



HYBRID WARFARE, STATE RESPONSIBILITY, AND INTERSTATE CONFLICT IN SOUTH ASIA: EVIDENCE FROM INDIA–PAKISTAN RELATIONS

Dr. Abida Kausar ¹, Muhammad Iqbal ²

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Affiliations:

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of History, Ghazi University, Dera Ghazi Khan, Punjab, Pakistan
Email: achuadary@gudgk.edu.pk

² Ph.D. Scholar, Department of History, Ghazi University, Dera Ghazi Khan, Punjab, Pakistan
Email: jawadiqbal1471@gmail.com

Corresponding Author's Email:

¹ achuadary@gudgk.edu.pk

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Abstract

The contemporary security environment in South Asia is increasingly shaped by non-conventional forms of conflict, including hybrid warfare, proxy engagement, and information operations. While existing scholarship on terrorism and regional instability has predominantly focused on non-state actors, comparatively limited attention has been paid to the role of states as indirect sponsors of violence and destabilisation. This article examines the dynamics of state sponsorship and hybrid warfare in South Asia through the lens of India–Pakistan relations, with particular reference to the contested region of Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan's internal security challenges. Drawing on a qualitative research design, the study employs document analysis, policy review, and triangulated secondary sources, including international reports, legal documents, and media investigations, to analyse patterns of alleged proxy conflict, information warfare, and coercive state practices. The article situates these dynamics within realist and state-sponsorship frameworks to assess how indirect strategies are employed to pursue strategic objectives while maintaining plausible deniability. Rather than treating official claims as established facts, the study analyses competing narratives, evidentiary patterns, and international responses to evaluate their implications for regional stability and international norms. The findings suggest that hybrid warfare has become a central feature of interstate rivalry in South Asia, complicating conflict management, legal accountability, and peace-building efforts. By shifting the analytical focus from non-state militancy to state behaviour, this study contributes to broader debates on hybrid conflict, state responsibility, and security governance in nuclearised regions.

Keywords: Hybrid Warfare, State Sponsorship, South Asia, India–Pakistan Relations, Kashmir, Interstate Conflict

1. Introduction

The character of conflict in the twenty-first century had undergone a profound transformation. Traditional forms of interstate warfare have increasingly been supplemented, and in some cases replaced, by indirect strategies that combine military, political, economic, and informational instruments of power. This evolving landscape often conceptualized as *hybrid warfare* blurs the distinction between war and peace, state and non-state actors, and domestic and external security domains. Within this context, the role of states in sponsoring, facilitating, or tacitly enabling violence beyond their borders has emerged as a critical yet underexplored dimension of contemporary international relations.

South Asia represents one of the most consequential theatres for examining these dynamics. As a region characterized by enduring rivalries, unresolved territorial disputes, and nuclear-armed adversaries, South Asia offers a compelling case for analysing how indirect conflict strategies are deployed to manage



escalation while pursuing strategic objectives. Among these rivalries, relations between India and Pakistan stand out for their persistence, volatility, and multidimensional nature. Since their partition in 1947, the two states have engaged in multiple wars, sustained military standoffs, and ongoing diplomatic contestation, with the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir remaining central to their antagonistic relationship.

Existing scholarship on conflict and terrorism in South Asia has largely concentrated on non-state militancy, insurgency, and religious extremism. While this literature has generated important insights, it has often marginalized the role of states as active participants in shaping proxy conflicts, information operations, and political destabilization. This analytical emphasis risks obscuring the ways in which state behavior—operating through indirect, covert, or deniable means—contributes to prolonged insecurity and cyclical escalation. In recent years, allegations of cross-border sponsorship, disinformation campaigns, cyber operations, and coercive economic and legal measures have further complicated the India–Pakistan security environment, highlighting the need for a broader analytical framework.

This article addresses this gap by examining state sponsorship and hybrid warfare as central features of interstate conflict in South Asia, using India–Pakistan relations as a focal case. Rather than advancing a normative or accusatory position, the study adopts an analytical approach that evaluates patterns of claims, counterclaims, and documented practices within their historical, strategic, and legal contexts. It interrogates how indirect methods, ranging from proxy engagement and narrative construction to legal exceptionalism and economic pressure, function as tools of statecraft in a region where direct military confrontation carries prohibitive risks.

