

Exploring the Warfare Targets in Interstate Disinformation Warfare against Pakistan

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Abstract

This study examines the targets aimed by interstate disinformation warfare waged by adversary states against Pakistan. The warfare mongers want to shape Pakistani public opinion and international perception to affect government policy in their favor by hitting these targets through media assaults. Although this study majorly involved inductive reasoning, like most qualitative studies, it partly has a validating character. This research comprised a sample of 15 interviewees with diverse backgrounds, including media academicians, journalists, and defense analysts. A purposive sampling method was adopted to recruit participants identified through snowballing. The participants were recruited through the purposive snowballing method. In-depth phenomenological interviewing was employed to collect data per this study's ontological stance and epistemological beliefs. Employing the Thematic Analysis Method, twenty codes were identified from the interview data. These codes were segregated into six nodes and child nodes each based on similarity. The nodes were later clubbed into a theme. Once the data had been arranged hierarchically in Codes, Nodes, and Themes, it was fed into NVivo version 12, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, to compile it graphically and assign visual presentations. All participants viewed affirmatively in line with the Nodes and Child Nodes, and no differing or mitigating remark was received from the participants. So, it is confidently concluded that the research objective has been fully achieved.

Keywords: interstate disinformation warfare, disinformation warfare targets, disinformation impact, public opinion, International perception, phenomenological interviewing.

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Pakistan has a great geo-economic standing. It links South Asia with landlocked Central Asia, rich in mineral and energy resources needing access to the Indian Ocean through Gwadar port. It is close to multiple vital sea routes from the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, Africa, and Europe through the Red Sea. Nawaz et al. (2024) agree that Pakistan is strategically located at the junctions of global trade routes and is primed to exploit this position amid a shifting international relations landscape. Javaid et al. (2024) similarly argue that Pakistan is the most appropriately situated country among the Southeast Asian states. The Gwadar Port is the connecting link supported by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), like initiatives to advance trade, infrastructure, and people-to-people linkages with the Central Asian region. The passage provided by Gwadar can ensure an oil lifeline to China. Khetran & Saeed (2017), Hussain and Hussain (2017), and Raza (2020) maintain that Pakistan plays a pivotal role in the Belt and Road Initiative (B.R.I.), which focuses on regional connectivity through economic development and is an avatar of the olden Silk Route that linked Asia to Europe and Africa.

Javaid et al. (2021) similarly maintain that for China, the distance from the South China Sea ports to African ports is 5,615 nautical miles, three times greater than from Gwadar. Furthermore, Pakistan's proximity to the Middle East and Africa makes its ports attractive to Central Asian states and China. It offers these states a cost-effective and time-efficient transit trade route to these regions. Junaid and Mustafa (2020) agree that landlocked Central Asian states can benefit from Pakistan's ports, especially Gwadar, a gateway for these states to the Indian Ocean. It provides them with a cost-effective trade route to South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Apart from economic leverage, Pakistan also has an undeniable political importance. Khan (2019) agrees, saying that Pakistan has gained political importance with its northwestern and western borders since the 1970s when the USSR invaded Afghanistan at the invitation of the Afghan government. Pakistan became the frontline state and acquired non-NATO ally status. It played a decisive role in countering the USSR with the help of the U.S.A. and repelled the USSR from Afghanistan. Post 9/11, in reverse mode, Pakistan abandoned support for the Taliban government in Afghanistan and had to brook the fight against terrorism as a frontline state. This view is endorsed by Javaid et al. (2024), who say that the situation in Afghanistan is still fluid, which adds to Pakistan's political importance.

1.2 Pakistan Faces Hybris Warfare

Pakistan's geostrategic importance has also brought problems to it vis-à-vis the regional and global powers. Azad (2020) and Kreft (2008) agree that Pakistan has highly conflicting interests with regional and global powers. Since its creation, Pakistan has faced territorial disputes with India and Afghanistan. The disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir has been a flashpoint, bringing these countries to war more than once. Since 1998, the Pakistan-Indian conflict has acquired a nuclear dimension. Likewise, Khan et al. (2019) maintain that the U.S. has different grievances against Pakistan. According to its terms, it wants a solution to the militancy in the region,

especially arising from Afghanistan. It holds Pakistan responsible for its failures and squeezes it with an oft-repeated mantra of “do more.” However, Pakistan is no longer an easy target due to its extraordinary combat capacity in recent decades. As a result, the regional and global powers inimical to Pakistan have resorted to hybrid warfare against it, involving various non-military means and actions, including economic pressures, psychological attacks, disinformation warfare, cyber attacks, and cultural influences. Jaspal (2020) agrees and opines that, unlike in the past, the adversaries are not in a position to arm-twist Pakistan by waging a full-fledged conventional war to toe its choices. Hence, it has no other option but to launch silent and subversive warfare against Pakistan.

1.2.1 Disinformation Warfare is the Main Tool of Hybrid Warfare against Pakistan

The main tool of the hybrid war against Pakistan is disinformation through the media. Media is used to build narratives against Pakistan, portraying it as a promoter of terrorism, an unsafe nuclear arsenal holder, and an economically failed state. According to Warrich et al. (2021), during the last few years, international media websites, blogs, and social media forums like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have been projecting Pakistan negatively on one issue or another, collectively building a perception that Pakistan is a failed state. It harbors terrorists and is an unsafe place to live. Such propaganda is aimed at spoiling the image of the country. India’s role in this regard is prominent. It has projected Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal as unsafe and vulnerable to rogue elements. Disinformation warfare is being used as a tool of coercion against Pakistan to bring about the desired change in its strategic decisions.

1.2.1.1 Disinformation Targets

The purpose of inter-state disinformation warfare Pakistan faces is to influence Pakistani people’s opinion and the international community’s views against Pakistan, especially the European Union and international bodies, like the UN, against the strategic policies of the Pakistani government aimed to bend those policies in their favor. It led to the systematic and formalized agenda-setting against Pakistan by targeting certain areas strategic to Pakistan. Zhong (2021) endorses the mass media’s effect on society by setting the agenda of issue priorities, arguing that over time, those issues that are prominent in the media usually become prominent in the minds of those people. Martemucci (2007) calls this mass media's ability to influence human cognition through perception management the agenda-setting role of the mass media, which is an essential ingredient of the 5th Generation Warfare.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore those areas in Pakistan that the interstate disinformation warfare mongers have been targeting in the last two decades to malign Pakistan and realize their vested objectives. Accordingly, the following was the research question:

Research Question: *Which strategic areas of Pakistan have the opposing countries targeted through disinformation offensives in the last two decades?*

Research Objective: *To identify Pakistan's strategic areas that opposing countries have targeted in the last two decades through disinformation offensives.*

2. Literature Review

2.1 Hybrid Warfare -- Definition and Description

Hybrid warfare is a catchy word involving many forms, means, and strategies. Caliskan and Cramers (2018) say hybrid war focuses more on non-military factors, such as information warfare, propaganda, cyber security, and subversive and non-kinetic means. Mansoor (2012) defined hybrid warfare as the simultaneous use of conventional and irregular forces (insurgents, guerrillas, and terrorists) involving state and non-state actors to attain a political purpose. Schmid (2019) has a similar view and says hybrid warfare primarily focuses on a broad spectrum of non-military centers of gravity, including political will, the economy, diplomacy, culture, psychology, legitimacy, morale, etc. Hence, winning hybrid warfare does not necessarily entail a military victory. Wither (2016) offers an inclusive definition of the modern display of hybrid warfare, underlining the techniques used, namely "the use of military and non-military tools. Nilsson et al. (2021) describe the hybrid war phenomenon with multiple terms, like 'Asymmetrical Warfare,' 'Sixth Generation Warfare,' 'Contactless Warfare,' 'Grey Wars,' 'New warfare,' 'Next-generation Warfare,' 'Ambiguous Warfare,' 'Irregular Warfare' 'Non-linear Warfare,' 'Full Spectrum Conflict' and 'Unconventional Warfare.'

