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EDITORIAL PERSPECTIVE

March of Jihadists in South Asia: The Threat to India
MAJ. GEN. AFSIR KARIM (RETD)



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EDITORIAL PERSPECTIVE

March of Jihadists in South Asia: The Threat to India

MAJ. GEN. AFSIR KARIM (RETD)

RESURGENCE OF AL-QAEDA

A video released on jihadist forums by al-Qaeda declared that the road to victory in Kashmir lies through attacks on big Indian cities; if big cities are targeted, India will be forced to seek a compromise on Kashmir. To achieve this goal, a strong organisation is required which all South Asian Muslims must support to turn India into a war zone. A new organisation, called al-Qarar, on the other hand, appealed to al-Qaeda to pledge support to Islamic State through a video that appeared to have been released from the Jamia Masjid area of Srinagar, where Islamic State flags have often been seen during protest marches. In another interview, al-Qaeda asked jihadists to turn the entire subcontinent into an Islamic region – a tall order indeed

At present, there is no visible presence of al-Qaeda in India, but our intelligence agencies should be on the lookout for small, hidden cells and supporters that should be neutralised before they proliferate.

Al-Qaeda and Pakistani terrorists should, however, understand that a most devastating riposte is likely to come from India if any Indian city is attacked again: when big guns start booming, al-Qaeda and its associates will disappear in thin air and the brunt will be borne by many Pakistani cities. Moreover, the headquarters of Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad are likely to be the main targets of Indian attack.

EMERGENCE OF ISIS IN PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN

It could be an ISIS renaissance in South Asia if American pressure on Taliban is reduced in any way in Afghanistan. ISIS black flags may well be seen all over Af-Pak in the near future in an area called Walayat-e-Khurasan by the ISIS.

The director general of the Pakistani Intelligence Bureau is reported to have recently warned his government of emerging ISIS threat to Pakistan as many Pakistani terrorist groups are supporting the Walayat-e-Khurasan scheme of ISIS. A recent UN Security Council counterterrorism report indicated that a larger number of Pakistanis have been joining ISIS since 2015.

Pakistan has been the principal supporter and mentor of the Afghan Taliban; it has been providing the Taliban a safe haven and training and recruiting facilities. ISIS is also being supported in Afghanistan by several Pakistani terrorist organisations, including Lashkar-i-Jhangvi and Jamaat-ul-Ahrar. Whether the ISIS caliph Abu Bakr al Baghdadi will move to the Af-Pak region soon is a moot point.

Various attacks in Pakistan have been launched by ISIS since 2016. The first attack was in August 2016, when a suicide bomber killed at least 70 people and wounded more than 100 in an attack on a gathering of lawyers and journalists in Quetta. Such attacks continued in 2017; a man blew himself at a Sufi shrine in Sindh province, killing more than 90 people and wounding more than 300. In another attack, a suicide bombing in the convoy of the deputy chairman of the Pakistani Senate, travelling on the National Highway in the Mastung District of Baluchistan, left at least 28 people dead and 40 wounded. The strong presence of ISIS in Pakistan became apparent when its suicide bombers attacked a church in Quetta, which left at least 9 dead and more than 50 seriously injured. It was the sixth attack for which ISIS claimed responsibility. All these attacks clearly proved support for ISIS in many parts of Pakistan.

In view of these developments, it will be necessary for the US to maintain a robust counterterrorist capability both in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Moreover, the US must maintain strong diplomatic pressure on Pakistan to deal with threats from Pakistan-based terrorist outfits operating

from safe havens in Pakistan. Reports suggest that the US is likely to induct more front-line troopers in Afghanistan shortly. A specific force level must be maintained in Afghanistan to conduct counterterror missions in Af-Pak successfully. It will be necessary for America to adopt a more realistic and tougher policy towards Pakistan as it is likely to continue to be the main supporter of jihadi terrorists in the region.

However, the US will have to maintain good relations with Pakistan till it finds alternative supply routes for its troops in Afghanistan. In the absence of alternative supply routes, it will be much more difficult to continue operations in Afghanistan.

If the American influence in Pakistan diminishes, a new generation of ISIS supporters may rise with the support of the large jihadi infrastructure existing in Pakistan under the wings of the ISI. Pakistani Lashkar-e-Taiba, the Pakistan Taliban and other sundry jihadist groups will willingly help ISIS in attacking India and other secular countries if the danger of a strong retaliatory action is absent. If ISIS is able to find a firm foothold in Pakistan, its first target will be India.

CHINESE INROADS IN THE CHINA-PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (CPEC): GRAND OPENING

‘Officially initiating economic activities at Gwadar, Pakistan, a trade expo has been planned for January 28-30 at this strategic deep-sea port intrinsic to the flagship China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

‘Having completed the first phase of construction, CPEC is one of the six corridors of China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Opening its doors to the world, Gwadar will next week host its first ever international trade exhibition under the auspices of the Gwadar Port Authority and the China Overseas Ports Holding Company (COPHC) at the Gwadar LinYi Trade City.

‘The port has been in full swing since November 2016, while the Gwadar Special Economic Zone is now poised to make its debut.

‘As the expo nears inauguration, finishing touches are under way to receive exhibitors from more than 120 companies. Gwadar Port Authority chairman Dostain Khan Jamaldini has said that initially only Chinese and

Pakistani companies have been invited to this trade show and 400 to 500 participants from those firms are expected. In subsequent events, gradually more foreign investors and companies will be invited, and the scale of the event will grow accordingly every year.

‘In November, China plans to hold a six-day International Import Expo, and Pakistan has been invited as guest of honor, as explained by Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Yao Jing recently.’¹

Notes and References

1. Sabena Siddiqui. ‘Gwadar Gearing Up for First Trade Expo Under BRI.’ Asia Times, 26 January 2018. <<http://www.atimes.com/gearing-gwadar-expo-2018/>>.

Afghanistan: New and Old Challenges Amidst a Spate of Violence

RAMTANU MAITRA

As China's One Belt, One Road (OBOR) project has begun to make its presence felt in the region around Afghanistan, the country has experienced massive bloodletting in recent months, largely a result of the fragmentation of the Taliban. The group's actions have neither a common goal nor adequate muscle to put together a nationwide movement, and no single faction is capable of securing control of the entire country, particularly the major cities, where more than 12 per cent of Afghans live. The various factions have engaged in killing innocent Afghans to announce their existence – a dangerous, if pathetic, tactic.

A few among Taliban leaders who have rejected the Taliban emir – Maulawi Haibutullah Akhundzada, who heads the Rahbari Shura (also known as the Quetta Shura) – and gone their own way to exercise their newly acquired authority through killings have picked up the black ISIS flag, calling themselves adherents of the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) – the nomenclature of ISIS (or Da'esh) in Afghanistan. While their vile actions are public, information on where they are centred, who their leaders or field commanders are and who their protectors are remains mostly within the realm of speculation.

The weakness of President Ashraf Ghani's government in Kabul has added to the chaos. Among other things, it is mired in corruption, partially because of its inability to be effective either in taming the terrorists or in governing the state. The omnipresence of a multibillion-dollar heroin trade, a major source of corruption, has compromised the integrity of government officials and also a part of the Afghan National Army (ANA).

Although denied by Kabul, regular media reports from the ground state that government forces are now aiding and abetting one or the other militant group.

This critical situation begs the question, Where is Afghanistan headed? To begin to answer that, we review, first, the status of US policy toward Afghanistan and then look at some of the major factors at work on the ground: the heroin problem, the violence occasioned by Taliban fragmentation, the growth of the ISKP, the Kabul government's missteps and the views and activity of Afghanistan's neighbours, Russia, China and Iran.

WHAT ABOUT THE AMERICANS?

Desperately trying to hold on to what's been attained during a 17-year fruitless war, the United States, under the new Donald J. Trump administration, appeared to be uncertain whether its mission is to 'stabilise' Afghanistan – a proposition associated with nation building that few outside of Washington's capital Beltway subscribe to – or to establish a permanent presence in the area. However, a recent statement by US defence secretary General James Mattis points to the latter.

Arriving unannounced in Kabul on 13 March, General Mattis met with Afghanistan's president Ashraf Ghani, CEO Abdullah Abdullah and other senior Afghan officials. Before his landing, Reuters quoted Mattis as telling reporters: 'There is interest that we've picked up from the Taliban side. We have had some groups of Taliban—small groups—who have either started to come over or expressed an interest in talking.' AP quoted Mattis as saying, 'We do look toward a victory in Afghanistan' but 'not a military victory—the victory will be a political reconciliation' with the Taliban.¹

According to available reports, the United States will be sending more troops to Afghanistan this year in addition to the 16,000 combat troops and trainers already there. In two separate statements in December, the US army announced its plans to deploy the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team and the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team of the Fort Carson,

Colorado, based 4th Infantry Division to Afghanistan this spring. The new soldiers will likely arrive at the beginning of the 2018 fighting season as relief for existing combat troops, a regular troop rotation as part of Operation Freedom's Sentinel.² US military officials say their long-term intentions are to establish a bulwark in Afghanistan against Islamist extremism and foreign aggression in a strategic neighbourhood that includes Russia, Iran and China.

Whether a few thousand additional troops will be able to seize an edge over the Taliban and the ISKP, particularly at a time when the Taliban is in control of about 60 per cent of Afghanistan's territory, is moot. Few believe the additional troops will make a noticeable dent. Some, like former Afghan president Hamid Karzai – also a member of Afghanistan's Pushtun power cabal – claim that sending these additional troops is a part of Washington's plan to make Afghanistan its permanent home. Cited in the 14 February *Washington Post*, Karzai stated: 'The United States is not here to go to a party. There is no need for them to build so many bases just to defeat a few Taliban. They are here because all the great American rivals are in the neighborhood, and we happen to be here, too. They are welcome to stay, but not to deceive us.'³

There is no reason to believe Karzai was whistling in the dark. In 2005, when the Taliban had begun its comeback after being ousted from power in December 2001, I wrote in a 30 March *Asia Times* article that the United States was beefing up its military presence in Afghanistan and at the same time encircling Iran. Washington will set up nine new bases in Afghanistan, in the provinces of Helmand, Herat, Nimrouz, Balkh, Khost and Paktia, I stated. Following talks with the then Afghan president Hamid Karzai in Kabul on 22 February 2005, I reported further that Senator John McCain (R-Arizona), at the time the number two Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee – accompanied to Kabul by Senators Hillary Clinton (D-New York), Susan Collins (R-Maine), Lindsey Graham (R-South Carolina) and Russ Feingold (D-Wisconsin) – said he was committed to a 'strategic partnership that we believe must endure for many, many years'. McCain told reporters that America's strategic partnership with Afghanistan should include 'permanent bases' for US military forces.⁴

It is likely that a permanent stay in Afghanistan was always the plan behind the US invasion in pursuit of Osama bin Laden in 2001. Weeding out the Taliban and other anti-US forces is a requirement to maintain those permanent bases.

THE CURRENT SCENE: HEROIN INC. AND A ROLLING WAVE OF VIOLENCE

Like the US troop presence, large-scale drug production has also become a permanent feature in Afghanistan. The principal source of finance driving the Taliban's war efforts and perhaps the prime cause behind the mounting corruption for more than a decade, poppy cultivation continues unabated. Taliban is surely the main beneficiary, but the huge amount of cash that the drug trafficking business generates annually is widely distributed, compromising many others. The unchecked explosion of drug production has also attracted some terrorist groups from outside to participate in Afghanistan's morbid state of affairs.

The latest Afghanistan opium survey released by the Ministry of Counter Narcotics, Afghanistan, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on 15 November 2017 shows that Afghanistan remains the world's top producer of opium and heroin. According to the survey, areas under poppy cultivation rose to a record high of 328,000 hectares in 2017, up 63 per cent from 201,000 hectares in 2016.⁵ Even more depressing is the finding that more Afghan provinces have begun to show up as poppy cultivators. The UNODC report states that the number of poppy-producing provinces in the country increased from 21 to 24 in 2017, with Ghazni, Samangan and Nuristan provinces joining the ranks, and adds that a 15 per cent increase in the opium yield per hectare has also contributed to the rise in production.