The study is guided by two interrelated theoretical perspectives. First, realist and neorealist approaches to international relations provide a framework for understanding how states operating in an anarchic system employ indirect strategies to enhance security and influence while avoiding overt conflict. Second, theories of state sponsorship of terrorism and proxy warfare illuminate the mechanisms through which states leverage non-state actors and informational instruments to pursue strategic goals under conditions of plausible deniability. Together, these frameworks allow for a nuanced assessment of hybrid warfare as an extension of traditional power politics rather than a departure from it.

Methodologically, the article employs a qualitative research design based on document and discourse analysis. Primary materials include official statements, policy documents, international legal texts, and investigative reports, complemented by academic literature and credible media sources. Recognizing the politicized nature of security narratives in South Asia, the study treats official dossiers and claims as objects of analysis rather than definitive evidence, triangulating them with independent sources to enhance analytical rigor. This approach enables an examination of how competing narratives are constructed, disseminated, and received within international forums.

By foregrounding state behaviour in the analysis of hybrid conflict, this article makes three contributions to the literature. First, it broadens the analytical scope of South Asian security studies by shifting attention from non-state militancy to the indirect strategies employed by states. Second, it contributes to theoretical debates on hybrid warfare and state responsibility by illustrating how these concepts operate in a nuclearized regional context. Third, it offers policy-relevant insights into the challenges of conflict management, legal accountability, and peacebuilding in environments where warfare is increasingly waged below the threshold of conventional armed conflict.

Research Objectives

Based on the reviewed literature and contextual framework, the study aims to:

- a) Critically analyse the historical and contemporary manifestations of Indian state-sponsored terrorism in Pakistan and the conflict-prone region of Jammu and Kashmir.
- b) Examine the ideological motivations, strategic imperatives, and institutional mechanisms underpinning India's support for cross-border militant activities and ongoing state sponsored terrorism in Kashmir
- c) Assess the responses and policy measures of regional actors and international organizations toward mitigating conflict, promoting peace, and fostering diplomatic engagement in South Asia.



Significance of the study

This study is crucial for comprehending the evolving dynamics of state-sponsored terrorism and hybrid warfare in South Asia, particularly in relation to India's intricate involvement in Pakistan's internal security matters. This study redirects the analytical focus from non-state actors and transnational extremist networks to examine state complicity, strategic subversion, and psychological warfare, thus enhancing the understanding of regional instability. The study holds significant relevance at this time as conventional warfare is increasingly being supplanted by alternative methods of influence, including cyber-attacks, dissemination of disinformation, imposition of economic constraints, and covert support for BLA miscreants. This research critically examines India's purported backing of separatist movements, its media and information strategies, and the diplomatic inaction of international actors. It questions the traditional frameworks of international law, sovereignty, and counterterrorism, which frequently overlook the influence of dominant regional powers.

The study incorporates insights from various fields, including defense studies, international relations, and media warfare, presenting a comprehensive analytical model that addresses the intricacies of modern interstate conflicts. Additionally, it offers a comprehensive overview of Pakistan's strategic responses, encompassing diplomatic engagements, counterterrorism operations, and narrative development. This dual focus provides a comprehensive perspective on how contemporary states manage internal resilience while addressing external threats in a multipolar global landscape. Furthermore, by placing the Pakistani experience within both regional and global contexts, the study addresses a significant gap in South Asian security literature. It highlights Pakistan's role not just as a location of conflict but as a strategic player actively involved in countering hybrid threats, challenging global disinformation frameworks, and managing the imbalances of international diplomacy. The research contributes to academic discussions and holds significance for state institutions, multilateral organizations, and security practitioners focused on the changing dynamics of conflict in the 21st century.

Delimitations of the study

While the focus is on Indian activities targeting Pakistan, the study also contextualizes these within broader South Asian security dynamics and global power politics. However, due to the sensitive and often classified nature of intelligence operations, the study is constrained by the availability of publicly verifiable data. Where gaps exist, triangulation and cross-verification have been used to maintain academic rigor and objectivity.

2. Literature Review

Hybrid Warfare and State Sponsorship in South Asia

The concept of hybrid warfare has gained increasing prominence in security studies as scholars seek to explain contemporary forms of conflict that transcend conventional military engagement. Hybrid warfare broadly refers to the coordinated use of military and non-military instruments including proxy actors, information operations, cyber tools, economic pressure, and legal mechanisms to achieve strategic objectives while avoiding direct interstate war (Hoffman, 2007; Barkawi, 2018). Rather than representing a novel phenomenon, recent scholarship suggests that hybrid warfare reflects the adaptation of long-standing power-political practices to technologically dense and politically constrained environments.