2.2 Disinformation as the Major Tool of Hybrid Warfare

An important part of hybrid warfare is disinformation and propaganda. Deichman (2009) called it 5th Generation Warfare – battle of perception. Bennett and Livingston (2018) later argued that 5th Generation Warfare (5GW) is moral and cultural warfare that manipulates perceptions through disinformation and alters the world's context. It involves a systematic disinformation campaign aimed at strategic deceptions instead of taking isolated pieces of false news. Warfare through disinformation has recently become significant to the military, intelligence community, and business. Interestingly, some authors like Wither (2016) have termed disinformation "coercive information" and called it the most distinguishing feature of the hybrid war.

Galeotti (2017) calls disinformation a fragment of a much greater and more difficult complex of transnational state-led activities in the cyber field. Hellman (2024) aptly maintains that disinformation warfare, unlike conventional combats, does not hit the geographical borders. Instead, it targets soft institutions such as governance and the rule of law, political and social stability, elections, and public trust in the government. Khawaja (2018) argues that enemies are known and identified in conventional wars. However, in disinformation warfare, the enemies remain hidden. They do not wear uniforms. The sides need to mobilize in conventional war, but no mobilization is needed in disinformation warfare. No deployments are required in disinformation warfare. Instead, it is launched simply through the press of a button. Disinformation warfare cuts across national

boundaries, educational backdrops, and cultural outlooks. It makes direct and indirect attacks possible from anywhere around the globe in just a few seconds.

Feaver (2007) maintains that disinformation is primarily used as a tool for perception management – seeking to shape the public view so that the decision-makers are effectively insulated from the people, thereby letting the enemy sway the frame of mind of the target. Borer (2007) argues that the task of perception management can be better understood through the Perceived Relative Deprivation (PRD) phenomenon, which is about a feeling of discrimination arising out of a state wherein what one has something compared to what one feels is entitled to and seeks restoration of justice. Abbasi (2020) takes the argument forward and says that in multiethnic federations like Pakistan, the PRD phenomenon is common and easily exploited by hostile elements. The activities of Baluch dissidents and the Pashtun Tahafaz Movement (PTM) in Pakistan are cases of foreign powers' exploitation of the PRD phenomenon.

2.3 Pakistan Faces Disinformation Warfare Challenges from Adversaries

Kamboh et al. (2021) maintain that Pakistan has attained an important position in world power politics due to its significant geopolitical location. For the US, Pakistan is salient because it is moving closer to China, the archrival of the US, and its neighbors with Afghanistan, where, according to the US, the potential of Islamist extremism looms large. A general impression also remains that the Taliban of Afghanistan are under the sway of Pakistan. Moreover, Pakistan joins its western border with Iran, an Indian ally against Pakistan. Besides its geostrategic significance, its nuclear capability, the CPEC, and its moral stand on the Indian-held Jammu and Kashmir have upset India and its North Atlantic allies. However, despite its frustrating footing for the world powers, especially India, Pakistan has proved a hard nut to crack militarily, given its nuclear deterrence.

In this perspective, India and its allies had no other option but to launch silent and subversive warfare against Pakistan, defeating the enemy without incurring high costs and causing bloodshed, the two characteristic features of conventional wars. Jaspal (2020) agrees and says that given the fact that Pakistan is no longer a soft military target, unlike in the past, India and its allies have resorted to hybrid warfare by targeting its domestic fault lines like political and economic instability, sectarianism, societal cleavages, etc. to destabilize Pakistan internally. In addition, they have been employing diplomatic means, disinformation, and propaganda campaigns. In Azad's (2020) view, the example of the Western media's role in Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Afghanistan is repeated in Pakistan. The international media, backed by the U.S., Israel, and India, has tried hard during the last two decades to malign Pakistan, dubbing it a failed state, harboring terrorists, insecure to live, and targeting its nuclear program armed forces and the CPEC.

2.4 Disinformation Targets of Adversaries in Pakistan

Past studies show that Pakistan's adversaries want to weaken Pakistan or influence its decisions by targeting its strategic areas through disinformation and propaganda, including the following:

- a. Allegations of Supporting Terrorism and the Human Rights Violation
- b. Sabotaging the CPEC
- c. Maligning Pakistan's Nuclear Program to get it rollbacked
- d. Restraining the Kashmir Issue
- e. Demoralizing Pakistan's Army and Intelligence Agencies
- f. Promoting Sectarian and Ethnic Divide and Fueling Separatist Movements

These areas will be discussed one by one in the following sections.

2.4.1 Allegations of Supporting Terrorism and the Human Rights Violation

Abbasi (2020) says that Pakistan is accused of supporting terrorism and providing safe havens for terrorist organizations. Such allegations were strengthened post-September 11 attacks, resulting in a global war on terror that put Pakistan under the limelight given its proximity to Afghanistan. These allegations helped the adversaries influence international opinion against Pakistan, bringing it to the verge of diplomatic isolation. Zaki (2014) agrees and says that the adversary states spread disinformation to suggest that Pakistan is not making sufficient efforts to fight terrorism or is even accused of supporting terrorist organizations. This narrative has been used to justify diplomatic and military actions against the country and to portray Pakistan as a global security threat. However, these states may use disinformation and propaganda against Pakistan to deflect attention from their own involvement in terrorism against Pakistan.

Hussain and Hussain (2017) argue that the allegation of terrorism has augmented Pakistan's problems manifold. It is ranked only after Iraq and Afghanistan in the Global Terrorism Index. The enemy countries have always alleged Pakistan as a supporter of terrorism and targeted its strategic interests like nuclear capability in the garb of this allegation. However, unfortunately, Pakistan's sacrifices in the war against terrorism are never counted. Warrick et al. (2021) aptly argue that the disinforming states blame Pakistan for supporting terrorism on the one hand and accuse it of human rights violations when it undertakes counter-terrorism measures. They maintain that by publicizing Pakistan's involvement in human rights abuses by state institutions, the issue of missing persons, religious extremism, and worries over three smaller federating units, the opponents promote a negative view of Pakistan.

