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## Asymmetric Warfare: Options Against Pakistan



**Colonel Poshuk Ahluwalia** was commissioned into the Mechanised Infantry and is a Graduate of the Defence Services Staff College (DSSC), Wellington. The Officer has operational experience in CI/CT operations in J&K and has served in High Altitude Area in Ladakh. He has also served in the UNPK Mission. He has been a distinguished pistol shooter having won several medals at international and nation level competitions. Currently, he is commanding a Mechanised Infantry Battalion in CI/CT Operations Area.

*“There are only two ways to fight: Stupidly (Conventionally) or Asymmetrically”*

—Lt Gen HR McMaster

### Introduction

Warfare and asymmetry have gone hand in hand since the advent of warfare— warring factions have always aspired to exploit some form of asymmetry to overcome their weaknesses against an adversary. Thinkers and philosophers have spoken of this facet of warfare over centuries. Kautilya, in the *Arthashastra*, mentioned about the various forms of warfare, namely *Nantrayudha* (war by counsel), *Prakasayudha* (overt warfare), *Kutayudha* (covert warfare) or *Tusnimyudha* (clandestine war). Sun Tzu, in *The Art of War*, communicated the aspect of exploiting one's strength while attacking the enemy's weakness or as Clausewitz mentioned— ‘war is politics through other means’. In

### Key Points

- Asymmetric Warfare is an interaction between two unequal powers (form of asymmetry could vary). Even weaker states possess the capability to win over stronger states.
- Pakistan aims at ‘exploiting the stability-instability paradox’ and align its goals with its Notion of Victory.
- Formalising a Dynamic Response Strategy (DRS), as an alternate response option and aligning own security posture with our conventional asymmetry, is the right step forward.
- Propagating own narrative would be imperative to dominate the cognitive domain. Overall strategy should work towards building a credible and punitive deterrence.
- Doctrinal intervention is a must to progress into the realm of ‘irregular warfare’.



the modern era, it was John F Kennedy who spoke of this facet of warfare which was new in intensity and ancient in origin. War has always been 'asymmetric', as 'parties with symmetry in capabilities', often pursue a 'policy of war avoidance' as in the case of USA and USSR wherein the symmetry led to a situation of Balance of Terror and Mutual Assured Destruction. Asymmetric warfare is only successful when one or more forms of asymmetry is exploited to one's advantage.

Asymmetry simply means an 'absence of symmetry' and asymmetric warfare in simple terms means the battle/engagement between unevenly matched and dissimilar opponents. Asymmetry could be in force levels, aims or methods and could cut across the entire spectrum of modern war viz. Nuclear, Biological & Chemical (NBC). Conventional or Sub-Conventional asymmetry would also imply having far more than a decisive edge wherein the capability in question is virtually non-existent with one of the belligerents. Dropping of nuclear bombs on Japan during the Second World War, by USA, was a case of nuclear asymmetry. Conventional asymmetry has recently been well demonstrated by the Allied Forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. An Asymmetric approach, in sub conventional Warfare, has been adopted by Al-Qaeda against the USA and its allies and by Pakistan in its proxy war against India.

This paper aims to analyse the concept of asymmetric warfare with a view to bring out options to wage asymmetric warfare by India against Pakistan along the active Northern borders.

### **Construct of Asymmetric Warfare**

History is replete with examples of actors exploiting their strengths to overcome weaknesses. The Peloponnesian War (431-404 BC) is an interesting interplay between a strong economic power and a strong military power exploiting ones' strength and targeting the others' weaknesses. There are various other examples.



To bring more clarity, few definitions of Asymmetric Warfare and related terms are given as under:

- **US Department of Defense.** Asymmetric threat is a term used to describe attempts to circumvent or undermine an opponent's strength while exploit his weaknesses using methods that differ significantly from the opponents' usual mode of operations.<sup>1</sup>
- **US Joint Warfare Doctrine.** Symmetric engagements comprises 'battles between similar forces' wherein superior forces and correlation of forces is important for victory. Asymmetric engagements, on the other hand, are fought between dissimilar forces.<sup>2</sup>
- **Glossary of Joint and Multinational Terms (UK).** Asymmetric attacks are actions taken by state or non-state parties (friendly or adversary), to "circumvent or negate an opponent's strength" and capitalise on perceived weaknesses through the exploitation of dissimilar values, strategies, organisations and capabilities. Such actions are capable, by design or default, of achieving disproportionate effects thereby gaining the instigator an advantage, probably not attainable through conventional means.
- **Joint Services Glossary (India).** Asymmetric warfare is a war between two sides with very 'dissimilar goals', which makes the fight inherently asymmetrical methods that are not in consonance with traditionally perceived warfare, i.e. big armies pitted against each other on the battlefield, 'utilising strategy or tactics to outwit the opponent'. It encompasses anything that alters the battlefield to negate the opponent's advantages or own disadvantages.
- **Glossary of Military Terms-Army 2009.** War between two sides wherein there is an asymmetry in war waging methods, force levels or technology employment, which



makes the fighting inherently asymmetrical from the traditionally perceived methods of war.