Drug trafficking and corruption, together with the fighting among Taliban factions based in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as other factors, have contributed to the recent rise of incidents of violence in Afghan cities. Lacking the ability to provide security even to Kabul, the capital city, where more than 10 per cent of Afghanistan's population resides, the Afghan government has become a virtual spectator to the

violence. Here is a short list of violent incidents recorded during the recent months in Afghanistan's urban areas:

- December 28: Forty-one people, mainly young Shia civilians, were killed by a suicide bomber in the audience at a Shia education centre, Tote, in west Kabul. The attack was claimed by the local branch of the Islamic State (IS) via an IS centre-related news channel.
- December 31: Eight people were killed in a bombing at a politician's funeral in Jalalabad. There were conflicting reports as to whether a suicide bomber or a motorcycle bomb caused the explosion. The Taliban denied any involvement; an ISKP claim was reported.
- January 4: Eleven people, mostly police personnel, were killed by a suicide bomber during a protest involving shopkeepers on Jalalabad Road in eastern Kabul. The ISKP claimed responsibility.
- January 20: Forty people were killed by armed gunmen who stormed the Kabul Continental Hotel. Those killed included mainly government IT specialists, crew members of a private Afghan airline and other Afghan and international hotel guests. This is the only attack where all the victims were not Afghan – 15 of the victims and several of the injured were foreigners. The Taliban claimed responsibility.
- January 23: Five people were killed when armed attackers stormed the Save the Children office in Jalalabad. The attack was claimed by the ISKP.
- January 27: Four people – two policemen and two civilians – were killed during a suicide attack in Kandahar City, near the Aino Mena housing scheme, when a suicide bomber struck a police vehicle. The Taliban claimed the attack.
- January 27: One hundred three people were killed when a car bomb exploded in Kabul's Sedarat Square. This attack was claimed by the Taliban.
- January 29: Eleven soldiers were killed when gunmen stormed a base of the ANA's 111th division in Kabul. The ISKP claimed responsibility.⁶
- February 20: Three people were killed when an explosion ripped through Jalalabad city, in the eastern province of Nangarhar, at about midday.⁷

- February 24: Twenty-five ANA soldiers lost their lives in a coordinated attack by the Taliban insurgents in western Farah province of Afghanistan, a provincial source said. The Taliban claimed responsibility (Khaama Press, 24 February 2018).
- February 24: Three people were killed in a suicide bombing in Kabul's PD 9 in Shashdarak area bordering the Green Zone, Afghanistan Ministry of Interior spokesperson Najib Danish confirmed. The ISKP claimed responsibility.⁸
- March 2: Three bystanders were killed and twenty-two wounded when a car bomb targeting a foreign forces convoy passing through the Qabel Bai area in Kabul's PD9 exploded. No group claimed responsibility. The attack occurred two days after President Ashraf Ghani had proposed peace talks with the Taliban.⁹
- March 9: Ten people were killed when a suicide bomber set off explosives in a crowd of minority Hazara Shiite Muslims near a mosque complex in Kabul. The IS claimed responsibility for the attack.¹⁰

This list is neither complete nor comprehensive; among other things, it does not contain the many terrorist killings that took place in rural Afghanistan during this period. Moreover, in many cases, the number of casualties cannot be fully ascertained; some other sources report larger numbers.

Facing the seemingly unstoppable wave of violence, President Ashraf Ghani has consistently condemned the attacks. In something of a departure, however, on 28 February, while inaugurating the second meeting of the Kabul Process for Peace and Security Cooperation in Kabul, President Ghani made concrete proposals for peace talks with the Taliban. For the first time, he mentioned the possibility of a ceasefire and offered the group an office in Kabul and the lifting of sanctions on those Taliban leaders who join the negotiation.¹¹ As of now, the Taliban has not responded to this offer, but it is likely that there is debate within the fragmented group.

FRAGMENTED TALIBAN

During the wave of recent killings, the Afghan media has sometimes reported that ‘the Taliban’ has claimed responsibility. But it is difficult to fathom who ‘the Taliban’ is. Is it a united orthodox Sunni-Pushtun group? Or is it one or another of the factions that the Taliban has broken down into? Ground reports indicate many disgruntled former Taliban field commanders – who were united under the late Mullah Mohammad Omar while he was alive (or at least was thought to be alive; his death in 2013 was not announced by his coterie until 2015) – have left the mainstream Taliban fold.

Two recent reports document this development. One, ‘Ready for Peace? The Afghan Taliban After a Decade of War,’ by Theo Farrell and Michael Semple, was published by the British military intelligence–linked Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) in January 2017. The second is an investigative report, ‘Afghan Government Quietly Aids Breakaway Taliban Faction,’ by Taimoor Shah, Rod Nordland and Jawad Sukhanyar, that appeared in the 19 June 2017 *New York Times*.

The RUSI report is the more extensive of the two, and its authors—Semple, in particular—have deep familiarity with the subject. Theo Farrell is a professor of international security and dean of arts and social sciences at the City University of London. Michael Semple is a visiting research professor in the George Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice, at Queen’s University in Belfast. In 2007, Semple and another individual, Mervyn Patterson, were given 48 hours to leave Afghanistan after the then Afghan president Hamid Karzai discovered evidence of a financial plan orchestrated by the two to train the Taliban to use secure satellite phones to communicate directly with UK officials. At the time, Patterson was in Afghanistan as a United Nations diplomat; Semple, an MI6 officer, was masquerading as the acting head of the European Union mission there. Semple was subsequently laundered through various institutions and has now emerged as an Afghanistan expert.

The RUSI report – based on interviews with a number of unnamed high-level Taliban operatives, some of whom have distanced themselves from Akhundzada and his Rahbari Shura—makes the following broad points:

- The Taliban movement is in disarray. The new leader, Maulawi Haibatullah Akhundzada, is widely viewed as weak and ineffective.
- Several factions within the Taliban are vying for power. The Mansour network, which is based in Helmand and claims to be backed by Iran and Russia, has risen to become the most dynamic group within the Taliban.
- Levels of morale within the Taliban vary. The boost from 2016 battlefield successes was dampened by the high cost at which they were gained, as well as the alienation of many Taliban from their leadership and the sense that many had no stake in those battlefield gains. The expulsion of Afghan refugees from Pakistan is putting added pressure on the Taliban because some of the refugees work as liaisons between the Taliban and Pakistani authorities.
- There is growing disaffection within the Taliban about the armed campaign. Many members feel that the war has lost direction and purpose and is corrupting the movement.

The report describes the present discord among the former Taliban leaders who had once united under the now-dead Mullah Omar. All interviewees have confirmed that Haibatullah Akhundzada is widely perceived as a weak and ineffective leader. ‘According to interviewee H [identified in the report as a senior functionary of the Rasool group, with family connections across the movement], “everybody is saying there are problems” with the Taliban leadership. Interviewee E [identified as a direct associate of Mullah Omar from the movement’s beginnings and a former Taliban provincial governor and deputy minister who has close personal links to Haibatullah and professional links to the Rasool group and Mansour network] noted how “the position of the Tehreek [the Taliban cause] right now is very precarious, because Haibatullah is not able to run the movement, he is sitting there as a symbol.” Interviewee B [identified as a Taliban functionary and a former Taliban provincial governor who is widely networked across northern Afghanistan] similarly noted that “all know that Haibatullah is a symbol and does not have any authority.” Interviewee D [identified as a

military commander and senior functionary of the Noorullah Noori network] further observed that Haibatullah “has little reputation or influence within the movement, and not even within his own tribe [the Noorzai]”.’

A footnote: The Rasool group, headed by Mullah Mohammad Rasool, the former Taliban governor of Nimruz province and formally known as the *shuraahli*, or high council, is a Taliban splinter group which formally broke from the main movement after the 2015 announcement of the death of Mullah Omar. The Mansour network, another faction of the Taliban, is an informal network of former comrades of the deceased Taliban leader Akhtar Mohammad Mansour. It operates as a powerful interest group within the main Taliban movement. The RUSI report notes that, based in Helmand, the Mansour network controls the largest portion of the Taliban’s revenue from the narcotics trade. Finally, there is the Noorullah Noori network, an informal network of former comrades of senior Taliban commander Noorullah Noori that operates within the main Taliban movement.

FRAGMENTATION’S FALLOUT

According to the RUSI report, ‘Multiple interviewees stated how the doctrine of obedience to the emir is far less observed than might be expected, and that the governance structure created by the Taliban during the 2000s (with national, provincial and district commissions for military and political affairs) is breaking down. Hence, Interviewee D noted that whereas “previously in the movement, decisions taken at the top were implemented vigorously. This is no longer the case as there is a shortage of resources and lack of obedience.” Interviewees B, D and H gave the specific example of the provincial governor for Helmand, Mohammed Rahim, who acts independently of the Rahbari Shura (more commonly known as the Quetta Shura). Since Haibatullah was appointed emir, Rahim has stopped remitting revenue from Helmand to Quetta. Interviewee E similarly noted that “Mullah Rahim claims that he has seniority within the Taliban leadership”.’

The report continues:

‘This highlights a key problem for Haibatullah: his inability to gain access to Taliban resources. Interviewee H stated that the new emir “doesn’t

have control of money and hence is losing authority.” He noted how the head of the Taliban Finance Commission, Mullah Gul Agha, who is aligned with Mullah Rahim, is blocking Haibatullah’s access to Taliban finances. Several interviewees noted a general shortage of resources, and one reported that significant Taliban funds seem to have disappeared. According to interviewee F [identified as a Taliban veteran from Kandahar and a former Northern Front commander who is widely networked in Quetta, with links to the Mansour network], “many believe that the money was with Gul Agha and Samai Sani [deputy head of the Finance Commission], but they dispute this.” The intensity of the fighting in 2016 showed that the Taliban prioritized financing their war effort. However, this bypassed the emir, leaving him without the kind of patronage resources which Mansour had drawn on to consolidate his position.

‘Several interviewees noted how Haibatullah was unable to appoint his own people to key positions, further weakening his leadership. The main example of this is Mullah Qayyum Zakir, the former head of the Taliban Central Military Commission. Multiple interviewees noted how Zakir, who is currently without a formal leadership position, had allied with Haibatullah, expecting a senior appointment in return. According to Interviewee H, Zakir “has gone quiet: you can only get hold of his secretary, who takes a message.” Haibatullah is also unable to replace those, such as Gul Agha, who defy his authority. Indeed, he is struggling to prevent his allies, such as his deputy Mullah Yaqoob (eldest son of Mullah Omar) from being removed from office. Again the experience contrasts with Mansour, who proved skilled at maintaining control of the appointments process within the movement.’

In reviewing the fallout of the fractionalisation of the Taliban, the RUSI report, citing the interviewees, points out that the Taliban’s morale is low. ‘Tactical victories have come at great cost: the interviewees pointed to heavy Taliban losses over the past three months of fighting in Farah, Faryab, Helmand, Uruzgan and Kunduz. The victories also led to a series of political challenges for the Taliban, which have left many in the movement questioning the utility of the military sacrifices,’ the report noted. Interviewee C, identified by Farrell and Semple as a direct associate of Mullah Mohammed Omar from the movement’s beginnings who maintains

close links to several members of the Rahbari Shura, said ‘many commanders feel that the armed struggle has lost direction and purpose. After more than a decade of war, victory is nowhere in sight. Many Taliban commanders worry that military gains are not sustainable. Thus, while the Taliban can capture a city such as Kunduz, they are unable to hold it.’

The report also notes that one of the fallouts is the growing distaste among some Taliban members for the un-Islamic motivations and behaviour of some Taliban commanders in the conflict. ‘A particular concern is with the use of suicide bombers (outside of Haqqani operations in Kabul), which have had elements of competition between provincial commanders. Interviewee C noted how commanders are using martyrdom attacks for “their own profit and personal fame” and that “they deploy Fedayeen to targets that will cause max casualties, and this gives a rivalry between commanders—so that each commander wants to cause maximum casualties”.’

Similar developments were described in the *New York Times* article, posted from Kandahar, that appeared on 19 June 2017. Citing a bitter fight that took place then in the heavily contested district of Gereshk in Helmand province, the correspondents went on to claim that ‘the government has quietly provided the breakaway faction—popularly known as the Renouncers—with weapons, safe passage and intelligence support in their fight against the mainstream Taliban.’ The ‘Renouncers’, the correspondents explained, are followers of Mullah Mohammad Rasool, who having split from the main Taliban group after revelations in 2015 that the former Taliban leader, Mullah Muhammad Omar, had long been dead, also became angered with Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansour for keeping Omar’s death a secret for two years.

The Rasool faction was further angered with emir Akhundzada when he chose Sirajuddin Haqqani as deputy leader in charge of military operations, the article noted. While the Rasool faction is open about waging war against the Mansour network in Helmand, it denies any affiliation with Kabul. On the other hand, the *New York Times* correspondents stated: ‘Qari Yousuf Ahmadi, the spokesman for the mainstream Taliban in southern Afghanistan, said the group they had attacked in Gereshk was a unit trained and equipped by the National Directorate of Security, the Afghan intelligence agency.’

Though the active fighting among the various Taliban factions remained hidden, the group's growing disunity in the wake of Mullah Omar's death was well known. In November 2015, the Afghanistan Analysts Network published a series of articles by Borhan Osman reporting on the splits within the Taliban. Osman wrote: 'One day after the Taliban confirmed the death of Mullah Muhammad Omar—when they also announced that his “deputy” Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansour had taken his place—three (active or former) members of the highest decision-making body, the Rahbari Shura (Leadership Council), openly declared their disagreement with the succession. They accused the new leader of having engineered the succession so as to get himself “selected”.'¹²

THE ISKP IN AFGHANISTAN: RUSSIA'S NEW INTEREST A POINTER

Reports of a growing IS presence in Afghanistan, particularly in the areas bordering Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), have drawn concern from many quarters for some time. Recently, however, Russia's growing interest in matters concerning Afghanistan is perhaps the clearest signal of a real problem. Moscow has kept its distance from the Afghan conflict since 1989, even supporting the US invasion in 2001 and the subsequent toppling of the Taliban regime; so its new involvement marks a clear change in policy. According to various statements by Russian officials and media reports, Russia fears that Afghanistan may become another safe haven for the IS militant group after Iraq and Syria and the US presence in Afghanistan may enable the process. Experts say Moscow wants to make sure that does not happen in close proximity to its backyard, central Asia.

'Russian President Vladimir Putin considers the IS presence in Afghanistan a big threat to his country's interests,' Ahmad Saidi, a former Afghan diplomat, told *Deutsche Welle*.¹³ Because of this fear, Russia is now trying to form an alliance with Afghanistan's immediate neighbours, such as Iran, Pakistan and China, who are equally allergic to the IS.

