academic communities have called online data the New Oil or the new power source capable of launching a new strategic competition between states in different regions.<sup>96</sup> The available data of a particular society or state on mainly the digitally empowered social networks of states have made them vulnerable before their enemies. The accessible online data could be manipulated in any unproductive direction or for strategic purposes. The data consisting of various political viewpoints, different ideological sentiments, and several societal taboos has become the source of power for the digital confrontational behaviours of states. In other words, the increasing transformations of states' leading social, political, economic, and security infrastructures in the digital world have inaugurated a new area of warfare between states where the accessed to general data and its critical manipulations have become the main sources of power between states. The strategic contests of great powers have also adopted these strategies to propagate their enemies' specific actions or policies while stigmatizing the national image of the states around the globe. The attacks on the national image weaken the

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<sup>94</sup> Sarminla Bose, *Dead Reckoning* (New Delhi: Hachette Publications, 2012), 130.

<sup>95</sup> Aubree Penrod, *South Asia's Nuclear Security Dilemma – India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and China* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

<sup>96</sup> Kalim Bahadur, "India's Foreign Policy," *India Foreign Affairs Journal* 02, No. 04 (October-December 2007), 49.

internationally functioning diplomatic forces of the states, whereas the propaganda seeks to downgrade the standing of great powers over various international issues.<sup>97</sup> The manipulation of data in certain unproductive directions and the spread of manipulated data generally target the internal societal structures of states while considering the domestic society of the enemy as an accurate targeting area. The targeting of domestic publics by the enemy generally attempts to mislead the general public about the particular decisions of their government. This factor widens the gap between states and societies at different levels. It makes it difficult for the formal decision-makers of enemies to establish the government's control over society. Thus, using sensitive information and critical data for strategic purposes has made data a power source in the age of contemporary post-information.

### **South Asian Politics and Digitalization of the World**

The digitalization of the international system has changed the conventional outlook of the global system due to the rise of countless digital platforms of states around the globe. The commencement of the digital age has introduced a new world of digital realities where state governments worldwide rapidly increase their dependencies on digital infrastructures. The rise of cyberspace worldwide is the primary factor in spreading digital state structures worldwide. The states located in different regions are keen on improving their positions in the evolving digital structures of the world. The digitalization of the international system has caused a multidimensional digital framework of states' values such as foreign policy and diplomacy.<sup>98</sup> The empowerment of diplomatic forces of the states and the increasing political communications of the governments in the digital domains have facilitated the state governments in introducing the digital formats of their diplomatic forces. Information technology's role in improving the states' traditional diplomatic structures has started an era of digital force across the world. Digital communications have enabled the state governments to increase their fast and direct communication with other states. The result of increasing digital diplomatic forces of the states has developed a digitally supported strong network of political communications between

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<sup>97</sup> Tahir Mahmood Azad, "Nuclear Power and Terrorism," *Strategic Studies* 36, No. 01 (Spring 2016), 61.

<sup>98</sup> Shantanu Chakrabarti, "Evolving Insurgency and India's Counter-Insurgency Options: Entering into the Age of Fourth-Generation Warfare," *Connections* 09, No. 02 (Spring 2010), 73.

different governments.<sup>99</sup> In this way, the rise of digitally supported diplomatic and political communications of states has formulated a world of digital realities. The world of digital realities has facilitated the traditional state structures of nations on the one hand; on the other hand, it has started a race of states in the emerging information warfare. The prevalence of information warfare has become an ultimate and undeniable future of the world where the states' abilities for spreading disinformation have become an unquestionable reality. The use of information for strategic purposes and the spread of these inaccurate information formats have become important parts of the existing defensive frameworks of the states. This scenario caused a shift in the existing power dynamics of the states and made the state governments vulnerable before their potential rivals. The world's growing dependency on digital infrastructures has started defining the prevailing power dynamics of the digital world.<sup>100</sup> The power dynamics have changed the traditional outlook of the entire international system due to the upsetting impacts of information technology on the traditional state structures of the conventional international system.

The arrival of information technology in world politics has disturbed the interstate interaction of various states in different regions. The states mainly having hostile interaction with their territorially adjoining nations are more vulnerable in this emerging age of post-information, in which the digital structure of the states is making them vulnerable to external threats. In this way, it is more appropriate to maintain that the emergence of modern technologies and their increasing appreciation worldwide have affected the politics of various regions, where South Asia is not an exception. The South Asian regional political order has become a victim of emerging new technologies due to the increasing reliance of India-Pakistan on modern technologies.<sup>101</sup> In the debate of modern technologies and their worldwide spread, the growing dependencies of India and Pakistan on advanced communication technologies have further intensified the regional security environment of South Asia. The empowerment of state structures with the help of advanced communication technologies has led the Indian and Pakistani leaders towards a new era of interstate hostility. The traditional strategic contest

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<sup>99</sup> John Mitton, "The India-Pakistan Rivalry and Failure in Afghanistan," *International Journal* 69, No. 03 (September 2014), 356.

<sup>100</sup> Khurshid Khan, "Understanding Information Warfare and its Relevance to Pakistan," *Strategic Studies* 32/33, No. 01 (Winter 2013 & Spring 2013), 140.

<sup>101</sup> Mario Esteban Carranza, *India-Pakistan Nuclear Diplomacy: Constructivism and the Prospects for Nuclear Arms Control and Disarmament in South Asia* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 221.

and the conventional foundations of their interstate rivalry have been upgraded in the age of advance communication technologies. It has launched a new race between both contesting nuclear powers of South Asia parallel to making them vulnerable before each other in the emerging digital world. Akin to various other strategic trends of the nuclearized subcontinent where New Delhi was the leading player and an active trendsetter, the technological race has made India the leading state in using modern communication technologies for strategic purposes.<sup>102</sup> The empowerment of Indian digital skills is primarily based on the massive developments of the Indian domestic IT industry and the allocation of the huge budget of New Delhi to the indigenous IT industry. There are various reports of independent research institutes confirming the improving digital muscles of New Delhi since the Indian government is actively allocating massive budgets to its sector. Indian leader always preferred to improve the digital skills of their nation with the belief that empowerment in the IT sector will let New Delhi strengthen its position in the emerging age of information technologies.<sup>103</sup>

In this way, there is no harm in saying that the arriving forces of the digital age in South Asia have let India build its strategic muscles in the realm of digital technologies, and New Delhi has engaged its mainstream strategic thinkers in using the modern means of communication technologies for the strategic purposes of the nation. New Delhi is designing various disinformation formats to serve India's core strategic objectives while pushing territorially adjoining rivals at disadvantageous positions. The engagement of formal strategic thinkers of New Delhi and India's IT industry in the strategic domain has helped New Delhi form a comprehensive doctrine of digital attributes for countering potential rivals in the digital domain. In the list of territorially adjoining hostile nations of India, the position of China is stronger than India, and the New Delhi-based defense planners are overtly reluctant to carry any anti-Chinese open policies in the digital domain while believing that the competition with China in the digital domain will serve appropriately the New Delhi's desired objectives.<sup>104</sup> Thus, the main target of Indian digital strategic planning is Pakistan, a state suffering from an acute economic crisis and unable to allocate a massive budget to advancing the domestic IT

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<sup>102</sup> Rekha Datta, *Beyond Realism: Human Security in India and Pakistan in the Twenty-First Century* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 27.

<sup>103</sup> Sagarika Dutt and Alok Bansal, *South Asian Security: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Discourses* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 12-13.

<sup>104</sup> David Shambaugh, *Where Great Powers Meet: American & China in Southeast Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 171.

industry. Thus, the prime target of Indian digital preparedness in the defence field is Pakistan, which has made New Delhi capable enough to undermine the position of Pakistan in the digital domain. The Indian anti-Pakistani planning has a long history of opposing Pakistan and its creation in the regional and extra-regional affairs. The declassified of Cold War have clearly accepted this fact of South Asian politics and its increasing reliance on the bilateral interaction of two major powers, India and Pakistan. CIA's President's Daily Briefs several times acknowledged the persistently emerging India-Pakistan multileveled rivalry has shaped different hostile regional political patterns.<sup>105</sup>

### **Regional South Asian Security in the Disinformation Age**

The empowerment of multi-layered defensive capabilities by India and Pakistan in the digital domain has marked a new era of India-Pakistan competition and its constantly emerging reliance on the latest means of information communication. The Indian formal defense planners have focused on the empowerment of New Delhi's strategic muscles in the domain of IT with the belief that the empowerment of digital infrastructure of India will enable India to defend its digital border in cyberspace, parallel to improving the role of its digital forces in the hostile regional security environment.<sup>106</sup> The combination of internal and external security compulsions has instructed the Indian leader to launch multi-layered digital campaigns to achieve its core strategic values. The primary focus of Indian digital campaigns is on initiating multileveled digital operations for strategic purposes. Various digital media formats have been considered the most effective platforms for India's anti-Pakistan operation, as it is a well-known fact that digital media has a variety of platforms in India. The improved media capabilities of New Delhi have led India to become a powerful player in the regional-level media war with Pakistan.<sup>107</sup> The Indian government is determined to augment its existing digital capabilities in cyberspace, and the formal decision-makers of New Delhi have started focusing on digital media as an appropriate means of defeating Pakistan in regional and extra-regional affairs. Some policy documents confirm New Delhi's emerging reliance on the newly emerged digital

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<sup>105</sup> 'ISCAP Releases', National Archives, 15 August 2016, <https://www.archives.gov/declassification/iscap/decision-table>.

