OPERATION BUNYANUM MARSOOS:
Restoring Deterrence in Volatile South Asia

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INTRODUCTION

Operation Bunyanum Marsoos marked a significant milestone in Pakistan's contemporary security landscape, emerging as a turning point in the nation's strategic posture. Conducted amidst intensifying regional hostilities, the operation was a demonstration of technological sophistication, coordinated military readiness, and national unity. It served as a calibrated response to external aggression and reaffirmed the country's commitment to safeguarding its sovereignty under the framework of international law.

To reflect upon the operation's strategic, operational, and narrative dimensions, a roundtable discussion was convened by the Sanober Institute with eminent scholars and experts, military officials, security analysts, diplomats, and members of civil society. The discussion featured Dr. Qamar Cheema, Executive Director of the Sanober Institute; Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhary, Former Foreign Secretary and Chairman of the Sanober Institute; Air Chief Marshal Sohail Aman (Retd.),Pakistan Air Force; Mr. Attaullah Tarar, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting; Major General (R) Dr. Raza Mohammad, Former President of Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI); Ambassador Naghmana Hashmi, Former Ambassador to China, European Union, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Ireland; Vice Admiral (Retired) Khan Hasham Bin Saddique HI(M), Former Managing Director, Bahria Foundation; Air Cdre Retd Khalid Banuri, Retired Air Force Officer; Mr. Aamir Masood, Retired Air

Marshal, Sardar Yasir Ilyas, Former President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI); Dr. Syed Kaleem Imam, Law Enforcement and Governance expert; Dr. Iftikhar Firdous, Journalist; Mr. Azaz Syed, Journalist and Dr. Sabyal Ikram, CEO of ABS Developers (Pvt.) Ltd. The discussion aimed to draw critical lessons from the events surrounding the operation, assess the efficacy of Pakistan's multi-domain deterrence, and formulate practical policy recommendations for future preparedness.

In addition to evaluating the military aspects, the discussion highlighted the importance of indigenous technological capabilities, the strength of cohesive national communication, and the imperative of countering hybrid threats through enhanced cyber resilience and intelligence coordination. Operation Bunyanum Marsoos is not just a case study in modern warfare it represents a rebirth of national resolve, strategic clarity, and operational synergy in a rapidly evolving geopolitical environment.

SUMMARY

- Operation Bunyanum Marsoos served as a pivotal moment in Pakistan's recent defence history, reinforcing the country's strategic deterrence posture and showcasing its evolving military and technological capabilities.

- The operation was launched in response to a clear violation of Pakistan's territorial integrity. Despite being the target of unprovoked aggression, Pakistan opted for a proportionate and legally justified response, anchored in international law and the right to self-defence under the UN Charter.

- The operation demonstrated the strategic integration of air power, electronic warfare, and cyber capabilities. It marked a shift in doctrinal thinking, focusing not just on battlefield engagement but on synchronised multi-domain operations.

- Pakistan's air force executed the mission with precision and professionalism, reportedly targeting over 30 enemy installations without suffering a single aircraft loss. This reflected decades of investment in operational preparedness, training, and force integration.

- A notable strength of the operation was Pakistan's indigenous technological capacity. The use of domestically developed electronic warfare systems, communication jamming tools, and surveillance capabilities highlighted a growing reliance on self-developed defence technologies.

- The information and narrative domain was a parallel battlefield. A preemptive narrative was crafted and effectively delivered through a dedicated digital communication department that monitored global media, intercepted disinformation, and disseminated verified information in real time.

- The newly established digital infrastructure, developed within a corporate framework and equipped with AI tools, allowed Pakistan to respond swiftly to hostile media narratives and counter disinformation with evidence-based communication.

- Pakistan's diplomatic outreach during the operation further strengthened its position. Senior leadership engaged daily with foreign envoys, providing real-time briefings that reinforced transparency and earned international credibility.

- The nation's youth played an unexpectedly vital role in the narrative battle. Through social media, they contributed to shaping perceptions by launching a "meme war" that gained traction and defused psychological pressure from adversarial propaganda.

- The operation brought together all segments of society including armed forces, government institutions, media professionals, civil society, and the younger generation reflecting unprecedented national unity in the face of external threat.

- Comparative analysis with other conflict zones (e.g. Ukraine, Iran) highlighted the increasing use of cyber-espionage, proxy warfare, and strategic deception, emphasising the need for Pakistan to strengthen counter-intelligence and cyber defence.

- Concerns were raised about future threats in the form of hybrid warfare, particularly from non-state actors and transnational intelligence networks. The need to disrupt recruitment chains and ideological grooming, especially among vulnerable youth populations, was emphasised.