Russia's foreign minister Sergey Lavrov and his Pakistani counterpart Khawaja Muhammad Asif, who was on an official visit to Moscow, have

agreed to work closely together on all Afghanistan-related processes. Discussing the Afghanistan situation, the two ministers agreed there was a need for such cooperation in order to find a regional solution to the conflict. Speaking at a joint press conference following their talks, Lavrov said, according to TOLO News, 'Today, the Russian side reaffirmed its willingness to continue providing assistance to Pakistan in strengthening its counterterrorist activity, which meets the interests of the entire region.' Lavrov said special attention was given to the situation in Afghanistan and around it. He continued: 'Both of us are concerned about the worsening security situation in the country, the growing terrorist activity, the narcotics threat that still looms large and the strengthening of ISIS' (Da'esh) position in the north and east of Afghanistan. Unfortunately, we have to say that the military presence of the United States and NATO that has lasted for many years has failed to bring peace and stability to the Afghan people.'¹⁴

The Russian concerns, however exaggerated they may be, cannot be brushed aside. Indeed, the Islamic State has already shown its fangs in Afghanistan. The ISKP has claimed responsibility for some of the recent terrorist attacks, among other things. In April 2015, a suicide attack was carried out on the Kabul Bank that killed more than 30 people. Condemned by the Taliban, the attack was allegedly claimed by the ISKP. At the time, Afghan president Ashraf Ghani told journalists: 'In the horrific incident in Nangarhar, who took responsibility? The Taliban didn't claim responsibility. Da'esh claimed responsibility for it.'¹⁵ In another incident, in February 2015, CBS News reported that gunmen, identified as members of ISIS by Zabul province deputy police chief Ghulam Jilani Farahi, kidnapped 30 members of the Hazara Shia community without seeking ransom.¹⁶

Since then, reports have appeared on the ISKP's activity to gain a stronger foothold in eastern Afghanistan adjoining Pakistan's loosely governed provinces. One such report of import, a September 2015 article that appeared on the Gatestone Institute website, claims that the ISKP, based on Pakistan's soil and in cooperation with some of the Pakistan-based terrorist groups, is plotting and executing attacks on Christians. The article claimed that Pakistan's leading generals had warned Christian clerics: 'Emissaries of the most powerful Pakistani generals and the Ministry

of Interior have apparently personally warned Christian clerics that the assault will first be launched in the country's northwest region of Khyber Paktunkhwa. This region abuts the Pushtun-dominated provinces of Afghanistan where Pakistan's Tehrik-e-Taliban is a potent force.'¹⁷ The article also complimented three Pakistani generals – the then army chief of staff General Raheel Sharif, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) chief General Rizwan Akhtar, and the commander of Pakistan's Army Rangers, General Bilal Akbar – for designing an 'aggressive battle plan with which to roll back extremist Muslim jihadists threatening Islamabad's sovereign control over the country'.

The article went on to note that an alliance had been formed between the ISKP operators and some other terrorist groups within Pakistan: 'The former Pakistani Taliban Commander, Hafiz Saeed Khan, is said to have pledged an oath of allegiance in January to Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Several other Pakistani Taliban groups have reportedly also agreed to join up. In addition, Ahmed Marwat, a.k.a. Farhad Marwat, commander of Pakistan's Jundallah terrorist organization, specifically threatened in June that "the Jundallah will attack kafir Shi'ites, Ismailis and Christians".' The report added: 'The Jundallah group, reputedly the Islamic State's most potent ally in Pakistan, claimed responsibility for the twin-suicide bombings against All Saints Church in Peshawar on Sept. 22, 2014. It also probably intends to initiate more anti-Christian atrocities.'

Beyond the ISKP's anti-Christian or anti-Shiite campaigns within Pakistan, there are wide-ranging reports that suggest that the group is taking advantage of the discontent over internal leadership struggles and rifts within the Taliban. A June 2017 article published by the Foreign Policy Research Institute said that the Pakistani Taliban, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and the ISKP were recruiting from among the Taliban members. 'ISKP used the absence of and, later, the confirmation of the demise of Mullah Omar in its propaganda aimed at courting disgruntled members of the Taliban. In these efforts, ISKP argued that Mullah Omar no longer was the legitimate leader of the Islamic community or emirate. The Pakistani Taliban and IMU were increasingly at odds with the Taliban due to the latter's refusal to conduct and support operations inside Pakistan. . . . The most significant switching of sides occurred

around January 2015 in the heartland of the Taliban when Abd al-Rauf Khadim set up a cell with several hundred former Taliban fighters in Kajaki district of Helmand province. Khadim was a former commander of the Taliban. According to Afghan analyst Borhan Osman, after being released from the U.S. detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in 2007, Khadim rose to prominence, becoming the second in command within the Taliban's military establishment.¹⁸

The June 2017 *New York Times* article referenced earlier also reported such recruitment by the ISKP from several parts of the country. 'The group is particularly strong in parts of eastern Nangarhar province, but it also has had a presence in Ghor, Farah and other areas. Most of those elements began as Taliban factions that turned against the mainstream group,' the reporters stated.

KABUL'S WEAK GOVERNANCE: E-TAZKERA, FOR EXAMPLE

Under President Ashraf Ghani, the Afghan government has proven incapable of handling the multitude of problems. There are many reasons for Kabul's failure. To begin with, being heavily dependent on foreign aid and being the victim of foreign interventions have handcuffed the Ghani administration. The exploding unaccounted-for money generation through the opium/heroin trade has corrupted a vast section of Afghanistan's law and order, administrative and security machinery; and a well-entrenched and well-funded Taliban and its factions in rural Afghanistan compounds the problem. For President Ghani, who spent most of his youth abroad throughout the 1980s and 1990s, bringing back order in Afghanistan is a Herculean task.

President Ghani has made the situation worse by failing to address the ethnic differences that exist among various tribes in Afghanistan in a constructive manner. Ghani is a Pushtun; the Taliban is virtually entirely Pushtun; and Pakistan, Afghanistan's nosiest neighbour, backs the Pushtun tribe's assumption of power, no matter who its leader is. Pakistan openly opposes any non-Pushtun taking over power in Kabul, and the Taliban's attitude is no different. Unfortunately, President Ghani has been playing

the same card – despite the fact that 60 per cent of Afghanistan’s population, the majority, is *not* Pushtun, but rather Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara, Nuristani and others. From the standpoint of effective governance, the need of the hour is a practical plan for inclusiveness to shape and build a truly representative political process.

Ghani’s handling of the policy for electronic national identity cards, known as e-tazkera, to be issued in preparation for the 2019 presidential elections is a good example of his missteps in this regard. The e-tazkera program, whose rollout began on 15 February, has fuelled dissention and further provoked animosity among the country’s ethnic groups. The issue, which has been simmering since the policy was first tabled in 2013, concerns how an individual is identified. In April 2016, the Ghani government amended a controversial article of the draft census law mandating the issuance of national identity cards to stipulate that both ‘nationality’ and ‘tribe’ are to be indicated on the tazkera. The outcry was immediate. Tajik and Hazara members of Parliament aligned on the issue, demanding that the tazkeras mention neither ethnicity nor nationality, as per the original, 2014 law.

At the heart of the debate is whether the new ID should mention the holder’s ethnicity, as well as nationality. In particular, there is opposition to the use of ‘Afghan’ to denote national identity because some Pushtun ethnonationalists continue to use ‘Afghan’ to mean ‘Pushtun’. In colloquial language among some ethnic minorities, ‘Afghan’ and ‘Pushtun’ are synonymous (for example, rural Hazaras often refer to Pushtuns as ‘Awghan’ or ‘Awghu’). Significantly, the Oxford English and Merriam-Webster dictionaries give both meanings for ‘Afghan’ – that is, an inhabitant of Afghanistan and (the less common meaning) another term for ‘Pushtun’.¹⁹

President Ghani exhibited his pro-Pushtun bias in another instance, when he ‘fired’ Atta Mohammad Noor Balk as Balkh provincial governor on 18 December 2017. Kabul claims that Noor resigned, but detailed reports indicate that the Tajik, an associate of the late Tajik leader Ahmad Shah Massoud, was terminated. Massoud had emerged as the most respected leader in Afghanistan following the retreat of the defeated Soviet military in 1989 but was then sidelined by the United States at the behest of Pakistan because of his non-Pushtun identity. Importantly, Noor is highly respected and has succeeded in forming an alliance with the Uzbek leader

Abdur Rashid Dostum. Did the growing power of a non-Pushtun lead Ghani to ‘fire’ Noor? According to Ahmad Shah Massoud’s young brother Wali, head of the Ahmad Shah Massoud Foundation: ‘You cannot fire people every single day and influence people. The problems will multiply. Every day you are complaining that Taliban and Da’esh are coming; who is more effective than Atta [Mohammad Noor Balk] against Da’esh and Taliban, and now you have also fired him.’²⁰

Ghani’s weaknesses are essentially the same deficiencies that prevent the Taliban from ‘winning’ its war or the United States from bringing a semblance of stability to Afghanistan after all these years – the failure to deal with the country’s ethnic diversity and its implications. The Taliban is largely a Pushtun movement, which limits its support in Hazara, Tajik and Uzbek and other areas. Although there is a bit more ethnic diversity at its lower levels, the Taliban’s top layers are dominated by Pushtuns. Haibatullah Akhunzada is a Pushtun from the Noorzai tribe in southern Afghanistan. His deputies, Sirajuddin Haqqani and Mohammad Yaqub, are both Pushtuns. Other senior leaders – such as Abdul Qayyum Zakir, Ahmadullah Nanai, Abdul Latif Mansur and Noor Mohammad Saqib – are Pushtuns. Overall, approximately 80 per cent of the Taliban’s top 50 leaders are Pushtuns from Kandahar province. As per Afghanistan’s recent history of grievances between the Pushtun Taliban and the Hazara, Tajik and Uzbek communities, the Taliban’s over-reliance on Pushtun leaders is a serious weakness. Roughly 93 per cent of Afghans say they are fearful of encountering the Taliban because of its extremist views and brutality.²¹

IS AFGHANISTAN IN THE REGION’S MIND?

Considering the prevailing state of affairs in Afghanistan, the region is confronted with two options. The first is to stay away from it; the country is too broken and too complex to be put together. The second option is to initiate a process, however long that process may take, to prevent conditions within Afghanistan from getting worse and the fallout from infecting the region as a whole. It is likely that this latter approach explains the recent behaviour of Russia, who did not consider Pakistan a suitable partner earlier in its goal for peace and stability in the region.

It is also evident that Russia does not consider India as important a player as Pakistan – and China and Iran – in the context of Afghanistan. In the joint statement that followed his talks with Pakistani foreign minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif in Moscow on 21 February 2018, Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov indicated he would like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) – dominated by China and Russia – to play a role in ensuring security vis-à-vis Afghanistan. In that context, he mentioned India. He said Russia would like to use the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure to develop practical measures to curtail the Islamic State in Afghanistan and prevent it from spreading to central Asia.

According to several RUSI interviewees, increased funding and military resources to the Mansour faction are coming from Iran and Russia. Interviewee E noted how ‘now most of Mullah Mansour’s group have close relations with Iran and get money, weapons and ammunition from Iran,’ and that ‘Russia is also providing aid like money, weapons and ammunition to the Taliban.’ Interviewee F claimed that the Russians, in particular, had provided night vision equipment and that Iran had facilitated meetings between Russia and the Taliban on the condition that the Afghani movement oppose the ISKP.²²

One of Russia’s concerns about Afghanistan is that it could become a major operational centre of the ISKP, many of whose members are from Russia and central Asia. Moscow also fears that considering the weak nature of the central Asian governments and the ongoing presence of a large number of Islamists in Russia’s southern Caucasus, a base in Afghanistan could become a stepping stone for the ISKP to challenge the weak central Asian nations in Russia’s backyard.

On the other hand, China, the most dynamic power to reckon with worldwide, is concerned that Chinese terrorists from Xinjiang Autonomous Region would build up their muscle inside Afghanistan by traveling through the Wakhan corridor, contiguous with China, Pakistan and Tajikistan. In addition to having an intensive dialogue with Islamabad and Kabul about stabilising Afghanistan, China is trying to secure its own Xinjiang province.

There were widespread reports that in a bid to extend its presence in the country, China wants to help Afghanistan establish a military base in the northeast province of Badakhshan. On 23 February 2018, *Afghanistan*

Times quoted the presidential office as stating: ‘Such military cooperation by the foreign countries will not take place without the approval of the national security council and the president of Afghanistan. . . . Cooperation between Afghanistan and China has wide dimensions, but the Chinese military presence in Afghanistan has not yet discussed.’²³

It is also becoming evident that China’s interest in stabilising Afghanistan is greater than that of Russia, Pakistan or Iran. Beijing has already launched its OBOR project. One component of OBOR winds its way from China’s east coast to Kazakhstan and then goes south, to Iran and beyond. Another component, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), now under implementation, will run through Pakistan from its northern-most point to the Arabian Sea in the south, traveling close to the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. In other words, Afghanistan sits in-between two arms of China’s OBOR initiative. China would very much like Afghanistan to be included in this economic project. Moreover, Afghanistan possesses rich mineral reserves, which would be of great use to China’s huge manufacturing machine.

Another of Afghanistan’s neighbours, Iran, has gotten closer to the Taliban, particularly to the Akhtar Mansour faction. The Mansour faction is apparently the dominant Taliban power in the Helmand-Kandahar region, reports indicate. Kabul wants to develop a close relationship with Tehran and will be necessarily careful in addressing the issue. Despite that constraint, some senior Afghan officials are concerned about this development. ‘We have received [intelligence] reports that Iran has obtained some weapons from Russia and delivered them to the Taliban. We cannot confirm it 100 percent. But intelligence reports show that the Taliban receive training inside Iran,’ Afghanistan’s Ariana News quoted Gulbahar Mujahid, the chief security commander of Farah province, as saying in a report published on 23 March 2018.