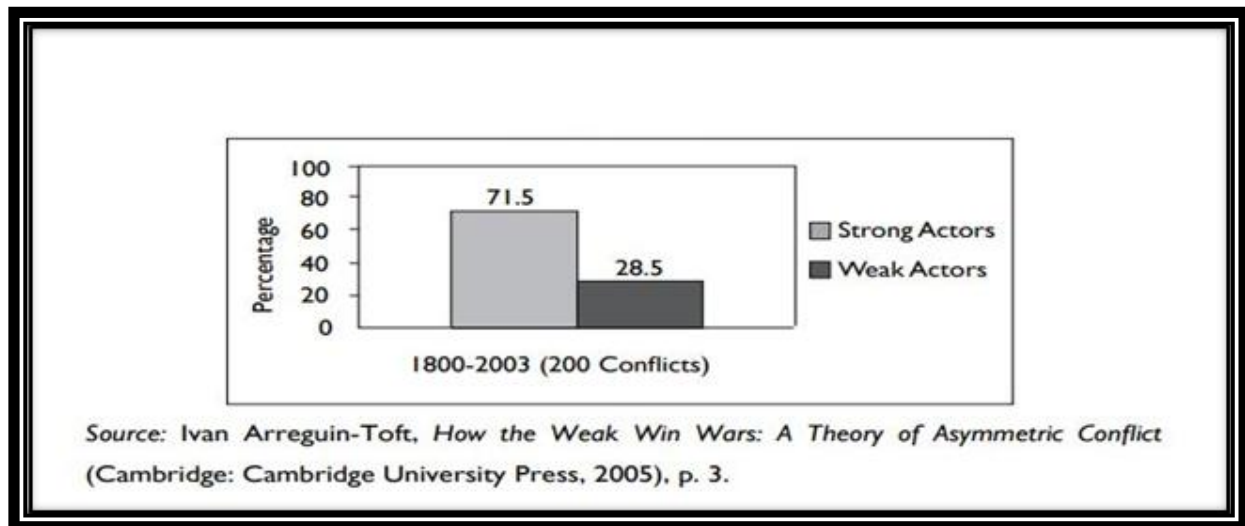
Nevertheless the definitions bring out the following aspects clearly:

- It is an interaction between two unequal powers (form of asymmetry could vary).
- It is a way to negate a superior force's advantage, exploit surprise in terms of ends, ways & means and is unconventional in its operational structure.
- It exploits dissimilar values & capabilities and uses strategies/ tactics (insurgency and terrorism) capable of producing disproportionate effects and which cannot be used by the opponent.
- It transcends across the entire spectrum of operations.
- The means employed are cost effective in nature and can also lead to disproportionate effects.

***Explaining Asymmetric Conflict Outcomes.*** A study by Ivan and Toft (2005) attempted to quantify the results of asymmetric conflict, over the last two centuries, wherein the scales have evidently tipped towards the weak actor. Further, when a weak actor employs an opposite approach against a stronger enemy, its chances of success increases drastically. Similar opponents having different approaches in different conflicts will lead to different results. Case in point is the 'Gulf War' (1990-1991) wherein US and Iraq both used 'direct approach in the conventional domain' and the stronger US won; but on the other hand, during 'Op Iraqi Freedom' (2003-2011), the US used a direct approach whereas Iraq shifted from direct to indirect approach' and prolonged the conflict denying the US complete victory.<sup>3</sup> When two adversaries, who are not evenly matched, in terms of 'power', are engaged in a conflict (asymmetric), theoretically, it should not be feasible for a weaker adversary to defeat a more powerful state possessing superior military and economic resources. However, history has shown that 'even weaker states possess the capability to win over stronger

states'. An analysis by Ivan and Toft, of approximately 200 asymmetric wars fought since 1800, suggested that weaker states have emerged victorious in 28.5 percent of conflicts.<sup>4</sup>

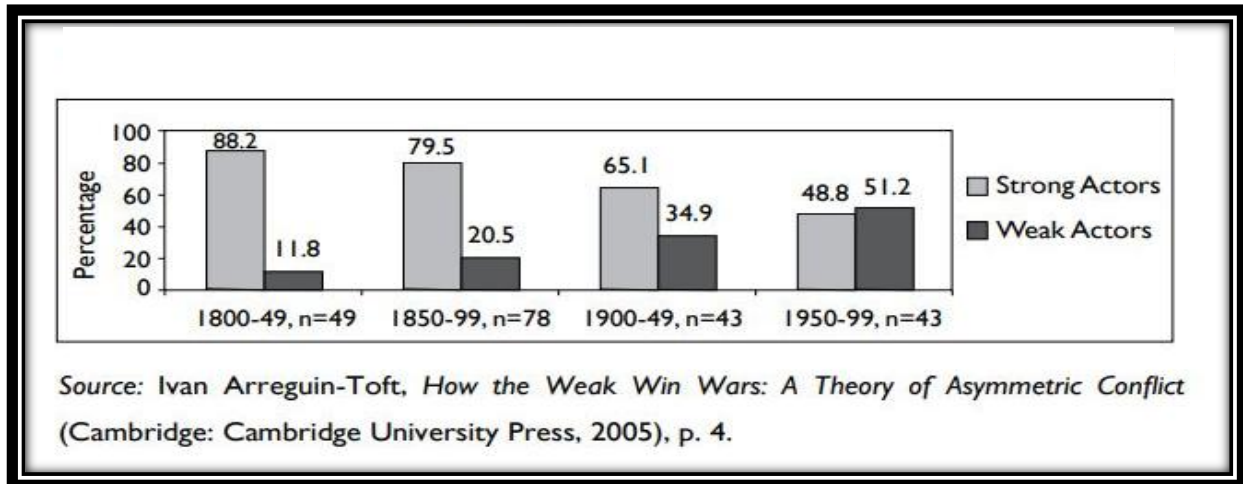
**Figure 1: Percentage of Asymmetric Conflict Victories During 1800-2003**



*Source: Ivan Arreguin-Toft, How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict, p.3*

Further, if the outcomes of the conflicts are divided into 50-year periods, then a striking trend emerges, in which stronger states have lost more and more asymmetric conflicts over time. The percentage of their victories has been falling from 88.2 percent in the period 1800-1849, to 79.5 percent, 65.1 percent and 48.8 percent in subsequent 50-year periods.<sup>5</sup> In fact, in the last 50-year period (1950-1999), 'weaker actors have secured more victories than their stronger adversaries'.