A parallel body of literature examines the role of states in sponsoring or facilitating violence indirectly. Early studies on state-sponsored terrorism focused on ideological motivations and Cold War alignments (Byman, 2005). More recent contributions have emphasized strategic calculation, arguing that states employ proxies to manage escalation risks, externalize costs, and preserve plausible deniability (Gunning, 2017; Salehyan, 2010). This scholarship highlights how sponsorship relationships are fluid, informal, and often embedded within broader diplomatic and informational strategies.

Despite these advances, the literature remains uneven in its regional application. In the South Asian context, research has overwhelmingly concentrated on non-state militancy, insurgency, and religious extremism, particularly in relation to Kashmir and Afghanistan (Fair, 2019; Ganguly, 2001). While this focus has yielded valuable insights, it has also narrowed analytical attention, frequently treating states as reactive entities rather than active architects of indirect conflict. As a result, the strategic use of proxies, narratives,



and non-kinetic coercion by regional powers has received comparatively limited systematic analysis.

Studies that do address state behavior in South Asia often do so indirectly, embedded within discussions of crisis stability, nuclear deterrence, or escalation dynamics (Wirsing, 2020; Yusuf, 2021). These works acknowledge the prevalence of sub-conventional conflict but rarely integrate hybrid warfare and state sponsorship into a unified analytical framework. Moreover, existing research tends to privilege military and diplomatic dimensions, leaving information warfare, legal exceptionalism, and economic instruments under-theorized.

Recent investigations into transnational disinformation campaigns and digital influence operations have begun to challenge this imbalance. Research on information warfare underscores how narrative control and reputational strategies function as critical tools of statecraft, particularly in contested regions such as Kashmir (EU DisinfoLab, 2020; Ahmed, 2021). However, these studies are often treated as isolated cases rather than as components of broader hybrid conflict architecture.

CPEC initiatives have substantially bolstered Pakistan's industrial and human capital capabilities, reinforcing its strategic posture in South Asia. By integrating skill-based education and STEAM-driven innovation, these projects extend beyond economic development, functioning as instruments of state influence with potential geopolitical ramifications. From India's perspective, the strategic and economic consolidation enabled by CPEC may be perceived as a source of regional imbalance, heightening security concerns and contributing to hybrid conflict dynamics. This underscores how large-scale infrastructure and workforce initiatives can serve as mechanisms of state power, framing interstate interactions within the broader context of responsibility and conflict management (Rafiq-uz-Zaman, 2023; 2024; 2025)

This article builds on and extends these strands of scholarship by integrating theories of hybrid warfare and state sponsorship within the specific empirical context of India–Pakistan relations. It responds to a clear gap in the literature by foregrounding state behaviour and examining how indirect strategies operate across military, informational, legal, and economic domains. In doing so, the study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of interstate rivalry in South Asia and advances broader debates on security governance in nuclearised regions.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in two complementary theoretical perspectives: realist approaches to international relations and theories of state sponsorship of terrorism and proxy warfare. Together, these frameworks provide analytical tools for understanding why and how states employ indirect strategies in high-risk security environments. From a realist perspective, states operate within an anarchic international system characterized by uncertainty and competition. In such an environment, survival and relative power remain primary concerns (Waltz, 1979). For rival states with asymmetric capabilities or constrained escalation options particularly nuclear-armed adversaries direct military confrontation carries prohibitive risks. Indirect strategies, including proxy engagement and hybrid warfare, thus emerge as rational instruments for pursuing strategic objectives while managing escalation (Mearsheimer, 2001).

Neorealist scholars argue that these strategies are not anomalies, but extensions of traditional power politics adapted to contemporary constraints. Hybrid warfare, in this view, reflects the pursuit of influence below the threshold of conventional war, enabling states to contest rivals without triggering full-scale conflict or international intervention. This logic is particularly salient in South Asia, where historical animosity, territorial disputes, and nuclear deterrence coexist.

The second theoretical lens draws on state sponsorship of terrorism and proxy warfare literature. Byman (2005) conceptualizes state sponsorship as a strategic relationship in which states provide varying degrees of support; financial, logistical, ideological, or operational; to non-state actors to advance foreign policy goals. Crucially, this framework emphasizes plausible deniability, allowing sponsors to benefit from proxy actions while minimizing legal and political costs. Subsequent scholarship has expanded this approach by incorporating information operations, cyber activities, and legal manoeuvring as integral components of indirect conflict (Gunning, 2017; Schmid, 2018).