<sup>106</sup> Dinesh C. Sharma, *The Outsourcer: The Story of India's IT Revolution* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2015), 142.

<sup>107</sup> Ashish Malik and Chris Rowley, *Business Models and People Management in the Indian IT Industry: From People to Profits* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 123.

infrastructures of the South Asian region. It is the upgradation of the existing position of India in cyberspace where Pakistan is lagging behind India, and the government of Pakistan has an inferior position than India in the evolving digital infrastructure of the world. Due to various economic problems in Pakistan, the government of Pakistan is unable to improve its digital infrastructure, which provides an advantage to India in regional politics. The Indian government, taking advantage of its advanced IT industry and enhanced position in the regional strategic competition, has launched a massive propaganda campaign against Pakistan at the regional and international levels.

This scenario has created a narrative warfare between India and Pakistan due to the rising influence of media in both states and the low-literacy rate of the public across the border. The low literacy rate of the Pakistani society particularly has deprived the Pakistan citizens of the cross verifications mechanism of the society. The absence of the cross-verification mechanism of the society has facilitated Indian propaganda campaigns to infiltrate easily in the domestic societal structure of Pakistan. This factor has placed Pakistan at a defeating end of this evolving narrative warfare in South Asia's intense regional security environment.<sup>108</sup> The narrative warfare has made India an active player, shaping the regional security outlook of the region in which Pakistan always preferred to remain defensive against Indian hostile and anti-Pakistani planning. Indian preparedness for countering Pakistan in the regional strategic competition has revealed a worldwide disinformation campaign of India to serve the core strategic objectives of New Delhi to obtain a dominating status in the technological sector. The use of modern information technology in the defense domain has started leaving worse impacts on the regional security environment under the nuclear shadows. India's government is strict on its strategic objective of creating a regionally hegemonic status in its domestic region parallel to suppressing the status of Pakistan-specific counterbalancing forces in the South Asia region.

The objective of undermining the position of an opponent or a potential enemy in the social, political, economic, and security domains primarily helps states' formal strategic decision-makers in designing various defense strategies against a specific enemy. The Indian formal defense planners are behaving according to this principle and making New Delhi powerful in the digital domain with the belief that the empowerment of strategic muscles in the digital domain will facilitate India in exploiting the

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<sup>108</sup> Pradeep Barua, *The State of War in South Asia* (Nebraska: Nebraska University Press, 2005), 223.

digital vulnerabilities of Pakistan. Thus, the New Delhi-based strategic community is highly motivated to bring advanced communication technologies against Pakistan because of its decades-long hostility with Pakistan. The decades-long conflict between both South Asian contestants is the outcome of an intense regional security dilemma in which an unending race of action-reaction has prevailed between both nuclear powers of South Asia.<sup>109</sup> In the regional security dilemma, Indian leaders always proved that New Delhi is a trend setter in the South Asian intense security environment parallel to believe that New Delhi has an ambition of investing its strategic potential in diverse directions to achieve the core values of its national interest. The formal defense planners from New Delhi are persistent in carrying their anti-Pakistani designs with the belief that the anti-Pakistani policies of New Delhi in the digital domain will enable India's defense planners to defeat Pakistan in the evolving narrative warfare.<sup>110</sup> According to the neorealist perspective, Indian increasing anti-Pakistan panning in the digital world is the outcome of its conventional strategic behaviour, which is deeply inherited in the regional hegemonic ambitions of New Delhi. For the achievement of the regional hegemonic ambitions of New Delhi, Indian mainstream defense planners have ignored the impacts of their offensive regional planning on the broader regional security environment. Indian increasing reliance on the evolving international climate of narrative warfare, leading strategic decision makers from New Delhi are purely emphasizing the core strategic objective of New Delhi while ignoring the impacts of its mainstream defense planning on the regional security environment.<sup>111</sup> Due to the increasing reliance of New Delhi on modern warfare technologies and narrative warfare has degraded the scope of peace and stability in the region, which are the central themes of the next chapter. The degrading role of peace and stability in the intense regional security environment of the nuclearized subcontinent is the actual point seeking the appropriate responses of the international community is the main theme of the next chapter, which purely emphasizes the Indian adaptation of narrative warfare against the territorially adjoining nations such as Pakistan.

## **Concluding Analysis**

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<sup>109</sup> Sumit Ganguly, *The Origins of War in South Asia* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 178.

<sup>110</sup> Vittal N., *India-Technology and a Vision for The Future* (Hyderabad: ICDAI University Press, 2004), 225.

<sup>111</sup> Tapan Choure, *Information Technology Industry in India* (New Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2004), 210.

The arrival of nuclear weapons in South Asia created deterrence between India and Pakistan and prevented the chances of direct armed confrontation in the region. The deterring role of atomic armaments remained, making the war between New Delhi and Islamabad less likely. Still, the effective role of deterrence remains inefficient in managing the consistently emerging crisis between two nuclear powers of the nuclearized subcontinent. This scenario has resulted in the prevalence of the stability-instability paradox in the South Asian complex security environment and placed the regional political order in a complex strategic competition between India and Pakistan. Thus, the nature of conflict changed in the region under the nuclear shadows and the leaders of two competing nuclear powers started relying on the non-conventional warfare means. The non-conventional domain of warfare pushed both states towards a new domain of warfare, commonly known as the Fifth Generation Warfare, in which the contesting attributes of India and Pakistan started adopting the latest means of information warfare. The information warfare resulted in the use of non-military means for the attainment of core strategic objectives where the leading state authorities from Islamabad and New Delhi started realizing the potential of the post-information age where the new means of propaganda through various disinformation campaigns have become the inevitable reality of contemporary South Asian strategic competition between the pair of a nuclear weapon states. The prime target of these disinformation campaigns is the social, political, and economic structures of states involved in a complex competition. In this competition, the Indian leadership is taking the lead, and the core values of New Delhi's contemporary security mechanisms launched a multifaceted propaganda campaign against Pakistan, which has been proved by various research reports of independent research organizations; these reports have been mentioned in this chapter. In this way, the debate in this chapter attempted to offer a brief survey of changing contemporary strategic features of India-Pakistan rivalry in which the disinformation warfare has become a central point of contest between two nuclear powers of South Asia.

### **Chapter 03: Question of Peace in South Asia and India in the Fifth Generation Warfare**

The question of peace in South Asia has become a serious challenge for regional and international players. The regional players, India-Pakistan, have acquired nuclear weapons against their prevailing security threats, and they are reluctant to support the vision of peace and stability in the region. The Indian defense planners have introduced an unending security competition in the region while considering Pakistan the prime security threat to their regional strategic interests, dictating New Delhi to create an influential role in South Asia. In response to Indian increasing reliance on its regional hegemonic ambitions, Pakistani leaders have adopted a defensive approach cemented in their India-centric counterbalancing policy measures.<sup>112</sup> Pakistan's adaptation of a defensive strategy against Indian prevailing hegemonic regional design has alarmed New Delhi's security bells and compelled the Indian policy makers to get the support of extra-regional power against Pakistan while considering the emerging cooperative ties of Islamabad with Beijing. The growing cooperative connections between Islamabad and Beijing have created a close New Delhi-Washington strategic partnership. The combination of alliances reflects the preferences of both contesting South Asian powers for acquiring the support of extra-regional powers against each other.

Additionally, their growing security competition based on an unstoppable action-reaction format has further intensified the regional political order of South Asia. The contesting patterns of India-Pakistan interstate interaction have made the question of peace a difficult and unachievable task in the region. In contrast, the role of advocators of peace and stability from outside the area has also been marginalized in the hostile South Asian region.<sup>113</sup> The international community from outside the South Asian region has also been in a difficult position in their efforts to support peace and stability between New Delhi and Islamabad. Thus, the question of peace in South Asia is persistently losing its relevance in South Asia due to the multiplying points of India-Pakistan disagreements over different regional and international issues.

The nature of evolving strategic competition between two nuclear powers is important in this regard, and this strategic competition has started adopting spill-over effects on the politics of surrounding

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<sup>112</sup> Nitin A Gokhale, *Securing India the Modi Way: Balakot, Anti Satellite Missile Test and More* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019), 157.

<sup>113</sup> Narendar Singh, *Securing Policy of India: Modi Doctrine* (Washington: Pentagon Press, 2017), 88.

regions. Islamabad's decision to sign a mega trading deal with neighbouring China has raised the security concerns of New Delhi while pushing India towards various formats of strategic alignments with the international community mainly in the maritime domain. Moreover, Indian decision-makers have started attacking the diplomatic forces of Pakistan working around the globe.<sup>114</sup> The Indian attacks on the status of Pakistan in the international community are also based on the degrading scope of Pakistan's cooperative engagements with different states. This factor has caused greater damage to Islamabad's political communication with other states for forming broader cooperative ties. The transformation of Indian strategic thinking into an indirect way of targeting Pakistan in the political and diplomatic domains is mainly dependent on the revealed Indian-sponsored international propaganda campaign for degrading the national image of Pakistan.<sup>115</sup> The Indian launching of an international anti-Pakistani worldwide misinformation campaign reflects the increasing reliance of New Delhi on the emerging 5GW. Therefore, this chapter tries to maintain an account of different arguments validating the presence of New Delhi's international propaganda campaign to serve the core strategic objectives of New Delhi.