**Figure 2: Percentage of Conflict Victories by Type of Actor Over Time**



Source: Ivan Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict*, p.4

**Strategic Interaction and Conflict Outcomes.** Considering the two strategic approaches described above, opposing strategies of the actors, engaged in an asymmetric conflict, can interact in two patterns 'same approach' interaction (direct-direct and indirect-indirect) and 'opposite-approach' interaction (direct-indirect and indirect-direct). Ivan-Toft's thesis states that, it is the 'pattern of strategic interaction' that will determine the victory of the strong or weak actor.<sup>6</sup>

**Figure 3: Expected Effects of Strategic Interaction on Conflict outcomes**  
**(Expected Winners in Shaded Cells)**

**Fig 3: Expected Effects of Strategic Interaction on Conflict Outcomes (Expected Winners in Shaded Cells)**

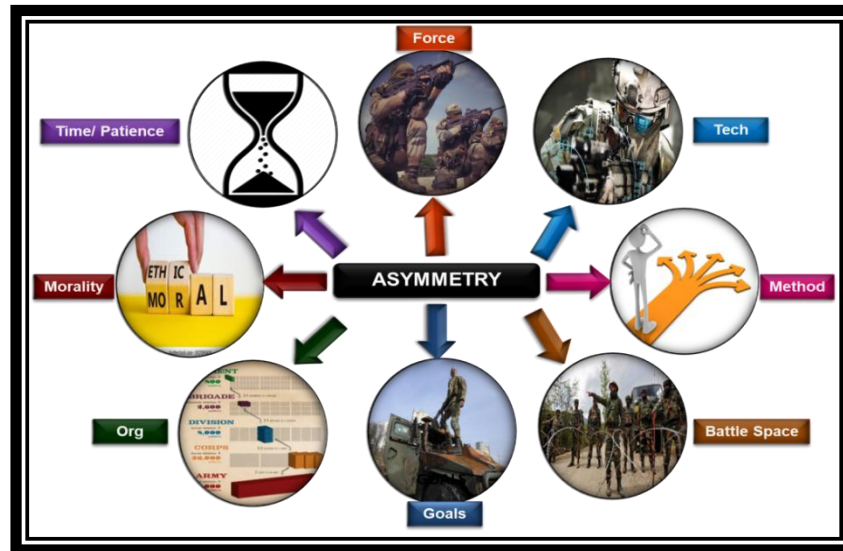
Strong Actor Strategic Approach		Weak Actor Strategic Approach	
		Direct	Indirect
	Direct	<b>STRONG ACTOR</b>	<b>WEAK ACTOR</b>
	Indirect	<b>WEAK ACTOR</b>	<b>STRONG ACTOR</b>

Source: Ivan Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 39.

Source: Ivan Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict*, p.39

The most visible form of asymmetry is the asymmetry of 'force' comprising both numerical strength and technology, making the US the most 'asymmetric power' in the world. However, it is the asymmetry of method strategy and tactics, which should be the focus of contemporary military thinkers. Other forms of asymmetry, though not mutually exclusive, could be employed in the battle spaces, in goals, in organisations, in timelines and in relative morality of the two sides.

Figure 4: Forms of Asymmetry



Source: Prepared by the Author

### Asymmetry of Force

Force asymmetry could be based on numerical or technological superiority or a combination of both. Colin Powell's statement "*I do not want to be in a fair fight ever*" indicates the decisive asymmetry that the US maintains in both conventional and nuclear forces. In such a force 'asymmetric situation', the weaker side has to adopt unconventional methods to strike at the vulnerabilities of the superior force. Asymmetry of methods is thus often a reaction to asymmetry of forces.





### ***Asymmetry of Methods***

Engagement by asymmetric method involves strategies and tactics outside the bounds of conventional warfare. It would imply an offensive ability that is not defensible by the conventional force. 'Surprise', both in terms of ways means and objectives, would become the main ingredient of such engagements. Idiosyncrasy (ability to generate eccentric patterns) in approach an 'unorthodox application of force', by not following the 'rules of the game', and against an improbable target, could help achieve decisive results. The 9/11 attack is a good example wherein unconventional weapons were used in an unconventional manner on an improbable target, hence, taking the target by total surprise.

In simple terms, 'asymmetry of methods' is merely the strategy of 'Indirect Approach' taken to somewhat higher level. While the 'Direct Approach' addresses 'force' and 'value' targets, the 'Indirect Approach' aims to destroy the adversary's will and capability to resist. The 'methods' adopted in this strategy would be highly unconventional, perhaps 'unethical', surprise dependent and beyond the capability of the adversary to replicate.

