

REVIEW OF

“MODERN PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE: A CASE STUDY OF INDIA”

By Dr Arunkumar Bhatt, Lancer Publishers, 2015, 357 pages, ISBN 978817062133

Reviewed by

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Dr Arunkumar Bhatt's *Modern Psychological Warfare: A Case Study of India* makes a seminal contribution to the study of military strategy and psychological operations. Bhatt grounds his analysis in a profound assertion: "*Wars are born in the human mind.*" This thought-provoking premise serves as the substructure for an in-depth examination of the evolution of psychological warfare, identifying its roots from ancient civilisations to contemporary battlefields. Through meticulous research and critical insights, the book sheds light on the strategic use of psychological tactics in shaping conflicts and influencing adversaries.

The author begins with a comprehensive analysis of psychological warfare (psywar) development as well as its strategic role and operational requirements. Following this segment the author first discusses how psychological warfare evolved to become a systematic military operation from its random battlefield application during the initial use of the term. Modern military doctrines demonstrate complete psywar integration through analytical inspections of how key theorists such as General JFC Fuller, Captain EM Zacharias, and Paul Linebarger, have contributed. Psychological Operations (PsyOps) have gone beyond conventional warfare and play very important roles even during peacetime strategic manoeuvres. By calling attention to the power of language and propaganda framing, the book illustrates how psywar shapes public perception and enemy responses, making it a dominant tool in both military and political arenas.

Chapter 2 effectively examines the core attributes, operational scope, and strategic value of Psychological Warfare (Psywar). It highlights Psywar's multidisciplinary nature, drawing from psychology, military science, and propaganda, while emphasising its ability to influence enemy cognition, attitudes, and behaviours beyond traditional battlefields. The strategic use of perceptual influence over direct military engagement enables Psywar to be an affordable operational approach to obtain military objectives. The comprehensive part displays a major advantage by examining Psywar utilisation in multiple military scenarios including conventional warfare and insurgencies as well as diplomatic engagement. The deceptive strategies implemented during the Vietnam War and Gulf War periods demonstrated successful direction of enemy behaviour towards crucial strategic aims by completely eliminating resistance reactions from combat. Additionally, its integration into modern warfare, particularly Command and

Control Warfare (C2W), underscores its continued relevance. Although the text fails to provide clear outcomes and explanations about Psywar, it nevertheless introduces multiple fundamental Psywar concepts in multiple sections, describing how Psywar works to change public backing and military morale.

Psywar is dealt-with in great detail in Chapters 3 and 4, wherein the authors cover operational practices and the historical growth of this tactic. Chapter 3 conducts a systematic evaluation of Psywar's operational process in addition to its intelligence acquisition and psychological control methods using meticulous planning and collecting intelligence through HUMINT and SIGINT sources. The analysis gains strength through historical examples about Goebbels's propaganda activities which demonstrate cases of actual implementation of these techniques. The succeeding chapter follows a developmental timeline of Psywar from its ancient military and religious origins to its role to geopolitical warfare strategies of today. A review of Psywar's historical background combines ancient Hindu and Judeo-Christian scriptures with the storeys of Genghis Khan and Alexander the Great to demonstrate its enduring significance. More contemporary conflicts such as the American Revolution, WW-II and the Cold War, clearly show how Psywar developed into a systemised and advanced method of control.

The subsequent segment of the book follows Psywar's historical development from ancient, initial deceptive methods toward contemporary organised systems of warfare. In due course of time, geopolitical choices have become essential for warfare, with military strategy and public opinion being influenced by Psywar methods. The book analyses developments of World War I, which transformed psychological warfare from flexible voluntary methods into official government-directed operations. Two main propaganda organisations, including the War Propaganda Bureau (WPB), were developed by Britain while hiring notable writers to create compelling messages. The psychological warfare tactics employed a number of steps, including the dropping of leaflets to weaken or break the morale of enemy combatants, manipulating worldwide news platforms, and messages specially designed to win over politically unaffiliated countries to the British cause. Britain focused its strategies on controlling American opinion through strategic information techniques including the propaganda-based Zimmermann Telegram incident in order to achieve Allied support. Due to Nazi Germany's employment of Goebbels' centralised propaganda to handle media-based public perception control, the use of Psywar developed greater sophistication during World War II. Propaganda messages focused on anti-communism together with racial superiority but the levels of censorship undermined public belief. The Allies countered with radio broadcasts, and films to challenge Nazi narratives and support resistance efforts.

