

# CONFERENCE PAPERS

## **Applicability of Hybrid Warfare to Pakistan: Challenges and Possible Responses**

*Andrew Korybko\**

‘Hybrid Warfare’, a relatively new term, which is not entailing a universally recognized definition in the first place; it is mostly being used as a catchall phrase to describe any sort of clandestine non-military destabilization efforts. Whether it is economic subversion or propaganda dissemination, all of these techniques have already been around for ages, and there is nothing novel in them nowadays, except may be in terms of how these techniques have adapted to incorporate modern-day technologies. The term itself is, therefore, highly politicized and aimed at conveying subliminal inferences, thereby, making the word ‘Hybrid Warfare’ a form of ‘Hybrid War’ itself.

The concept of Hybrid Warfare is completely different from anything being discussed in the West, and it is much more practically relevant since it is not designed to be a propaganda tool like the term itself has regrettably become. Instead, US-own state-of-the-art warfighting techniques in building an original model, which describes how and why the US is the one, who is actually waging asymmetrical conflicts all across the world through the hybrid utilization of a variety of proxy forces. However, the model, under discussion, allows to actually predict, where the next Hybrid Wars will be launched as well as provides a list of indicators for what to expect in the run-up to any imminent destabilization operation.

Throughout the course of this paper, a wide array of topics is going to be discussed, which all contribute to Hybrid Wars, whether through their tactical manifestation or the broader strategic environment in which they operate. Pakistan urgently needs to understand the essence of Hybrid Wars, because this model indicates that there is no other place in the world right now, which is more likely to be victimized by this stratagem, and in fact, Pakistan is already caught up in the destabilization web and has been for some time already. It is going to make sense of

---

\* Andrew Korybko, a prominent Russian geopolitical commentator, presented this paper during his visit to the Faculty of Contemporary Studies, National Defence University, Islamabad on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2017. This paper is based on his book titled *Hybrid Wars: The Indirect Adaptive Approach to Regime Change* published by the Institute of Strategic Research and Predictions at the People’s Friendship University of Russia; and *Oriental Review Article Series*, both of which are accessible at [orientalreview.org](http://orientalreview.org).

what has happened to Pakistan over the years, what it is going through right now, and where it is all headed.

The complexity and variety of ideas discussed in this paper might give the impression being longwinded or going off on some unrelated tangents, but this all comes together in explaining the essence of Hybrid Wars. Starting from the definition of Hybrid Wars, it will discuss the recent historical progression of the model, which involves a heavy degree of geopolitics. This is important in order to arrive at the contemporary context in which these conflicts are unfolding, including in Pakistan with CPEC. Once Hybrid Wars theory is explained, it will segue into discussing Pakistan's vulnerability to this model and some suggestions about what it can do to preemptively defend itself.

Of course, in doing so, it is going to naturally touch upon some very sensitive issues in Pakistani society, and accordingly, will present questions that Pakistanis will have to deal with in striking the perfect balance between safeguarding against this asymmetrical threat and preserving civil society traditions. It is not to inject into some of Pakistan's most intimate and divisive issues, but that can make people reconceive of them through the prism of Hybrid Warfare in spotting the inadvertent threats that they may entail, if they are irresponsibly dealt with by society or the state. There are hostile forces, which are waiting to exploit any opportunity that naturally or artificially arises in order to destabilize Pakistan, and that they usually begin by using the seemingly subtle methods of perception management techniques in order to open the door to unleashing a Hybrid War later on.

Hybrid Wars can be defined as “externally provoked identity conflicts, which exploit historical, ethnic, religious, socio-economic, and geographic differences within geostrategic transit states through the phased transition from Color Revolutions to Unconventional Wars in order to disrupt, control, or influence multipolar transnational connective infrastructure projects by means of Regime Tweaking, Regime Change, and/or Regime Reboot.” It is a long and very deep definition, therefore, it can be easily understood, once it will be deconstructed to go through each part separately. The first thing is that Hybrid Wars are externally provoked identity conflicts, which is certainly the case, but they are both a combination of natural and manufactured ones.

There are pre-existing identity conflicts within every single country in the world, though, they might not get to the level of catalysing political change unless provoked by outside elements, which is a key point. The methods through which external actors seek to influence their domestic targets vary, but they can roughly be divided into two broad and interconnected categories – NGOs and Infowars. It is not the case that all NGOs are hostile foreign intelligence-backed entities or that every

single international media outlet is a Hybrid War weapon, but to raise awareness about how these two mediums can be exploited for political purposes. There is a need to understand that there are many positive uses for NGOs and information outlets and that they ultimately do a lot more good than bad, but as the saying goes, it only takes a few rotten apples to spoil the whole batch.

Here, the reference is a broad segment of organizations that are official and informal, international and domestic. They can be anything from the Global Soros Foundation – which is often the main driver in one way or another behind most Color Revolutions – to a local neighbourhood effort to clean up the city's streets. NGOs do not have to be overtly involved in politics, either, as there are many genuine civil society initiatives, but what need to realize is that all NGOs – even those, which do not intend to be involved in politics – could either be deliberately instrumentalized for this purpose or misled into becoming politically active. An NGO, in other words, is a platform – whether physical or social – which organizes people together for a common goal, and operationally speaking, they can serve as cells for laying the foundation for Color Revolutions and later carrying them out.

Before discussing Color Revolutions, we need to accept that pre-existing identity divisions within targeted states can be exacerbated and manipulated for political and often times violent ends, whether by NGOs and information outlets, or just regular citizens. All countries are vulnerable to at least one of the five identity indicators that are historical, ethnic, religious, socio-economic, and geographic differences. These differences do not even have to be presently active in any given society, but just that the grounds for them exist, which could then be manipulated by others to create artificial conflicts. For instance, historical differences, which every country has to various extents. These might relate to decades-long political rivalries between different factions, or to recently acquired territory. Then, there are ethnic conflicts, which everyone is aware, are between or within different groups. Next is religious differences, which broadly manifest themselves as sectarianism in the Islamic world, while socio-economic ones deal mostly with inequality and systemic economic and institutional challenges. The last set of identity differences, geographic, can be subdivided into two categories – physical and political. People living in the mountains, for instance, usually have a different identity than those residing in the plains, just as people living in one political unit sometimes feel different allegiances than those living in other ones elsewhere in the country.