2.4.2 Sabotaging the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

Nadeem et al., (2021 and. Ahmad et al. (2024) maintain that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a mega venture that promises to catalyze economic growth in Pakistan and generate employment. However, the project is not without risks and threats of a security and diplomatic compulsion nature. Pakistan's internal issues, like political conflicts and instability, environmental effects, and economic crises, are other factors that threaten the project's long-term survival. However, according to Assadi (2018), this project is a target of international propaganda

waged by regional and international countries inimical to Pakistan and China. As a part of this propaganda, the Indian media has been propagating that China is trapping Pakistan into its debt web through this project. In this regard, fictitious data are circulated by the Indian and Western media. Likewise, Hassan (2019) argues that India, the U.S., and the Western states have been trying to sabotage CPEC from the outset, targeting it through sponsored militancy. The Gwadar Pearl Continental Hotel attack and the Chinese Consulate attack in Karachi were admittedly committed by the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), a disgruntled group created and financed by India to sabotage the CPEC. This group had also admitted to kidnapping and killing the Chinese engineers in Balochistan.

Jaspal (2020) says that the promising potential of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project has distraught India and its allies. They see this project as a means for China's economic and political domination in south and central Asia. As a result, Pakistan has become the world's top hybrid warfare battleground waged by these allies led by India. Bashir (2019) claims that the U.S. has been applying pressure on Pakistan to forego CPEC and align itself squarely with the U.S. against China. Sehgal (2018) says that the malicious anti-CPEC campaign unleashed by India aims to deprive Pakistan of its fruits by sowing doubts and distrust among the local populace of Balochistan.

2.4.3 Maligning Pakistan's Nuclear Program to Get it Rollbacked

Azad (2020) argues that Pakistan had to acquire nuclear capability as deterrence against Indian aggression. Pakistan had already experienced its dismemberment in 1971 at the hands of India. Pakistan had to conduct nuclear explosions only against the explosions by India. However, the Western powers have shown a skewed approach towards the matter and target only Pakistan's nuclear program, overlooking India's program altogether. The Western media and literature forward hypothetical assessments and scenarios to defame Pakistan's nuclear program. Shamim et al. (2024) argue that Pakistan's atomic program was launched in response to India's, which, in turn, started to counter China's military threat. China emerged as a threat to India after the 1962 Indo-China War. So, securing atomic capability helped India somewhat ward off Chinese military threats. Nevertheless, it led to a domino effect, and Pakistan also joined the nuclear race as a result.

Nadeem et al. (2021) maintain that Pakistan's nuclear program is the main target of Indian propaganda. Following India's nuclear tests in 1998, Pakistan had no choice but to follow suit. For its survival, Pakistan needed to develop a nuclear deterrent of the minimum threshold against possible Indian aggression, given the history of its hostility against its many-time smaller neighbor. When Pakistan compellingly tested nuclear weapons in 1998, it received criticism and propaganda from India, western states, and the U.S. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has reported that Pakistan has 140-150 nuclear weapons in its arsenal (SIPRI, 2018). Although, there is no reliable source for this claim. Haider et al. (2020) maintain that the West refers to Pakistan's nukes as an "Islamic Bomb." The conspiracy theorists connected it with the anti-Western "passion" of Muammar Gaddafi, Saddam Hussein, and the Iranian revolution. The

ultimate objective of this propaganda is to terrify the global community about Pakistan's nuclear program.

2.4.4 Restraining the Kashmir Issue

Iqbal and Ali (2022) argue that a special focus of India's disinformation and propaganda campaign against Pakistan is to malign Pakistan's stance over India's occupation of Jammu and Kashmir. The entire world understands that the case of the right to self-determination has been lying in the United Nations ledgers for more than seven decades without any outcome. India, instead, has portrayed the Kashmiri people's struggle for freedom as "terrorism" using disinformation and propaganda through state and fake media outlets. Alvi (2023) claims that the Indian government is spreading disinformation about normalcy in occupied Kashmir Kashmiri, followed by its special status under the Indian constitution. However, Kashmiri leaders are disputing this claim.

Kuchay (2020) maintains that India's organized disinformation operation was unearthed in 2019 in Brussels. The Srivastava Group, an Indian business giant, came under the limelight for sponsoring the operation. International Institute of Non-Aligned Studies (IINS), a think-tank founded by the Srivastava Group in Brussels, arranged a visit of far-right wing MEPs' excursions to Kashmir, Bangladesh, and the Maldives in 2019. BBC (2019) called these trips only public relations stunts. These excursions created institutional controversy back home in the European Union since the MEPs were presented as official EU delegations but did not represent the European Union. Khaliq (2020) maintains that EU DisinfoLab's disclosure of the large-scale Indian network of fake media houses and bogus NGOs upholds Pakistan's position and lays bare its enemies. Now, the international community must take notice of the rogue Indian regime that endangers global stability.

2.4.5 Alleging Pakistan Army Forming a "Deep State" in Pakistan

SRI (2019) refers to a video interview of Hilary Clinton, former U.S. Secretary of State, who said that Pakistan's actual governance remains in the hands of the military that runs it with the help of intelligence agencies and the factions in the judiciary, civil service, media, etc., with common interests. Hilary Clinton called it the deep state. Rehman and Shurong (2021) agree that Pakistan truly runs a deep state pattern of governance wherein the army, intelligence agencies, especially those working under the army, and the like-minded judiciary and bureaucracy undermine the elected government's writ. Dejected politicians also call it a state within the state or a state above the state. These deep state elements are the de facto rulers wielding the actual power and bypassing the civilian government in shaping and executing key internal or external policy matters.

Barany (2009) endorsed this point, saying that the army has been ruling Pakistan directly and indirectly. Direct rule resulted from coups d'état, like those in 1953, 1958, 1977, and 1999. Ahmer (2023) concludes that Pakistan's deep state has never let civilian governments strengthen and assert themselves. It has always managed weak and crumbly governments with a hung parliament, which are easy to break when the main ruling political party asserts itself in decision-

making. The deep state in Pakistan has also managed throughout its history to penetrate its trusted people in leading political parties. Such planted leaders were used to scuttle any anti-deep state move taken by the political party.

2.4.6 Promoting Sectarian and Ethnic Divide and Fueling Separatist Movements – The Case of Balochistan

Khan (2013) claims that the Indian media has poisoned Balochistan society. A few months earlier, the Indian, Iranian, and Afghan electronic and social media launched a deliberate information warfare attack, generating hype that Balochistan was breaking away from Pakistan. In reality, only a few thousand ill-advised menfolk from five out of thirty districts of Balochistan, duly sponsored by foreign interests adversarial to Pakistan, made such demands. Nandy (2024) argues that the Pakistani government has been unable to maintain equitable treatment of all ethnic factions nationwide. For instance, Punjabis have always received preferential treatment, while the people of Balochistan have faced economic and social deprivation, with severe underdevelopment and the highest level of illiteracy and unemployment. Such discriminatory treatment among the provinces and the ethnic groups has augmented nationalism and fostered separatist movements in Balochistan and erstwhile tribal areas.

