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INSURGENCY AND GREAT POWER POLITICS: AN APPRAISAL OF HYBRID WARFARE IN THE CONTEXT OF BALOCHISTAN'S INSURGENCY

Dr. Asif Salim

Assistant Professor Department of Political Science Bacha Khan University Charsadda. Email: drasifsalim@bkuc.edu.pk

Dr. Raid Khan

Assistant Professor Department of Political Science Bacha Khan University Charsadda. Email: dr.raidkhan@bkuc.edu.pk

Dr. Surat Khan

Assistant Professor Department of Political Science University of Lakki Marwat. Email: surat@ulm.edu.pk (Corresponding Author)

Muhammad Adeel Khan

Lecturer Department of Governance, Politics, IR and Public Policy (GPP) Abasyn University Peshawar. Email: dradeelkhan2@gmail.com

Abstract

Nationalist-driven insurgency in Balochistan has entered into an era of hybrid warfare. The deeprooted frustration of the Baloch people being ignited and exploited by the regional adversaries of Pakistan so as to gain politico-economic leverages in the region. Balochistan having excessive reserves of energy and natural resources and geographically contiguous with resource rich CARs and Iran further attract the states to extract share in the crisis. Geo-strategic and geo-economic significance of the province has also multiplied due to the initiation of CPEC and Gwadar port project. However, all these advantages will remain in limbo until nationalist-cum-religious insurgencies in Balochistan are addressed. The situation is going to be intensified as it is perceived that an alliance between TTP and Baloch rebellious groups have been concluded to assist each other in their operational activities to gain settled objectives. In this scenario, the great powers will also settle their scores with active assistance of bordering states to further aggravate the already deplorable security condition in Balochistan. Although, the successive governments are gradually channelizing the genuine political and economic demands by announcing various public-oriented projects to improve the wellbeing of the people of Balochistan, on ground, the challenges are terrifying to deal. The current research focuses religio-nationalist insurgency with meddling of great and regional powers politics by employing the 'frustration aggression theory' advanced by Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, and Sears to understand Balochistan's insurgency and its possible outcomes.

Key Words: Balochistan, Insurgency, Hybrid warfare, India, Great Powers Politics

Introduction

Balochistan is one of the largest of the four provinces of Pakistan. Since, the inception of Pakistan this province is boiling and experiencing series of insurgencies. Khan of Kalat, Mir Ahmad Yar Khan, first signed standstill agreement with West Pakistan to ensure its independent status of Balochistan but later on series of meetings and subsequently joining of feudatory states [Lasbela, Kharan and Makran District] into Pakistan, the document of accession was inked by the Khan under the barrels of the guns on April 1st, 1948 with Pakistan. This forceful annexation led to the first armed insurgency which was started by Khan's brother in 1948.ⁱ Before 2004, Balochistan has experienced full-fledged rebellious movements in intervals, 1958, 1963-69, 1973-77. Each time the episode of the movement was wider, intensified and lethal then the former one.ⁱⁱ However, the current wave of insurgency, which rightly started from the killing of Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti by the then president-cum Army Chief General Pervez Musharraf, is more terrifying and alarming in its nature. Arguably, the geo-strategic importance of Balochistan is immense in manifold because of its adjacent border with Afghanistan that further develop linkages with Central Asian Republics (CARs) and also shares 909 km border area with Iran normally called Seistan-Balochistan border. Iran is an easy way to connect Balochistan, by road or train, with gulf and bordering Middle Eastern states. Nonetheless, the most important development in the province is the initiation of Gwadar port project which multiply its geo-strategic and geo-economic significance.ⁱⁱⁱ Research studies proven the fact that Balochistan is rich in precious mineral and natural resources, notably, energy resources i.e., oil, gas, coal etc which, no doubt, if dig out and properly bring them into utilization, can become the lifeline of Pakistan's economy.

However, the concerning point is that the ongoing discussion about the importance of Balochistan in term of its physical features and location will remain in doldrums until indigenous nationalistdriven insurgencies are fully addressed. It is, indeed, not an easy task especially when the 'hybrid warfare' mechanism is in full swing' in Pakistan in general and Balochistan in particular.^{iv} Great powers' politics and regional countries meddling can practically be observed in case of Balochistan. Suicide attacks, target killings and bomb blasts have become order of the day. The terrorist incidents claimed by the nationalist groups clearly indicates that the province is subject to hybrid warfare launched by the opponents of Pakistan.