At this point, we are at externally provoked identity conflict in geostrategic transit states, which raises the question about what exactly is meant by transit state. Before elaborating the concept of transit state, its reference to the multipolar transitional connective infrastructure projects should be discussed. The transition of

Color Revolutions to Unconventional Wars should be understood here, first. Color Revolutions are basically “people’s protest movements”. Not every people’s protest is a Color Revolution, but every Color Revolution gives off the cleverly crafted veneer of looking like a “people’s protest”. They all have some sort of trigger event in common, be it a controversial law being passed or defeated, a supposedly rigged election, an anti-corruption crusade, or a civil society issue, such as, a spike in utility prices, and each of these can be naturally occurring or provoked by outside influences, whether intelligence-related or operating independently for their own interests. Again, there are legitimate and plausible reasons for people to organize in protesting against any of these issues, but they become a Color Revolution once they advocate for political changes and are linked to foreign forces, and this is where the NGOs and foreign information outlets come into play. Both of these can have financial, personnel, or direct links to outside actors, which have an interest in destabilizing the state, and often times work to engineer citizen-versus-state provocations or exploit pre-existing natural protest movements by infiltrating and later controlling them. Color Revolutions succeed not by a bunch of people holding play cards and shouting slogans until the authorities step down, but through urban terrorism; the most dramatic example is of “EuroMaidan” events of late 2013 and early 2014. There’s a big difference between peacefully protesting and violently agitating, and it is the latter, which is the end goal of Color Revolution organizers, which include NGOs, information outlets, and on-the-ground operatives. Color Revolutions succeed not because every single person involved is treasonously trying to overthrow the government, but due to the natural mechanics of crowd control psychology and the strategic actions of the core organizers.

Sometimes, all that it takes is a small and dedicated group of provocateurs to spark clashes with the authorities, which in turn are misleadingly reported on by hostile anti-government outlets in order to craft the perception that the police are randomly attacking “peaceful protesters” for fun. The whole point is to engineer a completely artificial narrative of “democratic freedom fighters” resisting a “tyrannical dictatorship”, which serves the dual purposes of encouraging more citizens to join in the growing riot and to generate support from abroad. It is important to state that “support” does not just mean favorable media coverage, though, that is a part of it, but also the threat of sanctions and diplomatic isolation from the so-called “international community”, which in this case mostly means the West. It can also be extended to clandestinely include material assistance to the “protesters” such as the weapons that they will need to help their Color Revolution evolve into an Unconventional War.

Unconventional War, by its definition, is a conflict, where one of the participants is not in an official uniform, so it could mean terrorism, a rebellion, an

insurgency, or anything like that. We can also see that in the leaked document of 2012 called the US Army Training Circular 18-01, which comprehensively describes how the Pentagon views Unconventional Warfare and actually trains its own soldiers for waging it. The connection between Unconventional Warfare and Color Revolutions is that the presumable “people’s protests” progressively escalate into an Unconventional War as the organizers and their foreign backers seek to put more pressure on the targeted government, because, a bunch of people standing around holding signs do not overthrow governments, actual security threats do.

As Color Revolutions either fizzle out due to effective government countermeasures or escalate into violence, when organizers sense state weakness, the logical progression is for them to morph into Unconventional Wars, understood in this sense as urban insurgency and terrorism, which are the next step in advancing the political goals of Regime Tweaking, Regime Change, and Regime Reboot. The examples of most well-known and successful Color Revolutions since the end of the Cold War, are Serbia in 2000, Georgia in 2003, Ukraine in 2004, and Lebanon and Kyrgyzstan in 2005, in which it is clearly observable how the transition of Color Revolution to Unconventional War takes place.

The Kyrgyz Color Revolution in 2010 was the first success in transforming a Color Revolution into a brief Unconventional War, and the lessons learned from this experience were applied the year later in the theater-wide “Arab Spring” Color Revolutions, notably in Libya, Yemen, and of course Syria. Then, of course, we had the outbreak of urban terrorism known as “EuroMaidan” in Ukraine at the end of 2013 and early 2014, which was in many ways a European example of the “Arab Spring”. At that very moment, the Russian Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov said in May 2014 that the “Arab Spring” was really a theater-wide Color Revolution and that “EuroMaidan” was the most recent iteration. This proves that there is an undeniable continuity between the events in the Mideast and what broke out in Eastern Europe, as well as the patterned transition of failed Color Revolutions mutating into Unconventional Wars of varying intensity and length.

General Gerasimov elaborated further, by citing the NATO War on Libya that the ultimate goal of Color Revolutions is to develop into Unconventional Wars, which serve as a pretext for a large-scale conventional military conflict waged by foreign powers. Hybrid Wars, which is basically a phased transition, do not need to always result in Libya-like conventional wars by NATO, since these are sometimes impossible for them to carry out in nuclear-armed countries like Pakistan or in states very close to their vicinity, such as in Russia and China’s Central Asian neighbours. There are also other practical geopolitical reasons behind their avoidance of conventional military operation, such as, troop limits and a fear of military

overstretch, which explains the reason that hostile governments sometimes opt to purposely keep the conflict threshold just below the level of conventional intervention.

In such cases, the concept of manageable or weaponized chaos, or in other words opening up a Pandora's Box of problems with the intention of having it deliberately destabilize the target and its surroundings, could be a goal in and of itself, which would also further the objectives of Regime Tweaking, Regime Change, and Regime Reboot. Sparking a seemingly self-perpetuating and autonomous cycle of conflict, such as, the one in Syria for the past half a decade, is designed to put enormous pressure on the state authorities and get them to enter into a series of political concessions, or Regime Tweaks, demanded by the outside aggressors. If that fails, then the next step is to push for Regime Change, which could ultimately be taken to the extreme of a Regime Reboot in fundamentally reorganizing the internal affairs of a given country through 'constitutional reform' and the promulgation of "Identity Federalism". This outcome is, when the differing identity-centric fighting forces are rewarded with their own quasi-independent statelets, such as, what happened in Bosnia after the war and what might be awarded to the Kurds as part of the post-Daesh 'political solution' in Syria.