### ***Asymmetry of Battle Spaces***

In a traditional conflict, the two opponents fight in similar battle spaces of topography (ground), air, sea, cyber etc. The human space (population, civic infrastructure, etc.) remains considerably unaffected other than those adjacent to the conventional battle spaces. In an asymmetric engagement, an attack in the topographical space could be countered by an attack in the human space. Cyber space attacks, given the deniability afforded, are prevalent even in peace time and becomes a major vulnerability of established powers as non-state actors like the Al- Qaeda, can hardly be attacked in this battle space.

***Asymmetry of Goals***

In Asymmetric Warfare, goals may be widely different and as also disconnected. The US led alliance in Iraq may be attempting to restore normalcy and introduce democracy/ secure Iraqi oil, while their opponents may want to extend Shia influence (Iran), 'compel US Forces to exit' (Iraqi opposition) or 'retain and bleed the US Forces' (Al-Qaeda). The goals of a non-state actor such as 'Aum Shinrikyo', who released nerve gas in a Tokyo subway, have never been satisfactorily explained.

***Asymmetry of Organisation***

Countries and conventional forces have visible shapes and hierarchical organisational structures, with clear lines of command & support, and function to safeguard the national objectives and doctrines. Organisational structures of most asymmetric players are difficult to determine with their 'organisational goals being nebulous' they present no clear cut targets as also their 'cellular organisations and diffused leadership' makes them highly resilient and effective in their chosen form of warfare.

***Asymmetry of Morality***

For a non-state actor, as also for some states, all 'means can be taken as fair means'. This lack of moral, legal and ethical constraints coupled with a total disregard for public opinion provides an Asymmetry of Morality. Thus, in such case of asymmetry, battle spaces can easily be extended beyond military targets and resources.

***Asymmetry of Time***

The pressure to end an engagement is on conventional forces whereas '*a guerrilla wins by not losing*'. In an asymmetric engagement, the 'time dimension' can be exploited by the weaker side to deny victory. Hence, it is highly unlikely that US public opinion would allow their forces to stay in Iraq indefinitely. However, no member of the Iraqi 'Opposition Forces' is limited by this constraint.



## **Pakistan: Diplomatic, Information, Military and Economic (DIME) Analysis and Response**

### ***Environment Scan: DIME***

Understanding Pakistan and her capabilities & challenges in the form of a DIME analysis, highlights a few major aspects:

- ***Diplomatic.*** Pakistan is in a precarious situation with strong allies and equal number of adversaries be it China and Turkey, which supports it permanently. Relations with Russia are at a nascent stage, growing mistrust with USA is still offset by its important geo- strategic location. While with Iran, the Shia angle as also oil are important facets Saudi Arabia is not as reliable as earlier and Afghanistan continues to seemingly provide strategic depth but at the same time exerts a binary stretch on Pakistan.
- ***Information.*** In the information domain, Pakistan enjoys a positive asymmetry due to low technological threshold and capability to conduct psychological operations. ISPR is an organisation which carries out effective and targeted information campaigns. The legendary capability of ISI, to generate actionable intelligence and integrate the Pakistani diaspora across the world, is a step towards achieving its objectives.
- ***Military.*** Countries raise Armies whereas Pakistan ‘inherited’ an Army (created an enemy to be relevant - India) and hence its elevated status in Pakistani society, due to which it is critical for Pakistan to maintain a credible image. Military business worth \$20 Billion keeps together the politico – military nexus as also the society.<sup>7</sup> Pakistan enjoys a resilient ‘hybrid capability’ which aims to ‘bleed India through a thousand cuts’ as a means to overcome her conventional inferiority. Military modernisation is a continuous process and seems to be delinked from the country’s fragile economic state. Dual use infrastructure gives Pakistan a distinct advantage in



the 'mobilisation matrix' and gives it the 'ability to overcome vulnerabilities' in time and space. Chinese collusivity further has dented the conventional asymmetry that India has traditionally enjoyed.

- **Economic.** Today, economy is the 'weakest aspect of Pakistan as a nation' poor annual growth, falling rupee and payment crisis only exacerbates the fragile situation. An unbridgeable trade deficit, a disproportionately ballooning defence budget and a faltering CPEC made matters worse for Pakistan.

### ***Response Strategy: DIME***

India, therefore, can take advantage of the situation and aim to weaken Pakistan further.

- **Diplomatic.** It is needed to constantly project Pakistan as 'sponsor of terrorism' by exploiting our own soft power and growing credibility in the world. Military to military cooperation could bear fruit and solve basic tactical and operational level issues, as 'men in uniform' understand each other better. Further, building own capability to threaten withdrawal from the Indus Water Treaty, would give India an enhanced diplomatic leverage.
- **Information.** Own line of operations, in the information domain, should be as under:-
  - India is not an existential threat to Pakistan and desires peaceful cohabitation.
  - India desires a stable and progressive Pakistan.
  - Highlight the current instability as an outcome of the self-serving politico-military nexus.
  - Faltering economy is an outcome of disproportionate military expenditures.
  - Discrediting the Pakistan Army and the ISI.
- **Military.** India should 'reactivate' its covert operation capabilities as also look at the ceasefire along the LC more critically and optimising its posture & infrastructure

accordingly. Ideally, the 'ceasefire should be an outcome of some successful CBMs and not the first CBM in itself'. Precision strikes on terrorist infrastructure in POJK and terrorist launch pads along the LC, should be a stated tactical level policy. Targeting the terrorist leadership, based not only in the hinterland but trans LC and globally, should be factored in our response strategy.