Nadeem et al. (2021) maintain that the adversaries use media to destabilize Balochistan. The media campaigns run by the adversaries have tried to show that Balochistan has been kept undeveloped, intentionally trying to provoke its folks against its own country and its institutions. The Indian media also spreads fake reports about Balochistan's alleged economic, political, and human rights-related problems. For this purpose, India operates a media channel, “Zee Salam,” in Balochi. Thousands of fake photos/videos about Balochistan are shared on social media in a planned and organized way, primarily to influence Pakistan’s social media in general and Balochistan’s in particular. Abbasi (2020) says that in multiethnic and multicultural societies like Pakistan, it is very common for the communities to get aggrieved, whether justifiably or not. Such communities are prone to intellectual manipulation by falling prey to hostile propaganda. Babar and Mirza (2020) say that ethnic and sectarian conflicts in Pakistan have made the state more vulnerable to Indian disinformation and psychological warfare. As a result, India had an opportunity to exploit unrest in Balochistan.

From the literature reviewed in the preceding section, the following research question emerges:

Research Question: *Which strategic areas of Pakistan have the opposing countries targeted through a disinformation offensive in the last two decades?*

3. Method

Qualitative research methodology was used to carry out this study mainly because it was to derive the meanings from the social phenomenon based on people’s information and their lived experiences, which could be realized only through the qualitative framework. Moreover, this study

explored in-depth meanings of social phenomena and yields subjective, interpretive, and inductive.

A purposive sampling method was adopted to identify and recruit participants through snowballing. This was mainly because only individuals with appropriate knowledge of disinformation and propaganda warfare against Pakistan could provide the relevant data. Previous studies support the use of a purposive sample for this study. Using this method, a sample of 15 participants was set for this study, comprising individuals informed of external disinformation interference in the country. The participants were identified through snowballing. This was an appropriate sample for a phenomenological study. Participants were shortlisted with a mix of international affairs academicians, international/diplomatic affairs journalists, and defense analysts. Participants with diverse backgrounds were intentionally chosen to complement the data from various aspects of the phenomenon of disinformation and propaganda against Pakistan this study examines. As a result, these informed participants with diverse backgrounds provided realistic data about the phenomenon. Because of the nature of the subject, data saturation was reached with about 70% of participants' coverage. As a result, interviews were completed with minimal incremental advantage from further interviewing.

In-depth phenomenological interviewing was employed. Under the sub-categories, phenomenological interviews were used for this study. Therefore, open-ended questions were asked in interviews. Originally, the interview question was about the disinformation targets of the adversaries in Pakistan. However, following the spirit of qualitative research, the interview questions were allowed to evolve, giving rise to numerous sub-questions as the interviewing process proceeded.

This study used a specific thematic analysis method designed for phenomenological studies known as the Modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen Method by Moustakas (1994). This process helped organize the data, break it into correct parts (Codes, Nodes, and Themes), and analyze each part to ensure the report's validity. This method involved identifying, describing, and reporting themes discovered within the data. As part of the thematic analysis process, codes were segregated into nodes and child nodes. These nodes were later clubbed into a Theme. Once the data had been arranged hierarchically in Codes, Nodes, and Themes, it was fed into NVivo version 12, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, to compile it graphically and assign visual presentations. Although the Codes, Nodes, and Themes were identified manually, the software generated output in the form of data visualizations, including tables, bar charts, hierarchical charts, explore diagrams, word clouds, and word trees.

4. Data Integration and Analysis

As part of the data integration process, 20 codes identified from the interview data of 15 participants were consolidated into 6 nodes and 6 Sub/Child Nodes. These Nodes were later clubbed into a Theme. The data was rearranged participant-wise, comprising their contribution in each sub-node, node, and theme. For each participant, the Sub-Nodes, Nodes, and themes were

codified as CxNxTHx, where C is for a Child Node, N is for a Node, and TH is for a Theme, while x denotes the serial number. Accordingly, as shown in Table 1 below, six areas and sub-areas were identified as the disinformation and propaganda targets of media warfare operated from across borders. Each was assigned a distinct node and sub-node.

Table 1

NVivo-drawn summary of Nodes and Sub/Child Nodes of Theme with an overall coverage of source content coded on Theme:

Theme Title	Nodes	Sub Nodes	Overall Coverage of Source Content Coded on Theme	
Disinformation Targets in Pakistan	N1	Promoting Pakistan as a Rogue State	<p>C1N1TH2-Alleging Pakistan of Supporting Terrorism</p> <p>C2N1TH2-Calling Antiterrorism Operations by Pakistan as Human Rights Violation</p> <p>C1N2TH2- The Theory of Pakistan's Nuclear Arsenal's Vulnerability to Theft and Misuse</p> <p>C2N2TH2-The Theory of Pakistan's Nuclear Program Technology is Vulnerable to Proliferation</p> <p>C1N3TH2-China's Access to the Asia Pacific is Not Acceptable to the U.S. and India</p> <p>C2N3TH2-The Theory of the Chinese Debt Trap for Pakistan</p>	36.68%
	N2	Maligning Pakistan's Nuclear Program	<p>C1N3TH2-China's Access to the Asia Pacific is Not Acceptable to the U.S. and India</p> <p>C2N3TH2-The Theory of the Chinese Debt Trap for Pakistan</p>	23.37%
	N3	Sabotaging China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Project	<p>C1N3TH2-China's Access to the Asia Pacific is Not Acceptable to the U.S. and India</p> <p>C2N3TH2-The Theory of the Chinese Debt Trap for Pakistan</p>	37.26%
	N4	Curbing the Kashmir Issue	---	8.71%
	N5	Fueling the Separatist Movements	---	12.43%

N6	Alleging Pakistan Army and Intelligence Agencies Acting as a Deep State in Pakistan	---	12.7%
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4.1 Node 1: Promoting Pakistan as a Rogue State

Some Participants viewed that enemy states, especially India, have consistently been involved in defaming Pakistan internationally. All media platforms, including print, electronic, and social, are involved in spreading false information about Pakistan. India is a media giant, and its media associations are very active in spreading the anti-Pakistan narrative in coordination with international media entities. They viewed that fake news, journalistic stories, propaganda series, fake documentaries, and one-sided and biased research studies are used by the Indian media and their Western associates to defame Pakistan as an insecure place for minorities to live and a haven for terrorists. Accordingly, the participants' views on this Node were divided into the following two sub-sets, which were assigned a Sub-Node/Child Node each:

- a. Alleging Pakistan of Supporting Terrorism
- b. Calling Antiterrorism Operations by Pakistan as Human Rights Violation

4.1.1 Sub-Node 1.1: Alleging Pakistan for Supporting Terrorism

Participants 1, 9, and 12 held that adversaries have been accusing Pakistan of supporting terrorist groups. The international media outlets sponsored by these states have shaped Pakistan's abhorrible image globally. They further said that false narratives have been used to mislead the international community. News reports and documentaries covering Pakistan's sponsorship and facilitating terrorism have painted its negative picture in a bit to isolate it diplomatically. There have been documented reports of adversary states and their intelligence agencies having indulged in propaganda campaigns against Pakistan, particularly about the country's involvement in the war on terror, disseminated through various means, including state media, social media, non-state actors, locally hired agents, etc. Participants believed that it helps the media warfare mongers influence international opinion against Pakistan. Participants also regretted that Pakistan has itself been the victim of terrorism, and it has made numberless sacrifices that have never been recognized.