Other Farah officials also told Ariana News that the Iranian government has established military training centres for Taliban militants in Zabol, a city in Iran’s Sistan and Baluchistan provinces, and in the Khorasan region (Khorasan-e-Razavi and South Khorasan provinces). All three Iranian provinces share a border with Afghanistan. ‘We have received intelligence reports that training camps have been established in Iran’s

Nehbandan area [in Khorasan], and they provide military training to the Taliban. Indeed, Russia, with Iran's assistance, is equipping the Taliban with advanced weapons,' Farah's deputy governor Muhammad Younis Rasooli claimed.²⁴

Also noteworthy is the warning issued by the Herat-based jihadi leader Amir Ismail Khan to the Iranian government against providing military and financial assistance to the Taliban militants in Afghanistan. 'Support for the Taliban will strain our relations, and enemies will never be able to secure your borders,' he said at a gathering in western Herat province on the occasion of the twenty-eighth anniversary of the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan.²⁵

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Islamic State Is Growing in Strength in Afghanistan

JAI KUMAR VERMA

The Islamic State (IS), which lost ground in Iraq and Syria because of attacks by multiple forces, is trying to get established in Afghanistan and Pakistan as both these countries are thoroughly radicalised. The formation of Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISK-P) was a master stroke which attracted a large number of Muslim fanatics. Initially, the idea of establishing an Islamic caliphate beseeched the imprudent, the semi-literate and the madrasa-educated Muslim youths, but soon, educated but disenchanted Muslims also joined the outfit. The leaders of the IS met the influential persons of various terrorist outfits of Afghanistan. The IS made alliances with few groups while encouraging other organisations and fighters to join the outfit. The rebels of diverse outfits, including the Tehrik-i-Taliban-Pakistan (TTP), the Afghan Taliban, the Pakistan Taliban, al-Qaeda, terrorists of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and fighters from foreign countries, also joined the ISK-P. The ideology of an Islamic state is based on Salafi jihadism and Wahhabism. The outfit declared that it would establish the Islamic caliphate of the early days of Islam and hence all Muslims must pledge allegiance to the IS. Jihadi Salafism is supported not only by terrorist outfits but also by a large number of scholars, media houses and websites. The Afghan Taliban and other terrorist outfits are giving resistance to the IS as these outfits have family, ethnic and tribal ties while the IS is considered a foreign entity. The influence of the IS and other terrorist outfits cannot be mitigated unless US-led forces destroy the safe havens of terrorists in Pakistan. The Afghan government should also

take drastic actions to reform the present corrupt and sluggish bureaucracy, especially the Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF). The intelligence organisations must be galvanised so that they collect actionable intelligence.

The Islamic State, which was once the most powerful, dreadful and financially strong terrorist outfit, was devastated by multiple forces, including United States–led coalition forces, US-supported Iraqi forces, Syrian forces assisted by Russia and Iran, Iran-aided Popular Mobilization Forces and Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces. The outfit, in its glorious days, was controlling about 78,000 sq. km of land where 10 million people were residing but now has lost all the territory, and its chief, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, is either killed or on the run and in no position to command the outfit.¹

The IS grew rapidly and became a potent threat to numerous countries of the world, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States, Russia and Iran, just to name few. The IS, after having been routed out from Syria and Iraq, is trying to establish itself in Afghanistan and Pakistan as both these countries are thoroughly radicalised and it is easy to get a foothold in these countries. Iran and Russia, which have sizeable Sunni populations, were scared because of the rising IS influence in the region. The United States and other Western countries wanted to obliterate the IS as these countries have also disgruntled Muslim populations and a few of them had gone to Syria and Iraq to join the IS. And with passage of time, these hardened terrorists would incite several other countrymen to join the outfit. Not only this, as the IS is vanquished in Iraq and Syria, the nationals of Western world who had gone to Iraq and Syria to fight from the side of the IS would return to their motherland. These cynical terrorists would bring fundamentalism and extremism with them and will create a problem for the security agencies. Countries whose nationals had gone to fight in favour of the IS must chalk out a comprehensive plan to handle these jihadists when they return from Iraq and Syria.

The IS has put a lot of anti-West and pro-Islamic literature on the Internet, which radicalise the crestfallen Muslim youths, and a few of them have become ‘lone wolves’ and killed several innocent citizens. The problem

of lone wolves is very grave as it is difficult to spot them before they perform as they carry out terrorist acts alone and do not take assistance from others.

FORMATION OF ISLAMIC STATE-KHORASAN PROVINCE

The formation of the ISK-P in January 2015 by the Islamic State, which was previously known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), was a master stroke which attracted a large number of Muslim fanatics. Initially, the idea of establishing an Islamic caliphate appealed to the imprudent, the semi-literate and the madrassa-educated Muslim youths, who thought that once the Islamic caliphate comes into existence, all their tribulations would be over and Muslims would rule the Caliphate according to the shariat, which is an Islamic law and mentions how to behave in every aspect of life. The IS is also strengthening itself in Afghanistan so that it can attack Russia as well as US-led North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) troops in Afghanistan.²

The Islamic State propagated the formation of the ISK-P in Afghanistan as well as in contiguous areas in Pakistan. Not only this, leaders of the IS met the influential persons of various terrorist outfits of Afghanistan and stressed that the terrorist outfits should join the ISK-P. The IS continuously changed its strategy and adopted pragmatic policies; consequently, its influence increased rapidly, and at several places it surpassed the Taliban. The IS made alliances with few groups while encouraging other groups and fighters to join the outfit. The rebels of diverse outfits, including the TTP, the Afghan Taliban, the Pakistan Taliban, al-Qaeda, terrorists of the IMU and fighters from foreign countries, also joined the ISK-P. Terrorists of Al Tawhid Brigade, Ansar ul-Khilafat Wal-Jihad, Jundullah, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi al-Alami and Jamaat-ul-Ahrar also started supporting the IS. Mangal Bagh Afridi, of Lashkar-e-Islam (LeI), also established cordial relations with the IS. Haji Daud Mehsud, the previous chief of the TTP, also joined the IS, which enhanced its following and influence. A faction of the Afghan Taliban, led by Mullah Rasool, also declared its allegiance to the IS, which made the group more powerful.

Although the alliances from different terrorist factions in Pakistan were woolly, these alliances have a grave impact on the ISK-P in Afghanistan also, as the Durand Line does not obstruct the linkage between both countries. Secondly, the IS also got hold of the weaponry of these terrorist outfits.³

Hafiz Saeed Khan, former TTP leader, was appointed as its president, while Mullah Abdul Rauf Aliza, who was an Afghan Taliban leader, became the deputy leader of the outfit. In this way, the IS leadership appointed a chief from Pakistan's most powerful terrorist organisation while the deputy chief was from an Afghan terrorist outfit. Hence, the organisation could increase its influence on terrorist organisations of both countries. Nevertheless, Aliza was killed in 2015, while Saeed was eliminated in an air strike in July 2016.⁴

Abdul Rahim Muslim Dost, a well-known Salafi of Kunar province, enhanced the influence of the IS in Kunar and Nuristan provinces of Afghanistan. Saeed Khan took advantage of the ground prepared by Abdul Rahim in Kunar and Nangarhar and recruited a large number of Afghans and Pakistanis who took shelter in these areas, as the Pakistan army had launched an operation in North Waziristan. In the same way, Mullah Abdul Rauf recruited Afghans from southern provinces. As the IS had money power at that time, it recruited jihadists from more than 11 states, including Logar, which is near the capital city of Kabul.

IDEOLOGY OF THE IS

The ideology of 'the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant' or the 'Islamic State', which is also known as Daesh, is based on Salafi jihadism and Wahhabism. The outfit declared that it would establish the Islamic caliphate of the early days of Islam and hence all Muslims must pledge allegiance to the IS. Jihadi Salafism is supported not only by terrorist outfits but also by a large number of scholars, media houses and websites. Numerous persons propagated Salafism on the social media, and it was the reason that the outfit gained popularity all over the world in a short time.

The Islamic State believes in stringent application of Islamic law and emphasises that all Muslims must follow the Quran and Sunnah in

letter and spirit. The outfit is totally against Shias and believes that all non-Muslims and persons opposed to the ideology of the IS must be executed. IS ideologues claim that a large number of Muslims, predominantly Shias, are not following Islam truthfully and hence they must be punished. There are several cases, especially in Afghanistan and Pakistan, where the IS has killed Shias mercilessly. The IS, which believes in the extermination of all non-Muslims through jihad, is against democracy, freedom of speech and equal rights to women. The outfit claims that by establishing an Islamic caliphate all over the world, it would stop the affliction of Muslims in several countries, including Afghanistan, China, Somalia, Myanmar, Russia, India and Sri Lanka.

The IS advocates mass killings, brutality, beheadings, shootings and burning of caged prisoners with the ulterior motive to instil fear among fence-sitters and rivals. It also gives a feeling of revenge to its followers who had perceived feelings of injustices done towards Muslims by persons of other religions. It has also generated fear among its followers so that they dare not work against the outfit.⁵

RECRUITMENT BY THE ISK-P

Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world, and there is widespread poverty in rural as well as urban areas. However, the condition of rural areas is more precarious and according to estimates, 42 per cent of the population of Afghanistan lives below the poverty line. The unemployment rate is escalating and it is 40 per cent at present. The IS took advantage of the situation and recruited a large number of unemployed Afghan youths. The IS is against cultivation and smuggling of poppy in the areas it controls, and this has further enhanced the unemployment. The IS is paying about three times the government salary, and hence there are numerous cases when soldiers of the ANSF have deserted the force and joined the IS, taking along their weapons.⁶

The ISK-P has distributed leaflets and pamphlets written in Dari and Pashto languages explaining the ideology of the ISK-P and eulogising the terrorist acts carried out by the outfit. The IS literature also contains photographs of IS terrorists carrying black flags and wearing local Afghani

and Pakistani attires. The IS extensively uses the Internet to propagate its ideology. It has also distributed audios and videos in which it has appealed that all Muslims should join the outfit and strengthen the hands of Baghdadi, who is fighting for the establishment of an Islamic caliphate. The literature also appeals to people to oppose the Taliban and support the ISK-P.

After capturing an area, the IS compels the imams of the mosques to spread the ideology of the outfit and persuade the youths of the area to join the IS. The outfit propagates against al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban and discredits those small outfits which refuse to align with it. The IS is involved in the smuggling of timber, and it extracts protection money from businessmen of the area.⁷

The IS, eager to establish itself in Afghanistan, has spent a lot of money on the purchase and distribution of foreign arms, laptops, vehicles, etc. The IS also pays remuneration to its cadres as well as to their family members. Analysts mention that a large number of volunteers joined the IS not because of its ideology but as it pays handsomely to unemployed youths. Foreign warriors also come to Afghanistan and join the IS with their families as they are overwhelmed by the ideology of the IS and about the establishment of the ISK-P.

The IS, after making a stronghold in Jowzjan province of northern Afghanistan, is now settling its warriors, with their families, in the areas it controls. Fighters from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Chechnya and African countries, including Sudan, have also settled there. There are also reports that IS fighters from Western countries, including France and the United Kingdom, are also residing in this remote area. The outfit has taken control of the area and is recruiting local Afghans there. The outfit is propagating that it is the only force which can stand against Western powers, especially the US, and can defend Sunni Muslims from the onslaught of the Shias assisted by Iran. The IS has defeated the Taliban at several places in Afghanistan and evicted them from their areas of influence.

Prominent Taliban leaders, including Mullah Sufu Qayum, Maulavi Assadullah and Mullah Nemat Mufti, joined the IS along with their followers, which has enhanced the strength of the IS and reduced the influence of

the Taliban. Besides Afghanistan and Pakistan, the IS is also strengthening itself in Libya, the Sahara and Nigeria. But analysts mention that it is easy for the IS to establish its base in Afghanistan and the remote areas of Pakistan because of rampant poverty, lack of education and total radicalisation of the area.

Afghanistan officials claim that the outfit has more than 3,000 foreign terrorists also; nonetheless most of the foreign terrorists are from Pakistan and Uzbekistan. They further assert that the number of IS fighters would increase after the complete fall of Iraq and Syria as most of the fighters, instead of going back to their home countries, may reorganise in Afghanistan to continue their fight for the establishment of an Islamic caliphate. Besides foreign fighters, several disgruntled, criminal and unemployed fanatic Afghans and Pakistanis have also joined the outfit.⁸

In 2017, Ghulam Ghous Kumar was arrested, who recruited more than 130 persons for the Islamic State in the Punjab province, especially in the Lahore area. He was recruiting at the behest of Nabeel Ahmed, of Afghanistan. The ISK-P launched a recruitment drive in educational institutions and also recruited through mosques.

According to reports, 300 Afghans were recruited by the ISK-P from Darzab district and were trained by the outfit to carry out terrorist activities. Umar Mohajir, an ISK-P commander, recruited several young Afghans from Jowzjan and Sar-i-Pul provinces.

ISLAMIC STATE INFLUENCE IS INCREASING IN AFGHANISTAN

The influence of the IS is escalating in different parts of Afghanistan and the neighbouring areas of Pakistan, and the terrorist outfit has successfully carried out terrorist acts in the capital city of Kabul, Jalalabad, Ghor and Qushtipa, just to name a few. In these terrorist attacks, more than 10,000 Afghan security personnel were killed while about 16,000 were injured in 2017 alone. A United Nations survey mentioned that in the first nine months of 2017, about 10 Afghans lost their lives every day. The IS also carried out terrorist actions in Pakistan, mainly in Peshawar, Quetta, Karachi, Khuzdar, Sehwan and Charsada.