In order to sustain the Hybrid War throughout its Regime Tweaking, Regime Change, and Regime Reboot phases, a broad coalition of countries partner together to provide assistance to their allied fighters, with the entire operation being directed by the US through the Lead from Behind stratagem, which is the international division of labor behind this prolonged destabilization.

Not all Color Revolutions lead to Unconventional Wars, however, with the so-called "Green Revolution" in Iran in 2009, the Mainstream Media-labelled "Electric Yerevan" in Armenia in 2015, and the recent two-year-long drama in the Republic of Macedonia being prime examples. This can be explained by two reasons. The first one is that the operations in question were never intended to develop into full-fledged Hybrid Wars backed up by a Lead from Behind coalition, but were instead probes to identify structural weaknesses and state responses in order to perfect the most optimal plan, which would later be unleashed at a more convenient time. Any resultant state destabilization, which might prompt government over reactions and the further exacerbation of violence would be welcomed, because it could make it easier to enact political concessions, or prompt Regime Tweaking, from the targeted state, but it might not have been originally anticipated to produce such results.

Correspondingly, effective counter-Color Revolution measures can also be attributed to preventing the emergence of a Hybrid War in these countries, but they should not always be seen as the sole reason behind why this did not happen. As per

the doctrine of weaponized or manageable chaos, which Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov recently acknowledged that the US might continue giving support to its proxies even if they are on the verge of defeat in order to prolong instability in the targeted state. This is not always the case, as even the US only has limited resources and that not all of its partners are eager to join in a Lead from Behind Hybrid War coalition, such as, the one that was used against Syria, but it is still an important factor that must not be discounted. Ultimately, the reason behind failed Color Revolutions, which never quite materialize to the Unconventional and Hybrid War stages, is always discovered in hindsight on a case-by-case basis.

Hybrid Wars are externally provoked identity conflicts, which aim to transition failed Color Revolutions into Unconventional Wars for the purpose of disrupting, controlling, or influencing multipolar transnational connective infrastructure projects. In a nutshell, multipolar transnational connective infrastructure projects are the New Silk Roads, which collectively contribute to China's One Belt One Road global vision, of which CPEC is the flagship project. The US has a grand interest in disrupting, controlling, or influencing the Silk Roads and CPEC, because of their geostrategic significance for China in the New Cold War, so in order to understand everything a little bit better and see how this all fits together, there is a need of understanding that why Washington is so strongly against multipolar transnational connective infrastructure projects, which are outside of its grasp.

Right now, the world is in the midst of a massive paradigmatic transition, whereby, the existing Western-dominated global institutions and power centres are being replaced by non-Western competitors, with everything roughly being summed up as a competition between the unipolar US and its allies to retain their influence in the face of a rising Russia, China, and their trusted multipolar partners such as Pakistan and Iran, for example. The multipolar forces want to reform the world system in order to make it more equitable and just, while the unipolar ones want to protect their institutional advantages. This struggle can be seen as the New Cold War, and while it was in the making for some time ever since the end of the Old Cold War, it really kicked into high gear in the late 2013 and early 2014.

During this time, the US unleashed the "EuroMaidan" Hybrid War against Russian interests in Ukraine, which was foreseen as being the fledgling Eurasian Union's irreplaceable bridge to the EU, or in other words, Moscow's multipolar transnational connective infrastructure project, which overlaps with China's Eurasian Land Bridge initiative. At the same time, the US began provoking China in the South China Sea and tried assembling a Lead From Behind coalition to challenge its interests there, which presented a threat to the maritime portion of OBOR. The

US' simultaneous indirect proxy warfare against Russia and China's chief national security interests is what brought them closer in an unprecedented Eurasian partnership, which brings us to the present day. Russia confronts the US militarily, while China does so economically, and these two Great Powers are, thus, a perfect pair for one another, and therefore, decided to pool their resources and coordinate their actions in order to facilitate the global transition from unipolarity to multipolarity; all the while constructing alternative governance systems and institutions such as BRICS, the SCO, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and the BRICS Bank. Pakistan's future is more directly tied in with China's economic efforts than Russia's military ones.

China is a colossal Great Power with the world's largest population and biggest market, so it needs consistent economic growth in order to remain stable. Any significant economic down turn could lead to socio-political unrest such as protests, strikes, Color Revolutions, and Hybrid Wars, which is why China must prioritize its economic security as one of the main pillars of its national security. The only way to ensure continued growth is to enhance connectivity with all of its global partners, since this will also provide a market outlet for China's over production, and therefore, keep large state-connected firms in business. Of course, China does not expect for underdeveloped and impoverished countries to be able to serve as dependable market places, which is why it has a self-interest in helping to develop and enrich its partners as part of this process in the ultimate "win-win" arrangement. These inter-connected economic motivations are the guiding concepts behind OBOR, which naturally has a geostrategic dimension as well.

Most of China's Eastern Hemispheric trade is conducted via maritime routes, which link it to the EU, Mideast, East Africa, and even neighbouring Southeast Asia, so it is very vulnerable to any sort of American naval interference, especially in the bottleneck areas of the Strait of Malacca, the Strait of Hormuz, Bab el Mandeb, and the two Suez Canals. In order to get to any of these regions, however, China must first traverse the South China Sea, which explains why the US is so interested in destabilizing that part of the world right now and why China is so adamantly defending its interests there. Therefore, as part of a long-term plan to partially mitigate its strategic vulnerabilities on the global waterways, China wants to pioneer an ambitious trans-Eurasian network of high-speed railroads in order to directly connect with each of its partners via overland routes – except for East Africa of course – which are safe from the US' naval obstruction.