4.1.2 Sub-Node 1.2: Calling Antiterrorism Operations by Pakistan as Human Rights Violation

Participants 8 and 15 contended that the international media, inimical to Pakistan, is playing a double game. On one side, as said earlier, it condemns Pakistan for harboring terrorism. On the other side, it maligns Pakistan for human rights violations when it fights against terrorists. They said this media never condemned the killing of non-Baloch innocent residents of Balochistan during the last three years. Instead, it exalts the militants who indulge in the cold-blooded murder

of civilians and military and para-military personnel. If Pakistan's law enforcement agencies kill the terrorists, their death is publicized as a human rights violation. Although what is called human rights violation is, in fact, anti-terrorism operations, they maintained. However, a counter view was also available among the Participants. Participant 15 agreed with the allegations of human rights violations by the Pakistani law enforcement agencies referring to a large number of forced disappearance cases in Balochistan.

4.2 Node 2: Maligning Pakistan's Nuclear Program to Get it Rollbacked

Certain Participants argued that Pakistan's nuclear program started to counter India's nuclear threat and turned out to be the seventh nuclear weapons power in the world. It gave Pakistan leverage and security in the region. However, it received flak from Israel and the Western community besides India. It became a victim of propaganda campaigns about its safety, security, or operational readiness, creating doubts about Pakistan's ability to handle nuclear weapons responsibly. Participants maintained that the propaganda typically includes exaggerations regarding the development of atomic weapons and the claimed dangers of these weapons ending up in the hands of terrorists. They also said that Western journalists and think tanks have contributed to propaganda against Pakistan. Israel has created a sizable online workforce of authors and publishers to carry out a propaganda campaign against Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. Participants also contended that propaganda operators have also been trying to convince the countries that Pakistan is actively proliferating nuclear technology to isolate Pakistan in the international community.

Accordingly, the participants' views on this Node were divided into the following two subsets, which were assigned a Sub-Node/Child Node each:

- a. The Theory of Pakistan's Nuclear Arsenal is Vulnerable to Theft and Misuse
- b. Pakistan's Nuclear Program Technology is Vulnerable to Proliferation

4.2.1 Sub-Node 2.1: The Theory of Pakistan's Nuclear Arsenal is Vulnerable to Theft and Misuse

Participants 1, 2, and 7 viewed that the main propaganda against Pakistan's nuclear program is calling it vulnerable – open to theft and misuse. Accordingly, the Indian, Israeli, and Western media presented a worn-out and baseless argument that Pakistan's nuclear program is unsafe and is likely to fall into the hands of terrorists. Participants viewed that India and Israel have engaged in disinformation warfare against this program's safety over the years. India escalated the disinformation that the Taliban of Afghanistan had already controlled some of Pakistan's nuclear facilities. Some Participants referred to senior politicians from the U.S. and Israel, who gave irresponsible statements about Pakistan's nuclear program's safety and security. A participant referred even to Hollywood movies, which have been used to portray Pakistan's nuclear program as unsafe.

4.2.2 Sub-Node 2.2: The Theory of Pakistan’s Nuclear Program Technology is Vulnerable to Proliferation

Participant 3 contributed to this argument. He maintained that the Indian, Israeli, and Western media call Pakistan’s nukes an “Islamic Bomb.” The conspiracy theorists connected it with the incarnation of all sorts of regional threats – the anti-Western “passion” of Muammar Gaddafi, the Socialist Ba’athism of Saddam Hussein, and the Islamic Ideology of the Iranian revolution. The Western fake think tanks called it the act of the wider Islamic nation rather than an individual country. However, the point is why nations with nuclear weapons, like the U.S., India, and Israel, are not attacked despite controversy. Imagine Israel’s bomb being classified as a Zionist bomb or India’s weapon being referred to as a “Hindu bomb.” Pakistan is deeply committed to the non-proliferation of nuclear materials and technology.

4.3 Node 3: Sabotaging the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Project

Some Participants contended that sabotaging CPEC is another propaganda target of the opponent states on two grounds. First, it promises economic growth to Pakistan, which is not acceptable to them. Second, it facilitates China and offers it easy access to the India ocean, which is not acceptable to the U.S. particularly. So, to thwart its progress, they are hatching conspiracies for which the international media is used to propagate fabricated stories against CPEC. Participants claimed that initially, India was against the CPEC because it took it as a competitor of the Indian-funded Chabahar Port Iran, targeting access to Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics. So, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had fervently criticized CPEC, calling it unacceptable at any cost. With the support of the United States, the Modi administration has used hybrid warfare to sabotage CPEC. Participants said that as a part of the propaganda, a myth was spread that Pakistan would fall victim to China’s debt trap and become a colony.

Accordingly, the participants’ views on this Node were divided into the following two subsets, which were assigned a Sub-Node/Child Node each:

- a. China’s Access to the Asia Pacific is Not Acceptable to the U.S. and India
- b. The Theory of the Chinese Debt Trap for Pakistan

4.3.1 Sub-Node 3.1: China’s Access to the Asia Pacific is Not Acceptable to the U.S. and India

Participants 1, 4, and 15 argued that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a multi-billion-dollar project comprising energy, special economic zones, and transportation networks. It has a huge potential to uplift Balochistan’s economy, leading to prosperity. CPEC has kindled hopes among the local populace. However, the adversaries, especially the U.S. and India, do not want to see China having easy access to the Arabian Sea. The Participants believed that the Gwadar Pearl Continental Hotel attack and the Chinese Consulate attack in Karachi were admittedly committed by the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), financed by India to sabotage the CPEC.

4.3.2 Sub-Node 3.2: The Theory of the Chinese Debt Trap for Pakistan

Participant 3 maintained that fabricated stories are frequently published in the international press to thwart the project, including China entangling Pakistan into a debt trap through CPEC. He said that the adversaries spread the myth that Pakistan would fall victim to China's debt trap and become a colony. An American diplomat, Alice Wells, called the Chinese money a heavy loan that would inflict a heavy toll on Pakistan's economy. The total CPEC loan is \$5.8 billion, making 5.3 percent of Pakistan's total foreign loans, with an interest rate of 2 percent and 20-25 years of repayment time starting in 2021, with annual repayments of about \$300 million. It does not seem to be burdensome for Pakistan. Furthermore, about seventy-five percent of the Chinese investment would be foreign direct investment, while the remaining part would be a concessional loan, with two percent interest.