### **Fifth Generation Warfare and Indian Strategic Thinking**

Indian strategic thinking always focuses on promoting India's fundamental national interests and making India an active and influential player in its home region. Indian strategic thinking dictated the New Delhi-based security planners to emphasize adapting various strategies to achieve core national interests. The fundamental maxims of Indian strategic thinking provide a comprehensive approach to securing and protecting Indian expansionist behaviour in its home regions.<sup>116</sup> The advancement of Indian expansionist behaviour in its home region has received strict and inflexible opposition from neighbouring Pakistan because Pakistani state officials are determined to protect the entire regional order of South Asia from influential Indian designs against the territorially adjoining states. Territorial adjoining states' response further compels New Delhi to articulate its effective expansionist strategies

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<sup>114</sup> Suresh R., *The Changing Dimensions of Security: India's Security policy Options* (New Delhi: Vj Books, 2015), 67.

<sup>115</sup> Attiq ur Rehman and Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, "Indian Strategic Thinking & Partnership with Israel: Implications for Pakistan," *Margalla Pappers* (2017), 74.

<sup>116</sup> Shreeman Chaulia, *Crunch Time: Narendra Modi's National Security Crises* (New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2022), 29.

to suppress the role of Pakistan's specific counterbalancing policies against Indian regional dominating ambitions. The connection of Islamabad with Beijing and the support of China to Pakistan in its regional politics increased the Indian anxieties in the South Asian region. While keeping in mind the prevailing challenges to Indian core strategic interests in the South Asian region, New Delhi-based strategic planners have started introducing different approaches for achieving the geo-strategic interests of New Delhi.<sup>117</sup> In this way, the arrival of the twenty-first century and the unstoppable forces of globalization have pushed India towards an advanced IT culture. Promoting an advanced IT culture and allocating massive financial resources to its domestic IT industry has led Indian strategic thinkers to use their improving IT skills in the emerging world of digital realities. The focus of New Delhi on the newly emerging world of digital realities has resulted in several strategic aspirations of India in cyberspace. In other words, the emergence of the digital age in the international system has altered India's strategic thinking and witnessed the application of Indian core values of strategic thinking in the growing contemporary cyberspace era. It has facilitated Indian formal defense planners in launching various covert operations in cyberspace to serve the core geo-strategic interests of New Delhi. Thus, the growing significance of the emerging digital age in Indian strategic thinking has placed India under the shadow of 5GW, where a multi-layered propaganda operation of India has become a vibrant trend.<sup>118</sup>

The transformation of Indian strategic thinking in the era of 5GW has started reshaping the core values of Indian strategic thinking by incorporating it with the emerging realities of the digital world. The increasing reliance of New Delhi on the 5GW is inherited in Indian insecurities originating from the intense interaction of New Delhi with its territorially adjoining nations because the core maxims of Indian strategic thinking dictate Indian policymakers to carry regionally hegemonic ambition against the neighbouring countries.<sup>119</sup> This situation supports New Delhi in obtaining the desired objectives of its strategic planning and inflicting a sense of insecurity in the security calculations of

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<sup>117</sup> Bharat Karnad, *Staggering Forward: Narendra Modi and India's Global Ambition* (Haryana: Penguin Random House, 2018), 42.

<sup>118</sup> Shrikant Paranjpe, *India's Strategic Culture: The Making of National Security Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 87.

<sup>119</sup> Sinderpal Singh, *Modi and the World: (Re) Constructing Indian Foreign Policy* (Singapore: World Scientific, Publishing, 2017), 126.

its neighbouring nations. The adaptation of cyberspace to advance strategic interests by India has increased the complexities of regional political order because New Delhi has explored the notions of cyberwar, psychological warfare, and information warfare in the main designs of its strategic thinking.<sup>120</sup> The advancement of these strategic conceptions in the world with the support of modern communication technologies has placed South Asia's entire regional political order under the influence of 5GW. In this way, the leading planners of Indian defense strategies in the domain of 5GW have initiated a new strategic competition in the region while keeping in mind the Chinese progress in science and technology and the application of modern technologies for strategic purposes in China. Indian insecurities in the 5GW are primarily linked with China due to the increasing digital preparedness of China in the international system and the growing strategic competition of Beijing with Washington in the digital domain. The evolving US-China strategic competition is a multileveled competition between two great powers where the role of technology has launched an information war between both contesting superpowers. Chinese IT preparedness against the compulsions of global great power politics and its aim of surpassing American technological developments directly impact Indian security calculations.<sup>121</sup> Chinese border clash with India and its technologically superior status in the broader Asian power politics upset New Delhi's strategic mind. It forced the Indian leaders to empower their digital capabilities against China in the wider Asian power balance and the active role of China in South Asian regional politics. The combination of the Chinese role in the South Asian and Asian power competition directs the New Delhi defense planners to polish Indian digital muscles in the emerging digital infrastructure of the international system.

### **Indian' Propaganda Strategies**

The main purpose of India's propaganda strategies is mainly linked with the Chinese landmark achievements in the 5GW tactics and the increasing emphasis of Beijing on the importance of the rapidly changing nature of non-traditional security threats. The rise of information technology has improved the conventional nature of non-traditional security threats in the contemporary international

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<sup>120</sup> Ian Hall, *Modi and the Reinvention of Indian Foreign Policy* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2019), 112.

<sup>121</sup> C Raja Mohan, *Modi's World: Expanding India's Sphere of Influence* (Haryana: Harper Collins, 2015), 207.

system which various policy documents of New Delhi have confirmed.<sup>122</sup> A published document by the Indian Armed Forces, *The Land Warfare Doctrine-2018*, clearly mentioned the importance of the non-traditional domain of security threats for Indian mainstream defense planning. There are some other formal policy documents declaring the increasing focus of India on the information for the achievement of the core national interests of New Delhi. The declassified versions of these documents have clearly emphasized the shift in Indian strategic thinking as per the requirements of the newly emerging age of digital realities.<sup>123</sup> The change in strategic thinking is a minor development designed to align New Delhi's defense with the changing attributes of the contemporary international system. It is widely believed that the Indian aim of initiating multi-layered information operations has adopted the new means of indirect war-fighting without involving troops. The preferred tactics for this information war are applying ancient propaganda techniques in the digital domain and achieving the desired security objectives with the help of modern advanced technologies. The Indian policymakers, especially under the contemporary government of Narendra Modi, have rationally accepted adopting a multifaceted security approach to meet the requirements of the no-kinetic security threats. The use of information war as an appropriate tool for spreading misinformation has reached its zenith during the Modi government due to the ultra-nationalist ideology of the Modi government and the promotion of the fanatical ideological trends of the Modi government in the leading defense policies of contemporary India.<sup>124</sup> The Indian security establishment has translated the main security threats to New Delhi originating from Pakistan in the digital domain and upgradation of New Delhi's security planning the cyberspace has developed an international web of various propaganda tactics under the leadership of Modi. New Delhi primarily shapes these propaganda tools to influence the general perception of Pakistan in the world by degrading the national image of Pakistan in the world.<sup>125</sup> These India-sponsored propaganda tools are primarily relying on various strategies, such as creating a negative perception of Pakistan in the political communications of the states. The change of political

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<sup>122</sup> P.R. Biju and O. Gayathri, "Self-Breeding Fake News: Bots and Artificial Intelligence Perpetuate Social Polarization in India's Conflict Zones," *The International Journal of Information, Diversity, & Inclusion* 07, No. 1/2 (Winter-Spring 2023), 22.

<sup>123</sup> Shanthi Kalathil, "The Evolution of Authoritarian Digital Influence: Grappling with the New Normal," *PRISM* 09, No. 01 (2020), 33.

<sup>124</sup> G. D. Bakshi, *Limited Wars in South Asia: Need for an Indian Doctrine* (New Delhi: Centre for Land Warfare Studies, 2010), 114.

<sup>125</sup> John E. Peters, *War and Escalation in South Asia* (Washington: RAND, 2022), 22.

narrative in the world concerning the position of Pakistan in its home region and the use of manipulated information for political purposes has been initiated by the Modi government under its right-wing agenda because the arrival of Modi in Indian politics has inaugurated a new debate in the Indian politics due to the rise of ideological influences on modern India under Modi. The ideological marginalization of Pakistan describes the extremist ideological patterns of Indian foreign relations where the overwhelming effects of fanatical religious ideology have become an undeniable reality of contemporary South Asian politics. The impacts of politically driven strict ideological trends on the mainstream politics of New Delhi have even undermined the domestic secular basis of the Indian internal system where the projection of propaganda has convincing justifications for New Delhi.<sup>126</sup> The formal political authorities from New Delhi have formally maintained that the formulation of the Modi regime's proactive disinformation operations is India's response to the emerging anti-India agenda, which is an irrational explanation of the Modi government. Thus, the deepening interests of New Delhi in the promotion and support of its broader propaganda campaigns have raised several conflicting areas in the South Asian region. The position of media and the controversial role of media are the leading points of Indian propaganda campaigns due to the belief that the media is an appropriate mean of spreading a certain format of information to a target group of people. Indian policymakers have preferred the media as an effective tool for shaping public options in a specific direction on a particular topic. The functioning of media campaigns about a certain perspective is highly dependent on the spread of manipulated facts and inaccurate information formats.<sup>127</sup> The intellectual history of propaganda techniques cleared its nature and various characteristics, describing fake news as an appropriate war-fighting technique without involving troops. The aim of the proliferation of such information formats varies from state to state and the strategic choices of their policymakers. In the case of India, India's leadership under the Modi government is the initiator of this multi-layered propaganda to serve the core strategic interests of New Delhi.