Afghan security forces have failed to curb the growing clout of the IS in the country because of unbridled corruption, outdated weapons, inadequate training and lack of conviction to fight the ideologically committed IS fighters. Besides these problems, Afghan society is a tribal society and tribes have age-old differences, maybe because of traditions and land and water disputes. Besides tribal disputes, the IS was also able to augment Shia-Sunni differences. IS suicide bombers have blasted Shia mosques and also not spared the dargahs (religious places) of Sufi saints. The outfit has destroyed churches. In December 2017, ISKP suicide bombers killed nine Christians and injured many more when they attacked the Bethel Memorial Methodist Church in Quetta. On 28 December 2017, ISKP suicide bombers attacked the Shia Cultural Centre in Kabul and killed more than 40 persons and injured even more. Again, in October 2017, ISKP terrorists killed more than 30 Shias after attacking a Shia mosque in Dashte-e-Barchi, near Kabul. Attacks on Shia mosques have increased the animosity between Shias and Sunnis, and terrorists of a few anti-Shia terrorist outfits, like Sipah-i-Sahaba and its offshoots, Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, Jundawalah, etc., have joined the IS. People have no faith in the deteriorated judicial system, and the tribal chiefs who occupied powerful posts in the administration helped only their families or their tribes.⁹

The Iranian intelligence minister rightly pointed out that although the IS is vanquished in Iraq and Syria and lost the areas it controlled, it did not surrender the weapons it possessed. Hence the outfit remains a big threat to world peace. The outfit is trying to establish itself in Afghanistan and Pakistan as both countries are radicalised and the IS already has a lot of sway in the area.¹⁰

The IS, which is anti-Shia, will also establish itself in the region where Sunni extremist organisations, like Sipah-i-Sahaba, Lashkar-i-Jhangvi and Jundawalah, have influence as these organisations are anti-Shia and claim that Shias are not true Muslims and they should be exterminated. These terrorist outfits have carried out several terrorist activities in which Shias were slaughtered.

The IS would also try to augment its influence in Russia and Iran as both these countries have sizeable disgruntled Sunni Muslim populations and they will like to join the IS. Not only this, the Uyghur Muslims in

Xinjiang province are fighting to break away from China and would also welcome the IS in their area. Islamic terrorists from Pakistan are assisting Uyghur secessionists, but they were suppressed mercilessly by China. If the IS occupies Afghanistan and some portion of Pakistan, the Islamic fanatics would certainly render more assistance to Uyghur Muslims in their freedom struggle. Hence a large area will come under the influence of the IS, which may be detrimental to world peace.

The death of the powerful Taliban leader Mullah Omar in Pakistan also helped the ISK-P to strengthen itself in Afghanistan. Mullah Omar, who had a bounty of USD 10 million on his head, worked as an adhesive between various Taliban factions, and his orders were obeyed ‘religiously’ by the Taliban. The Deobandi seminaries, which always propagated against the Shias, also helped the ISK-P in its recruitment drive as both Deobandi and the ISK-P profess that their aim is to eliminate the Shias. The ISK-P has vigorously used the social media to propagate its ideology in its recruitment drive.¹¹

FOREIGN TERRORISTS JOINING THE ISK-P

The idea of the ISK-P has lured not only young, uneducated Muslims of Afghanistan and Pakistan but even educated but disenchanted Muslims of foreign countries, especially of France and Algeria, who came to Afghanistan and joined the outfit. Several foreigners who were fighting in Iraq and Syria had to escape from there after the weakening of the IS and are now settled in Darzab and Qosh Tepa districts of Jowzjan province. According to reports, more than 40 foreigners of the Islamic State were recruiting local Afghans for the ISK-P while more than 200 foreign terrorists were staying in Bibi Mariam village in Darzab.

PROBLEMS FACED BY THE IS IN AFGHANISTAN

The IS, which is trying hard to establish itself in Afghanistan, is facing strong resistance from the Afghan Taliban as the Afghan Taliban has local family and ethnic ties and also gets support from its tribes while the IS

is considered a foreign entity and in several areas locals gave tough resistance to the IS in its recruitment drive.¹²

Its lack of local roots, waning recruitment and consistent losses on the battlefield have created numerous obstacles to the IS's ascent in the region. The Islamic State has so far failed to recreate its success in Syria and Iraq and could not establish a stronghold in Afghanistan. Its attempts to expand into a country that has hosted both the Taliban and al-Qaeda strongholds for decades were rebuffed, confining its current presence to sparse pockets in eastern Afghanistan. The group's brutality and inflexible ideology have alienated most local Afghans and caused defections within its own ranks. It is losing ground from a combination of Taliban pushback, Afghan security forces operations and US-targeted air strikes. In March 2016, Afghan president Ashraf Ghani declared that Afghanistan would be a 'graveyard' for the Islamic State. The ultimate demise of the IS in Afghanistan may still be too early to predict.

The Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), which wants to attain strategic depth in Afghanistan, is also assisting diverse terrorist outfits, including the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani network. The ISI not only provides financial assistance but also gives safe sanctuaries in Pakistan after the Taliban and the Haqqani network carry out terrorist activities in Afghanistan. Both these outfits are working against the IS. Analysts declare that Iranian intelligence agencies also assist Shia terrorist outfits so that the influence of the IS can be restrained as the establishment of the ISK-P is dangerous for Iran.

WAY FORWARD

The rising influence of the IS in Afghanistan and Pakistan is precarious for world peace; hence US-led NATO forces should not leave the country unless they vanquish the Islamic State; otherwise the IS will propagate it as its victory and will enhance its influence in nearby countries, especially Pakistan and Bangladesh, and will create problems in India too.

The world community cannot leave this region at the mercy of terrorists because very soon, they will occupy large parts of Afghanistan and also the restive province of Balochistan, Federally Administered Tribal

Areas (FATA), Waziristan and Karachi and even some portion of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The US, the lone superpower, as well as forces of several other countries have not managed to wipe out terrorist outfits from Afghanistan although efforts have been made for the last about 17 years to annihilate terrorist outfits. These countries have not succeeded as all of them are working with different agendas and no joint operations has ever been launched. If forces of all countries, including the US, Russia, Iran, Pakistan and China, work together, terrorist organisations can be wiped out from Afghanistan.

US-led NATO troops killed Abdul Hasib, chief of the outfit in July 2017, after a gunfight in Nangarhar province. The US also dropped the largest and most powerful non-nuclear bomb, on Achin district of Nangarhar province, in April and killed more than 90 combatants of the IS. In February and March 2017, US-led NATO troops carried out more than 400 air raids on the hideouts of the IS in Afghanistan, but the influence of the IS is not decreasing.¹³

Nevertheless, terrorism and the influence of diverse terrorist organisations in Afghanistan cannot be eradicated unless the US and other forces do not control Pakistan, which has emerged as the epicentre of terrorism. Pakistan, which has waged a low-intensity war against India and wants to achieve strategic depth in Afghanistan, has constituted several terrorist outfits in the country. The sinister ISI has also created a big terrorist infrastructure where the terrorists are trained in weapon handling, assembling of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), selection and reconnaissance of targets and carrying out of terrorist activities.

The US administration, which has lost several American soldiers and already spent billions of dollars in Afghanistan, has understood that it cannot overcome terrorist outfits unless Pakistan stops providing them safe havens. At present, terrorist outfits, after committing terrorist acts in Afghanistan, return to their hiding places, which are located in Pakistan. Washington has shelved the \$1 billion in assistance for military purchases and \$900 million aid for counterterrorism to Pakistan. Nonetheless, the suspension of aid is too little and too late and Pakistan will not discontinue assistance to or stop harbouring terrorists.

China, which claims to be an all-weather friend of Pakistan, has already offered financial and other types of assistance to Pakistan as the latter is fulfilling its objectives. Islamabad-assisted terrorists are attacking US-led NATO forces. Hence, the US is bleeding in Afghanistan while the economic progress of India is hampered because diverse ISI-assisted terrorist outfits are carrying out terrorist activities in India, especially in Jammu & Kashmir. The analysts also mention that China does not give financial assistance but it gives loan and that too at high interest rates to the smaller countries and when these countries fail to repay the loan, China occupies strategic projects in the country.

Sri Lanka is the latest victim: it had to hand over Hambantota Port on a 99-year lease in December 2017 to two new Chinese companies, namely Hambantota International Port Group (HIPG) and Hambantota International Port Services (HIPS). The holding company of both these companies is China Merchants Port Holdings Company. Although Sri Lanka promised that the port will not be used against India, Hambantota is located at the southern coast and it will give China dangerous access to the Indian Ocean. China has signed a free trade agreement with Maldives and also opened an overseas military base at Djibouti. Analysts claim that China, which has already taken over control of Gwadar Port, will sooner or later occupy some arable land in Pakistan as Chinese population is more than the cultivable land available in China. China has emerged as the biggest importer of food items in the world.¹⁴

Pakistan is radicalised up to the extent that it is difficult for any government to take stringent actions against the terrorist outfits as several of them were created and are assisted by the military controlled ISI. Secondly, the roots of the madrassa culture is very deep in the country and most of the terrorists are the product of madrassas. According to a report, there are more than 45,000 madrassas in Pakistan, of diverse faiths and beliefs. A large number of madrassas enhance Islamic fundamentalism in the country. A civilian or military government cannot take action against madrassas, who are responsible for the spread of terrorism in Pakistan.

The Pakistan government has failed to take action against terrorist outfits. Hence it is essential that the world community, led by the US, destroy the training centres and exterminate leaders of terrorist outfits as

well as Pakistan military personnel who are training these enemies of mankind. The IS or any terrorist outfit in Afghanistan cannot be ruined unless the hideouts in Pakistan are destroyed.

The role of intelligence organisations in curbing terrorism cannot be over-emphasised. Intelligence organisations must provide actionable intelligence so that the ANSF can plan and exterminate terrorists. Hence it is essential that the Afghan government galvanise intelligence organisations and only well-trained and dedicated officers and staff are deployed to collect intelligence. The first few batches of intelligence officers can be sent to India for training, and later, some Indian-trained intelligence officers can be sent to Afghanistan for training their personnel. After some time, foreign-trained Afghan intelligence officers can train their officers and staff. In intelligence, only collection is not enough; it must be disseminated within the shortest time possible so that requisite action can be taken.¹⁵

The political parties must broaden their base, and their leaders should mingle with electorates. The election procedure should be more transparent so that the faith of the public is restored. The government should try to provide basic amenities to the public even in the remote areas, and land reforms should be implemented.

The Afghan government should also take drastic actions to reform the present corrupt and sluggish bureaucracy. It must generate employment, and there should be overall economic development of the country. The literacy rate of Afghanistan is one of the poorest in the world, and sincere efforts should be made to enhance job-oriented education. The government should make genuine efforts to redress legitimate grievances of the public. It is important that the masses develop faith in the capability of the government. Only then would they relinquish terrorist outfits and join the mainstream. At present, the public feels that although the IS is atrocious, primitive and foreign, it is still better than the dishonest government.

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Changing US Policies Towards South Asia and the Indo-Pacific

ASHOK KAPUR

The election of President Donald J. Trump unleashed major conceptual and policy changes in the US government's orientation towards this area. A sharp contrast emerged between the Obama and the Trump views of the world and their respective approaches. Obama said he would lead from behind; he stressed climate change issues, he did not like American exceptionalism and he apologised to the Arab world about the past behaviour of the US. Trump instead emphasised America-first policies; he argued that America was back on the world stage, with the emphasis on US nationalism and national interests as the benchmark to judge relationships with allies and rivals, like Russia and China. Trump rejects the idea of a multilateral and multicultural utopia; he called out 'Islamic terror' by name, which Obama has declined to do, and he unleashed the US military to fight and defeat ISIS and to stabilise Afghanistan. He called out NATO allies for not paying their membership dues, and he called out China and Mexico for pursuing unfair trade practices. He escalated the rhetoric against the North Korean missile and nuclear programme and appeared to be ready to go to war in a volatile region.

Writing for the Council on Foreign Relations in New York (26 December 2017), Elliot Abrams noted the major shifts.

- There was an emphasis on great power competition, with the public declaration that Russia and China were strategic rivals but they had to be engaged and challenged. This approach gave US policy a geopolitical and balance-of-power orientation, and a tangible sign was that Trump authorised the flow of lethal military aid to Ukraine even

as he did not come out openly to say that Russia had interfered in the 2016 election to help him.

- Missing from the Trump rhetoric was any focus on the promotion of human rights and democracy in the world; this was in sharp contrast to Obama's approach.
- Trade relations were emphasised, but the focus appeared to stress trade disputes with Mexico and China and the use of sanctions – threats and actual sanctions – in a limited and controlled way as leverage in policy matters.
- Trump eliminated a key assumption in US foreign policy since the 1940s which had stressed as a given that the Israel-Palestine dispute was the centre of the Middle East conflict. Instead, Trump chose to build strategic ties with the Sunni states (Saudi Arabia and the Gulf kingdoms) and strengthened ties with Israel and tacitly supported the build-up of Israel-Saudi ties. Jihadis and Iranians were the major problem in the Middle East, not Israel in the Trumpian view. The view was that countries would find common ground with Israel to fight Islamic terror.