Applied together, these frameworks enable a nuanced analysis of hybrid warfare as a multi-domain strategy embedded within interstate rivalry rather than a deviation from it. They also caution against treating



allegations of sponsorship as self-evident truths. Instead, they encourage an examination of strategic incentives, patterns of behaviour, and narrative construction. This study adopts this analytical posture, using theory not to validate claims but to assess how indirect conflict operates within the India–Pakistan security dyad.

3. Methodology

This article employs a qualitative research design centred on document and discourse analysis. Given the covert and politically contested nature of hybrid warfare and state sponsorship, quantitative measurement is often impractical. A qualitative approach allows for a more nuanced examination of narratives, strategic patterns, and institutional responses across multiple domains.

Data sources are triangulated to enhance analytical rigor and reduce reliance on any single perspective. Primary materials include official policy statements, government dossiers, international legal documents, and reports issued by multilateral organizations and human rights bodies. These are complemented by secondary sources such as peer-reviewed academic literature, investigative journalism, and reputable international media coverage.

Recognizing the politicized nature of security narratives in South Asia, official dossiers and state claims are treated as objects of analysis rather than as definitive evidence. They are examined for their framing, strategic intent, and reception within international forums, and are cross-referenced with independent sources wherever possible. This approach mitigates bias and aligns with best practices in critical security studies.

The analysis proceeds thematically, identifying recurring patterns across three interconnected domains: proxy conflict and alleged state sponsorship, information and narrative warfare, and legal–economic instruments of coercion. These themes are interpreted through the theoretical lenses outlined above to assess how indirect strategies function within a nuclearised interstate rivalry.

The study acknowledges several limitations. Access to classified intelligence is not possible, and publicly available data may be incomplete or contested. Nevertheless, triangulation and cautious interpretation allow for meaningful analytical insights into the dynamics of hybrid warfare without overstepping evidentiary constraints.

4. Data Analysis

a. Proxy Conflict and Alleged State Sponsorship

Indirect conflict through proxy actors has been a persistent feature of India–Pakistan relations, particularly in contexts where direct military engagement carries high escalation risks. Historical and contemporary accounts of proxy involvement in South Asia are deeply contested, shaped by competing national narratives and strategic interests. This section does not seek to adjudicate claims conclusively but rather to analyse patterns, strategic logic, and the role such allegations play within the broader rivalry.

From a historical perspective, Pakistan frequently cites India's support for the Mukti Bahini during the 1971 conflict as an early example of proxy warfare in South Asia. Scholarly accounts acknowledge India's material and logistical backing of Bengali insurgents, situating it within the geopolitical dynamics of the Cold War and regional realignments. This episode is often invoked in Pakistani strategic discourse as evidence that proxy engagement constitutes a recurring, rather than exceptional, feature of India's regional strategy. Conversely, Indian scholarship tends to frame the episode as humanitarian intervention and strategic necessity, underscoring how proxy narratives are shaped by national historiographies.

In the contemporary period, allegations of state sponsorship have centred on Pakistan's internal security challenges, particularly in Baluchistan and urban centres such as Karachi. Pakistani authorities argue that external support to separatist and militant groups reflects a deliberate effort to exploit internal vulnerabilities. High-profile cases, including the arrest of Kulbhushan Jadhav in 2016, have been elevated as emblematic of this claim. India, however, has consistently rejected these allegations, maintaining that such incidents are politically motivated and lack credible evidence.

From an analytical standpoint, the persistence of these claims—regardless of their contested nature highlights the strategic utility of proxy warfare within a nuclearised rivalry. Theories of state sponsorship suggest that indirect engagement allows states to impose costs on adversaries while maintaining plausible deniability and managing escalation risks. In South Asia, where conventional war carries potentially



catastrophic consequences, proxy conflict functions as a means of sustaining pressure below the threshold of overt military confrontation.

Importantly, proxy dynamics are not limited to material support. They intersect with diplomatic signalling, legal manoeuvring, and narrative construction, reinforcing the argument that state sponsorship operates as part of a broader hybrid strategy. Whether substantiated or disputed, allegations of proxy warfare thus play a central role in shaping threat perceptions, policy responses, and international engagement in the India–Pakistan context.

b. Information Warfare and Disinformation Campaigns

Information warfare has emerged as a defining component of contemporary hybrid conflict, complementing physical and proxy-based strategies. In the India–Pakistan rivalry, narrative control and reputational competition have become increasingly salient, particularly in relation to Kashmir and counterterrorism discourse.