### **The Investigations of 'India Chronicles'**

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<sup>126</sup> Abdul Basit, *Hostility: A Diplomat's Diary on Pakistan-India Relations* (Karachi: Touchstone 2021), 221.

<sup>127</sup> Mona Bhan, *Resisting Occupation in Kashmir* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 112.

The most convincing argument to validate New Delhi's created multileveled propaganda campaign for achieving its desired strategic objective has been revealed in the analysis of various published reports. The analysis in these published reports confirmed that the Modi government is actively preparing and promoting an international network of fake news consisting of various inaccurate information formats. A report of a European independent institution, the EU Disinfo Lab, published in 2019, cleared in its investigation that the Indian government is sponsoring different formats of propaganda operations around the globe while primarily focusing on European countries.<sup>128</sup> The report of Disinfo Lab exposed a massive fake news operation in India targeting international institutions while serving Indian national interests. The spread of this global network of India comprises several dead media, ineffective think tanks, and fake NGOs to spread a certain perspective of information in favour of India. The release of this Brussels-based research report 'India Chronicles' confirmed that the prime target of this fake Indian campaign is Pakistan, a state having a formal countering India's potential in the region. The designed disinformation operations of New Delhi are primarily structured to influence the general public's perception of Islamabad's position on several regional issues generally and the Kashmir issue specifically. The focus of the EU's published report has revealed that shaping specific opinions of the international community has let New Delhi emphasize the multilateral institutions of the EU and the United Nations.<sup>129</sup> The release of this report has further confirmed that the conceptions of narrative warfare are the preferred strategy of contemporary strategic circles of New Delhi in which the information has been identified as the most effective weapon for achieving the desired outcomes. In this way, the concepts of narrative warfare and information weaponization have prevailed in Indian strategic thinking to malign Pakistan in different international forms and multi-state platforms. A complex interplay of these features of Indian strategic thinking has inaugurated a new era of strategic competition between New Delhi and Islamabad parallel to jeopardizing the standings of Pakistan in the international community. The revelation of operations showed that the leading defense planners of New Delhi had involved around 600 fake media outlets and information platforms to attack and stigmatize the core social, political, and ideological values of Pakistan. The attack on Pakistan's core national values has

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<sup>128</sup> Nolan Higdon, *The Anatomy of Fake News* (California: University of California Press, 2020), 112.

<sup>129</sup> Eileen Culloty and Jane Suiter, *Disinformation and Manipulation in Digital Media: Information Pathologies* (New York: Routledge, 2023), 12-14.

communicated to the government of Pakistan the new trends of Indian strategic thinking and their advancement in the formal security mechanism of India. The fifteen-year-old anti-Pakistan Indian campaign was attached to the role of Islamabad in defending the Kashmir issue. The main issue between New Delhi and Islamabad is the disputed status of Kashmir, which has always remained important for the mainstream priorities of both states. The issue remained the same under the governments of different political parties in both countries.<sup>130</sup> The Kashmir issue is fundamentally a root cause of historically hostile relations between India and Pakistan, and the leaders of both nations have developed incompatible standings on the Kashmir issue while believing that Kashmir is the central point of their regional standings. The inflexible standings of both states on the Kashmir issue have led their respective governments to add Kashmir to their power calculations. The India-Pakistan governments have developed their incompatible national standings in the Kashmir issue. Even the possession of nuclear capabilities by both contesting neighbours in 1998 made Kashmir a nuclear flashpoint of the region instead of creating a consensus on the Kashmir issue for the peaceful resolution of the issue. To defend their incompatible and contrasting standings on the Kashmir issue, the Indian and Pakistani leaders have started emphasizing the international community through various diplomatic means.<sup>131</sup> The spread of Kashmir-specific narrative in the formal diplomatic services of both states in the world has activated the diplomatic forces of India and Pakistan in the world while opposing each other. In this way, a contest of both powers on the Kashmir issue has been launched in the world where their diplomatic communities and respective diaspora are promoting their formal standings of their states on the Kashmir issue. The continuation of the diplomatic struggle on the Kashmir issue has led Indian policymakers to adopt different strategies for downgrading the position of Pakistan while stigmatizing the ideological and ethnic associations of Pakistan with the Kashmiri people.<sup>132</sup>

The launching of international propaganda on the Kashmir issue has upgraded the traditional foundations of the India-Pakistan conflict because a new domain of politics has been started between New Delhi and Islamabad under the influences of 5GW. The use of manipulated and out-of-context

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<sup>130</sup> Ilhan Niza, *The State During British Raj: Imperial Governance in South Asia, 1700-1947* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2019), 124.

<sup>131</sup> Rajiv Kumar, *Modi and his Challenges* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2016), 109.

<sup>132</sup> Virendra Singh Baghel, *Modi's Vision 2030* (New Delhi: The Readers Paradise, 2020), 224.

information has become a preferred tool of both contesting powers of South Asia because the leaders of both contesting nations believe that the competition in the domain of modern communication technologies will now determine the merit of regional South Asian politics. The international community has now also seen that the Indian diplomatic forces are carrying multiple designs of state-sponsored propaganda to undermine the position of Pakistan on the issue of Kashmir.<sup>133</sup> The published report of EU Dis-Info Lab is an appropriate example to legitimate that New Delhi is sponsoring various propaganda operations to mislead the world's main power centers. The report has rationalized that New Delhi actively supports and promotes these fake information platforms in the digital world. The formal government authorities of the Indian government have denied the report's contents in reaction to the rising criticism of the New Delhi-sponsored disinformation campaign. New Delhi's efforts to avert international criticism of the analysis of the EU DisInfo Lab have further cleared to the international community that New Delhi's anti-Pakistani obsession has become an open truth and an unquestionable reality. The refusal of the Indian government to accept the information provided in the report has also explained the Modi government's offensive way of managing its South Asian engagements.<sup>134</sup> The use of fake information to serve the Indian objective, an attempt by New Delhi to gain maximum support from the international community on the issue of Kashmir, has now intensified the competition between both India and Pakistan in the South Asian region. The impacts of this published report on South Asian regional politics has greater impacts on the hostile interaction of India and Pakistan at the bilateral level.<sup>135</sup> The Islamabad-based strategic thinkers have accepted the fact that the Indian diplomatic forces are equipped with high levels of disinformation operations. These operations directly support New Delhi in its regional power competition.

### **Modi's Government and Indian Disinformation Operations**

The revelation of the New Delhi-sponsored disinformation campaign under the Modi government is a clear indication of Indian illegitimate and offensive role in regional politics, which has led the Indian prime policymakers towards a certain extremist agenda. This ultra-nationalist agenda is deeply rooted

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<sup>133</sup> Kanti Bajpai, *How Realist Is India's National Security Policy?* (New York: Routledge, 2023), 147.

<sup>134</sup> Attiq ur Rehman. "Indian Hybrid Warfare in the Post-Truth Era and its Impacts on Pakistan's Foreign Policy," *Journal of Indian Studies* 09, no. 02 (July-December 2023), 225.

<sup>135</sup> Biswapati Goswami, *Modi 2.0* (New Delhi: Orange Books International, 2019), 76.

in the classical maxims of Indian strategic thinking and the translation of this thinking in the formal policies of New Delhi. The ideology of the Modi government has started playing an active role in Indian mainstream politics because the Modi government has altered the conventional foundations of Indian policies and integrated them with the realities of the new world.<sup>136</sup> The world of digital realities has become the prime focus of the Modi government, and it can be assessed through various national initiatives of New Delhi in the last five years. New Delhi's state-sponsored various national projects for the promotion of the domestic IT industry and the creation of multileveled cooperative engagements with the technologically advanced and economically developed nations are the mainstream supporting points of Indian widening exposure to modern technologies. The use of these technologies for strategic purposes has become the prime agenda of the Modi government due to the emerging digital structures of the world. The growing reliance of the Modi government on modern communication technologies has helped New Delhi control and manipulate the existing formats of South Asian regional politics without calculating the impacts of this Indian behaviour on other states. Moreover, the effects of the strategic uses of technological advancements on the broader South Asian regional security environment are also counter-productive.<sup>137</sup> The Indian government is strict on achieving New Delhi's strategic objectives defined by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In this way, it is cleared that the scope of peace and values of cooperative engagements with the territorially adjoining nations are not in the mainstream priorities of contemporary India. Indian leadership under the Modi government is actively securing the geo-strategic interest of New Delhi without caring about the degrading role of peace in the region and the intensifying nature of the regional security environment. Using multileveled propaganda techniques for achieving strategic objectives has logical justifications for New Delhi. Still, the worse impacts of these propaganda techniques on Pakistan particularly cannot be ignored because Pakistan is the only South Asian state containing substantial for containing the offensive applications of Indian South Asian policy. Pakistan's determination to support the values of peace and stability has resulted in a reactionary and defensive approach of Islamabad against Indian offensive regional designs.

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<sup>136</sup> Harsh V. Pant, *The Routledge Handbook of Indian Defence Policy: Themes, Structures, and Doctrines* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 304.

<sup>137</sup> Sunil Vashisht, *Towards New India* (New Delhi: Prabhat Books 2018), 29.