More alarming the situation is, that facts are being overlapped by perceptions. Facts are being blurred by the centrifugal forces to tarnish the image of Pakistan before the comity of nations. Pakistan is imagined as a terrorist sponsored state, yet the existential fact is that Pakistan is the worst victim of terrorism and always used it as a proxy by the great powers to secure their tactical and strategic interests and after that left Pakistan at lurch. According to Ambassador (R) Munir Akram "the hybrid war against Pakistan is focused on Baluchistan, the erstwhile FATA region, Gilgit-Baltistan and the CPEC.^v This research work is an attempt to analyze the nationalist Baloch insurgency in the context of hybrid warfare which mainly encompasses foreign sponsored insurgencies, acts of terrorism, transformation of factual information through propaganda and blurred media campaign.

Methodology

The study is qualitative in nature which consist of process tracing and a single case study. Process tracing or opening the 'black box' methodology is used to understand and evaluate the related events of an issue by which the decision-makers respond. To understand the insurgency in Balochistan is a phenomenal study and undoubtedly a complex one, therefore empirical and analytical methods have further been employed for authentication of facts related to fluctuating trends regarding the nationalists' insurgency. The data for research has primarily been collected from secondary sources which includes, books, magazines (print & online) newspapers, journals, net surfing and official and unofficial documents. Addition to this, themes are also generated through personal observation and discussion with experts of the related field so as to further qualify the research.

Theoretical Framework

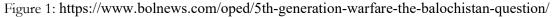
A group in a particular society has some genuine demands which ranges from basic human needs to socio-economic and political rights. These demands need to be addressed by the state apparatus before it reach to the level of deprivation. Sense of alienation further leads to the phenomena of frustration. This is the stage, from where the deprived group direct its inner instinct towards available options. These options can be based on constitutional or non-constitutional means. However, the scholars agreed on a point that 'insurgency begins where constitutional mechanism for addressing the demands fails'. In this context, the frustration aggression theory advanced formulated by Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, and Sears is the most relevant theory to understand Balochistan's insurgency.^{vi} This theory mainly focuses that the instinct of an individual compelled him to destroy himself because frustration could not be streamlined. Human ego prevent him from self-destruction, which resultantly transferred to others. The theory further argues that frustration is caused where individual's desire is not attainable which leads to aggression. As far as insurgency in Balochistan is concerned, series of episode can be recorded in this context. The Baloch nationalist demands include, maximum political autonomy as per the constitution, exclusive right on the mineral resources, natural gas royalty and accessibility to the information of the persons disappeared during military operations.^{vii} Apart from this, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is also a controversial project in front of many Baloch nationalist leadership. They have reservations about employment opportunities for the non-Baloch persons in this mega project. They believe that the soil of Balochistan will again be used as was done in the past by the center government for development of other part of the country rather than the development of the Baloch people. This decade long frustration ultimately led the Baloch people to start armed struggle for their economic and political rights. However, fact of the matter is that the successive governments have addressed the political issues and economic demands of Balochistan to some extent but still these are exaggerated and portrayed by the external media negatively. Arguably, the level of intensity of Baloch insurgency would have had less impact if foreign involvement had contained dexterously.

Results and Discussion

Is foreign involvement a myth or reality?

International media highlights the deprivation of the Balochistan and Baloch people by focusing on three major areas. Firstly, since 1947 Balochistan has been kept in Blanket for strategic purposes. Physical characteristics of the province are unique in term of its mountainous terrain and border linkages with Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Iran and Arabian Sea. India is three times bigger than Pakistan and at the same time a conventional enemy. Therefore, in time of war this province can be used for guerrilla warfare and dumping the military resources therein as this analogy is extracted from the approach adopted by Pakistani military towards erstwhile Federally Administrative Tribal Areas (FATA).viii This military strategic thinking barred the economic development in the province and keep the 'Sardari system' intact there. Educated class in Balochistan often ask with a question mark that why the economic development did not took place in the province with same pace of other provinces. There is dearth of schools, colleges, higher institutions, hospitals and factories. Secondly, the issue of political autonomy is long awaited and demanded by the indigenous politicians (Sardars) as the socio-economic development is purely linked with political empowerment.^{ix} It is also argued that before the state began repressing the Baloch, most of the nationalist political parties were working within the framework of the federal constitution of Pakistan to get socio-economic and political rights. Further, it is also perceived by some of the security experts that security forces rather than separatist are responsible for awful law and order situation in Balochistan.^x Thirdly, there must be exclusive right of the Baloch people on mineral resources. It is an established fact that Balochistan is rich with energy resources i.e., oil, gas, coal and other metallic and non-metallic resources like chromite, sulpher, marble, iron ore, limestone, copper etc.xi