- **Economic.** Pakistan can be targeted by drying up exports, ensuring enhanced accountability by IMF and FATF so as to prevent diversion of funds for terrorist activities.

## Countering Asymmetric Warfare

### *Manifestation of Pakistan's Asymmetric Warfare*

Warfare across the continuum of conflict comprises activities in the current scenario as also the termination of kinetic conflict.

- **Present Situation.** Inducing complacency and simultaneously reducing the force asymmetry. Exploiting the 'stability – instability paradox' and continue to achieve moral ascendancy along the LC. The ways adopted by them to include collusivity with China, freeing forces from Durand line, military modernisation and exploitation of hybrid capability and the means adopted by them, covers information and covert operations, diplomatic onslaught in UN and exploitation of terrorist infrastructure.
- **Trigger for Potential Conflict and Actions.** Pakistan ensured information domination across the entire spectrum, by keeping its own troops embroiled in an internal security situation. Further, it kept the two- front threat alive, in collusivity with China. Ways adopted by Pakistan to achieve the same included escalating Internal Security (IS) situation, grab actions at LC and local LC operations. However to achieve the same, the 'means' adopted by Pakistan included cyber, IW capability, employment of special forces (SSG) and ISI, media management by ISPR and upgrading terrorist infrastructure.



- **Actions When Hostilities are Imminent.** Pakistan, in this timeframe, will target India's war waging potential and widen the mobilisation differential in time and space. It will also highlight the inadequacy in India's response and generate a sense of despondency in the population at large, and the forces in specific exploiting the psychologic aspect of capture of Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman, post the Balakot airstrike. The ways, Pakistan may likely resort to, ranges from interdicting Lines of Communication, targeting, VA/ VPs, simultaneous terrorist strikes and disinformation campaign by exploiting terrorist infrastructures, media (ISPR), and uses of kinetic means like LRVs, UCAVs and SSG strikes.
- **Conduct During Actual Conflict.** Pakistan's asymmetry in goals would be constructed along the 'Notion of Victory' that is by ensuring a stalemate and creating a critical IS situation in Kashmir. The ways likely to be adopted may include blunt strike corps offensive, deny major gains on LC and extensive narrative engineering. Means possessed by Pakistan, to achieve the same, comprises playing the nuclear card, non-traditional application of second line forces, exploiting terrorist infrastructure, IW capabilities and media campaigns by ISPR.

### **Current Situation (J&K)**

Pakistan's efforts with respect to propagating a false narrative of article 370, delimitation etc. is not finding any traction in Kashmir. Northern borders being active, have the potential to embroil India in a two front conflict and stretch our conventional asymmetry. Pakistan is attempting to fan separatist sentiments by constantly 'raking up the Kashmir and Khalistan issue' (Lashkar-e-Khalsa). Targeting of military leaders and personnel over the social media and 'honey trapping' is an ongoing process. Further, discrediting of the political dispensation and constant efforts to 'trigger mass agitations', is a perennial Pakistani effort. The major tools utilised by the adversary include the following:

- **Narrative Engineering.** This proved to be one of the main tool, used in achieving its aim to deteriorate the current situation in J&K. This includes facades like



objecting to abrogation of article 370 in the international forums, spreading misinformation about delimitation, NRC and CAA. 'Depiction of India as an occupier' in national and international forum is the highlight of their campaign.

- **Propaganda Campaign.** The campaign of spreading propaganda in Kashmir and more recently Punjab, Pakistan effort including the K-2 project (Kashmir-Khalistan), is a conscious effort by Pakistan to create 'Kashmir Khalistan Referendum Front (KKRF)' and fan separatist sentiments.<sup>8</sup>
- **Targeting Military Commanders/ Personnel.** To create mistrust towards the military in Kashmir, Pakistan utilises social media to 'falsely project' ethical and financial malpractices. Further, targeting personal lives, widespread attempts of honey trapping and PIO calls are trending.<sup>9</sup>
- **Politics.** Disrupting policy making and functioning of the government, by organising mass agitations, are classical examples of use of hybrid elements to focus on the 'deprivation of normalcy' in J&K.
- **Response Strategy.** Own strategy should rest on leveraging own asymmetry in force levels, economic prowess and standing in international forum to achieve own objectives and simultaneously deny Pakistan the opportunity to execute actions by exploiting their asymmetric strengths. Exploiting Pakistan's internal fault lines, and causing them to transfer their forces/ resources from a binary to tertiary stretch, should be our focus at the strategic level. Aggressive domination of LC and degrading terrorist infrastructure should form an essential part of our conventional response along with robust Rear Area Security (RAS) and CI/ CT posture. Financial asymmetry is to be exploited in achieving desired end state (eg. increasing remuneration for key players in terrorist ecosystem). Though limited in capability, consistent efforts should be made towards acquiring offensive IW and Cyber capability.
- **Strategic Response.** India should develop means to exploit the internal fault lines present in Pakistan. The Dynamic Response Strategy (DRS), as an



alternate response option, needs to be exploited, wherein an appropriately structured and self-sufficient force like IBG could become a tool to execute successful response options. Further, India also needs to review its nuclear 'No First Use Policy' so as to project intent and a strong approach towards national security.<sup>10</sup>