The Objective of India's Increasing Reliance on 5GW reflects Indian strategic thinking concerning the new digital developments of contemporary world politics. The strategic communities of different states have started increasing their engagements in the information domain. The prevalence of this tendency in the international system has inaugurated a new race in world politics in which all the states are trying to invest their potential in IT while allocating massive budgets to their domestic IT industries.<sup>138</sup> This race has given India an advantageous position against Pakistan and augmented the India-centric uncertainties of Islamabad. According to the neorealist theoretical descriptions of the international system, the Indian emerging insecurities are based on the position of Pakistan and Islamabad's increasing cooperative ties with China. Both developments hamper India's strategic thinking and make New Delhi a power maximizer in its home region.<sup>139</sup> The power-maximizing attributes of Indian conventional maxims of strategic thinking instruct New Delhi to place neighbouring Pakistan at a disadvantageous position at the regional and international levels by launching various propaganda campaigns. Launching an international India-sponsored web of multiple misinformation operations could validate the transformation of New Delhi's traditional strategic conceptions in the digital domain. The arrival of Modi in politics as the fourteenth Prime Minister of India has revealed this planning of India before the international community with the release of a European research report explaining the broader functioning of Indian-sponsored disinformation campaigns worldwide. After the European revelation of New Delhi's strategic position in the ongoing age of information warfare, various circles of international intellectual communities and leading state authorities of different countries expressed their views on highlighting India-sponsored global propaganda worldwide.<sup>140</sup> The development has made the questions of peace and stability a difficult choice in South Asia and degraded the scope of peace and stability between both contesting nuclear powers of South Asia. According to the realist description of world politics, this behaviour of India under the Modi administration has started pushing Pakistan towards the

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<sup>138</sup> Arvind Gupta, *India's Foreign Policy: Surviving in a Turbulent World* (Singapore: Sage Publications, 2020), 241.

<sup>139</sup> Harsh V. Pant, *New Directions in India's Foreign Policy: Theory and Praxis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 221.

<sup>140</sup> C. Vinodan, *India's Foreign Policy and Diplomacy: Emerging Scenario and Challenges* (New Delhi: New Century Publications, 2017), 149.

domain of 5GW due to the India-caused changes in the regional structure of the nuclearized subcontinent.

### **Concluding Analysis**

The increasing reliance of India-Pakistan on Fifth Generation Warfare has augmented the intense regional security environment of the nuclearized subcontinent, where the decades-long rivalry between the pair of nuclear weapon states has become an inevitable reality and an irrefutable truth. The shifting focus of India and Pakistan has inaugurated a new debate in the South Asian region through adopting new means of warfare, and these new means of warfare have altered the conventional strategic outlook of the South Asian region. The increasing reliance of both India and Pakistan on nuclear weapons has changed the traditional patterns of New Delhi-Islamabad strategic competition parallel to placing the entire regional order under the new domain of formation warfare. The Indian security establishment has preferred to launch a worldwide disinformation campaign against Pakistan by targeting the worldwide diplomatic forces of Islamabad and making Pakistan a prime target of Indian regional hegemonic designs. According to the realist-driven features of the international system, New Delhi's core national security values are against Pakistan and its growing cooperative bilateral ties with China. This situation has started victimizing Pakistan in its home region instead of considering the impacts of the Indian offensive region's behaviour on the scope of South Asian peace and stability. The nuclearized rivalry of India-Pakistan has become a more deteriorating factor regarding the values of peace and stability. The degrading role of peace and stability is directly linked with India's contemporary government, in which the Modi's leadership is the prime factor in upsetting and intensifying the South Asian regional security environment. Therefore, Modi's ultra-nationalist and ideological agenda is playing an active role in underestimating the scenario of peace and stability under the nuclear shadows.

### **Chapter 04: South Asian Peace and India-Pakistan Conflict under 5GW**

The increasing dependence of South Asian regional politics on the growing digital infrastructures of the world has changed the traditional outlook of the India-Pakistan rivalry because the digitalization of the international system has affected all the states in different regions. The emerging wave of

digitalization in the international has affected the standings of various states in their regional and extra-regional affairs. The increasing reliance of South Asian states on the emerging digital infrastructures of the world has increased the dependency of the regional states on cyberspace. Indian and Pakistani governments have become active players in the digital transformation of the world while believing that integrating advanced technologies with the mainstream infrastructures of the world will enable them to improve their societal, economic, and political structures.<sup>141</sup> The application of advanced communication technologies in the mainstream structures of the states has facilitated both states on the one hand.

On the other hand, it has raised various challenges of a non-traditional nature for states where South Asian states cannot be considered the appropriate examples because the ongoing basis of strategic competition has been augmented with the arrival of advanced communication technologies in India and Pakistan. As mentioned in the previous chapter the position of Islamabad cannot be equated with India in the debate of technological advancements. The weak position of Pakistan in the evolving competition of information technology between New Delhi and Islamabad is due to the multifaceted economic challenges of the country and the lack of sufficient financial resources to empower the country in the evolving digital environment of the international system.<sup>142</sup> The rise of international smartphone culture and emergence of global health crisis in the form of coronavirus in the world has augmented the digital vulnerabilities of Pakistan. Globalization and the corona crisis have increased Pakistan's dependency on the world's digital infrastructures. This digitalization has made Pakistan more vulnerable than India due to its weak position in the evolving competition of technological advancement.

The societal transformation of Pakistan in the digital domain and the widespread pronation of various social media networks across Pakistani society are important factors in this regard. The use of social media networks has become an essential part of Pakistani society which could be treated as an exception.<sup>143</sup> Akin to many other countries, the rise of social media communication forums in society

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<sup>141</sup> Scott Gates and Kaushik Roy, *Unconventional warfare in South Asia: Shadow Warrior and Counterinsurgency* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 200.

<sup>142</sup> Marcus Franke, *War and Nationalism in South Asia: The Indian State and the Nagas* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 119.

<sup>143</sup> Ali Ahmed, *India's Doctrine Puzzle: Limiting War in South Asia* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 97.

has exposed the vulnerable societal areas of Pakistan in regional power politics. The Indian government has started using social media and various online content to degrade Pakistan's standing in the world, parallel to attacking the internal social structure of Pakistan, where the multiplying digital tendencies of societies are mainly unregulated. Based on the discussion in the previous chapter, the central of this chapter revolves around the South Asian version of Indian propaganda, which is damaging the internal state structure of Pakistan by exploiting the societal vulnerabilities of Pakistan. The main debate in this chapter attempts to provide a brief picture of contemporary South Asia, where the values of peace and stability are losing their relevance to the regional politics of the nuclearized subcontinent.

### **Digitalization of South Asia**

The digitalization of South Asia has added another layer of strategic competition between New Delhi and Islamabad due to the increasing dependencies of both states on the newly emerging digital structures of the world. The overwhelming wave of technological revolution in the international system has encircled the whole world politics and affected the politics of all regions, where Middle Eastern regional politics is an appropriate example.<sup>144</sup> The outbreak of the Arab Spring was due to the spread of social media channels and the public's access to various sensitive government sets. Public access to the banned and restricted political information brought major changes in the countries affected by the political changes of the Arab countries under the heavy influences of technological advancements. An international environment of digitalization provided all citizens across borders and regions free access to various formats of restricted information, which became the prime cause of revolution in Arab states in the form of the Arab Spring.<sup>145</sup> Similar to the Arab Spring, various other states are also becoming the victims of social media propaganda and the spread of information to upset the tradition political structures of the states. Apart from the Arab states, many other states have started facing political upheavals at the societal level. The infiltration of sensitive and manipulated information to the general public and the proliferation of anti-state sentiments are weakening the internal societal structures of the states. Pakistan is an appropriate example where the state

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<sup>144</sup> Kaushike Roy, *Hinduism and the Ethics of Warfare in South Asia: From Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 97.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

government is facing foreign-supported propaganda across the society. The spread of this propaganda is weakening the historical bonds between the state and society due to the increasing unrest of society. The penetration of anti-state sentiment in society results from the multiplying tendencies of states in the digital domain. The government of Pakistan has accepted the increasing threats of social media and the challenging nature of social-media culture in the country, which has provided sufficient chances to India for the proliferation of its anti-Pakistani agenda in the country.<sup>146</sup>

The prevailing effects of social media in society have become uncontrollable forces for the government authorities because it has become too difficult for the states to regulate any format of sensitive information. The digitalization of South Asian regional politics, as a part of an international culture of digital values, has forced both contesting nations to become active parts of the emerging world of digital realities. The adaptation of new means of technology by India and the Indian government's vision for empowering the country's digital muscles have led New Delhi to support the Indian IT industry financially. In contrast to India, Pakistan has also jumped into the emerging digital culture of the world without understanding the complexities of the rising digital world.<sup>147</sup> Both states' dependency on the region's growing digital culture has created an asymmetric balance between both contesting governments. The increasing number of smartphone users in Pakistan and the dramatically rising social media users across Pakistani society have made Pakistan an essential part of the regional digitalization of South Asia. The position of India is different from Pakistan because New Delhi has secured various landmark achievements in the domain of information technology.<sup>148</sup> The Indian leaders have mentioned the increasing reliance of India on advanced communication technology in different statements, and the formal positions of Indian political authorities on the growing culture of digitalization have also communicated to the whole world the growing Indian technological developments. The declassified various published policy documents of the governments are also the supporting elements in this regard because the government authorities in India are actively engaged in crafting multileveled digital policies. The Indian Foreign Office is more active in launching various

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<sup>146</sup> Peter R. Lavoy, *Asymmetric Warfare in South Asia: The Causes and Consequences of the Kargil Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 109.

<sup>147</sup> Bina D' Costa, *Nationbuilding, Gender and War Crimes in South Asia* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 195.