TRUMP HAS CHANGED THE DYNAMICS OF THE SOUTH ASIA AND INDO-PACIFIC WORLD

Obama's foreign policy towards Asia and the Indo-Pacific world had a pattern of activism, but it did not have a coherent plan of action which brought American power into play in Asia and the Indo-Pacific world. Language matters, and Trump is the first president to use the term 'Indo-Pacific', which brings into play the growing importance of India as a global player and as a part of the major contests of the century – between China and India and between the power and interests of the US and its allies (Japan, Australia, South Korea and Taiwan). 'Indo-Pacific' implies a connectivity between countries which are located in the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean worlds, where Indonesia is a territorial and diplomatic bridge between the two. Indonesia is an interesting strategic partner for many countries in Asia because of its strategic location astride the Malacca Straits and because it houses a large Muslim population which has a

moderate orientation, it is rich in resources and it has an outward-looking international personality. By highlighting the strategic rivalries with China and Russia, Trump's orientation provides a long-term focus towards Asian and maritime international relations, and furthermore, it shows a willingness to call out bad behaviour by Asian countries. Trump has rejected Obama's policy of strategic patience with North Korea and instead took the relationship to a high level of tension, but at the same time, he has spoken of his desire to have a far-reaching diplomatic agreement to stabilise the region on his terms. The approach is to escalate and seek negotiation, and despite Trump's public bluster against Kim Jong Un, Trump's actions so far do not indicate a commitment to go to war. Clearly, North Korea and the US, and China and South Korea, are now engaged in a diplomatic game, which was not the case during Obama's tenure. The UN Security Council is also engaged, as are the Russians and Chinese, as is evident by their cooperation with two major UN Security Council resolutions increasing sanctions against North Korea. It is interesting that China is a strategic rival but the Trump policy of sanctioning Chinese banks and North Korean entities has induced cooperation with the US at the UN. There seems to be a method to Trump's 'crazy' conduct. With China, Trump the candidate had threatened a trade war because of the belief that it was a currency manipulator and engaged in unfair trade practices. But Trump the president has been measured in the application of pressure on China, and the intent is to secure China's cooperation in regional security affairs. There is a widespread belief that China is now the acknowledged world leader because of Trump's isolationist and protectionist stance, but this may be a simplistic view. Trump's actions show that he will not leave China alone to pursue its strategic ambitions, and the Trump signals are that America is there to stay in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. The Trump view as disclosed in the National Security statement of 17 December 2017 is that US leadership is essential because in its absence, bad actors fill the vacuum. His administration rejects the view, which Obama and the European leaders propagated, that the inclusion of bad actors in globalisation and multilateral projects and institutions and world trading arrangements would tame the bad actors and create an incentive for them to be good in the international sphere and in their domestic politics.

Obama used the nuclear deal with Iran as an example of restraining Iran in the nuclear and missile sphere, but Trump has argued that Iran is still a bad actor, as is evident by its policies in the Middle East, and for this reason, US leadership, Trump style, is needed to curb Iran's expansionist impulses. There is a huge contrast between Obama's 'lead from behind' approach and Trump's 'escalate and negotiate' approach. Obama was playing to the belief in human progress through rational discourse. Trump has a Hobbesian view of human nature. Human beings are rational up to a point, but when peaceful discourse fails, then the fear of punishment is required to induce rational calculation of risks and rewards. Trump's actions show that he does not care for Obama's preachiness about democracy and human rights and instead values the importance of democracy, rights and rule of law as well as domestic prosperity of Americans and make this the basis of the American appeal to the world.

TRUMP'S NATIONAL SECURITY AIMS AND ASSUMPTIONS REGARDING THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR ASIANS

In December 2017, the Trump administration unveiled its strategic vision for the region, and because his views and policy prescriptions are at odds with China's, we are witnessing a clash of civilisations at the ideological and policy levels. This clash is the context in which other Asian powers have to function. This clash does not imply that war is inevitable between China and the US or among regional Asian powers, but it implies that many contests of varying degrees of importance are festering in the region. I call them contests of the twenty-first century.

Some contests are appearing on a pan-Asian scale, and some have a narrow territorial and ideological focus. Most have historical roots, and they span decades of controversies. These contests are deeply embedded in the domestic structures and histories of the countries concerned, as in the cases of Pakistan and India, China and India, China and Vietnam, the two Koreas, and China and the US. For this reason, diplomatic and strategic affairs must take into account the views and interests of domestic

constituents of Asians and the phenomena of nationalism and national interests, which often clash with theories and rhetoric about globalism, multilateralism and international security concepts. However, since 1945, no world leader has been able to reconcile the clash between competing national interests and the views of the international security community. This is an important point because nationalism and national interests have strong roots among Asian societies and state institutions and the European project to establish a European collective personality does not have a resonance among Asian leaders and peoples even if some leaders use the rhetoric of globalism and multilateralism. But if we scratch the surface, there are strong and competing national interests behind the mask of globalism and multilateral statements.

Below I set out the ideological and policy clash between the Trump and the Xi Jinping visions of their respective futures in the Indo-Pacific sphere, I should state that these competing views represent the contemporary strategic overlay in the region which stands in contrast with the US-Soviet overlay in world affairs during the Cold War era (1945–1980). The reader is reminded that this overlay, and the contention it represents, is on-going, there is no clear trend line in favour of the Chinese and the other side(s) led by the US, and it is up to the reader to choose between three possible outcomes: (i) that China becomes the dominant player in the Indo-Ocean world, (ii) that the US checkmates China in different spheres and the contention carries on and (iii) in the case (ii) happens, the major and minor Asian powers gain the space and the opportunities to pursue their interests with the aid of their allies.

Let me turn first to the outline of the Trumpian view of the Indo-Pacific region and then turn to the Chinese view. What are the key points and nuances in the Trump administration's security orientation? The full text of the statement was published in the *Los Angeles Times* of 18 December 2017, titled 'Read the Full Text of President Trump's National Security Strategy'. The document has the following elements which are noteworthy:

The 'Indo-Pacific' is recognised as a distinct region, which is in contrast with the traditional post-1945 US foreign policy view of Asia-

Pacific. This region has a territorial scope from the west coast of India to the United States' west.

- The Indo-Pacific area is recognised as the arena of geopolitical competition between the major powers, especially China and Russia – both strategic rivals. The competition is between free and repressive visions of world order, and this competition is taking place in this region. The US policy according to this document is 'to sustain favourable balances of power'.
- India's emergence as a 'leading global power' and a strong strategic and defence partner is highlighted, as is a view of the main US alliance partners: Japan, Australia and India.

The section on South and Central Asia recognises that the subcontinent represents a quarter of the world's population. South Asia is important because it spans terrorist threats from the Middle East to the subcontinent; the US, it is noted, faces 'transnational terrorist' threats, and the finger is pointed at militants who operate 'from within Pakistan'. The US pointedly asks Pakistan not to engage in destabilising behaviour. The Trump administration lays down another marker: it seeks a self-reliant Afghanistan. The nuclear threat is another marker. The fear of an Indo-Pakistani nuclear exchange is a 'key concern' that requires diplomatic attention. Pakistan's nuclear program is linked to the terrorist issue; the US seeks to prevent nuclear weapons, technology and materials from falling into terrorist hands. These concerns have been expressed by others, including the Obama administration, but the new element is that the Trump administration is putting pressure on the Pakistani government and military to roll back its support to the Haqqani network and to remedy its policy of 'lies and deceit' towards the US. The suspension of military aid in billions has the support of the US Congress, and while the Pentagon still values a relationship with Pakistan as before, the Trump administration requires Pakistan cooperation to stabilise Afghanistan and not to use the Haqqani network to pursue Pakistani aims in the region. This element is a new development in the American thought process, which signals a clear departure from the traditional (1950–2015) US policy to maintain an Indo-Pakistani balance by retaining its links with the Pakistani military and intelligence services.

Pakistan has traditionally argued that Kashmir is the core issue and Indo-Pakistani relations are the main pillars of South Asian security. The Trump approach makes several significant departures: by seeking to 'deepen' its strategic partnership with India and support India's leadership role in Indian Ocean security and the broader region, Trump, unlike Obama, has pitched India's role in the wider Indo-Pacific region, and in the American estimation, South Asia means Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, but the burden is not on India to solve the Kashmir issue by making concessions to Pakistan. The burden now is on Pakistan to show good faith by intensifying its counterterrorism efforts and to manage effectively its nuclear arsenal. The importance of reforms in Afghan governance practices is highlighted, but Pakistan's importance is in cleaning up its act within Pakistan and Afghanistan and Pakistan is no longer regarded as a major role model in the Indo-Pacific sphere. In short, Pakistan has been cut to size. The burden now is on China to make up the shortfall in foreign military aid to Pakistan or for Pakistan to change its priorities and ensure that it is not totally dependent on China's benign policy, which is motivated by Beijing's requirement to maintain its links with a key ally and to stabilise its position in Gwadar and to build the Belt and Road project as well as the road link between Tibet and the Karakoram Highway. An implication is that the Trump administration is raising the costs of China's political investment in Pakistan precisely when the Trump administration has brought into play in Beijing's decision-making apparatus the costs of maintaining a double-faced policy towards North Korean nuclear and missile program. The US has the means and the determination through the UN Security Council and its unilateral sanctions policy to inflict harm on Chinese banks and to use this policy and the threat of further escalation to induce China's leadership to rethink its priorities vis-à-vis North Korea and the US government. The Pakistan issue does not rise to the level of the North Korean threat in US thinking, but the Trump national security document lays down markers which are now a part of the US-Pakistan-US Congress-Pentagon conversation that requires new policy changes on Pakistan's part.

The counterpoint to the Western view of the Asia-Pacific or the Indo-Pacific region (the Chinese prefer the former, and the Trump

administration prefers the latter) is provided in a detailed study by the French writer Martin Jacques in his book *When China Rules the World: The Rise of the Middle Kingdom and the End of the Western World* (Allen Lane, London, 2009). Jacques makes several points.

- For 200 years, we have lived in a West-made world system where ‘modern’ meant ‘Western’ rules and institutions were the dominant ways to organise the diplomatic-political, economic and military arrangements and relationships in the world.
- The twenty-first century is different because of the rise of powerful non-Western countries.
- In the new emerging world, China will be the central player, and China has distinctive characteristics. It is a large continental state; its attitudes, values and character predate its rise as a nation state in 1949; its economic impact is well known, and its rise means the end of Western dominance. As it assumes its traditional position of Middle Kingdom, it will, or is, re-establishing its old tribute system with a hierarchical order; this implies a belief in a racial hierarchy and Chinese superiority in a world of different races; the Middle Kingdom name for China is ‘Zhongguo’. The tribute system accepts China’s superiority in return for its protection and generosity. As a hierarchical system, it does not accept the Western legal idea of sovereign equality of states or a system of states which operates according to the principle of balance of power or divided power; the alternative to the balance-of-power system is an imperial system which Western-minded leaders reject and which China is pursuing without a formal declaration. (See Chapter 9 of Jacques’s book.)
- China’s policies and its internal and international position since 1949 are based on a combination of 5000 years of civilisation. Of the population, 92% consists of the Han race, and its political-diplomatic-military history follows the principle of order through imperialism and social and political hierarchy based on China’s superior position. Here civilisation, race and imperial history make for a powerful combination which is baked into the Chinese psyche at the elite and popular levels, and this consciousness is not limited to the Chinese people within China. It appeals to the Chinese in Hong Kong and the overseas

Chinese, with perhaps the exception of Taiwan because this area is home to a vibrant Taiwanese nationalism and identity which is distinct from the Chinese character because of Taiwan's political and military history and because Taiwan has established its combination of democracy and capitalism and an alliance with the US. The Chinese combination as propagated by its large Communist Party and its powerful state apparatus and as accepted by the Chinese population with limited dissent makes the core of China's 'modern' identity. But it is based on a fundamental distinction between two worlds: Chinese and non-Chinese. And the core struggle which China faces – this is my opinion – is for Beijing to neutralise or defeat the non-Chinese world if the Maoist/Xi Jinping vision is to become real. The contention between the two worlds is also the struggle between the Chinese and the Western visions of 'modern' international relations. A key character in this contention is that the Western view relies on a combination of capitalism and democracy as the basis of its modernisation drive, along with the acquisition of power, while the Chinese view adopted the capitalist leg of modernisation but rejects the necessity of democratic politics except under the auspices of the Chinese political leadership, as in the case of controlled elections in Hong Kong and within China at the local levels. For China today, these struggles are real in my view, but Martin Jacques does not address these contentions. It is clear, however, that China's leaders do not accept the Western system of international relations and are openly and keenly pushing their opposition to the Western formulations and instead are using Western rhetoric about globalisation, multipolarity and regional cooperation arrangements to push the Chinese approach as outlined above.

WHAT ARE THE BIG DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CHINA'S AND WESTERN APPROACHES?

There is a widespread belief in Western thinking about the central importance of a liberal order that relies on two pillars: capitalism and democracy. This approach rejects imperialism and accepts balance of power

or divided power and shared power among several power centres as the basis of international relations and international consent about the policies, standard of behaviour and values in the modern world. Its rules and institutions are: (i) to go to war if necessary against bad actors, as in World War II and the American fight against Japanese imperialism; (ii) to rely on diplomacy, which implies a willingness to negotiate and compromise; (iii) to rely on alliances with strong and weak likeminded countries; and (iv) to reject a theocratic basis to organise international relations and rely instead on the principle that states and nation states are legally sovereign and are not subject to a higher theocratic authority, such as the Pope in Vatican or a caliphate in the Middle East which answers to the call of the Prophet and only Allah in the management of political, economic and social relations on earth. The Western liberal project is still a work in progress in the ex-colonial countries. The belief in state sovereignty and capitalism has gained ground in many countries in the Middle East, South and South East Asia, East Asia and in parts of Africa and South America; and the principles of organising relationships on the basis of alliances, balance of power, diplomacy and war are evolving, but the practice of democracy and the widespread acceptance of transparent democratic principles have an uneven record in many Middle Eastern countries, such as Egypt, Iran and Saudi Arabia (and there are others in the region and in Africa); moreover, with the proliferation of smuggling networks and warlordism in North Africa, Western ideas and practices are not in play.