- **Conventional Approach.** Aligning own security posture with our conventional asymmetry, needs to be looked at afresh. Declaring of terrorist infrastructures across the border as non-military targets and precision strikes on identified targets need to form part of our national security architecture. Domination of LC by kinetic and non-kinetic means, would pay rich dividends. Moreover, enhancing logistic capabilities and logistic stamina of own forces needs to be carried out simultaneously.
- **Information and Cyber Means.** The contemporary battlefield extends equally into the cognitive domain and upgrading own information and cyber capabilities is critical. Seeking professional IT assistance, by employing 'Agniveer' recruits, towards this effort, would be a step in the right direction. Own IT and cyber prowess should be harnessed to control and monitor adversaries' mobile network, targeting command and control (C2) structure thereby ensuring information dominance over the adversary by extensive use of technology. Propagating own narrative, in favour of operations by own forces, would be imperative to dominate the cognitive domain.
- **Hybrid Means.** Blunting of the adversary' capabilities in the hybrid domain, would entail ensuring a robust Rear Area Security and CI/CT grid by induction of additional CAPF in the hinterland Kashmir and relieve own forces for trans LC operation. De-radicalisation of youth and control of madrassas, spreading anti-national propaganda, would further diminish the adversary' capability in this domain.



The overall strategy should work towards building a credible and punitive deterrence.

**Figure 5: Deterrence**

**Deterrence = Capability + Resolve + Belief**

Source: <http://twitter.com/arunp2810/status/278530791572508672?s=21&t=kjnBCbY3eRljzSoMuavGOg> and  
Annotated by the Author

## **India's Options to Wage Asymmetric Warfare**

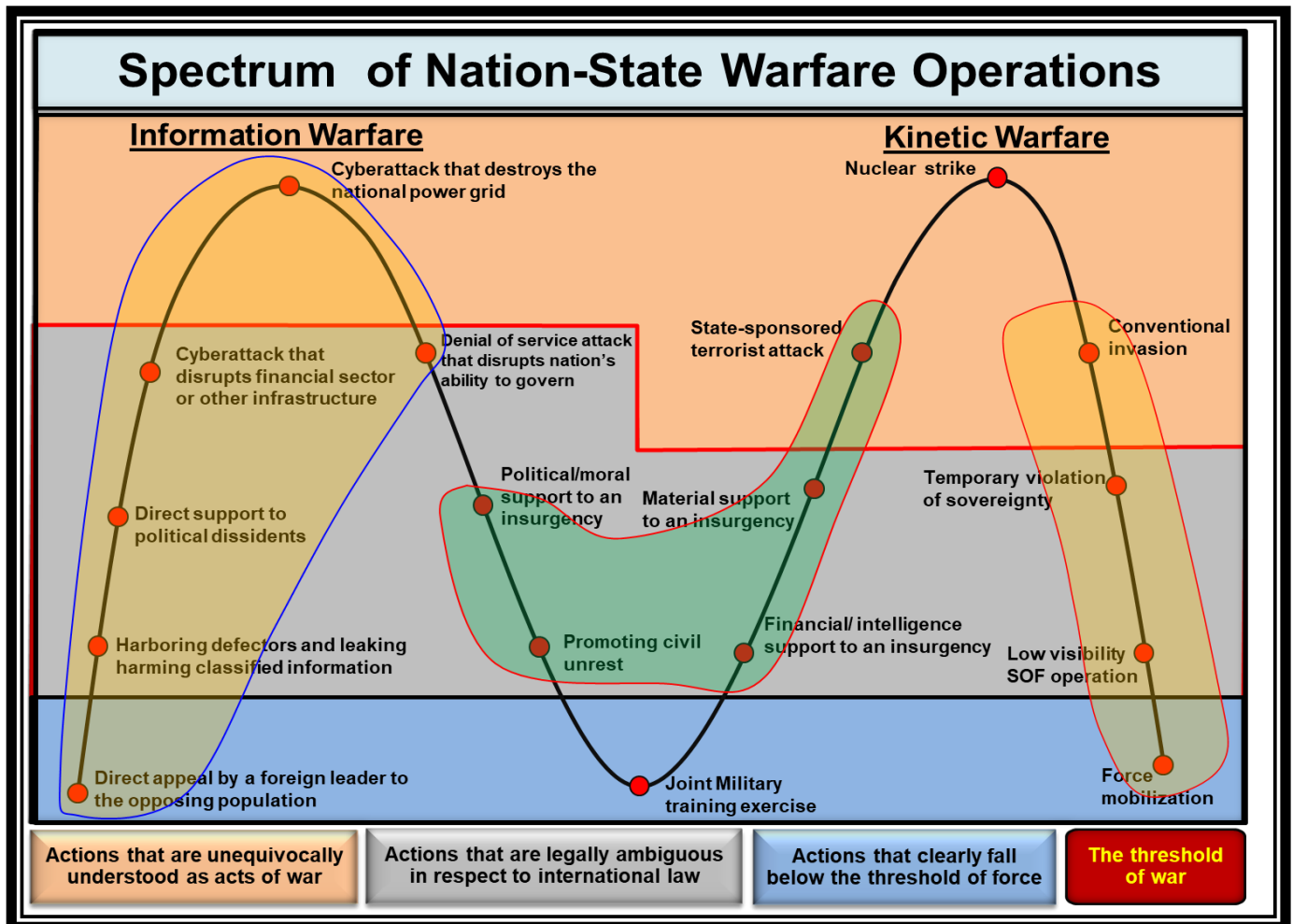
### **Concept of War**

India's politico-military leadership needs to decide whether to follow traditional 'Indian morality based approach' towards conflict management which also includes living upto the standard of our global image or 'dilute our stance' by adopting employment of hybrid and non- state assets as a state policy.