<sup>148</sup> Gregg Huff, *The Economics of World War II in Southeast Asia: Economy and Society Under Japanese Occupation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 28.

programs of bilateral and multilateral engagements with different states located in diverse regions. These developments of India have cleared India's digital vision, enabling New Delhi to consider the IT industry an essential part of the Indian economy.<sup>149</sup>

The revelation of Indian disinformation operations showed that the leading defense planners of New Delhi. The growing Indian IT industry has attached the digital infrastructure of the states with the formal defence structure in which the New Delhi-based strategic planners have started using information technology to achieve strategic objectives. New Delhi's achievements in the digital domain have instructed the leading Indian defense planners to consider technological advancement as an appropriate means of projecting Indian strategic interests in the regions against Pakistan. This security mindset of New Delhi has pushed India towards planning different media techniques of media warfare for degrading the national image of Pakistan in the world. Moreover, the Indian strategic decision-makers have launched a South Asian version of a disinformation campaign to target the internal vulnerabilities of Pakistan while believing that the attack on the internal fault lines of states will weaken the interaction of state and society in the country.<sup>150</sup> The Indian strategic planners have launched a South Asia-specific network of various anti-state channels to mislead the general public of Pakistan. In this way, it is appropriate to maintain that the rise of digital culture in the South Asian region has inaugurated a new competition between two contesting nuclear powers in which the leaders of both states are trying to undermine the positions of each other in the area.

### **Narrative Warfare and India-Pakistan**

The attacks on the internal societal structure of Pakistan have facilitated India in achieving the core objectives of its Pakistan-specific defense planning and making Pakistan vulnerable in its internal structure. The efforts of New Delhi to spread inaccurate and manipulated information in the internal structure of Pakistan have started damaging the internal societal structure of the country in which the anti-state elements are rising under various slogans. New Delhi-sponsored propaganda has created multiple media links with fake sets of information for the general public and let people across the world access the manipulated pictures of Pakistan's internal situation. The uninterrupted and

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<sup>149</sup> Zia ul Haque Shamsi, *South Asia Needs Hybrid Peace* (London: Peter Lang, 2022), 42.

<sup>150</sup> Ayesha Jalal, *The Struggle for Pakistan: A Muslim Homeland and Global Politics* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014), 68.

unrestricted information to the general public causes various critical developments because the Indian and Pakistan governments are inflexible on various regional points. The selection of a disinformation campaign by India as an appropriate tool for undermining Pakistan has become a preferred tool of the contemporary Indian government despite knowing that the two countries are the nuclear powers managing their bilateral hostility under the deterring role of atomic weapons.<sup>151</sup> The mainstream legislative bodies of India have considered the spread of fake information on the sensitive topic will let New Delhi defuse the India-centric counterbalancing potential of Pakistan in its home region. The rise of this scenario is called in South Asia as the start of narrative war between New Delhi and Islamabad because the governments of both states are actively engaged in shaping and reshaping various narratives and counter-narratives. The creation of different narratives and counter-narratives has inaugurated a new race between both nuclear powers because the legislative authorities of both states have accepted the war's different narratives as effective tools for shaping specific formats of public perception against each other. The war of narrative is also called the war of perception because the main strategies of narrative wars generally emphasize the creation of certain narratives to achieve certain objectives.<sup>152</sup> The state preparing for narrative warfare typically focuses on the ing of p. In this way, the outbreak of narrative war between New Delhi and Islamabad has placed the India-Pakistan conflict beyond the physical aspects of war while making the involvement of troops in any conflict a symbolic reflection of the state's defense preparedness. The emerging narrative warfare between New Delhi and Islamabad has been confirmed in the formal government documents of various great powers. A declassified document of the CIA on December 16, 2016, showed that the American government accepted the rising scenarios of strategic competition between India and Pakistan has transformed the nature of competition between two regional powers.<sup>153</sup> Launching various disinformation operations against each other generally enables the state governments to achieve their strategic objectives without fighting with the rival states on the battlefield. The absence of kinetic action in narrative warfare has reduced the loss of infrastructure

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<sup>151</sup> Stephen P. Cohen, *Shooting for a Century: The India-Pakistan Conundrum* (Washington: Brookings Institutions Press, 2013), 29.

<sup>152</sup> Ian Talbot, *A History of Modern South Asia: Politics, States, Diasporas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016) 119.

<sup>153</sup> CIA, India-Pakistan, December 27, 2016, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp78-01617a001600010001-2>

and human lives in interstate conflicts. The absence of losses has made the narrative war a war of public perception about the specific decisions of the governments and building resistance to the particular actions of states at the broader level. The rise of narrative warfare in the international system has altered the traditional conceptual foundations of global security and the conventional threat perceptions of the states against potential security threats. The leading intellectual circles of the international community have started expressing their views on the covertly functioning narrative war between different hostile states.<sup>154</sup> The leading intellectual circles of the global community have called it a war-beyond-weapons due to its covert nature and greater emphasize on the perception building. In South Asia, the narrative war has encircled the India-Pakistan decades-long rivalry. The contesting attributes of both nuclear powers have now gone towards the narrative war and the formal political authorities of both states have accepted the covert attacks on their societies for the perception building in a specific direction. The narrative war in South Asia has augmented the traditional foundations of the India-Pakistan conflict and compelled the governments of both states to focus on creating a narrative and counter-narrative. In the evolving competition of narrative war, the position of Pakistan is much vulnerable because the Indian government launched various networks of spreading fake information to Pakistani society.<sup>155</sup> The formal political authorities of Pakistan have expressed their serious concerns about the Indian launching of disinformation worldwide operation to undermine Pakistan. The government of Pakistan has mentioned on various occasions the covertly functioning disinformation campaign of New Delhi in the multilateral gathering of states to keep Islamabad isolated and a weak state of the world. Despite several clarifications of the Pakistan government on India's actively functioning propaganda operations in the region and beyond the area, the response of the international community is inadequate to address this issue.

### **Scope of Peace and Stability**

The scope of peace and stability has rarely been an important area for the Indian government because the classic maxims of Indian strategic thinking, explained in the second and third chapters, dictate

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<sup>154</sup> William Dalrymple, *A Deadly Triangle: Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2013), 08.

<sup>155</sup> Syed Shahid Hussian Bukhari, *Pakistan's Security and the India-US Strategic Partnership: Nuclear Politics and Security Competition* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 210.

New Delhi to become an influential player in regional and international affairs. The core values of Indian strategic thinking instruct the formal policy-making circles of New Delhi to persistently empower its strategic muscles in the territorial and maritime affairs of its domestic region. The combination of territorial and marine politics has become an important part of Indian mainstream defense planning presently because of the strong belief of the Indian government in controlling both affairs of South Asia.<sup>156</sup> The formal political authorities of the Modi government have accepted that the strong positions of Indian armed forces in South Asia's territorial and maritime politics will enable New Delhi to achieve its strategic objectives. The quest for dominating both mentioned domains of regional politics has become a primary factor causing massive weaponization in the nuclearized subcontinent. The Indian policy for acquiring newly developed advanced weapon systems has degraded the vision of stability in the region, equivalent to questioning the deterring role of nuclear weapons in the South Asian nuclearized regional politics. The constantly emerging reliance of Indian on various strategic techniques of countering the status of Pakistan in the region is directly linked with the status of stability in the region. The leading intellectual circles of the world have already accepted the degrading role of deterrence in the region due to the emerging influences of Indian strategic thinking on the New Delhi defense preparedness.<sup>157</sup> The Indian-launched disinformation campaign has changed the classical status of stability in the region because New Delhi's approach to upgrading the traditional propaganda techniques in the digital domain has posed an additional threat to the regional strategic matrix between the two nuclear powers. The use of sensitive information to stigmatize the national image of Pakistan in the world has ruined the chances of peace in the South Asia region. During the remarks about the South Asian deteriorating security environment under the nuclear shadows, Farani mentioned that the scope of peace and stability has been tarnished in the nuclearized subcontinent due to New Delhi's objective of targeting Pakistan's position in the regional and international political orders.<sup>158</sup>

Thus, the threats to stability and peace in South Asia depend on New Delhi's newly adopted strategies for downgrading Pakistan in its domestic region. Indian attacks on Pakistan's internal structure have

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<sup>156</sup> Daniel S. Markey, *China's Western Horizon: Beijing and the New Geopolitics of Eurasia* (London: Oxford University Press, 2020), 201.

<sup>157</sup> Sanjaya Baru, *Strategic Consequences of India's Economic Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 221.

<sup>158</sup> Farani, *The Scope of Peace in South Asia*.

damaged the scope of stability and peace in the area and forced the government of Pakistan to take certain counterbalancing measures against India. There are many cases to validate that the Indian fake news and its spread in critical times have damaged the national image of Pakistan on various occasions, such as the canceled visit of New Zealand's cricket team. The team's visit to Pakistan was destroyed by the fake news of India on the internal security circumstances of Pakistan in 2022.<sup>159</sup> The visit was canceled, and the investigation of the Pakistan security agencies and law enforcement departments have cleared that the Indian proliferated news of inaccurate security arrangements in Pakistan was not true. The Pakistani authorities later denied the India fake news consisting of an unverified email about the critical status of the security arrangements of the team. The team tour was canceled, and it posed a serious question to the government of Pakistan while jeopardizing Islamabad's vision of reviving sports diplomacy. The attack on the sports diplomacy of Pakistan was an appropriate explanation of the Indian targeting of Pakistan in regional and international affairs. This act of India, later proved illegal and fake, boosted the conflicted interaction of India-Pakistan, where peace always has little chance.