Thus, it is rightly argued that every crisis brings its own opportunities. The geo-economic and geostrategic significance attracts the regional and extra regional players to interfere in Balochistan by igniting indigenous alienated-sentiments of the Baloch people. Therefore, as per the frustration aggression theory formulated by Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, and Sears, the sense of deprivation has reach to a stage of rebellion in Balochistan where slogans of independent Balochistan have become order of the day and the players are making their own moves on the chess board.

Power Politics of Regional and Global Actors in Balochistan

At present, Sino-US economic tug of war is started at many points i.e., Asia-pacific, Europe and Latin America. Both the economic giants are trying to encircle and further contain each other. With the initiation of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) the US is responding more aggressively at every nook and corner to give tough time to Beijing. One of the core corridor is China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which seems to be a source of strength for China in the region as well as in the Indian Ocean.^{xii} One of the component of the US-India strategic partnership is to contain China economic and strategic expansion in South and Central Asia. Similarly, India is deeply involved in fomenting insurgencies in Balochistan so as to settle-down the scores of Kashmir insurgency and to engage the Pakistani security forces at southwest border. Apart from this, India is also in alliance with Iran to flop Gwadar port project by constructing Chabahar project at southeastern Iran. This port is only 170 km west of Pakistan's Gwadar port. Chahabhar port will also reduce Afghanistan's dependency on Pakistan as the port is 800 km closer to the border of Afghanistan than Pakistan's Karachi port.^{xiii} Thus, all these alliance at global and regional level are slowing down the developmental progress in Balochistan and fueling insurgencies herein.

The Two Big (US and Russian) Involvement in Balochistan

In Baluchistan, US and Russia had always tried to exploit the region to make Pakistan weak and to promote their own national interests. "*Pashtunistan Movement*" and "*Greater Baluchistan*" was supported by Russia. After invading Afghanistan in 1979, it was believed that the Soviet Union would try to take Baluchistan's deep sea water port with the help of Baloch insurgents and their militant activities. As long as the Soviet forces took control of Afghanistan, they tried to convince Baloch to revolt against Pakistan. Balochs were given surety by the Soviet that they will give autonomy to the Baloch over their land and that it would be given an autonomous Province status. Major objective of the Soviet Union in the region was to maintain its domination on Kabul where it will be their base from where to raise the issue of Pashtunistan and Greater Baluchistan and to make it possible to separate Baluchistan from Pakistan.^{xiv}

This area has been considered as the heart of Asia since ancient times. At present Balochistan has once again emerged as an ideal place for replaying the 18th century great game. Besides Russia was eager to get access to warm water of the Arabian Sea and wanted to dominate the energy resources of Central Asia. For energy export, the Central Asian states are dependent on Russia. Domination of the region is in the interest of both the powers. It is in the interest of Russia that Balochistan be destabilized as it will give hope to discourage the Trans-Afghan pipeline as well as similar other projects.^{xv}

The geo-strategic location of Balochistan and its vitality cannot be ignored by the US. To counter Chinese influence in the region, the US is involved in supporting Baloch insurgents. The intelligence agency CIA provides financial assistance to Baloch insurgents in Afghanistan. Raymond Davis, the US spy, who was arrested during an incident when he killed two Pakistanis in 2011 was believed to be involved in covert operation in Balochistan. These covert operations of the intelligence agency of the US shows increased interests of the US in this region.^{xvi} The US, India and Israel nexus foremost agenda is the creation of "*Greater Balochistan*". Here in Pakistan on one hand the US is propagating her concerns of maintaining peace in Pakistan but on the other hand it is involved in malicious activities of supporting militancy in Balochistan. Its objective in the region is to maintain influence in Gawadar and other parts of Balochistan. Disrupting the developmental project of Gawadar port, which is a joint venture of China and Pakistan, is the foremost objective of the United States in the region. The US interest in the region can thus best be served where instability in Balochistan is maintained and the developmental projects of Pakistan and China is sabotaged. The world second largest economy, China's presence in Gawadar is a major concern for the US as it will increase Chinese influence in the Middle East and Africa which will consequently threaten Washington's regional goal.