The analysis dispenses details of how technological developments have transformed both the range and coherence of psychological warfare (PsyWar), throughout history. PsyWar has developed from primitive vocal and illustrative strategies to present-day digital disinformation activities, which the book efficaciously examines. The analysis demonstrates how each historical technical breakthrough — starting with printing and continuing through radio and cinema and ending with the internet — steadily widened the power of psychological operations. The chapter is fascinating because of its thorough investigation of historical periods and because it shows how psychological warfare transformed between different communication platforms. The analysis of World War I and II displays how psychological warfare techniques expanded into

organised methods through leaflet distribution along with State-controlled radio broadcasts. The gradation between the Cold War period and the contemporary age of digital warfare provides an essential understanding about disinformation tactics and cyber warfare strategies alongside AI-powered information narratives for modern conflict situations. By integrating theoretical insights from Clausewitz with those from Bernays and McLuhan, the analysis takes shape at a deep level to prove how information control surpasses traditional military force. However, additional discussion about ethical aspects and security measures to defend against contemporary PsyWar threats could have been included as these would have enhanced the chapter's content.

In the latter section of the book the author effectively demonstrates how India has failed to develop a structured psychological warfare (PsyWar) approach despite the proven demonstration of effectiveness of the latter in global conflicts. The British Empire applied psychological warfare extensively in colonial India through regulation of education as well as through its divide-and-rule policy, combined with propaganda techniques against nationalist resistance. The examination of World War-era Psychological Warfare demonstrates the skilful British use of media and recruitment techniques for preserving British colonial power. Indian institutions should preserve archival knowledge of previous experiences because this heritage would prepare the country to execute contemporary psychological warfare operations effectively. The study presents compelling information but requires more details about present methods or future plans related to Indian PsyWar advancement.

Post-Independence India continues to face psychological warfare challenges that stem from multiple factors, including governmental indifference, military neglect, and a marked susceptibility to foreign propaganda. Although PsyWar proved demonstrably important during a number of global conflicts, India maintains no established PsyWar capabilities because it lacks both dedicated military PsyWar units and comprehensive strategic communication protocols. The vast range of media platforms work without coordination to counter hostile messages so India stays vulnerable to false information including social media disinformation. Experience from China, together with that from US and Pakistani operations, shows how vital it is to develop an organised PsyWar methodology. A National PsyWar Division needs to be urgently established, while incorporating PsyWar into military strategy along with media utilisation for strategic influence and implementation of cybersecurity measures to counter foreign disinformation.

The final chapter effectively emphasises the pressing need for India to institutionalise psychological warfare (PsyWar) as a strategic necessity rather than an afterthought. Future wars will unfold both through information domains and actual fields of combat. Consequently, an active PsyWar strategy is essential to defend national security. One of the strongest assertions in the *"Last Strategic Argument"* lays out the strategic position by showing that adversaries presently conduct PsyWar against India and emphasising that a refusal to master this discipline will result in serious strategic setbacks for the nation. The final segment summarises essential points including India's past inattention to PsyWar. The suggested actions comprise operational steps that combine creation of a department of PsyWar, with security policy inclusion and propaganda defence along with digital weaponisation tactics for information warfare. Through this chapter, the author demonstrates how psychological and information warfare methods will determine

future conflicts before advocating for India to create a structured psychological warfare strategic plan.

The author concludes by recommending specific way-ahead approaches. To strengthen India's psychological warfare (PsyWar) strategy, it is crucial to examine successful models from other nations. China's "Three Warfares" doctrine — comprising public opinion warfare, psychological warfare, and legal warfare — has been highly effective in shaping global narratives, intimidating adversaries, and influencing diplomatic outcomes. The United States' Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) have played a decisive role in conflicts such as the Cold War, the Gulf War, and the Global War on Terror, using advanced media strategies, leaflet drops, and digital campaigns to control enemy morale and public perception. Similarly, Russia's information warfare tactics — exemplified by its interference in the 2016 U.S. elections — demonstrate the power of disinformation, cyber propaganda, and deepfake technology in manipulating public opinion.

In the digital age, AI-driven PsyWar has emerged as a formidable tool, with algorithms enabling the large-scale spread of misinformation, bot-generated narratives, and deepfake propaganda. Cybersecurity threats, such as data breaches, targeted influence campaigns, and social engineering attacks, pose significant risks to national security. India's vast digital population makes it highly vulnerable to foreign PsyWar attacks through social media manipulation, fake news, and cyber espionage. Strengthening cybersecurity infrastructure and deploying AI-powered countermeasures are essential to safeguarding India's information ecosystem.

Beyond military and governmental efforts, civilian involvement is crucial in building national resilience against psychological warfare. Media literacy programs, public awareness campaigns, and educational reforms can equip citizens with the skills to critically analyse information, detect misinformation, and resist psychological manipulation. Governments should collaborate with tech companies, educators, and civil society to promote fact-checking initiatives and counter-disinformation efforts. By integrating strategic PsyWar measures with public engagement, India can enhance its ability to counter external threats and maintain information sovereignty in an increasingly contested global landscape.

Viewers must ponder what nations should do to prepare for psychological warfare in a paradigm within which perceptions are stronger than reality. Through its analysis, the book encourages readers to deliberate upon the social impacts of psychological warfare. What standards of ethical conduct and frameworks should countries employ to handle this quickly advancing technology-PsyWar convergence? By provoking such questions, "Psychological Warfare" ensures its lasting significance in security studies and strategic thought.

About the Reviewer

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