Moreover, the rising tensions between both nuclear powers are primarily based on the frequent attacks of New Delhi on Pakistan in the domain of advanced communication technologies.<sup>160</sup> The increasing platforms of Indian anti-Pakistan propaganda have targeted various other areas as well, such as the foreign relations of Pakistan with other nations. The decision of Islamabad to sign the mega economic corridor project has presently become the gravitational point of Indian anti-Pakistan obsession. The Indian politicians and the formal policymakers have recognized the signed corridor deal between Islamabad and Beijing as a potential threat to India and its standing in Asian power politics generally and South Asian regional politics. The multileveled propaganda of New Delhi against China-Pakistan cooperative relations has made the corridor project between the two states the most controversial development of Asian regional power politics.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Mohan Malik, *China and India: Great Power Rivals* (New Delhi: First Forum Press, 2011), 145.

<sup>160</sup> Christopher Clay, *The Difficult Politics of Peace: Rivalry in Modern South Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 47.

<sup>161</sup> David Brewster, *India and China at Sea: Competition for Naval Dominance in the Indian Ocean* (Haryana: Oxford University Press, 2018), 157.

Apart from having all these critical Pakistan-specific Indian developments, the Indian government always remained persistent in criticizing the ideological foundations of Pakistan with the help of various inaccurate explanations. The New Delhi-sponsored attacks on the ideological foundations of Pakistan have made Pakistan internationally a country of multileveled fanatical ideologies where the question of safety and security are the difficult choices of the government. A brief history of the US-led war on terror is an appropriate example in this regard because the Indian mainstream defense planners always underestimated the efforts of Pakistan to combat the menace of terrorism. Based on these undeniable realities, the idea of peace is difficult to imagine in South Asia's intense regional security environment.<sup>162</sup> The proposals of peace always remained merely the theoretical concepts in the politics of nuclearized regions, and the constant growth of hostile India-Pakistan relations has become the ultimate reality in the area under the shadows of 5GW.

### **The Scope of Peace and Stability in South Asia**

The values of peace and stability are interconnected in the South Asian region, where the possession of nuclear weapons and the constant growth of New Delhi-Islamabad hostility is an undeniable reality. The focus of both states on the values of peace and stability lacks a consensus due to their opposite defense policies and contrasting strategic doctrines inherited in the interstate enduring rivalry.<sup>163</sup> The values of peace and stability could be generated between New Delhi and Islamabad despite having multiple crises mainly consisting of intense arms race, expanding territorial disputes, and the growing socio-political tensions. In the presence of these unresolved issues, the governments of both states are required to develop a consensus on the values of peace and stability.<sup>164</sup> It is important to mention here that the scope of peace is heavily dependent on the values of stability between both nuclear rivals because the stability in their bilateral hostile interaction could down the temperature of their conflict in multiple areas. The conception of stability in the region is linked with the stabilities of crisis, bilateral relations, and deterrence. The crisis management mechanism and the improvement in bilateral political communications are the primary factors that support the scope of

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<sup>162</sup> Rajesh Jetly, *Perspectives on South Asian Security* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2013), 112.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Mario Esteban Carranza, *South Asian Security and International Nuclear Order: Creating a Robust Indo-Pakistani Nuclear Arms Control Regime* (London: Routledge, 2019), 112.

peace in a strategically intense region. The combination of crisis management and political communication at the governmental level will cause various positive developments, such as initiating positive diplomatic connections on productive lines. Thus, the start of political and diplomatic connections between New Delhi and Islamabad will eventually support deterrence stability, which is the main question in the South Asian region.<sup>165</sup> The stability of deterrence will reduce the chances of sub-conventional warfare in the nuclearized region parallel to preventing the probability of escalation between two nuclear powers. Thus, the concept of stability will encourage the India-Pakistan leaders to understand the significance of various confidence-building measures (CBMs). The initiation of CBMs in the South Asian complex region will improve the strategic outlook of the region in the world. It will enable both hostile governments to start their multidimensional cooperative ties to overcome their economic vulnerabilities and social prosperity. Given these factors, the only thing lacking is the realization of the values of peace and stability by Indian and Pakistani leaders. This realization will not only serve the economic interests of both states, but it will relax the regional security environment of the subcontinent. In this way, the question of peace and stability needs the serious attention of the India-Pakistan governments and the attention of the third parties of the external players.

In the contemporary age of technological advancements, the rapid flow of information has allowed the formal strategic planners of states to accept the reality of digitalization of the international society, which only supports the technologically advanced states. South Asian regional politics is an accurate case because of the ongoing India-Pakistan conflict and its transformation in the digital domain. The transformation of both contesting powers' strategic capabilities in the domain of technology has changed the conventional strategic outlook of South Asian regional security because the leaders of both states are empowering their strategic capabilities in the domain of advanced technologies.<sup>166</sup> It is pertinent to mention here the digitalization of the South Asian region and the decisions of both contesting powers of South Asia for adopting the new technological trends for strategic purposes. The

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<sup>165</sup> Christophe Jafferlot, *Pakistan at the Crossroads: Domestic Dynamics and External Pressures* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 221.

<sup>166</sup> Ahsan I Butt, *Secession and Security: Explaining State Strategy Against Separatists* (London: Cornell University Press, 2021), 225.

growing tendencies of both states on the emerging wave of technological advancements have made India a proactive and offensive state in its home region.

In contrast, Pakistan became a reactionary and defensive state in the region. The combination of both states' offensive and defensive strategic postures has placed the whole regional political order of the nuclearized subcontinent under the shadows of 5GW.<sup>167</sup> It is the outbreak of a new competition between two nuclear contestants in which the values of peace and stability have started losing their relevance to the South Asian region. As discussed earlier, the scope of peace is associated with stability because the stable regional security environment could guarantee peace between New Delhi and Islamabad. In the evolving competition of both nuclear powers, the role of third parties is also important due to the close cooperative ties of both India and Pakistan with the external power. The governments of both states believe that the support of extra-regional powers will enable their respective governments to strengthen their respective positions against each other in the region. In this way, the degrading role of peace and stability in the nuclearized region demands the impartial and rational responses of the extra-regional powers because the external power could effectively defuse the rising India-Pakistan tensions. The multidimensional connections of both regional powers with the global powers have already provided space to the external players for their regional interventions. Now, the South Asian policies of great power are required to address the unquestionable harsh realities of the India-Pakistan conflict under the nuclear shadows.

### **Concluding Analysis**

The questions of peace and stability are losing relevance in the South Asian intense security environment where the multi-layered rivalry between two neighbouring states has become a major hurdle in improving the regional political order. The leaders of the two regional powers consistently oppose each other in regional and extra-regional affairs while introducing various proposals for regional peace and stability. Their proposed ideas for improving the regional security environment are inherited from the historical differences and ideological dissimilarities rooted in the partition of the subcontinent when the British

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<sup>167</sup> Austin Carson, *Secret Wars: Covert Conflict in International Politics* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2018), 220.

colonial retreat laid the foundations of the India-Pakistan rivalry, mainly on the Kashmir issue. The unfinished agenda of partition left Kashmir an unresolved issue in the region and resulted in an unending contest between two contesting key players of South Asia. While considering Kashmir a major cause of India-Pakistan hostility, the governments of India and Pakistan adopted various contesting behaviours on the Kashmir issue. They adopted contesting positions in the region against each other. In this way, the use of new technologies and the expanding role of various digital information channels led India and Pakistan leaders to introduce several new patterns of their hostilities in the region. In this way, this chapter focuses on the positions of India and Pakistan in the area and their contesting ways in the information age where the Indian leadership has preferred to adopt a new pattern of narrative warfare. This narrative warfare is an outcome of the digitalization of international society and the widespread promotion of different social media channels worldwide. The Indian government started using the spread of digital media as an effective source of downgrading the position of Pakistan at the regional and extra-regional levels. Thus, the debate in this chapter tried to evaluate an overwhelming wave of narrative warfare in the domain of information contests between two nuclear powers, which are consistent with the deterring role of atomic weapons. This scenario augmented the existing hostile patterns of New Delhi and Islamabad against each other parallel to the intensifying fracturing of the vision of peace and stability in the nuclearized subcontinent.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this comprehensive exploration of the literature on India-Pakistan relations and South Asian geopolitics reveals the multifaceted nature of the New Delhi-Islamabad strategic competition cemented in their enduring conflict. The plethora of academic works and diverse perspectives representing India-Pakistan intense strategic competition has been accessed for this research. Most authors tried to analyze South Asia's persistently deteriorating regional security environment and its changing attributes under the decades-long India-Pakistan rivalry. The changing characteristics of India-Pakistan hostility are mainly inherited in the hostile history of the subcontinent in which the

partition of the subcontinent at the end of World War II laid the foundations of India-Pakistan hostility because the withdrawal of British colonial forces from the subcontinent created various structural issues in the subcontinent. The structural issues of the post-colonial era are generally associated with territorial disagreements and the problems of water governance and management. The end of colonial rule pushed India-Pakistan towards an era of multi-levelled hostility and an unending competition rooted in the trauma of partition and its strong impacts on the political mindsets of both neighbouring hostile nations. The trauma of partition has disturbed the political communication between two hostile neighbouring countries band. The leaders of both states adopted hostile behaviours against each other and started standing against each other in regional politics. It created an environment of mistrust in the region and fractured the diplomatic connections of both nations while believing that their social and political features were incompatible and inflexible. The political and diplomatic disconnects hampered the societal interactions of both nations while reducing the chances of people-to-people cooperation in the region. In this way, the history of India-Pakistan hostile interaction can be traced to the partition of the subcontinent when the British colonial retreat became the prime factor in defining the foundational stones of India-Pakistan hostility and their formal political, social, and ideological incompatibilities.