The flip side of this strategy, however, is that the new mainland transit states are instead vulnerable to Hybrid War, this stratagem can be described as provoking identity conflict in geostrategic transit states that are along the route of multipolar

transnational connective infrastructure projects or New Silk Roads. Ukraine and Syria were two such states, with the first being integral to Russia's Eurasian Union project, and the second one being the terminal location of the prospective Friendship Pipeline, which was supposed to send Iranian gas through Iraq and to Syria for sale on the European marketplace. Each of these initiatives aimed to achieve very powerful multipolar goals, which is why the US so determinedly opposed them. "EuroMaidan" was launched in order to 'poach' Ukraine out of the Eurasian Union and deal a heavy blow to Russia's integrational efforts, while the "Arab Spring" theater-wide Color Revolutions, which were initiated for grandiose geostrategic reasons, such as, to see a Turkish-backed Muslim Brotherhood Arab super-state come into fruition for proxy use against Iran, also served the immediate purpose in Syria of sabotaging any hope that the Friendship Pipeline would be built.

The US has obvious geostrategic reasons to subvert other Silk Roads and related multipolar transnational connective infrastructure projects, which can unleash Hybrid Wars by first identifying China's most important OBOR plans, both active and prospective. There is ongoing work being done in Russia, the Balkans, Southeast Asia, and East Africa on several New Silk Road projects and initial plans are being considered for Central Asia at the moment too, with each affiliated state in these regions being vulnerable to Hybrid War destabilizations as per the five identity conflict variables, namely historical, ethnic, religious, socio-economic, and geographic differences. These become more pronounced and easier to manipulate the more non-Western that a given transit state is. The keystone of OBOR, however, is not in any of those aforementioned regions, but in South Asia and right here in Pakistan with CPEC, which unites all of those through the Zipper of Eurasia and Convergence of Civilization concepts. As a result, Pakistan is poised to become the world's top Hybrid War battleground in the coming future. In order for this to make sense and not sound like baseless fear mongering, it should be observed why CPEC is the cornerstone of OBOR, which makes it the most important project for ensuring China's economic and strategic security, and therefore, turns it into the main target of American destabilization efforts through Hybrid War, including in conjunction with the US' new military-strategic ally, India.

CPEC is much more important than even the record-breaking \$50 billion, already allocated to it, would indicate, since it first and foremost achieves very tangible geostrategic objectives for China. The first is that it aims to connect to Xinjiang, and therefore, develop a West-East trade route across the entirety of the People's Republic, which is expected to bring development to the country's most obscure and impoverished corners. This would not happen, though, if companies along the Eastern Chinese coast do not utilize this route, which means that they must have some sort of incentive in doing so, otherwise this ambitious plan would

not amount to anything. There is a very convincing argument behind why China's mega cities and economic centres should use CPEC, and that is simple geopolitics and common strategic sense. The US' disruptive activities in the South China Sea could eventually pose a threat to Chinese shipping, and moreover, the Strait of Malacca could very easily be closed to China's vessels in the event of a conflict or the run-up to one. This would strangle China's Eastern coast and could dangerously prompt the sort of socio-political unrest that Beijing wants to avoid. However, if a reliable overland route were to be pioneered in linking east China with the Indian Ocean and detouring around the Strait of Malacca bottleneck, then any future crisis of this nature could be largely averted. CPEC satisfies this pressing geostrategic need by giving China dependable and safe access to the Indian Ocean, from where it can then trade more freely and uninterruptedly with the Mideast, East Africa, and EU. As for the other chokepoints of the Strait of Hormuz, Bab el Mandeb, and the Suez Canals, China's "win-win" diplomacy with the relevant regional stakeholders of Saudi Arabia and Iran, Djibouti, and Egypt, respectively, gives them a self-interested reason to ensure freedom of navigability for China's ships.

The key objective that China needs to attain, therefore, is to reach the Indian Ocean, since everything else afterwards would be comparatively less difficult to deal with. Access to this body of water is also crucial for guaranteeing China's robust economic engagement with East Africa, which is expected to become one of the defining trade partnerships of the future. It is to keep in mind that for as far-reaching and impressive as China's trans-Eurasian Silk Road projects in Russia, Central Asia, and the Mideast are in trying to link East Asia with Western Europe, it is going to take many years to construct these desired corridors, and there are also so many Hybrid War vulnerabilities inherent with these routes that some of them will probably be successfully disrupted, controlled, or influenced by the US. This in turn reinforces the fact that the vast majority of the international trade on which China so desperately depends for ensuring its future socio-political stability will be conducted via the global waterways in one way or another for the next foreseeable decade or two at least.

What CPEC does is give China a fighting chance to maintain its economic growth without fear of having it held hostage through the US' manipulations in the South China Sea or the Strait of Malacca. CPEC guarantees China's strategic freedom and flexibility in the face of the US' naval threats and nullifies all the trouble that it is causing along its southern maritime borderlands. The project helps China wean itself away from its existing dependency on South China Sea-traversing trade by giving it more secure options via the overland portion of CPEC. Importantly, CPEC also connects with the maritime routes of OBOR, which thus, makes it doubly pivotal for China in serving as its mainland-maritime interface for conducting EU, Mideast, and

East African trade. Because of the premier geostrategic importance of the Indian Ocean and CPEC in China's grand strategic calculus, and evaluating the shifting concentration of global power from West to East, it is fair to say that the future is not just an Asian one or a Pacific one, but an Indo-Pacific Century, which Pakistan is literally located right in the middle of.

Approached from the US' perspective, Washington has every reason that anyone could think of to destabilize Pakistan through identify-driven Hybrid War because this would allow it to disrupt, control, or influence CPEC and henceforth indirectly acquire a strategic advantage over China's economy. It would also allow the US to guide events all throughout the Indo-Pacific Century after having obtained control over the last multipolar and independent state in South Asia, whether through Regime Tweaking, Regime Change, or a Regime Reboot. Pakistan is the US' top target for Hybrid War because of its participation in CPEC and location at the geographic center of the Indo-Pacific Century, both of which give it globally relevant significance in serving as the multipolar breakout point for China in Eurasia. The New Cold War competition between the US and China is being fought all across the world in various ways, especially in Africa for example, but nowhere is it more important than in Pakistan for the reasons that has been previously discussed and the US' method of fighting this proxy conflict is through Hybrid War.