A significant contribution to understanding this dimension came from investigations by EU DisinfoLab, which documented a transnational network of media outlets, non-governmental organizations, and online platforms allegedly used to influence international opinion. Rather than treating these findings as definitive proof of state intent, this study analyses them as evidence of how information operations function within modern interstate competition. The scale, longevity, and organizational complexity of the network suggest a high level of coordination, blurring the line between state and non-state actors in the informational domain.

Information warfare in South Asia operates across multiple audiences. Internationally, it seeks to shape discourse within multilateral institutions, policy communities, and media ecosystems. Regionally, it reinforces domestic narratives of victimhood, legitimacy, and moral authority. In this context, Kashmir has become a focal point for competing representations, with both India and Pakistan mobilizing legal arguments, human rights claims, and security narratives to advance their positions.

The strategic significance of information warfare lies in its capacity to produce tangible political effects without physical violence. Narrative dominance can influence diplomatic alignments, constrain mediation efforts, and legitimize coercive policies. At the same time, the diffuse and deniable nature of disinformation complicates attribution and accountability, allowing states to distance themselves from operations conducted through intermediaries.

By situating disinformation campaigns within the broader framework of hybrid warfare, this section underscores how information operations are not peripheral but central to contemporary interstate rivalry. In the India–Pakistan case, they function alongside proxy dynamics and diplomatic strategies, reinforcing conflict persistence while reducing incentives for direct confrontation.

c. Legal, Economic, and Non-Kinetic Dimensions of Hybrid Conflict

Beyond proxies and information warfare, hybrid conflict in South Asia increasingly encompasses legal, economic, and regulatory instruments that exert pressure without resorting to armed force. These non-kinetic dimensions are particularly significant in a region where overt escalation is constrained by nuclear deterrence and international scrutiny.

Legal frameworks have become prominent arenas of contestation, especially in relation to Jammu and Kashmir. The use of domestic security legislation, constitutional changes, and administrative measures has been interpreted by critics as mechanisms of control and deterrence, while proponents frame them as sovereign responses to security challenges. Regardless of normative interpretation, such legal strategies contribute to altering facts on the ground and reshaping the conflict environment, often with long-term implications.

Economic and resource-related instruments represent another layer of indirect coercion. Disputes surrounding water management under the Indus Waters Treaty illustrate how infrastructure development and treaty interpretation can acquire strategic significance. While formal abrogation has not occurred, tensions over dam construction, data sharing, and treaty compliance have heightened perceptions of vulnerability and insecurity. In this sense, water governance functions not merely as a technical issue but as a potential lever of influence within the bilateral relationship.



From a theoretical perspective, these legal and economic measures align with broader understandings of hybrid warfare as a multidimensional strategy. They impose costs, generate uncertainty, and shape adversary behaviour while remaining below the threshold of armed conflict. At the same time, they expose limitations in international legal mechanisms, which often struggle to address gradual, cumulative forms of coercion.

Collectively, these non-kinetic dimensions underscore the complexity of contemporary interstate conflict in South Asia. They reveal how hybrid strategies extend beyond the battlefield, embedding rivalry within legal systems, economic interdependence, and institutional process.

5. Findings & Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that hybrid warfare has evolved into a systematic and institutionalized mode of interstate competition in South Asia, rather than a sporadic or auxiliary strategy. In the context of India–Pakistan relations, indirect conflict mechanisms constitute a deliberate and rational extension of statecraft under conditions of nuclear deterrence.

First, the analysis reveals that proxy dynamics and allegations of state sponsorship operate as strategic instruments irrespective of their empirical conclusiveness. Competing claims regarding support to non-state actor's function, not only as security concerns but also as political tools shaping international perception, legitimizing domestic policy responses, and reinforcing adversarial narrative. This highlights that the *discursive utility* of such allegations is as significant as their operational dimension.

Second, the study underscores the centrality of information warfare in contemporary interstate rivalry. Disinformation networks, narrative framing, and reputational strategies act as force multipliers, extending the impact of sub-conventional conflict. In the India–Pakistan context, these operations contribute to the internationalization of disputes, diplomatic positioning, and the construction of competing legitimacy claims. Conflict is therefore increasingly waged in cognitive and informational domains, rather than exclusively through physical confrontation.