### **Domain Asymmetry**

Every nation enjoys and builds asymmetry in different domain and accordingly aspires to exploit them. India and Pakistan both enjoy asymmetries in varied domains against each other. Accordingly, Pakistan has been undertaking activities in the grey zone by keeping the Kashmir issue as the centre of gravity and at times, transcending into actions, close to conventional conflict, by kinetic terrorist strikes. The far extremes of the graph (see Figure 6) marked in yellow, are the ones where India enjoys positive asymmetry and includes asymmetric capabilities in conventional, cyber and diplomatic domains. The central part of the graph, marked in green, are the aspects where Pakistan enjoy and exploits asymmetry.

Figure 6: Spectrum of Nation - State Warfare Operations



Source: Adapted by Author from Jason Rivera, "Understanding and Countering Nation-State Use of Protracted Unconventional Warfare", *Small War Journal*, 25 October 2014

### Objectives

India needs to focus on shaping the cognitive battle space, by disrupting societal cohesion and engineering adverse propaganda. Shock and disorder, leading to degradation of infrastructure combined with discrediting Pakistan's military and political structures, will give



out of proportion results through force implosion. The ways which can be adopted are enumerated below:-

- ***Shape the Cognitive Battle Space***

- Manipulating opinion by propagating own narrative.
- Engineering violence by making use of propaganda technique.
- Disrupting societal cohesion by generating contradiction.

- ***Overwhelming Infrastructure***

- Improving upon capability to target essential service.
- Causing financial disorder in terrorist funding organisation.

- ***Generating Political Dissension***

- Inviting extraneous pressure over political bodies.
- Eroding legitimacy of military which is a supreme body.
- Destroy the will of the adversary to wage war.

- ***Reduce Military Effectiveness***

- Making the people of Pakistan realise that the ongoing conflict will not do good to anyone.
- Tie down and discredit the military.

### ***Options to Wage Asymmetric Warfare***

The key military instruments of asymmetric warfare and their inter se comparison is depicted in the given table (**see Figure 7**), with outright advantage in the conventional domain as depicted in blue, and limited capability in the information and cyber domain. Doctrinal

intervention is a must to progress into the realm of irregular warfare to counter Pakistan's asymmetric advantage.

Figure 7: Instruments of Asymmetric Warfare: India and Pakistan

Instruments of Asymmetric W		PAKISTAN			
		Reg Army	SF	Irregulars / Trts	Cyber W
INDIA	Reg Army	Conventional War	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deny infiltration /induction</li> <li>Secure VA/ VPs</li> <li>Jamming/ interference with communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CI/ CT grid</li> <li>RAS</li> <li>Integrated operation (CIV)</li> </ul>	Defensive Cyber Warfare / Cyber security
	SF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Precision strikes – C2, VAs/ VPs</li> <li>ISR</li> <li>Target designation &amp; PSDA</li> </ul>	Covert operation (need a doctrine)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Target terrorist infrastructure</li> <li>Infiltration organisation</li> </ul>	Information intensive operations in support of Security Forces/ Cyber security
	Irregulars / Trts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inciting insurgency</li> <li>Exploit fault lines (need a doctrine)</li> </ul>	Doctrine & capb non-existence		
	Cyber W	Crime/ Hacking/ Espionage/ Warfare	Crime/ Hacking/ Espionage/ Warfare	Crime/ Hacking/ Espionage/ Warfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Def Cyber Warfare</li> <li>Offn Cyber Warfare</li> </ul>
		INDIAN ADVANCE	CAPABILITY EXIST (UNTESTED)	LIMITED/RELUCTANT CAPABILITY	LIMITED CAPABILITY

Source: Adapted by the Author from Navneet Bhushan, "Winning the Asymmetric Wars: Matrix of Instruments of War", IDR, 08 December 2016



## **Asymmetric Warfare : Options for India**

India could achieve asymmetry specific to our active Northern borders, through various facets comprising asymmetry by force, method, application, IW etc. The game changers in this regard pertain to availability of Counter Insurgency Force (RR) for inter theatre and synergised force application as also synchronised IW pursuits. The same is explained under following heads:

- ***Creation and Employment of Reserves***
  - CAPF induction and relief of Rashtriya Rifles (RR) formations in hinterland, will provide flexibility to the theatre commander for employment across theatres.
  - Employment of RR battalions in offensive role as part of ad hoc IBGs.
- ***Strategic and Tactical***
  - Doctrinal complementarity of operations in the Northern and Western Theatres.
  - Complementary employment of RR to generate adequate force ratios, post re-balancing wherever required.
- ***Method***
  - Non-linear and simultaneous application of forces and force multipliers.
  - Employment of forces as coup-de-main operations.
- ***Sabotage***
  - Identification of key terrorist figures in Area of Operations and targeting them.
  - Integration of all such efforts to be carried out deliberately at the national level.



- ***Subversion with Other Agencies***

- Enhancing Hybrid capabilities to include employment of Ikhwan and TA (H&H) battalions.
- Integration with JKP and other intelligence agencies.

- ***Information Warfare (IW)***

- Building a strong IW narrative that supports the ongoing campaigns and military operations.
- Top down approach guiding a Central nodal agency to synergise the effort.