- Participants observed that Pakistan's evolving defence doctrine must now focus on technological readiness, narrative resilience, economic security, and cross-sectoral integration to remain adaptive in a volatile regional environment.

- The operation has become a reference point for defence planners, analysts, and policymakers, serving as a case study in strategic restraint, deterrence credibility, and narrative dominance.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Air Power and Multi-Domain Operations

Operation Bunyanum Marsoos reaffirmed the centrality of air power in contemporary warfare. The operation demonstrated that Pakistan's air force had moved beyond traditional tactical applications toward highly synchronised, multi-domain operations. These involved large-force aerial packages, electronic warfare platforms, and cyber capabilities deployed in unison. Such capability was not achieved overnight but reflected over two decades of investment in training, technological innovation, and inter-service coordination. The precision of the strikes and the absence of aircraft losses underscored the preparedness and professionalism of the force.

Indigenous Technological Capabilities

A defining feature of the operation was the reliance on indigenous technological resources. Participants emphasised that Pakistan's locally developed communication systems, electronic warfare infrastructure, and cyber tools played a decisive role in intercepting and disrupting hostile operations. This growing technological self-reliance reduced dependency on foreign systems and enhanced operational autonomy. The development of secure communication frameworks, such as Pakistan's own digital command and control network, further strengthened national capabilities in sensitive domains.

Narrative Management and Digital Preparedness

The information and media domain was recognised as an equally contested space during the operation. The establishment of a dedicated Digital Communication Department equipped with AI-based tools and real-time media monitoring systems enabled Pakistan to counter disinformation swiftly and effectively. By pre-empting hostile narratives and ensuring the timely dissemination of factual content, Pakistan was able to shape the international discourse in its favour. This marked a significant advancement in digital diplomacy and strategic communication.

Societal Cohesion and Youth Engagement

One of the most powerful outcomes of the operation was the emergence of national unity. The collective response of political leadership, military institutions, civil society, and the general public highlighted the strength of a unified front. Particular attention was drawn to the active engagement of Pakistan's youth, who contributed meaningfully through responsible digital activism. Their online presence and creative engagement played a significant role in maintaining morale and projecting resilience on digital platforms.

Effective Diplomatic Communication

Pakistan's diplomatic outreach during the crisis was consistent and deliberate. Senior government representatives

ensured regular briefings with the diplomatic community, providing first-hand accounts of the unfolding situation and clarifying Pakistan's defensive intent. This transparency not only reinforced international trust but also helped prevent the mischaracterisation of Pakistan's actions in global forums. The proactive engagement of foreign embassies helped safeguard Pakistan's diplomatic standing during a period of high regional tension.

Economic Prudence and Strategic Restraint

Participants also reflected on the economic dimensions of military confrontation. While acknowledging that conflict inevitably exerts pressure on national economies, it was noted that Pakistan's measured and proportionate response helped avoid widespread economic disruption. In contrast, regional markets, particularly in the neighbouring country, experienced significant losses. This comparison underscored the value of strategic restraint and the importance of maintaining economic stability even amidst security crises.

Hybrid Warfare and the Future Threat Landscape

Increasing complexity of modern conflict, particularly in the context of hybrid warfare was also stressed. Participants discussed how the fusion of cyberattacks, espionage, disinformation campaigns, and proxy engagement is challenging traditional military doctrines. The threat posed by non-state actors, foreign intelligence proxies, and digitally empowered freelance networks requires a

fundamental strengthening of Pakistan's counter-intelligence framework. Future preparedness must include investments in strategic surveillance, cyber defence, and the ideological insulation of vulnerable populations, particularly youth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enhance indigenous technological development in electronic warfare, cyber defense, and secure communication systems to ensure greater operational autonomy.

- Institutionalize a real-time digital communication structure supported by AI tools to monitor, counter, and preempt hostile narratives during national crises.

- Strengthen internal security and counter-intelligence frameworks to detect, deter, and disrupt espionage, infiltration, and ideological subversion.

- Promote civil-military synergy by integrating think tanks, academia, and private-sector experts into strategic planning and national security dialogues.

- Expand joint-force training and simulation-based exercises across all services to sustain and deepen multi-domain operational readiness.

- Invest in digital civic education, cyber hygiene awareness, and youth engagement platforms to empower responsible online behavior and national solidarity.

- Ensure economic resilience by securing strategic infrastructure, reinforcing investor confidence, and insulating the economy from conflict-induced volatility.