Third, the findings demonstrate that legal and economic instruments are integral to hybrid warfare. Constitutional measures, regulatory frameworks, and treaty-based resource governance function as gradual mechanisms of coercion, enabling states to reshape strategic realities while avoiding overt escalation. These practices expose a significant gap in international legal frameworks, which remain ill-equipped to address cumulative and sub-threshold forms of conflict.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings reinforce realist and neorealist assumptions that states adapt their strategies to structural constraints. Hybrid warfare emerges not as a deviation, but as a contemporary manifestation of power politics under nuclear conditions. Additionally, the study extends theories of state sponsorship by demonstrating that indirect conflict now operates across multiple synchronized domains, military, informational, legal, and economic.

Across the three analytical domains examined, a consistent pattern emerges: indirect conflict enables rival states to impose costs, shape narratives, and pursue strategic objectives while avoiding the escalation risks associated with overt military confrontation. Proxy dynamics, whether historically acknowledged or contemporarily contested, illustrate how allegations of sponsorship function strategically regardless of their ultimate verifiability. In this sense, the persistence of claims and counterclaims becomes analytically significant in itself, shaping threat perceptions, policy responses, and international engagement.

The findings also underscore the growing centrality of information warfare in interstate rivalry. Disinformation campaigns and narrative construction operate as force multipliers, amplifying the effects of other hybrid instruments while complicating attribution and accountability. In the India–Pakistan context, information operations have contributed to the internationalization and polarization of security discourse, particularly regarding Kashmir. This supports broader theoretical arguments that hybrid warfare increasingly privileges cognitive and reputational domains alongside material capabilities.

Legal and economic measures further extend the scope of hybrid conflict. Domestic legal reforms, treaty interpretation, and resource governance most notably in relation to water—demonstrate how ostensibly technical or administrative actions can acquire strategic significance. These practices challenge existing international legal frameworks, which are better equipped to address discrete violations than gradual,



cumulative forms of coercion. The South Asian case thus highlights a broader governance gap in managing sub-threshold conflict.

Taken together, these findings contribute to ongoing debates in security studies in three ways. First, they reinforce calls to re-centre state behaviour in analyses of terrorism and instability, moving beyond an exclusive focus on non-state actors. Second, they extend theories of hybrid warfare by illustrating how multiple indirect instruments are synchronized within a single rivalry. Third, they demonstrate how nuclear deterrence shapes not only military strategy but also the proliferation of sub-conventional conflict. These insights have relevance beyond South Asia, offering comparative value for the study of rivalries in other nuclearised and politically contested regions. Overall, hybrid warfare in South Asia is persistent, multidimensional, and strategically embedded, making it a defining feature of regional security dynamics.

6. Conclusion

This study has examined the role of hybrid warfare and state sponsorship in shaping interstate conflict in South Asia, with particular focus on India–Pakistan relations. The analysis demonstrates that indirect strategies spanning proxy engagement, information warfare, and legal–economic instruments are structurally embedded within the logic of regional rivalry. A key conclusion is that hybrid warfare represents a strategic adaptation to nuclear deterrence, enabling states to pursue competitive objectives while avoiding full-scale military confrontation. Conflict is therefore not diminished but reconfigured into sub-threshold and multidimensional forms. The study makes three principal contributions. First, it re-centres state behaviour in the analysis of South Asian conflict. Second, it advances theoretical debates by positioning hybrid warfare as an extension of realist power politics. Third, it demonstrates the integration of diverse instruments of coercion within a unified strategic framework. From a policy perspective, the findings suggest that existing conflict management approaches are insufficient to address hybrid threats. Addressing these challenges requires greater attention to information warfare, proxy dynamics, and legal–economic coercion, alongside traditional military and diplomatic tools. While the study is constrained by reliance on publicly available and contested data, it provides a foundation for future research. Comparative and empirically grounded studies can further refine understanding of hybrid conflict across regions. In conclusion, hybrid warfare is not a temporary phenomenon but a durable and defining feature of contemporary interstate relations in South Asia, with significant implications for global security governance.

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Contribution of Authors

All the authors participated in the ideation, development, and final approval of the manuscript, making significant contributions to the work reported.

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The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Ethical Approval

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Data Availability

The datasets generated during and analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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