The post-partition era of the subcontinent started witnessing the increasing strengths of New Delhi-Islamabad hostility and their evolving incompatibilities in mainstream regional affairs. The governments of both nations remained inconsistent with the territorial points of disagreement. They preferred to rely greatly on their military build-up to manage security matters while increasing defense capabilities. The weapon build-up and political clashes of both neighbouring rival nations resulted in certain military clashes and several border skirmishes, and the two-sided political authorities of both states remained ineffective in developing equally acceptable scenarios of peace and cooperation at the regional level. The reduced chances of peace and cooperation in the South Asian region dragged regional politics under the intense political competition between New Delhi and Islamabad. The peace proposals have resulted in various efforts of two-sided leaders to reduce their multiplying points of disagreement on certain diplomatic, political, social, and ideological levels. These disagreements proved effective in effecting the hampering of the values of peace and cooperation between New Delhi and Islamabad parallel to making their leaders hostile against each other. In this way, the history

of South Asian politics suggests that the India-Pakistan hostility always remained a prime factor in affecting the scope of political communication and diplomatic cooperation between New Delhi and Islamabad. The emerging political and diplomatic disconnects between the neighbouring South Asian powers have intensified regional power competition. The spill-over effects of this tough power contest in South Asia have created an additional layer of power competition between New Delhi and Islamabad. The leaders of both states carry their bilateral tensions in world politics beyond their domestic regions. The role of great power is pertinent to mention here, which has been touched on in this research, as the Indian and Pakistani leaders are trying to keep the South Asian power balance in their favour with the support of great powers. In other words, the increasing hostile patterns of India-Pakistan have provided sufficient chances for the extra-regional powers to intervene in the domestic affairs of South Asia.

The increasing role of extra-regional powers in the South Asian regional security environment has augmented the increasing India-Pakistan hostilities. Indian quest for increasing its role in South Asia's territorial and maritime affairs has led the leading policy makers of New Delhi to gain the support of great powers in the region. It is widely believed that the Indian increasing reliance on the support of great powers has resulted in the close strategic collaboration between New Delhi and Washington. In contrast, the Pakistani state authorities have joined China in its emerging economic networking. The decision of Pakistan to join Chinese economic worldwide designs is a response to Indian increasing resilience in its strategic partnership with the United States. While considering the growing Sino-Pak economic collaboration, New Delhi has started treating Pakistan and China as the most serious threats to its positions in the Asian power balance generally and South Asian power politics specifically. The conventional security patterns of New Delhi have aligned its defense preparedness with different states from across the globe to counter China's emerging role in Asian politics, which is directly associated with the mainstream security priorities of Pakistan. This scenario creates structural changes in the South Asian region where the Indian leaders are cautious about the changing dynamics of South Asian power politics in which the Chinese leaders are cultivating diplomatic closeness with Pakistan. The increasing Indian insecurities from China are merely responses of New Delhi to the structural changes of the South Asian region, which leaves a sense of insecurity in Pakistan's mindset. According to the neo-realist theoretical dimension, the structural changes of international or regional

systems generally shape the specific behaviours of states in strategically contesting and diplomatically cooperating manners.

So, the Indian realist-driven responses to the merging security complexities from its surrounding great power China have compelled its mainstream defense authorities to take sufficient security measures, which have started targeting Pakistan, the only South Asian state having adequate potential for counterbalancing Indian regional hegemonic ambitions in its home region. Additionally, the Indian leaders are cautious about raising Pakistan's economic collaboration with China while considering the cooperative designs of its two neighbouring nations with each other. The rising cooperative alliance of both countries is the response to New Delhi's offensive behaviour, which has cultivated enduring rivalries with its territorially adjoining China and Pakistan. In this way, the changing defensive strategies of India have adopted various hostile patterns throughout history, in which the contemporary age of information warfare has facilitated New Delhi to launch multileveled disinformation campaigns against Pakistan. The neo-realist theoretical perspective is pertinent to mention here because the Indian increasing reliance on various propaganda operations is a response to rising structural challenges of Asian power politics generally and South Asian regional politics specifically. It considerably increased Islamabad's insecurities in its home region, where Kashmir is the prime concern of Pakistan, where the majority of the population is Muslim and determined to oppose Indian occupational policies in Kashmir. The voices of the Kashmiri Muslim population against Indian occupational behaviour have gained the support of Pakistan due to common ideological and humanitarian concerns. The Indian leaders have decided to downgrade the support of Pakistan to Kashmiri people through different propaganda operations internationally to counter reducing the support of the international community to Pakistan's position in its home region against Indian offensive regional policies. In this way, this research tried to emphasize the contemporary phase of Indian regional hegemonic policies cemented in its widespread anti-Pakistani campaigns. The central idea of this research attempted to provide an upgraded academic survey of Indian increasing disinformation operations against Pakistan under the leader of Prime Minister Modi. It has internationally been accepted that the Indian leaders under the Modi government have revolutionized New Delhi's mainstream security policies and revised Indian ways of targeting Pakistan in the regional and extra-regional environment. This study suggests that this format of Fifth Generation

Warfare has considerably worse impacts on the South Asian vision of peace and stability under the nuclear shadows. It has been academically proved in this research that the scope of peace and stability in contemporary South Asia has been fractured due to the rise of Modi's government in India and its new way of damaging the position of Pakistan in its home region.

### **Recommendations**

Based on this research's concluding remarks, it has been proved that the South Asian regional security environment is constantly deteriorating due to the changing attributes of Indian defense policies. The present emphasis of New Delhi on the various disinformation campaigns against Pakistan has become an active part of Indian anti-Pakistani behaviour, which has been significantly deteriorating the scope of peace and stability in the nuclearized subcontinent. In this way, the regional security environment of South Asia can be improved with the support of the following recommendations.

The mainstream leadership of India and Pakistan was required to revise their decades-long hostile visualization of each other because the rivalry originated from the partition of the subcontinent as the result of the British colonial retreat. The traditional hostile patterns of both states always multiply with different new hostile policies in which the two-sided defense planners tried to keep the regional balance in their favour without considering the impacts of their multi-levelled hostility on the scope of peace and stability of the South Asian nuclearized subcontinent. In this way, the considerable departure from the conventional patterns of hostility needs to be rationalized in the presence of new realities of the international system. The new realities of the world are witnessing the changing power dynamics of the global system, where most states are revising their traditional positions on different regional and international issues. This situation demands India-Pakistan to reconsider their main points of disagreement on the regional problems parallel to crafting several scenarios of their bilateral interaction supporting the scope of broader regional peace.

The departure from traditional points of disagreement between New Delhi and Islamabad will lead the governments of two opposing powers towards adopting an enhanced mechanism of political communication and diplomatic cooperation. The increasing role of political communication at the

governmental level and the initiation of diplomatic collaboration at the bilateral level will facilitate the Indian and Pakistan leaders to start an era of new regional politics where the values of peace, stability, and development will become the unquestionable features of South Asian regional politics. The history of South Asian regional politics witnessed the peace proposals of Pakistan to India, which were refused by the Indian political authorities, and the Indian leaders decided to remain consistent with the anti-Pakistani values. The change in Indian behaviour will encourage its mainstream leadership to actively participate in regional peace and stability efforts. This factor will pull Indian strategic thinking from the anti-Pakistan traditional designs where New Delhi is persistent in targeting Pakistan from multiple directions. So, the combination of political communication and diplomatic cooperation will ultimately let the governments of both states avoid their hostile behaviours in the contemporary information age.

The increasing reliance of India on new means of warfare in the contemporary information age has unquestionably augmented South Asia's regional security environment, which has degraded the role of the multilateral, regional framework of the nuclearized subcontinent. The adaptation of the new means of warfare has further hampered the efforts of SAARC, a regional multilateral organization designed to resolve longstanding regional issues mainly between key regional players. In this way, the rapidly deteriorating regional security environment consisting of the enduring India-Pakistan rivalry can be addressed with the help of SAARC, where the leaders of both nations can effectively discuss their mainstream points of disagreement. The effective role of SAARCH is heavily dependent on the unilateral and bilateral initiatives associated with New Delhi and Islamabad, as the two states are key players and responsible for regional peace and security. In this way, the combination of bilateral and unilateral initiatives of India and Pakistan could effectively support the greater agenda of multilateralism introduced by SAARC. The adaptation of such a framework will change the main course of South Asian regional politics, where the longstanding dispute between New Delhi and Islamabad in the age of information could be replaced with diplomatic cooperation and economic collaboration.

The formal state authorities from New Delhi and Islamabad must adopt a pragmatic approach to

resolve their main conflicting points, which could be possible only with the help of their bilateral approach. Such a bilateral approach could be spared from the involvement of extra-regional forces because the role of extra-regional powers always placed South Asia under the unavoidable influences of international power politics. In other words, the South Asian regional security environment has always remained dependent on the changing dynamics of great power politics due to the persistent reliance of India and Pakistan on the support of extra-regional powers. The governments of both states always considered the support of external actors as an effective way of strengthening their positions in South Asia, and this factor considerably fractured the scope of regional peace and stability. Therefore, India and Pakistan state authorities could rationally understand the importance of their home region in international politics in which the bilateral cooperation could improve the regional political order by developing common cooperating grounds away from the influences of extra-regional power. The constructive and positive presence of extra-regional powers could be appreciated by Indian and Pakistani leaders, which are easy to imagine but difficult to practice.

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