- Establish permanent crisis communication units within relevant ministries to coordinate narrative responses across diplomatic, media, and civil society platforms.

- Create a centralized threat assessment cell for hybrid warfare that consolidates inputs from intelligence, cyber, media, and economic domains.

- Build secure national data repositories and localized cloud infrastructure to protect sensitive information from external manipulation and leaks.

- Launch strategic awareness campaigns on hybrid threats for civil servants, media professionals, and educational institutions to build institutional literacy.

- Encourage cross-border engagement with neutral or like-minded countries to counter hostile diplomatic narratives and promote strategic partnerships.

- Institutionalize periodic war-gaming exercises involving cyber, air, land, and digital command components to simulate high-pressure national emergencies.

- Facilitate inter-agency information sharing and protocol harmonization between defense, interior, foreign affairs, and information ministries.

- Develop clear, legally vetted escalation control mechanisms to manage limited conflict scenarios without risking strategic overreach.

By implementing these measures, Pakistan can enhance its overall strategic posture, fortify internal resilience, and respond more effectively to the multifaceted nature of emerging security threats. These steps will not only strengthen deterrence and operational preparedness but also help institutionalise a national security framework that is agile, integrated, and future-ready. At the same time, such a comprehensive approach will enable Pakistan to foster regional cooperation and uphold its commitment to long-term peace and stability across South Asia.

CONCLUSION

Operation Bunyanum Marsoos stands as a pivotal moment in Pakistan's evolving security and strategic trajectory. It was more than a military operation; it was a comprehensive demonstration of Pakistan's readiness to defend its sovereignty with precision, discipline, and strategic foresight. The operation served as a reflection of the country's maturing defence doctrine, which now incorporates not only conventional capabilities but also the essential dimensions of cyber warfare, information dominance, and narrative control.

The success of the operation was underpinned by careful planning, operational coordination, and technological integration across multiple domains. The air force's ability to execute complex missions with precision and without incurring losses demonstrated the depth of training and the strength of operational preparedness. Equally significant was the role of indigenous technologies, which allowed for secure communication, electronic warfare dominance, and cyber resilience—all of which contributed to maintaining the strategic initiative during the crisis.

In addition to its military effectiveness, Operation Bunyanum Marsoos was notable for the strength of Pakistan's response in the information domain. The establishment and deployment of a robust digital communication structure enabled the state to shape the global narrative, preempt disinformation, and project a responsible and lawful posture in the face of provocation. Through a combination of real-time media engagement and digital diplomacy, Pakistan managed to reinforce its credibility and counter hostile propaganda with facts and clarity.

Perhaps one of the most significant outcomes of the operation was the sense of unity and collective resolve that it inspired across the nation. The alignment of political leadership, military institutions, civil society, media professionals, and the youth underscored the value of societal cohesion during times of national stress. The responsible and patriotic engagement of Pakistan's younger generation, especially on digital platforms, played an instrumental role in amplifying the state's position and countering adversarial narratives with creativity and conviction.

At the diplomatic level, Pakistan's outreach efforts ensured that international partners were kept informed through credible and timely briefings. This transparency helped to build trust, counter misinformation, and maintain diplomatic equilibrium at a time when regional tensions were high. The emphasis on responsible statecraft and adherence to international norms further elevated Pakistan's image as a mature and stabilising actor in a volatile environment.

Despite the operation's success, the evolving nature of hybrid warfare presents ongoing challenges. The fusion of cyber threats, information manipulation, psychological operations, and proxy engagements requires a recalibration of traditional

security frameworks. It is now essential to institutionalise the lessons learned from Operation Bunyanum Marsoos and translate them into long-term reforms. These must include strengthening counter-intelligence mechanisms, investing in indigenous technological innovation, and fostering inter-agency coordination to address complex, non-linear threats.

Moreover, the operation reaffirmed the critical linkage between strategic deterrence and economic stability. Preserving investor confidence, protecting infrastructure, and ensuring continuity in economic activity must be central to any future crisis management strategy. A resilient economy not only supports national defence but also underpins Pakistan's ability to sustain long-term strategic autonomy.

Operation Bunyanum Marsoos should be remembered not only as a successful military response but as a comprehensive national effort. One that showcased Pakistan's preparedness, unity, and resolve. It set a new precedent for integrated national security, where technology, narrative, diplomacy, and defence come together to form a coherent and credible deterrent. Going forward, Pakistan must build upon this moment of strategic clarity to institutionalise resilience, enhance capacity, and prepare for the challenges of a complex and rapidly evolving security landscape.

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