The Indian Factor

Indian involvement in the region is also of grave concern for Pakistan. India's evil intensions and their secret involvement in fueling Balochistan's insurgency have been exposed. For years Indian intelligence agency is interfering to support the insurgents' groups in Balochistan. These are not just allegations from Pakistani government but the Baloch militant leaders have confessed of receiving the Indian support. It has also been exposed that the members of the Balochistan Liberation Organization (BLO) have been living in India since 2009. Indian consulates in Kandahar and Jalalabad have been accused of funding, training and arming Baloch militants. Almost a decade ago one of a senior official of Pakistan alleged that 600 Baloch militants were receiving training in Afghanistan from the Indian intelligence agency to conduct terrorism in Balochistan.

The Indian intelligence agency for a long time has been involved in covert operations in Balochistan through proxies and a network of terrorism which falls within Hybrid parameters.^{xviii} The Research and analysis Wing (RAW) has been involved in the terrorist activities in Balochistan. Pakistan in 2009 handed over a dossier of RAW's involvement in terrorist activities in the province. Pakistan on regular basis hand over such dossiers to the United Nations. It is revealed in those dossiers that how the Indian intelligence agency is involved in using Afghanistan territory for training and providing fund to the terrorists in ex-FATA region and Balochistan.^{xix} Funding to such organization and to the ethnic and sectarian disturbances had been traced back to India.

Kulbushan Jadhav, an Indian spy agency agent confessed in a video recording that his duty in Balochistan was to held meetings with the Baloch insurgents and also to carry out activities with their cooperation. These activities were of criminal nature which led to the killing of many Pakistanis.^{xx} He further stated that the RAW was involved in the separatist movement in Pakistan. He confessed that RAW was behind all these activities in Balochistan where it supported the Balch liberation movement to help free Balochistan and the region around it from Pakistan.^{xxi}

Indo-Iranian nexus and Interference in Balochistan

Balochistan on its western side, is bordered with Iran. It thus has always been a major factor which determines relationship between Iran and Pakistan. Certain factors that led to confusion and doubts are involved in affecting Pak-Iran relations. The Indo-Iranian relations, their defense cooperation

and RAW's activities in Pakistan are some of the factors affecting Pak-Iran relations. It is through Iran that India got access to the Balochistan region where it is involved in malicious activities trying to destabilize the region. Pakistan is continuously facing security threats due to the insurgent group movements near Pak-Iran border. Pakistan believes that it is Indian sponsored activities whose objective in the region is to destabilize the province and to damage law and order situations in Pakistan. CPEC is a mega project of the province of Balochistan which has augmented the geostrategic importance of the province. Gawadar, because of CPEC, is becoming a trade hub where infrastructural development and economic activities will certainly uplift the economy of the province in particular and the country in whole.^{xxii}

Kulbushan Jadav case is evident of the fact that Iranian territory was used by the Indian intelligence agency against Pakistan. Beside this Kulbushan was having an Iranian passport and was involved in spying and inimical activities with the intension and Indian objectives of destabilizing Balochistan. Indian Prime Minister on the occasion of India's Independence Day in 2016 mentioned and talked about the Balochistan crisis. His statements and stance on Balochistan was supported by the Baloch insurgent leaders. All this proves of Indian involvement in Balochistan. The Director General of the Inter- Services Public Relations (ISPR) briefed media on the capture of Kulbushan that he was involved in terrorist activities in Balochistan and that his goal was to sabotage CPEC and the Gawadar port projects. He stated that it was a clear act of state sponsored terrorism and Indian interference in Pakistan.^{xxiii}

The Indo-Iranian nexus in Afghanistan and interference in Balochistan

With the withdrawal of USSR from Afghanistan, a vacuum created which needed to be filled by the regional stake holders. Afghanistan emerged as a center of Indo- Iran nexus on one hand and to be a bone of contention between Pakistan and Iran on the other. The Indo-Iran nexus in Afghanistan created a challenging situation for Pakistan where India has been involved in supporting the opposite groups in Afghanistan. Close cooperation between India and Iran on the question of Afghanistan has threatened Pakistan's position in the region. Afghanistan being a landlocked country needs to pass through Iran or Pakistan to reach the sea water for its trade. Afghanistan on the other side in 2011 had an Agreement on Strategic Partnership signed with India. It is this partnership of the two which enabled them to work against the interests of Pakistan in the region. Beside this India being an active player in Afghanistan is providing financial assistance in the form of aid packages, infrastructural development and capacity building programmes.^{xxiv}