4.4 Node.4: Curbing the Kashmir Issue

Participants 4 and 7 identified how India resorts to disinformation and propaganda ploys to maintain its unlawful control over the Kashmir valley. They highlighted the situation in the valley after India abrogated its constitutionally assigned special status. One participant mentioned how India had been employing a network of fake media houses and NGOs to malign Pakistan and tried to show the international community that the situation in Kashmir was quite normal.

4.5 Node 5: Fueling Separatist Movements

Participants 1, 4, and 11 contributed to this Node. They contended that people from specific areas, like Balochistan, former federally administered tribal areas (FATA), rural Sindh, and southern Punjab, feel deprived of their rights. The enemy agencies take advantage. It has been one of the areas where disinformation and propaganda campaigns by the adversary states have been used to portray Pakistan negatively in the international arena. Participants said that the Baluch dissidents and Pashtun Tahaffaz Movement (PTM) receive help from enemy nations through financial resources and media backing. They maintained that enemy states play a double game with Pakistan. First, they promote sectarianism in Pakistan; then, it is accused by international media of being religiously intolerant when it tackles sectarianism. Simultaneously, anti-Pakistan forces take advantage of sectorial and ethnic fissures and deploy trained agents in Pakistan to augment them. They fragmented Islamic unity and augmented inter-sect differences.

4.6 Node 6: Alleging Pakistan Army and Intelligence Agencies Acting as a Deep State in Pakistan

Participants 3 and 10 view that the Pakistan Army and Pakistan's intelligence agencies deserve criticism from the foreign media because of the questionable role they have played in Pakistan since its inception. These participants believed that the critics are correct if they say that Pakistan is a deep state where the Pakistan army leads governance. This deep state governance comprises secret and unauthorized power networks, the military, intelligence agencies run by the military, and the judiciary and civil service people under the military sway. This network operates

autonomously and sovereignly, pursuing its own interests, goals, and agendas independent of the country's political leadership.

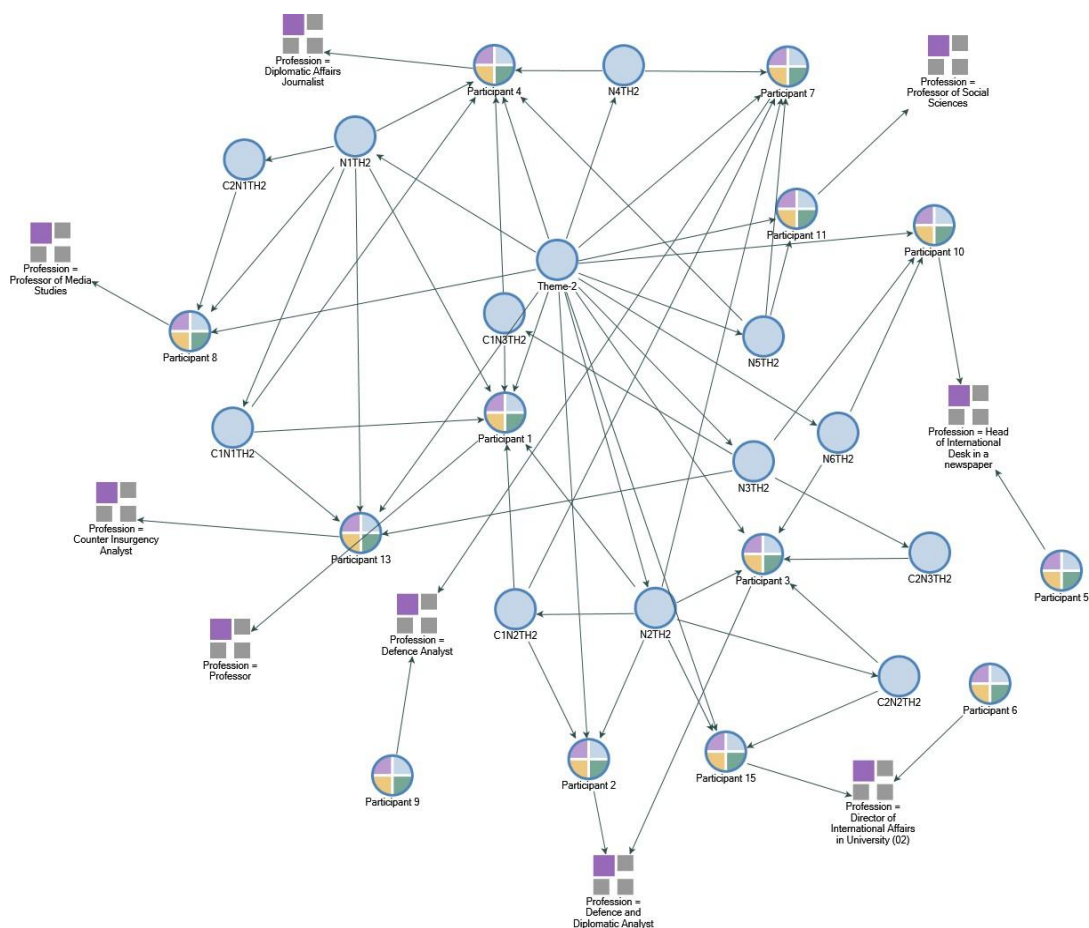


Figure 1: An NVivo-drawn explore diagram for the Theme showing the interaction between Theme, Nodes, and Sub/Child Nodes and the participant's contribution to Nodes and Sub/Child Nodes.

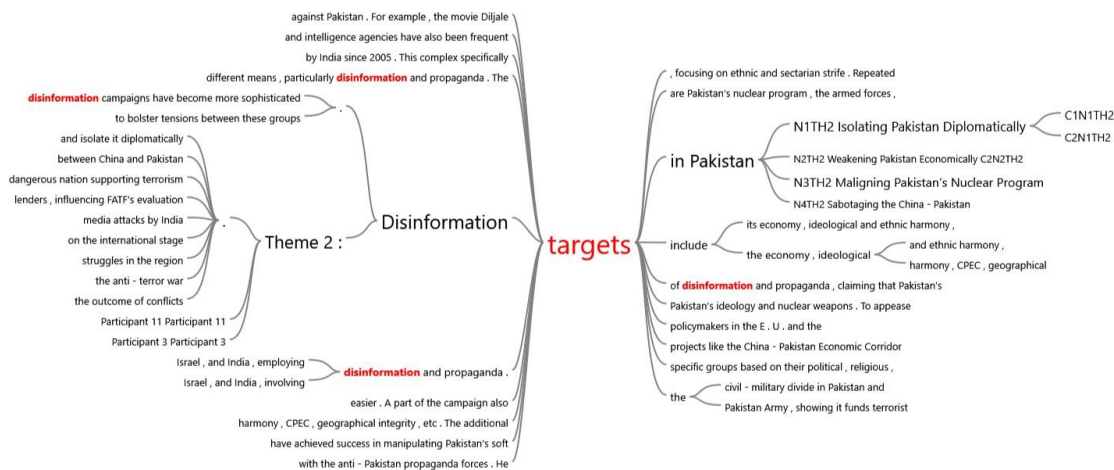


Figure 2. NVivo-drawn Annotated Word Tree of the Theme

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion involves whether the research objectives have been realized. It analyzes and explores the meaning of the data and identifies its importance and relevance to the research objectives. To interpret the data, this section is structured around the research objectives, and the theme identified during the data analysis is aligned with them. More importantly, the review of the research objective’s realization also involved juxtaposing the interview data against the past studies from the literature review chapter to find whether the findings of this study endorse or differ from those studies. The theme-node-contributing participant orientation for the Research Objective is given in Table 2.