In comparison, China's theoretical and practical policy construct follows the path of imperial, albeit a benign kind in the Chinese view. Modern China of the Xi Jinping variety (not Maoist variety) and the rhetoric and paths adopted by post-Mao leaders in China favour a return to the traditional tribute system, which combines alliance activity with likeminded countries who seek China's protection and benevolence. The belief is that a combination of civilisational history, racial purity of the Han people and their belief in their cultural superiority and China's strategic location as it borders on East Asia, the Pacific region and Central Asia, and South and South East Asia give Beijing the case that the rise of China and its dominance of Asian and world affairs is historically inevitable. In this narrative, Trump's America is seen as inwardly drawn and is seen as

likely to lose what the Chinese theorists and their friends in the West believe is moving forward as a zero-sum game.

Two questions arise.

1. Will the Western system of international rules and institutions, and democracy and capitalism to back up this system, co-opt China as it follows the path of capitalism into the Western framework, or is this unlikely given that the Chinese Communist Party is devoted to the principle of one-party rule and authoritarian rule based on economic reforms and rejection of political liberalism?
2. Will China's diplomacy and alliance-building activity gradually move Asian countries into China's orbit and induce acceptance of its principles of a tribute system centred on the Middle Kingdom? In doing so, will China's actions shrink the diplomatic, economic and military space of Western countries and Asian middle powers and enlarge that of China and its regional allies?

There are no easy answers to these questions because the thinking and actions in support of the first and the second question are both in play. In the Indo-Pacific area, evidence of activities in support of both propositions exist but the evidence in either case is not conclusive. So our exercise is to understand the pathway and its milestones in China's approach. After 1949, China's advancement of its activities in relation to the non-Chinese world has had a shorter time span even though its rise has had an impressive trajectory. The China model of dealing with the non-Chinese world must be compared to the Western approach, which has a longer pedigree and roots in European and American politics for over 200 years. In addition, the history of colonial expansion left a Western imprint on societies in the Middle East, Asia and Africa in the form of acceptance of state institutions, state sovereignty and the role of law and international institutions, such as the UN and regional organisations, and the international criminal court. Note, however, that the acceptance of such Western arrangements is not total or universal; it varies with the style and interests of local leaders and local traditions.

Let us review the basis of China's experiment with Middle Kingdom imperialism or the tribute system. Note that the approach believes in a

hierarchical order even though the People's Republic of China publicly believes in the sovereign equality of nations. Note that a tribute system approach and a sovereign equality approach are theoretically and practically incompatible. Chapter 9 in Martin Jacques's book explains the combination of Chinese imperial history, the history of the Han race and its belief in its racial purity and superiority and the belief in a Middle Kingdom-centred hierarchical political order. In this mindset, the belief in expansionism, particularly towards its southern zone (the Himalayas, South Asia and South East Asia and the South China seas), is a natural expression of China's civilising mission. Jacques (Chapter 9) discusses the Middle Kingdom complex of the Chinese people. The belief in Han superiority gained ground in late-nineteenth century, and Jacques (pp. 236–242) outlines the geopolitical basis of China's approach to the non-Chinese world. At the centre is the royal domain. Then comes the princely domain. The third circle is the pacification zone. The fourth is the zone of allied barbarians. The fifth and final zone is that of savages. The challenge to the reader and to this writer is to assess where particular countries fall on this hierarchical scale. Are the Himalayan kingdoms (Nepal and Bhutan) in the pacification zone? Is Pakistan in the second or the fourth domain? Where is India in this scheme – zone 5? And the US?

CHINA'S FIXED STRATEGIC CONCEPT AND AMBITION AND HER TACTICAL FLEXIBILITY TO EXPLOIT CONTRADICTIONS

China's fixed strategic concept is to move towards hegemony over her Asian neighbours. Beijing has been open in its statements and actions about her ambitions to increase its orbit and to reduce that of her strategic rivals – the US, Japan and India in particular. Martin Jacques (p. 283) quotes that Chinese specialists explain her regional strategy in the way of Deng Xiaoping: '[P]articipate actively, demonstrate restraint, offer reassurance, open markets, foster interdependence, create common interests and reduce conflict.'

Jacques quotes a Singaporean diplomat's view in 2004, saying that the 'balance of influence is shifting against the United States' (p. 285). In

support of this view, it is argued that China has succeeded in bringing several South East Asian countries – Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar and South Korea – into its orbit and it is trying to do the same with Australia and Taiwan and several neighbours of India – Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Maldives are also within the Chinese orbit and Pakistan is mostly in China's orbit as well. Also China's unilateral expansion in the South China seas points to its willingness and ability to engage the naval capacity and the political will of the US and its regional allies.

There are three counterpoints to the view that China's rise and hegemony are inevitable. The first is that the elephant in the room is the US, post-Obama, and China's neighbours who are US allies and who fear the dangers of expansionism by a major power which uses charm diplomacy to cover her strategic ambition to Finlandise her neighbours by using bilateral inducements and threats. The US gained a hegemonic position in Asia-Pacific following the end of World War II and the victory over Japan in 1945. Its control of Pacific islands and Diego Garcia as well as the major ports in the Pacific and the Gulf regions gave it unparalleled access to major strategic choke points. During the Cold War, the US held the upper hand in the contention with the major communist powers, and with the help of local allies in the Middle East, Asia and other parts of the world, the US invariably prevailed. Undoubtedly, the balance of influence, but not necessarily the balance of power, began to shift during the eight years of Obama's tenure, but notice that the Trump National security paper mentioned earlier adopts an explicit China focus, with the emphasis against her expansionism in the South China seas and, by Washington's encouragement, that South Asian countries should maintain their sovereignty as China's influence expands.

The second counterpoint is that the US-China struggle to widen their orbit of influence is not a zero-sum game. There is a second elephant in the room, namely, the middle powers in the Indo-Pacific region: Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, Indonesia, India and Iran. These countries have the ambition and the diplomatic skill and the economic and military strength to build their respective interests, influence and power to protect themselves in matters of their sovereignty, and they have the support of their country's nationalism and history to do so; that is, the ruling elites

in South and South Eastern Asian countries have the support of their people to pursue their policies in a legitimate and effective fashion. These countries do not fully embrace the American or the Chinese models, they pick and choose what is in their interest and they have the skill and the determination to negotiate with the Americans and the Chinese. A variety of different approaches have emerged. For example, in Myanmar, there are several competing points of power and influence. The Burmese military holds preponderant military and political power, but it shares the latter with Han Si Kyi to gain political legitimacy by accepting democratic elections under conditions. Despite the proximity to Yunnan and China's interest in building a land bridge from Yunnan to the Bay of Bengal and to exploit Burmese resources for China's advantage, the Myanmar government has declined to roll over, unlike Pakistan. Myanmar now is the centre of a contest between Chinese and Indian influence, and this has been labelled as a contest of the century. Another example is Vietnam's. Because of the history of the Sino-Vietnamese territorial and political conflicts, Vietnamese nationalism and power are in play in that part of the world. Vietnam's policy has shown flexibility inasmuch as the two former enemies, Vietnam and the US, have now joined hands to work together as economic and military partners to check China's expansionism in the region. Note here that triangular relationships (in this case between Vietnam, China and the US) of this kind are shaping regional power politics and expanding the space, for Vietnam and the US in this case, to check China's space.

In East Asia, the pattern of triangulation (or even a pentagonal type of relationship involving Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Australia and India) is gaining ground as the Trump administration has tightened economic sanctions against North Korean and Chinese banks and this has won the support of all UN Security Council members. China has not prevailed in slowing the effects of US diplomacy. China's space with North Korea – once described as a link between the lips and the teeth – is now frayed. If Kim Jong Un is sincere about denuclearisation as the price to gain a meeting with President Trump and the legitimacy such a meeting will confer on a pariah regime, that is a sign that diplomacy is working. Of course, talks do not mean that they will result in successful negotiations, but in this case, a pattern of diplomatic engagement has set in with one

takeaway: ‘escalate and negotiate’ can be a path forward in regions of conflict or tension.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE

Japan’s political space has grown, with tangible signs of North Korean missile and nuclear activities and with the fear that China’s expansionism could place Japan’s international trade at risk in the South China seas; Japan’s prime minister Abe is moving towards an active defence modernisation program in alliance with the US and South Korea, and this is part of the pattern of military modernisation of South Korea and Taiwan in response to China’s activities. Sun Tzu had warned that a good general wins a conflict by attacking the enemy’s mind and alliances; in the situation in the Indo-Pacific world now, China’s neighbours are consolidating their thinking and policies by developing means and policies to check China’s ambitions, be it in the South China seas, or in Doklam, or in Gwadar, or in the Belt and Road initiative or by its aggressive military development and by its position as a leader in cyber warfare. An open question is whether the US government under Trump will continue to squeeze Beijing’s new emperor, Xi Jinping, on issues like intellectual property theft and trade issues to secure China’s cooperation in regional and international security and economic affairs. This was done to induce China’s cooperation by coercive US economic sanctions diplomacy against North Korean and Chinese economic interests to secure China’s pressure on North Korea’s regime. If these practices become a pattern in US-China economic and political relations, then one may hypothesise that China’s charm diplomacy has its limits and China’s domestic space is vulnerable to foreign interventions.

Note that British and American practitioners in the nineteenth century were able to undermine the policies of the Chinese imperial government by pressuring it to open up to Western commerce and other pressures, including warfare, which led China to cede Hong Kong to Britain. I have outlined the pattern of Chinese reactions to Western pressures and its ability to retreat and to negotiate in my Sapru House paper (‘China’s Changing Approach to Strategy and Negotiations: Past and Present,’ Indian

Council of World Affairs, New Delhi, January 2013). So even as China's strategic concept is fixed on the idea of Chinese hegemony, the tactical concept emphasises the importance of flexibility and manoeuvrability to gain space for China's statecraft. Key here is China's assessment of 'Shi', or the situation in which China sees itself operating.

The third counterpoint is that China has domestic and external vulnerabilities. Just as China's strategists seek to exploit contradictions (like the rulers of British India) in the enemy camp, leaders in the non-Chinese world are also able to exploit the contradictions in China's camp if – and this is a big if – they choose to undertake defensive and offensive measures to check China's orbit. Note the contrast between Obama's policy of 'strategic patience' with North Korea and China and Trump's policy declaring China and Russia as US strategic rivals. Strategic patience is a defensive response; it implies that China would change its orientation because its involvement in global institutions would tame its nationalism and its hegemonic aims. Declaring China to be a strategic rival, on the other hand, shows an inclination to engage China by active measures and to exploit its external and internal pressure points. What are they?

Mao's writings revealed an important truth. Despite its size, China could not pursue its interests unaided; it needed allies, hence the importance of a united front strategy against 'imperialism'. North Korea has been an ally, but as the Trump administration has engaged the Kim regime by a pattern of harsh rhetoric, economic sanctions and willingness to go to war, the North has turned to diplomacy with the South, and at the time this article is being written article (12 March 2018), it is willing to discuss denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula if regime security is assured for the Kim government. A North Korean–South Korean dialogue with the US government in the background has the potential to denuclearise the Korean peninsula, unify the Korean nation (which shares a common language and race characteristics) and eventually bring US commercial and military presence in play in the peninsula, which is China's background. China and Russia have favoured a divided Korean peninsula because it gave the communist states a point of pressure against the US. But Trump's engagement policy shows that he pressured North Korea to come to the negotiating table and simultaneously pressured China and Russia to accept

sanctions against North Korea through UN Security Council resolutions. This example shows China's vulnerability to external pressure – from the non-Chinese world in China's backyard.

Among the lesser powers, China's best ally is Pakistan because it gives China access to Kashmir and Gwadar – both are important as the western flank of the subcontinent and the fact that the two are anti-India. Pakistan is facilitating China's push into the Arabian Sea and the Belt and Road initiative. Pakistan is now a client state of China in the sense that its level of indebtedness to China in financial and political terms has reduced its independence of choice in foreign and military affairs. But at the same time, Pakistan is under pressure from the US to roll back its terror groups and even with China's support, Pakistan is likely to remain under American and Indian pressure in the foreseeable future. As it falls under pressure of the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF), Pakistan and its ally China will be hard pressed to gain manoeuvrability on that sticky issue.

Domestically, China is vulnerable to its internal political, economic and institutional pressures. China's military might depends on its economic prowess, which has slipped to 6.5% annually, compared to India's 7%, although it is undeniable that China is the world's second-biggest economy. But China has high internal debt. Xi's elevation to the position of president for life, along with his position as head of the Central Military Commission and the Communist Party, gives him immense power, but it raises the question of internal legitimacy if the collective leadership system is seen to fail and if a power struggle arises, as it usually does in an authoritarian system. Xi is not a Mao, who relied on brute force to keep China in turmoil; Xi wants calm, stability and popular consensus about his policies. Externally and domestically, China's 'Shi' points to a world in flux in the Indo-Pacific region and within China.