External actors seek to provoke identity conflicts in states that occupy important transit routes along the New Silk Road, and they do this through a strategic interplay of NGOs and information outlets. The most cost-effective way to presently wage a war is not to do so directly, but to indirectly provoke what appears to be a "civil war" in the targeted state. This is achieved by using the said NGOs and information outlets to spark identity conflict, taking advantage of historical, ethnic, religious, socio-economic, and geographic differences in bringing this about. Usually, this takes the form of a Color Revolution progressively phasing into an Unconventional War, but other times the process might be the reverse, with a prolonged Unconventional War of attrition in the countryside leading to a Color Revolution in the urban centres.

Either way, as the state becomes embroiled in various degrees of internecine warfare, the external organizers assemble a Lead from Behind coalition to sustain the destabilization by feeding their proxy fighters weapons and other sorts of required assistance to prolong the conflict. During this time, the hostile actors hope that the targeted state will resort to their desired Regime Tweaking, or political concessions, as a trade-off for lessening the intensity of the Hybrid War. In practical terms, this could result in allowing the US and its allies to control or influence the New Silk Road projects, in this case, CPEC, in one way or another. Should Regime

Tweaking not be possible due to the government's unflinching resistance to Hybrid War blackmail, then Regime Change becomes the next option, just like it was pursued against President Assad and former President Yanukovich. If that fails, as it stands to do in Syria, then a Regime Reboot is the last recourse for the Hybrid War organizers, whereby, they seek to turn the formerly unified country into a checkerboard of quasi-independent identity-based statelets as part of their divide-and-rule strategy. All of this is disturbingly very applicable to Pakistan, which is being targeted, because it is the Zipper of Eurasia, and therefore, Convergence of Civilizations, crucially located in the geographic center of the Indo-Pacific Century and of irreplaceable strategic importance for China's national security.

Beginning with the first point, it is safe to assume that there are certain NGOs and information outlets in Pakistan – just like in any country – which wittingly or inadvertently contribute to national confusion and subsequently raise the risk of political conflict, whether or not they are doing this on behalf of an external patron or on their own self-interested initiative, no matter what their intentions may be. This is a very sensitive issue in any country, because it touches on the very essence of civil society and democracy, these sorts of threats do exist and they have proven their lethal efficacy all across the world in numerous instances, especially during the theater-wide “Arab Spring” Color Revolutions and the outbreak of urban terrorism popularly known as “EuroMaidan”. The events in Syria and Ukraine are classic examples of Hybrid War, and they owe their organizational genesis to hostile NGOs and information outlets.

Pakistan is rife with historical, ethnic, religious, socio-economic, and geographic differences, which could be manipulated in order to engineer violence and set a Hybrid War scenario in motion. The awareness of how certain threads of national fabric can be used against Pakistan by outsiders, including through the indirect manipulation of otherwise well-intentioned and unwitting actors by NGOs and information outlets is very important.

The first and foremost issue of Pakistan's origin story, which is controversial to some because it is seen as religiously exclusionary. In select cases, individuals might associate more with Islam than with Pakistan, which is, of course, a personal choice, but might make them vulnerable to external manipulation by foreign countries or non-state actors such as radical clerics. There is also the fact that some territorial issues came up right around the time of Pakistan's independence, with Kashmir understandably being the most important of them. Kashmiris and those living in what is nowadays Gilgit-Baltistan are very loyal to and thankful for Pakistan, but that does not mean that India and others would not stop trying to get some of the more extreme nationalist elements of the latter to embrace their separate identity

and militantly resist the central state. This narrative is somewhat along the lines of what the terrorists in FATA relied on in emphasizing the anti-state concept of a transnational or Afghan-expansionist “Pashtunistan” on the supposed grounds that the Durand Line is an artificial international boundary. There is also the case being advanced by the most extreme Baloch nationalists, which argue that they did not want to be part of Pakistan and that their inclusion in the state was the result of force and coercion. If, these two narratives of radical Pashtun and Baloch narratives are paired together through their commonality in refusing to recognize the Durand Line and their subsequent inclusion in Pakistan, a conclusion can be drawn that both of the frontier populations could be exploited by outside forces based in Afghanistan, which might one day intend to change Pakistan’s borders so as to promote an artificial concept of “Greater Afghanistan”, whether de-jure internationally, which is unlikely or de-facto through some sort of “Identity Federalism” following a forthcoming conflict. These ideas are real and can be weaponized to use against Pakistan, which is why it is absolutely essential to understand them in order to devise the best strategies for counteracting these threats. One of them can be by deconstructing Pakistan’s inclusive national identity into exclusive sub-national parts by drawing attention to Punjab and Sindh, both of which – just like most of the country – can be further subdivided into different cities, clans, and tribes, which could in turn be mobilized around different political or NGO forces, attracted or guided to them by manipulative identity-centric information outlets.

On the topic of Punjab and Sindh, their prosperity relative to the rest of the country could make the peripheral populations vulnerable to falling for the demagogic narrative of regionalism, which is manifested nowadays by the claim that Punjab will be the only part of the country to benefit from CPEC and that this is part of some corrupt conspiracy by the Punjabi political elite. From the reverse angle, and to be a bit provocative here, people in Punjab and Sindh might become for lack of a better description, “regionally arrogant”, be it through their official policies or individual attitudes, and unintentionally further divisive narratives, which only fuel the fire of identity conflict and set the stage for Hybrid War sentiments. It should be recognized that the seeds of identity conflict are planted within one’s mind and manifest themselves as ideas before transforming into action with time.

In a sense, any identity conflict-prone individual – which includes every single human being on this earth – can be compared to a potential “sleeper cell”, to use conventional terrorist terminology, because just like people who believe in an extreme and violent interpretation of religion, those which hold the same views in accordance with other identity variables – be it history, ethnicity, socio-economic issues, or geographic affiliation – do not always exhibit visible signs of their radical beliefs until the run-up to acting on them, which could take a long time or be

triggered within a short notice depending on the stimuli involved. The catalyst for action could be something as drawn-out as a prolonged political crisis or as sudden as an on-the-street provocation, but either way, it aims to compel the individual to act on their ideas in a certain way, one which promotes the objectives of the Hybrid War organizers even if the participants are largely unaware of this.