Table 2

The Theme-Node-Participants Orientation for Research Objective

Theme	Nodes	Sub/Child Nodes	Contributing Participants
Theme: Disinformation Targets in Pakistan	Promoting Pakistan as a Rogue State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alleging Pakistan for Supporting Terrorism Calling Pakistan’s Antiterrorism Operations Human Rights Violation 	Participants 1, 9, and 12 Participants 8 and 15
	Maligning Pakistan’s Nuclear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Theory of Pakistan’s 	Participants 1 and 2

Program to Get It Rollbacked	Nuclear Arsenal's Vulnerability to Theft and Misuse		Participants 13 and 15
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Theory of Pakistan's Nuclear Program Technology is Vulnerable to Proliferation 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • China's Access to the Asia Pacific is Not Acceptable to the U.S. and India 		Participants 1, 4, and 15
Sabotaging CPEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Theory of the Chinese Debt Trap for Pakistan 		Participants 3
Curbing the Kashmir Issue		---	Participants 4 and 7
Fueling Separatist Movements		---	Participants 1, 4, and 11
Alleging Pakistan Army and Intelligence Agencies Acting as Deep State in Pakistan		---	Participants 3 and 10

5.1 Node 1: Promoting Pakistan as a Rogue State

5.1.1 Sub-Node 1.1: Alleging Pakistan for Supporting Terrorism

Abbasi (2020), Zaki (2014), Hussain and Hussain (2017), and Jaspal (2020) support the views of Participants 1, 9, and 12, who held that harboring terrorism is the biggest accusation against Pakistan, which makes it vulnerable internationally. The adversary states spread disinformation that Pakistan is not making sufficient efforts to fight terrorism or is even supporting it. Abbasi (2020) says that Pakistan is accused of supporting terrorism and providing safe havens for terrorist organizations. Such allegations were strengthened post-September 11 attacks, resulting in a global war on terror that put Pakistan under the limelight given its proximity to Afghanistan. These allegations have helped the adversaries influence international opinion against Pakistan, bringing it to the verge of diplomatic isolation. Hussain and Hussain (2017) argue that the enemy countries have always alleged Pakistan as a supporter of terrorism and targeted its strategic interests like nuclear capability in the garb of this allegation. Jaspal (2020) agrees that Pakistan's antiterrorism

operations have been the most targeted by disinformation offensives of adversary states. They have been accusing Pakistan of supporting terrorist groups and have successfully placed it on the international watchlist.

5.1.2 Sub-Node 1.2: Calling Pakistan’s Antiterrorism Operations Human Rights Violation

Warrick et al. (2021) support the views of participants 8 and 15, who maintained that human rights violation allegations against Pakistan make the international fraternity more receptive to the disinformation and propaganda against Pakistan. It is blamed for human rights violations when it performs anti-terrorism operations. Warrick et al. (2021) support the views of participants 8 and 15. They say that the disinforming states blame Pakistan for supporting terrorism on the one hand and accuse it of human rights violations when it undertakes counter-terrorism measures. By publicizing Pakistan’s involvement in human rights abuses by state institutions, the issue of missing persons, religious extremism, and worries over three smaller federating units, the opponents promote a negative view of Pakistan.

5.2 Node 2: Maligning Pakistan’s Nuclear Program to Get It Rolledback

5.2.1 Sub-Node 2.1: The Theory of Pakistan’s Nuclear Arsenal’s Vulnerability to Theft and Misuse

SIPRI (2018), Mustafa (2019), Azad (2020), Nadeem et al. (2021), and Shamim et al. (2024) supported the views of Participants 1, 2, and 7, who believed that Pakistan’s nuclear program was the biggest irritant for India and Israel. Disarming Pakistan with its nuclear weapons is their priority. So, a planned propaganda campaign is being against it. SIPRI (2018) has reported that Pakistan has 140-150 nuclear weapons in its arsenal. It has also labeled Pakistan as the fastest-growing nuclear-weapon state. Mustafa (2017) believes that following the 9/11 event, propaganda against Pakistan intensified, and the Indian and Western media severely attacked the Pakistan nuclear program. Azad (2020) argues that the Western and Israeli media have shown a skewed approach toward Pakistan’s nuclear program vis-à-vis India, overlooking the latter’s program altogether. Nadeem et al. (2021) maintain that Pakistan needed to develop a nuclear deterrent of the minimum threshold against possible Indian aggression. When Pakistan compellingly tested nuclear weapons in 1998, it received criticism and propaganda from India, western states, and the U.S. They labeled Pakistan a rogue state, unsafe for nuclear weapons. Shamim et al. (2024) argue that Pakistan’s atomic program was launched in response to India’s, which, in turn, started to counter China’s military threat.

5.2.2 Sub-Node 2.2: The Theory of Pakistan’s Nuclear Program Technology is Vulnerable to Proliferation

Tiwari (2013), Wilson Centre (2022), and Ashfaq (2022) endorse the views of Participant 3, who maintained that the Indian, Israeli, and Western media call Pakistan’s nukes an “Islamic Bomb.” The idea that one Muslim country would provide its bomb to another was widely held, and Islamophobia was spreading like a plague. The Western think tanks called it a theft product

of Dr. Khan and declared it the act of the wider Islamic nation rather than an individual country. Tiwari (2013) states that the West refers to Pakistan's nukes as an "Islamic Bomb." The conspiracy theorists connected it with the anti-Western "passion" of Muammar Gaddafi, Saddam Hussein, and the Iranian revolution. Wilson Centre (2022), in its archives, keeps a letter from Menachem Begin, the prime minister of Israel, written to Margaret Thatcher, her British equivalent, warning her of the enormous danger the Islamic bomb constituted to the world. Ashfaq (2022) endorses this point and says that insinuations were made at the Nuclear Security Summit held in 2016 that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, particularly its tactical weapons, could be seized by terrorists, including I.S. In another summit, President Obama remarked that small, tactical nuclear weapons are at greater theft risk."