## **Recommendations**

Identification of capability to build and consolidate the four conflict domains Kinetic-contact, Kinetic-Non Contact, Non Kinetic-Contact and Non Kinetic-Non Contact is a must. Employment of mechanised elements along the LC wherever feasible, operational readiness in the DRS continuum are ways to gain asymmetry by force. Technical infusion through development/ induction of vectors and munitions & sub tactical AD, will ensure early attainment of objectives exploiting the kinetic non-contact domain. R&D in cyber and information domains are critical to compliment efforts towards overall achievements of military aims. The recommendations for capability building can be divided as per the nature of operations as under :-

- ***Kinetic-Contact.*** Asymmetry of force in warfare that includes contact warfare and which is kinetic in nature and can be achieved by:
  - Deployment of Mechanised Forces along the LC where terrain and infrastructure permits.
  - Integration with the Indian Air Force at tactical and sub tactical levels for quicker and synergised employment at short notice.
  - Active employment of RR battalions in carrying out offensive trans LC operations.



- Allocation of special forces and theatre reserve forces to ensure credible capability for executing DRS.
- **Non Kinetic-Contact.** In this domain, capability building can be developed by creating an asymmetry in cyber, networking and aerial capability.
  - **Asymmetry in Cyber and Networking.** It can be achieved by building EW capability that includes jamming and EW suites. Efforts are required to build capability to disrupt communication link of drones, handlers and terrorists.
  - **Asymmetry in Aerial Capability.** It can be achieved by enhancing technology based insertion capability and by conducting SEAD and DEAD.
- **Kinetic Non-Contact.** By infusion of technology, the capability can be built to achieve an edge over the adversary.
  - **Asymmetry in Vectors.** This capability can be achieved by infusion and usage of LRVs & UCAVs and increasing stand-off range without calibre escalation.
  - **Asymmetry in Munitions.** To achieve asymmetry in munitions, infusion of loiter munitions, precision munitions, guided munitions and anti-radiation munitions, is required to be carried out on priority.
  - **Asymmetry in Sub Tactical AD.** It can be achieved by employment of MANPAD and anti-drone/ RPAs.
- **Non Kinetic - Non Contact.** The capability of countering adversary, without contact and without any kinetic means will include the following aspects:
  - **Asymmetry in Surveillance (ISR).** Trans LC and hinterland surveillance are both equally important. The asymmetry in these domains can be achieved by developing capabilities of gaining real time information by means of aerial



surveillance, cyber and tele-communication hotspots. It also includes satellite imagery and smart AIOS, vehicle, body scanners and micro drones.

- **Asymmetry in Information.** Achieving this asymmetry is the need of the hour and can be achieved by taking forward the concept of digital army by taking assistance of IT experts and influencers. To pace up the process, it is a must to provide budgetary support for the same. Induction of tech savvy Agniveers must be undertaken.

## Conclusion

The Indian Military has exhibited considerable proficiency in combating the various forms of asymmetric war that have been encountered so far. Honing its skills even further, equipping to give it more teeth and finesse, training to beat the adversary in his own game, while retaining the combat superiority in the conventional domain, will serve to defeat the designs of all exponents of asymmetric war be internally driven or externally sponsored.

## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup> "Joint Publication 1-02", *Department of Defense, Dictionary of Military and associated Terms*, 08 November 2010.

<sup>2</sup> "Joint Publication 3-0", *Department of Defense, Doctrine for Joint Operations*, 01 February 1995.

<sup>3</sup> The Editors Of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Iraq War 2003-2011", *Britannica*. Available at <https://www.britannica.com/event/Iraq-War>. Accessed on 15 October 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Ivan Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 3. ISBN 978-0521548694.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, pp. 29-47 and p. 204.





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<sup>7</sup> Available at <https://www.aljazeera-com.cdn.amproject.org>. Accessed on 25 October 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Ritesh K Srivastava (Etd), "Pakistan's K2 Plan Decoded; ISI Teams Up with Pro-Khalistan Outfits to Create Unrest in India", *ZeeNews*, 23 October 2019. Available <https://zeenews.india.com/india/pakistans-k2-plan-decoded-isi-teams-up-with-pro-khalistan-outfits-to-create-unrest-in-india-2241711.html>. Accessed on 25 October 2022.

<sup>9</sup> IANS, "ISI Using Honeytrap to Target Indian Army Officers: Minister of State Shripad Naik", *The Statesman*, 09 December 2019. Available at <https://www.thestatesman.com/india/isi-using-honeytrap-target-indian-army-officers-minister-1502831681.html>. Accessed on 25 October 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Ankur Banga, "IBGs : Inevitable For Dynamic Response & Future Conflicts", *CLAWS Web Article*, 04 June 2020. Available at <https://www.claws.in/ibgs-inevitable-for-dynamic-response-future-conflicts/>. Accessed on 25 October 2022.

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*The views expressed and suggestions made in the article are solely of the author in his personal capacity and do not have any official endorsement. Attributability of the contents lies purely with author.*



**CENTRE FOR LAND WARFARE STUDIES (CLAWS)**

RPSO Complex, Parade Road, Delhi Cantt, New Delhi 110010

Tel.: +91-11-25691308, Fax: +91-11-25692347, CLAWS Army No. 33098; Email: [landwarfare@gmail.com](mailto:landwarfare@gmail.com)

Website: [www.claws.in](http://www.claws.in)