China is being viewed as a regional threat, which India is trying to counterbalance by having firm relations with Afghanistan. To counter China's influence in the region, India is active in terrorist activities in Balochistan. All these operations by the Indian intelligence personnel are done through the consulates established along the Pak-Afghan border. Pakistan's foreign office, ISPR and the media have highlighted the issue and provided proofs of Indian involvement in Balochistan to the world and made it realized to the world community that India is involved in state sponsored terrorism.^{xxv}

Propaganda fuels conflict in Balochistan

Media efforts directed against Pakistan are now operating at full capacity in this age of hybrid warfare. The efforts in the media are attempting to give the impression that Balochistan has been kept impoverished and underdeveloped. In fact, the presence of outside parties in the province have a negative impact on the overall development progress. One of the factors that has impeded the province's progress toward growth and stability is the presence of militant organizations in the province that get funding from outside sources. In an effort to agitate the people of Pakistan against their own government and institutions, the state of India has been attempting to depict Balochistan as a backward and impoverished region of Pakistani society. India creates fictitious social media profiles and websites in order to give the impression to the outside world that Balochistan's own government is keeping the province in a state of abject poverty. This helps India promote an inaccurate view of the region.^{xxvi}

In reality Balochistan has not been accorded its rights but the enemies are exploiting fracture lines. It is propaganda that is based on a half-truth that Balochistan has been kept impoverished and underdeveloped and that Punjab, a province where poverty is common along with other socio-economic imbalances, is taking advantage of Balochistan's riches.^{xxvii}

India has begun a propaganda campaign against Pakistan and is utilizing a variety of platforms like television, newspapers, books, social media, movies, and plays. It has already begun developing a multi-media website and mobile application for its Balochi radio station. The transmissions on the radio stations were transmitted in the Balochi language, and they aired remarks made by top officers of the Indian intelligence agency, RAW, in an effort to inspire the Balochi population to rise up against Pakistan. In addition, India has begun broadcasting a television news station known as "Zee Salam" for the same reason.^{xxviii}

The Indian government is making a concerted effort to persuade the country's media to highlight misleading information on Balochistan. Because of this, the Indian media is spreading false stories about the "deep-rooted and festering political, economic, and human rights problems of Balochistan." Instead of focusing on militant attacks and bomb blasts in the province, the Indian media is instead publishing articles that attempt to explain Pakistan's "Balochistan Problem."

India has one of the highest percentages of the world's population actively engaged on various social media sites. In Pakistan, for instance, there are just 40.4 million people who use social media but in India there are over 206 million people who use social media^{xxix}. These individuals have a systematic influence on Pakistan's social media by disseminating hundreds of hoaxes involving Balochistan and other parts of our country via the posting of images and videos. The Indian government is attempting to smear, destabilize, and otherwise harm Pakistan's reputation in the eyes of the world community by utilizing the media. They do this by generating and disseminating false and fabricated news via a vast network consisting of 750 fake media outlets and 550 websites that are active in 162 different nations.

Figure 2: https://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/india/#monthly-202112-202212

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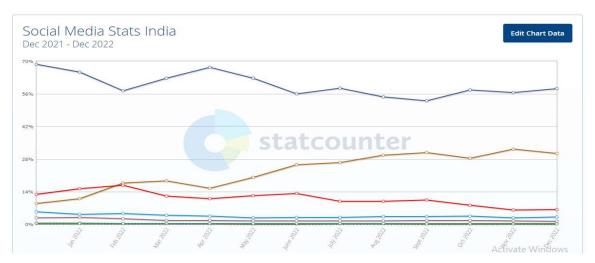


Table1:https://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/india/#monthly-202112-202212(downloaded Data)