5.3 Node 3: Sabotaging China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Project

5.3.1 Sub-Node 3.1: China's Access to the Asia Pacific is Not Acceptable to the U.S. and India

Sindhu (2021), Khan et al. (2019), Bashir (2019), Jaspal (2020), and Khan et al. (2024) support the views of Participants 1, 4, and 15, who held that CPEC is a promising project for its socio-economic benefits to Pakistan and has regional and global politico-economic consequences. At the same time, it is frightening for Pakistan's adversaries. Sindhu (2021) states that the U.S.'s latest interests in the region are to prevent China from rising as a superpower and promote India as a countervailing force to China. So, it wants Pakistan's direct or indirect role in its favor. Khan et al. (2019) maintain that the U.S. could not see Pakistan joining the Chinese camp, so they tried to use all the ploys to keep it from joining. It has far-reaching plans to debilitate Pakistan to such an extent that it stoops before the U.S. by all means and extends all-out cooperation on every front. Bashir (2019) maintains that the U.S. has been applying pressure on Pakistan to forego CPEC and align itself squarely with the U.S. against China. Jaspal (2020) says that Prime Minister Modi is hell-bent on eradicating the project through a hybrid warfare stratagem with the help of the U.S. Khan et al. (2024) maintain that CPEC is an establishment for the China-Russia-Pakistan triangle. The authors claim that Pakistan and Russia discussed an additional route for Russia to the warm waters of the Arabian Gulf through the Gwadar Port and join the CPEC Project.

5.3.2 Sub-Node 3.2: The Theory of the Chinese Debt Trap for Pakistan

Assadi (2018), Sehgal (2018), and Syed (2020) support Participant 3's views, who said that the adversaries spread the myth that Pakistan would fall victim to China's debt trap and become a colony. Assadi (2018) says Indian media has been propagating that China is trapping Pakistan into its debt web through this project. In this regard, fictitious data are circulated by the Indian and Western media. Sehgal (2018) says certain analysts have published fabricated stories against the CPEC at India's behest, calling for Pakistan to become China's economic colony due to high CPEC-related loans. Syed (2020) says even an American diplomat, Alice Wells, while talking

to journalists on a visit to Islamabad, said that the Chinese money was not “assistance” but rather expensive loans that would inflict a heavy toll on Pakistan’s economy.

5.4 Node 4: Curbing Kashmir Issue

Iqbal and Ali (2022), Alvi (2023), Kuchay (2020), and Ali (2020) supported the views of Participants 4 and 7, who argued that India has always employed malicious disinformation and propaganda tactics to distract international attention from its unlawful occupation of the state of Kashmir. Although Pakistan has tried its best to convince the international community that the people of Kashmir yet have to secure their right to self-determination, it could not succeed in putting any pressure on India. Iqbal and Ali (2022) argue that a special focus of India’s disinformation and propaganda campaign against Pakistan is to malign Pakistan’s stance over India’s occupation of Jammu and Kashmir. Alvi (2023) claims that the Indian government is spreading disinformation about normalcy in occupied Kashmir Kashmiri, followed by withdrawing its special status under the Indian constitution. However, Kashmiri leaders are disputing this claim. Kuchay (2020) maintains that India’s organized disinformation operation was unearthed in 2019 in Brussels. The Srivastava Group, an Indian business giant, came under the limelight for sponsoring the operation. Ali (2020) maintains that Pakistan is determinedly striving for the Kashmir cause and taking every possible step to resolve the problem on the bilateral and multilateral levels. The struggle for Kashmir should continue until the world acknowledges it and the UN intervenes.

5.5 Node 5: Fueling Separatist Movements

Khan (2013), Nadeem et al. (2021), and Abbasi (2021) support the views of Participants 1, 4, and 11, who maintained that disinformation has created significantly bigger hurdles for the Pakistani security agencies and army in dealing with the insurgencies in Balochistan and the former federally administered tribal area (FATA). Khan (2013) claims that the Indian media has poisoned Balochistan society through disinformation, blowing the issue out of proportion. In reality, there are only a few thousand ill-advised menfolk from five out of thirty districts of Balochistan, sponsored by foreign interests adversarial to Pakistan, making such demands. Unfortunately, it has never been made public that there is massive fighting between the separatist groups themselves for money and arms. The fact is that the Government of Pakistan has mismanaged the Balochistan issue. Nadeem et al. (2021) maintain that the adversaries use media to destabilize Balochistan, provoking its folks against its own country and its institutions. For this purpose, India operates a media channel, “Zee Salam,” in the Balochi language. Abbasi (2021) says that in multiethnic and multicultural societies like Pakistan, it is very common for the communities to get aggrieved, whether justifiably or not. Such communities are prone to intellectual manipulation by falling prey to hostile propaganda. For instance, during the East Pakistan crisis, India could easily and effectively manage the perceptions of the Bengali masses against Islamabad, leading to the dismembering of the country.

5.6 Node 6: Alleging Pakistan Army and National Intelligence Agencies Acting as a Deep State

SRI (2019), Barany (2009), and Ahmer (2023) endorsed the views of Participants 3 and 10, who argued that the Pakistan Army and the ISI are labeled for running deep state in the country. SRI (2019) refers to a video interview of Hilary Clinton, former U.S. Secretary of State, who said that Pakistan's actual governance remains in the hands of the military that runs it with the help of intelligence agencies and the factions in the judiciary, civil service, media, etc., with common interests. Hilary Clinton called it the deep state. Barany (2009) endorsed the point, saying that the army has been ruling Pakistan directly and indirectly. The direct rule resulted from coup d'état, like those in 1953, 1958, 1977, and 1999. Indirect military rule means the army's control and influence over policies about important domestic and international matters without assuming explicit control. Ahmer (2023) concludes the point by saying that history shows that Pakistan's deep state has never let the civilian governments strengthen. It has always managed to install weak and crumbly governments with a hung parliament, which are easy to break when the ruling political party asserts in decision-making.

Conclusion:

Most of the Participants talked at length about the disinformation targets the opponent states aim at in Pakistan as a part of media warfare. All participants viewed affirmatively in line with the Nodes and Child Nodes, and no differing or mitigating remark was received from the participants. Participants posited that although the ultimate aim of media warfare against Pakistan is to enervate the country and make it pliable to adjust it within the regional and global agenda of the powerful countries, media warfare operators have identified certain areas that are to be weakened to achieve the ultimate target. For instance, as a few participants maintained, India aims to isolate Pakistan diplomatically, for which it took an extraordinary step to set up a huge fake network comprising hundreds of media outlets operating in more than five dozen countries, involving fictitious NGOs and engaging a dozen members of European Union Parliament members against their personal gains. Participants also claimed that India vigorously used social media to arrange negative data for keeping Pakistan on the FATF grey list so that Pakistan's economy further suffers. Likewise, some Participants viewed Pakistan's nuclear program as the largest propaganda target propagated as unsafe and prone to proliferation because this program makes Pakistan strategically strong and confident. According to some Participants, CPEC is the second largest target of the propaganda mill since it promises Pakistan economic growth. Pakistan's army and intelligence agencies were also viewed as disinformation targets. However, certain participants said that they agreed with most of the propaganda content about them. So, it is confidently concluded that the Research Objective 'To identify Pakistan's strategic areas that opposing countries have targeted in the last twenty years through disinformation offensives,' has been fully achieved. The recipients of disinformation against these targets were the wider public, the Government of Pakistan, separatists operating in Balochistan and FATA, and the international community and bodies.

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