Approached from the reverse perspective, people naturally have all sorts of benign and passive ideas – whether political or otherwise – and might be moved all of a sudden by an unexpected stimulus to act on them by protesting, which is perfectly alright so long as it is legally sanctioned and does not descend into rioting. Color Revolutions, which are oftentimes but not always the first stage of Hybrid War, rely on crowd control techniques and strategic provocations in order to accrue critical mass and become a real threat to the existing power structure. Sometimes, Unconventional Wars in the periphery can eventually create enough instability in the interior that they prompt Color Revolution unrest after the fact. In both cases, stereotypical terrorist attacks like suicide bombings are meant to accelerate the phased progression to Hybrid War.

To apply all of this to the Pakistani context, each of the many identity conflict variables, described earlier can inspire ideas of exclusive separateness within the minds of the country's citizens at the expense of their inclusive patriotism. Many people might associate themselves more strongly with their historical, ethnic, religious, socio-economic, and/or geographic identities than their national one as Pakistanis, though it is almost impossible to discover that this is the fact until the individuals in question begin to politically or militantly act in response to these exclusive identity motivations. There is a big difference between inclusive sub-national patriotism, such as, being a proud Baloch, Pashtun, or Punjabi member of Pakistani society and exclusive sub-nationalism, such as, rejecting the common Pakistani identity, which binds the country's diverse population together. The first one greatly enriches society and makes the state stronger, while the second one weakens the state by advancing separatist inclinations or provoking conflict with other identity groups.

There might be certain patterns that can be discovered between an individual's behavior and intentions prior to joining in protests or militant groups that is why sociologists and cultural anthropologists are so important in today's world, especially from the perspective of Hybrid War. Professionals in these fields and other related ones contribute to a deeper understanding of the connection between identity and political or militant activity, and their valuable findings can help the state craft effective informational countermeasures in preemptively avoiding some of the Hybrid War scenarios through the fostering of a more inclusive sense of national

identity or patriotism. On the other hand, however, a keen sense of how and why various groups join protests and militant organizations can also be taken advantage of and instrumentalized by ill-intentioned forces in order to encourage these very same scenarios.

What Hybrid War basically comes down to is the state's defensive efforts to cultivate and develop an ever-growing sense of inclusive patriotism, while its opponents – whether internal or external – strive to do the opposite by inventing enticing narratives, which encourage identity separateness and offensive physical action against the state, be it political or military. There is a difference between legitimate and legal protests, and those which are prompted under manufactured pretexts and might even be illegal. In both cases, many of the participants might not have any hostile intentions against the state and are unaware of how their participation in either event could be exploited by a well-organized core of individuals hell-bent on destabilizing the country. The same goes for NGOs and information outlets, including those linked to abroad. Nobody can immediately judge someone, something, or some event right away until by getting more information about them and their intentions, which is why it is so important for the state to do its job in collecting the necessary information about them, which can help the authorities arrive at the proper determinations.

In doing so, very sensitive domestic issues must be taken into consideration, which somehow affect or are affecting every citizen regardless of the country that they live in. People must not ever be afraid of voicing their opinion, and a robust civil society demands that they be able to offer creative solutions and engage in active discourse without fear of being threatened or overstepping the line, but having said that, there are civilizational standards and a level of cultural decency, which have to be followed. In Pakistan, people cannot commit blasphemy, while in Russia, they cannot promote Nazism. Each of these two prohibitions might contradict the freedom of speech principles enshrined in the theoretical conception of democracy, but the reality is that there is no such thing as a “perfect democracy”, and that its execution in practice is always somewhat different than how it is idealistically portrayed. Even the US and Western Europe have formal or unofficial limits on what people can say, with the latter being termed “political correctness” and often times being abused nowadays.

How all of this relates to Hybrid War is that there is a distinction between harmless statements issued to advance certain political or identity causes within the context of a given state's existing system and power structures, and harmful ones, which are designed to subvert the system and eventually produce the results of Regime Tweaking, Regime Change, and Regime Reboot. Neither of these are

necessarily bad, if advanced peacefully and through constitutionally legitimate processes, but are national security dangers, if promoted by outside forces and through illegal and violent means.

A legal anti-corruption or other sort of protest, which demands that a politician – whether national, regional, or local – enact concessions (Regime Tweaking), resign (Regime Change), and/or amend the law (Regime Reboot) is not in and of itself anything out of the ordinary in a democracy, but it could become a troubling sign of Hybrid War under several circumstances. The first is that outside forces, somehow, engineered the protest trigger event through selective leaking or street provocations in order to produce the expected and desired action to advance their Regime Tweaking, Change, and/or Reboot objectives.

Another factor to be wary of is the hijacking of the protest movement – even if it began on peaceful, legitimate, and legal grounds – through the tactics of crowd control psychology and premeditated provocations, which aim to transform it into an anti-state Hybrid War instrument, is designed to fulfil broader geostrategic goals, such as, disrupting, controlling, or influencing the multipolar transnational connective infrastructure projects or New Silk Roads, which pass through the targeted transit state. Hybrid War is not only conducted on the national level, but also on the regional and local ones too, and its transnational manifestation through the theater-wide “Arab Spring” Color Revolutions. All strata of society far and wide are vulnerable to externally provoked identity conflicts and the manipulation of legitimate protest movements into anti-state insurgencies, but not all protests lead to Color Revolutions, and not all Color Revolutions lead to Unconventional Wars. Overreacting to what could have otherwise been an ordinary protest movement or a Color Revolution probing attempt might inadvertently catalyse the very same Hybrid War scenario that the state hoped to avoid in the first place. The trick, then, is in how the state responds to provocations, be they violent attack against the police or peacefully breaking administrative laws against holding unsanctioned rallies, since it is these events, which escalate the situation by prompting the authorities to physically engage with the protesters.

It is at this point, where perception management techniques come into play, when hostile forces deliberately mischaracterize their ‘reporting’ and video footage of the incident as an “unprovoked and brutal attack by the dictatorship’s troops against unarmed and peaceful civilians”, the artificial narrative of which could set into motion the larger Hybrid War chain of events in relation to the pressure that other countries can then put on the victimized state. There is no one-size-fits-all approach for dealing with these situations and each one needs to be assessed and individually dealt with on a case-by-case basis every time. This is because every

encounter between authorities and protesters is unique, whether in Pakistan or elsewhere in the world.