Date	Facebook	Instagr am	YouTu be	Twitt er	Pinter est	Linked In	redd it	Tum blr	VKonta kte	news.ycombinato r.com	Oth er
2021- 12	68.61	8.99	12.89	5.5	2.88	0.51	0.37	0.19	0.04	0.01	0.02
2022- 01	65.32	10.97	15.27	4.32	2.9	0.52	0.43	0.18	0.03	0.02	0.05
2022- 02	57.37	17.65	16.78	4.65	2.45	0.44	0.46	0.13	0.02	0.01	0.03
2022- 03	62.75	18.69	12.06	3.84	1.74	0.39	0.37	0.09	0.03	0	0.03
2022- 04	67.41	15.42	10.98	3.62	1.75	0.36	0.33	0.08	0.01	0.02	0.02
2022- 05	62.67	20.09	12.36	2.75	1.45	0.28	0.31	0.05	0.01	0.01	0.01
2022- 06	55.94	25.51	13.23	3.03	1.56	0.28	0.38	0.05	0.01	0.01	0
2022- 07	58.5	26.44	9.86	3.07	1.42	0.33	0.31	0.05	0.02	0.01	0.01
2022- 08	54.72	29.64	9.97	3.43	1.47	0.37	0.34	0.03	0.01	0.01	0
2022- 09	53.09	30.77	10.48	3.3	1.66	0.37	0.27	0.03	0.01	0.01	0

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2022- 10	57.6	28.35	8.18	3.64	1.63	0.32	0.2	0.05	0.01	0.01	0
2022- 11	56.58	32.27	6.16	2.8	1.5	0.31	0.27	0.07	0.01	0.02	0
2022- 12	58.32	30.48	6.32	3.09	1.26	0.29	0.19	0.05	0.01	0.01	0

In addition, in 2019, it was found out that a large network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and think tanks were providing assistance to over 200 fake news outlets that were run by an Indian network in order to influence the European Union and UN with content that was critical of Pakistan. The content in question was aimed at spreading misinformation about Pakistan. A non-governmental organization based in Europe made the discovery in November 2019 that India was in control of a network consisting of 265 sites that published false news. During the course of the inquiry, it was discovered that a number of mysterious organizations had been orchestrating yearly demonstrations and social media activities directed against Pakistan during the sessions of the United Nations Human Rights Council.^{xxx}

Hybrid warfare and the CPEC

The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a project that China started which would cost multiple billion dollars. The megaproject includes the construction of cutting-edge transportation networks, new energy facilities, and specialized economic zones. It is anticipated that CPEC will stimulate economic activity in the province, which will ultimately lead to stability and prosperity. The local populace now has a more positive outlook because of CPEC. The province will be well positioned for future economic growth and prosperity as a result of the construction of Gwadar special economic zones and an extensive transportation network. port. Since the beginning of the mammoth project, it has been the target of many conspiracy theories and propaganda emanating from India, the United States, and other western nations. They are seeking to influence and damage the development initiative while simultaneously engaging in a propaganda war against it. It is anticipated that the CPEC, which is a flagship project, would help Pakistan's economy. India is actively working to undermine the megaproject by fabricating negative news about it and launching assaults against it with terrorist groups. Regardless of whether India acts publicly or covertly against Pakistan, its harmful intentions are brought to light either way. In addition, it is unhappy with the massive investments of the Chinese in the CPEC projects. The CPEC has been the focus of India's efforts to undermine the project's success by supporting a group of extremists. In an effort to derail the megaproject, the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) has claimed responsibility for the assault on the Gwadar Pearl Continental hotel.^{xxxi} The Chinese Consulate in Karachi was the target of an assault that was also orchestrated by the Indian intelligence agency. In the province of Balochistan, it was also responsible for the kidnapping and killing of Chinese engineers. All these developments categorically proof that India has launched full-fledged hybrid warfare on Pakistan.

Conclusion

The research looked at the difficulties that hybrid warfare poses for Balochistan. In Pakistan, the province of Balochistan covers the most land area of any other province. It is endowed with a vast quantity of untapped natural resource potential. The fact that Balochistan is home to one of the world's biggest deep-water ports adds to the region's already substantial geostrategic significance. Because of the province substantial significance to the world's major powers, a hybrid warfare has been conducted against it in an effort to destabilize it. India is Pakistan's natural adversary, and it has never passed up a chance to take advantage of the dynamics that exist inside Pakistan's provinces. Since, for a long time India has been actively contributing to the instability in Balochistan. It is engaged in hybrid warfare against Pakistan, specifically focusing attacks at Baluchistan. In the province, militant organizations are involved in terrorist activities, and India's Intelligence Agency is persistently supporting them financially and politically. India is waging a kind of warfare known as the "hybrid warfare" against Pakistan by employing social media, electronic media, and print media in an effort to impair the image of Pakistan before the comity of nations.

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