What might work in dispersing riotous Color Revolution protesters in Islamabad might not be the same approach that should be relied upon for calming tribals whipped up into an angry frenzy by demagogues, just as neither of these techniques might have been appropriate for handling the early stages of the “Arab Spring” or “EuroMaidan”. By the same token, one Color Revolution disturbance in Islamabad might need to be dealt with differently than its earlier iterations owing to changed situational circumstances, which is why it is impossible to devise a strict code of conduct for responding to these incidents. The only thing that can be offered then are basic guidelines in advising the state about the general parameters of what it should and should not do, though, understanding that the actual circumstances might require some flexibility in devising the most optimal approach to any given provocation.

As for those guidelines, they aim to make it easier for the state to discern the difference between a legitimate people’s movement and a Hybrid War setup, a crucial determination, which then helps the authorities decide how to respond to the situation. This is very important that the state does not over react to legitimate and legal people’s movements by seeing foreign conspiracies everywhere, since this could counterproductively lead to the exact same Hybrid War scenarios that they so desperately want to avoid.

The first stage of Hybrid Wars usually involves NGOs and informational outlets, the most effective of which are foreign-funded and somehow linked to abroad. They might not necessarily have a known physical presence in the country, because it is possible for them to conduct some of their organizational operations via cyberspace or clandestinely, and in those cases, the appropriate security professionals will have to decide whether to block those pages off the internet or conduct raids in busting them, respectively. They might be difficult to detect and defeat, however, since the popularity of social media platforms, such as, Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube make it likely that the authorities will always be one step behind the Hybrid War perpetrators unless they outright ban these services, which is not wise to do on a permanent basis and is best employed for short periods during times of crisis or imminent threats, if at all, that is. However, what can be more effectively dealt with are foreign-funded NGOs within the host country, all countries could learn a lot from Russia’s recent legislation a few years ago, which mandated that this class of supposedly non-governmental organizations publicly register their status as foreign agents. What this means in practice is that all of their publications must carry some notice that they are legally designated as a foreign agent, which can

help to deter naïve and well-intentioned individuals from getting mis-led into following their Hybrid War schemes. Although harshly criticized by the West, this method actually does not harm the effectiveness of any NGOs, which do not intend to organize or provoke physical rallies. Average citizens usually do not care, if the animal rights or environmental organization that they are donating to is sponsored by a foreign entity, but they will definitely have second thoughts about accepting the political advice put forth by a foreign-funded entity, especially if it is trying to convince them to protest against their own government.

Not much can be done in countering foreign media outlets, which desire to stir up trouble within the targeted state. Of course, the simplest and most immediate way to deal with them is to ban the channels or websites, which are making problems or spreading fake news, but nowadays many citizens across the world think that censorship implies that the government is hiding something and that the censored outlet is speaking a forbidden truth, even if they are not. While, it is totally reasonable to ban fringe extremist websites, which call for violence and terrorism, it might be questionable to people if a major international broadcaster is taken off the air or online. Plus, people can use alternative workarounds to access that information, if they really want to. There is another way to avoid such condition is that patriotic civil society organizations, whether financially independent or financed by the state, engage in detailed fact-checking of everything that the media outlet in question talks about. If certain coverage is revealed to have been biased, misleading, or fake news, then the organization can debunk it and have its findings broadcast across national media outlets, alternative blogs, and social media. This is a lot more effective of a way to counter false narratives than to simply censor them, sometimes very dangerous and outright false ones need to be strictly removed from the public discourse owing to the latent or imminent threats that they pose to national security. Apart from those, however, the big-name outlets that are most likely to disseminate misleading, provocative, or false information inside of Pakistan should ideally be responded to with civil society fact-checkers.

The next component of Hybrid War, which needs proactive measures to resist is the threat of identity conflict between the states' various groupings. It is impossible to craft a cookie-cutter strategy for dealing with this owing to the diverse array of demographics living within a given state, so it is suggested that the authorities work with competent sociological, cultural, and other experts in identifying the most likely situational triggers and infowar narratives, which could prompt these groups to engage in political or military activity against the state. Armed with this knowledge, the authorities can then work on taking the necessary steps to preempt the situational triggers, which could lead to this outcome, as well as immediately dealing with them right when they first recognize the signs of this

happening. They can also work on devising appropriate counter-narratives, which emphasize inclusive sub-state patriotism and diminish the appeal of its exclusive separatist or conflict-prone nationalist counterpart.

Along the same vein, what every state can do is invest in its internal soft power capabilities to promote an inclusive patriotism, which seeks to unify all identity groups within its territory for the sake of the common national good. Methods for achieving this could range from patriotic education in schools and extracurricular youth organizations, to public rallies and the media's positive reinforcement of the national narrative. Correspondingly, patriotism must not ever get out of control and develop into nationalism, which is a fine line to balance but one which must be paid attention to at all times.

According to Russian scholar Dmitry Likhachev, "Nationalism is hatred of other peoples, while patriotism is love for your motherland." In the Pakistani context, nationalism can take two forms – both that of the nation itself and the inclusive Pakistani identity, or the many sub-national identities, which inhabit this country, such as Baloch, Pashtun, Punjabi, and Sindhi, to name but a few. Pakistani nationalism could dangerously veer off or be hijacked in the direction of anti-Chinese sentiment, especially if this is paired with a universalist worldview of Islam, which condemns the country's number one international partner for its official atheist practices. The other form of nationalism ends up provoking identity conflict, separatism, and even terrorism at its most extreme manifestations, and both are equally dangerous to Pakistan's national security and fundamentally contradict its core geostrategic interests.

It requires regular upkeep and narrative maintenance, but the state must always reinforce, promote, and grow its inclusive patriotism because this is the most effective structural deterrent against Hybrid War. It would not stop foreigners from trying to destabilize the state, but it provides the most reliable way to reduce the chance that regular citizens could be misled into joining anti-state activities. If people truly feel as though they are equal stakeholders in their country's success, then they are less likely to turn against their government and be enticed by the allure of political and/or militant identity separateness, whether predicated on their history, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, or geographic affiliation. Instead of allowing these variables to be manipulated as tools of exclusion for dividing society along these lines, they need to be brought together in forming the inclusive glue for uniting it, which is the very essence of true patriotism.

Ultimately, Hybrid War comes down to being an ideological battle between the state and its foes for the loyalty of the citizenry. The government is always on the defensive and must continuously deliver results to its stakeholders through

development, jobs, justice, and security, all of which reaffirm the citizenry's belief in inclusive patriotism. On the other hand, anti-state forces are always on the offensive and try to convince the people that the authorities are not fulfilling their promise to deliver on what is expected of them, instead suggesting that some members of the citizenry would do better, if they embraced the perceived attractiveness of counter-narratives, such as, identity exclusivism and took concrete political or military action to resist what they have been led to believe is an ineffective and/or illegitimate government.

It is natural that internal political factions within a democracy engage in all of this rhetoric with the exception of militant and anti-state slogans, but the moment that they begin hinting at any sort of illegal activity is when they have clearly crossed the line and start constituting a security threat. It may not be a Hybrid War one, though. the deliberate encouragement of illegal behaviour could easily lead to the sort of state-protester engagements, which are vulnerable to exploitation by even more hostile and nefarious actors. The key variable in deciding, if an incident is related to Hybrid War, however, is to identify whether any foreign trace can be discovered. This could manifest itself through financing, training, or material assistance, for example, but these might not be immediately apparent and could take time to prove in the middle of a sudden crisis. Instead, if the state is pressed to urgently act under time-sensitive circumstances, then it would do well to quickly consider whether the given provocation has any connection to larger geostrategic designs.

Herein lies the connection to the broader global concepts, which relate to the Law of Hybrid War by referring to the hostile force's desire to disrupt, control, or influence multipolar transnational connective infrastructure projects, or in other words, OBOR and its New Silk Road branches including CPEC. To continue with the Pakistani context, It is very obvious that CPEC traverses through Gilgit-Baltistan and terminates at the Gwadar port in Balochistan, so it can be strongly inferred that disturbances in these two regions run the chance of destabilizing CPEC and, thus, accomplishing the geostrategic goals of country's rivals. Not every protest or civil society action in these parts of Pakistan are part of a Hybrid War plot, and not every person participating in peaceful or even irresponsible movements are doing so under the direct and witting orders of foreign parties, with the exception being armed terrorist groups, of course. It is possible that regular people are being manipulated by outside actors without their knowledge or that their initially legitimate protest movement was hijacked and turned into something which it was never intended to become.

This is why the state must exercise caution in dealing with events in these two parts of the country, because an overreaction could inadvertently provoke the same sort of Hybrid War scenario, which Pakistan is trying so hard to avoid. The worst thing that can happen is if people in these two provinces become convinced that they no longer have a stake in supporting inclusive patriotism and instead turn towards exclusive nationalism. It is assumed that foreign NGO and informational actors are trying each and every day to push the people of Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan in this direction, but the most powerful force, which could contribute to this process, is ironically the state itself if it overreacts to disturbances enough times and unintentionally cultivates the perception among these communities that it is against them and their interests. Actions speak louder than words, and all that it takes are several high-profile mishaps to enact self-inflicted wounds to the principles of Pakistani patriotism and spike the likelihood that these groups will embrace exclusive nationalism and the direct foreign support, which always accompanies it.

There is nothing inherently wrong with political concessions, leadership changes, or legal and constitutional reforms, especially when they concern local or regional issues, but only so long as they are carried out in accordance with the law and without any element of foreign interference. The moment that foreign traces are connected to any of these moves or the rising pressure to enact them is the second that the state knows that a Hybrid War plot is being executed. This compromises the original civil society movement no matter how legitimate its initial objectives or internal composition may have been, though, it might unfortunately end up discrediting what could have otherwise been some reasonable and decent proposals. In this case, average citizens, who support these initiatives might lose hope that they could ever legally advance these goals, which might consequently diminish the luster of inclusive patriotism. It is both impossible and irresponsible to speculate on the details of this scenario in the Pakistani or any other context, but this eventuality could partially be avoided, if states have efficient governing structures, feedback loops, and accountability to their citizens. In a sense, what is needed to prevent legitimate calls for political concessions, leadership changes, and constitutional reform from being exploited by Hybrid War saboteurs is to have a well-oiled democracy, something which takes time to build and is never fully accomplished no matter which country it is or how long they have been pursuing this goal. No country is perfect, not Pakistan, Russia, China, the US, or Germany, but each of them aspires to be as efficient as they can in terms of their internal structures so as to prevent outside forces from manipulating their democratic processes for Hybrid War ends.

A trusted and well-functioning partnership between civil society and the government within a flourishing democracy, which regularly promotes inclusive patriotism is the most effective means for defending against Hybrid Warfare, which

is externally provoked identity conflicts, which exploit historical, ethnic, religious, socio-economic, and geographic differences within geostrategic transit states through the phased transition from Color Revolutions to Unconventional Wars in order to disrupt, control, or influence multipolar transnational connective infrastructure projects by means of Regime Tweaking, Regime Change, and/or Regime Reboot. Pakistan is the main target for Hybrid War right now because of how CPEC endows it with an irreplaceable geostrategic position in being the Zipper of Eurasia, the Convergence of Civilizations, and the center of the Indo-Pacific Century, all of which directly impact on China's grand strategic vision and give the multipolar world a powerful advantage in the context of the New Cold War.

Hybrid Wars are not just preemptively defended against through democratic institutions and inclusive patriotism, but also through advance knowledge about how they function and what they entail, so the more people who are aware of this, the less potential recruits that the foreign organizers have for potentially luring into their scheme. Furthermore, if the citizenry is educated about Hybrid War, then they can help serve as the state's eyes and ears in its most remote regions or crowded neighbourhoods, thereby improving Pakistan's efficiency in spotting and proactively countering any signs that a Hybrid War is being cooked in the country. Identity conflict does not work, if the people are united, and this includes not only Pakistanis in general, but also the sub-national identity groups, which are most directly targeted by this stratagem. If all forces of society are aware of what Hybrid War is and how it functions, then they are much more likely to come together in opposing it when the crucial time arrives to do so.