Xi's elevation to emperor status has several ramifications. Without institutionalised countervailing points of power and internal policy debate, this is a recipe for the rise of factionalism and power struggle(s). Xi seeks strict Communist Party orthodoxy which is Xi centric. Deng Hsia Ping had established a succession ladder in 1989; this approach is now over. With growing internal debt, an ambitious middle class, expanding international

ambitions and a non-Chinese world which is watching and engaging but not waiting for China to abandon its ambitions, there are risks for China's future. Recently, the US Congress passed the Taiwan Travel Act, which is a policy shift by Washington to allow high-level Taiwanese officials to enter the US and conduct official business. China objects, calling it a serious violation of the One-China Principle. There is support in Washington – by the US Congress and the Executive branch – to support Taiwan with arms, and recently a \$1.3-billion arms sale was approved. This implies a strong US commitment to the security of Taiwan and the Taiwan straits, through which trade and ships traverse. Another aspect to consider is that China is very strong in the economic and military spheres but the South China seas and Taiwan remain flashpoints along with China's frontier regions. A minor but telling issue is that the Uighurs have been able to move from Xinjiang to Turkey via South East Asian countries, and apparently People's Republic of China's intelligence was unable to intercept the dissidents. A first-rate intelligence service is the heart and soul of a power, and China's ability to control the ground may be uneven. Intelligence services work in a shadowy world, and they often tend to exaggerate the enemy threat and exaggerate their own importance. This is problematic if the secret services are answering only to the emperor, and with a single client there is a tendency to tailor intelligence products to what the service thinks the leader wants to hear. This institutional bias has been hard to overcome in the intelligence services of the major powers, but if left unchecked, it can produce faulty policy making if other institutional checks and balances are not working effectively. This may be a risk Emperor Xi may face.

THE MAJOR CONTESTS OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY ARE IN THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION

There are two main contests: the first is between China and the US, and the second is between China and India. These contests are meant to demonstrate the hegemony of either the China model or the US+allies model; the first is built on China's economic and military strength and its Xi-centric determination to build China's hegemony; the second is to

show that the future lies in a model of strength based on capitalism and democracy and the energy which enables these forces to gain international influence. In these contests, China cannot defeat or conquer India, but it can narrow its orbit of allies within the subcontinent (e.g., with Nepal and Sri Lanka and Maldives) and if India's economic and military strength and its political leadership weaken, then India's influence can be checked and diminished, as in the past during the Nehru years. Also, China can encircle India by gaining access to Indian Ocean port facilities and by its lavish investments in the subcontinent, which creates a dependency and debt trap for India's neighbours; and it gives China leverage in her dealings with these countries. How this contest takes shape in the future depends on Indian actions and a willingness to continually engage and counter China's actions and to create a balance of power between China and India in the Indian Ocean region. Thus far, this approach appears to be in play and it is a robust one.

The US+allies vis-à-vis China contention has taken shape in the relationship between Trump and Xi. We noted that China has a fixed strategic concept to expand and seek hegemony, but on the other hand, it is flexible at the tactical level, going by its view on the situation in the Indo-Pacific world. Here are a few important variables in the situation for China which require it to practice tactical flexibility.

- China's economic strength – which is the basis of its military development – depends on access to the US market, and it requires acquisition of modern US technology by acquiring Western companies and/or by engaging in industrial espionage. The contradiction is that China has a non-market economy with protectionist barriers against foreign imports and yet China praises the value of an open international trading system. China gained immensely in terms of access and prestige when Bill Clinton accepted its membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO) in the belief that it would adjust itself towards a market economy and undertake political reforms. But that did not happen, and now the signs are clearly against such a result. Trump now complains that there is a \$500-billion-a-year trade deficit against the US and this needs to change in favour of US trade with other countries. This is a point of pressure by the US against China.

- China's military strength is evident by the expansion in the South China seas and by the frantic pace of China's military modernisation. But the US is still a strong military force in the Indo-Pacific world and with a pattern of Japanese, South Korean, Taiwanese, Vietnamese, Indian and Australian military modernisation, China's rise to a position of hegemony is not inevitable, provided the US and its allies maintain their robust process of engaging and studying China's moves and manoeuvres. The key to China's hegemonic aims lies not so much in its ability to stay in the game in the politics of South and South East Asia as in its ability to disorient the medium powers in South and South East Asia.

In both these contests, the protagonists are engaged in simultaneous war preparation and in a diplomatic dance. China too is involved in the parallel pursuit of the 'harmony' line, which is represented by its Foreign Ministry, and its war preparation line, which is represented by its armed forces. The US and its allies also are pursuing both lines of action in their practice of statecraft. Success in strategy requires a combination of an ability to demonstrate coercion or forceful action (by military and/or economic means), subtle craftiness and apparent sincerity to convince the rivals and enemies that the practitioners possess these skills. The Indo-Pacific world provides ample signs that this is the future of the contests between US+allies and China, between China and India, and between China and the US and the regional middle powers in Asia in the twenty-first century. The point is that the protagonists are now watching and acting; they are not waiting and practising 'strategic patience' as advocated by Obama, and they are not expecting Xi's China to accept the right of others to secure a stable balance of power instead of China's hegemony.

Is There a ‘Trump Doctrine’?

JEFFREY STEINBERG

Much of the mainstream Western media, particularly the English-language media, is obsessed with US president Donald Trump’s every move, every tweet, every gaffe. It can be fairly said that the current American administration is the most unusual in a very long time.

The president speaks from his gut. He relishes political hand-to-hand combat with his adversaries – real and imagined. He has proclaimed a radical turn in American global policy, a return to ‘America First’. He has verbally downgraded all of the post–World War II alliance arrangements, particularly the more recent multilateral trade agreements, like the World Trade Organization, the North American Free Trade Alliance (NAFTA) and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). He has abandoned the sacred cow of free trade and has now imposed import tariffs on steel and aluminium and has assailed China for theft of American intellectual property. He has added punitive sanctions against 1,000 Chinese products imported to the United States, provoking fears of a destructive trade war. The president’s decision to impose steel and aluminium tariffs was announced without even informing his National Economic Council chairman Gary Cohen, resulting in the former Goldman Sachs president’s resignation.

WILL THE REAL DONALD TRUMP PLEASE STAND UP?

Yet, those world leaders who have had the opportunity to meet with President Trump one-on-one have, with few exceptions, come away with a very different impression of the man. Japanese prime minister Shinzo

Abe, the first foreign leader to meet in person with the then president-elect Donald Trump, who met him again two months into the Trump administration at the president's Florida retreat at Mar-a-Lago, has nothing but praise for the experience. A close aide to the Japanese leader, who accompanied him on one of the meetings with Donald Trump, reported to colleagues that the Trump-Abe meetings were the most well-organised, productive and cordial summits the prime minister had ever had with a foreign leader. In contrast to his public persona, President Trump came across as poised, well informed and flexible in those closed-door discussions. Xi Jinping, president of China; Narendra Modi, prime minister of India; and Vladimir Putin, president of Russia all came away with similar impressions. French president Emmanuel Macron had a similar experience and is now the lead European head of state engaging with Trump.

The contrasts between the administration's collective public persona – amplified by the steady stream of 'insider' leaks to the media and high-profile resignations – and the president's interactions with other world leaders, members of Congress and his own cabinet and White House staff, only add to the confusion and anxiety.

A REAL TEAM OF RIVALS

Doris Kearns Goodwin, the noted American historian, wrote a monumental biography of Abraham Lincoln, called *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*. Faced with the crisis of Union and slavery, Abraham Lincoln assembled a cabinet of strong-willed figures, all of whom competed brutally for the president's support.

President Trump has assembled his own team of rivals. Before his recent departure as President Trump's key economic advisor, Gary Cohen battled constantly with the protectionists in the cabinet and the White House, led by Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and special assistant to the president and head of the National Trade Council Peter Navarro. Cohen was backed by Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, son-in-law and key advisor Jared Kushner and National Security Advisor H. R. McMaster (on March 22, McMaster was

removed and replaced by former United Nations ambassador and ultrahawk John Bolton).

Even some of the president's most strident critics admit that he has assembled one of the most professional national security teams in memory, led by three four-star Marine generals who have served together for decades: Defense Secretary James Mattis, White House chief of staff and former secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly and the Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Joseph Dunford. For the Central Intelligence Agency director, the president chose another military man, West Point graduate Mike Pompeo. With the recent firing of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Pompeo will replace him as secretary of state. President Trump chose two successive three-star army generals as his national security advisors – Michael Flynn and H. R. McMaster.

The president is comfortable with military officers, who put American national security interests above all other considerations.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was in daily contact with Defense Secretary Mattis, in one of the strongest instances in memory of deep collaboration between the defense and diplomatic chiefs. That Department of Defense–state collaboration will likely continue if Pompeo is confirmed by the Senate as secretary of state.

The complex weave of fierce ideological rivalry – even after the departure of alt-right ideologue Steven Bannon from the White House, the deep collaboration and professionalism of the military advisors now wearing civilian business suits and President Trump's own unpredictable brand of 'business pragmatism' and reality TV star volatility – is enough to make the most seasoned political analyst reach for the bottle of sedatives. It is easy, from the outside, to simply label the Trump presidency as chaotic.

The picture is further complicated by the fact that the president has a large circle of former business associates and personal friends whose advice he regularly solicits – bypassing his entire White House staff and cabinet. Early on in his tenure as White House chief of staff, General Kelly realised that he could bring discipline to the White House staff and control access to the president during the working day. But he could not control the president's 6 a.m. tweets, and he could not even monitor the president's after-hours conversations with his private 'billionaires club' of

friends, whose views were, more often than not, out of sync with the thinking of mainstream America.

In a complete break with precedent, Donald Trump formally launched his re-election campaign on the day he was inaugurated as president. He has travelled around the country since taking office, holding campaign rallies for his 2020 campaign, while assuming all of the responsibilities of commander in chief and president. Donald Trump has demonstrated an uncanny ability to switch from campaign mode to presidential mode in a split second. In his relatively simple and pragmatic approach to the job, President Trump is unfazed by what appears to be schizophrenic behaviour to his growing legion of critics.

NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

In an effort to establish clear policy guidelines for America's national security and military strategy, the president's national security team moved early in the first year in office to produce a series of policy papers, spelling out the administration's outlook and plans. It was an unusual exercise for a new administration. Usually, presidents wait until their second or third year in office to issue written guidelines covering such a large scope of strategy. The Trump national security team undertook the early effort for two reasons:

- To give US allies and adversaries alike a clear perspective on American policy, to overcome the widespread appearance of chaos and uncertainty
- To set forth a policy framework that President Trump would hopefully accept and would stick with for his term in office, whether four or eight years

The first of a series of critical strategy documents was published in December 2017. It was the National Security Strategy of the United States. In January 2018, the administration produced the National Defense Strategy, in both an unclassified summary version and a more comprehensive classified version. In February 2018, the Trump administration released the Nuclear Posture Review, a comprehensive plan for the modernisation of

the strategic thermonuclear weapons triad (submarine, intercontinental ballistic missile and strategic bomber), as well as a revision of the US policy for the deployment and use of theatre low-yield nuclear weapons.

Later this spring, the administration will complete its National Military Strategy, which will likely remain classified, but will be in line with the earlier two strategy documents. It will produce the Ballistic Missile Defense Strategy, the Cyber and Information Warfare Strategy and a comprehensive review of the military industrial base and the nation's supply chain. This last report, due in April, represents the first effort in decades to assess the US economic preparedness and the vulnerability to reliance on foreign production to provide critical infrastructure.

While it is beyond the scope of this article to provide a detailed synopsis of the national security documents, some important points must be highlighted, because they are critical themes that run through all of the papers produced to date and will likely be reflected in the remaining studies still being prepared. Ultimately, the question is, How will these studies impact administration policy going forward?

Here are the critical findings so far:

- The global security environment has evolved. The threat of jihadi terrorism, while still a matter of concern, is no longer the number one threat. China and Russia have advanced their military capabilities to the point they individually and collectively pose a threat to the past decades' security architecture, which had been premised on unchallenged American global military dominance.
- Rogue states – Iran and North Korea – pose an additional security threat, employing state capacities to destabilise their regions, including providing support to non-state surrogates like Hezbollah.
- The four priorities of the new national security program are protection of the homeland, the advancement of American prosperity, the maintaining of American military primacy through a peace-through-strength program of military build-up and the increase of American global influence.
- Russia and China have been labelled as 'revisionist powers' because their political systems are not premised on democratic values and because they are together pursuing a policy of a multipolar world

in which the role of the United States is to be diminished. Following the 19th Party Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the constitutional revision allowing President Xi Jinping to serve indefinitely, China is making an open play to revise the global system of trade and security, leading eventually to Chinese domination. China's global reach is centred upon the new Silk Road 'Belt and Road Initiative', under which China is investing trillions of dollars in vast transportation and other infrastructure projects extending across Eurasia into Africa and Latin America. What China's president Xi Jinping calls a 'win win' strategy is viewed in Washington as a means of extending Chinese influence around the globe, to ultimately replace the United States as the leading global power.

- The United States will integrate low-yield tactical nuclear weapons to both the updated deterrent strategy and the conventional war-fighting doctrine. This change in doctrine was justified as a measured response to both Russian and Chinese deployments of new-generation tactical nuclear weapons and their change in policy to consider first use of low-yield nuclear weapons under certain conditions. The Russians refer to this as 'escalation to de-escalation', presuming that a limited use of low-yield tactical nuclear weapons in an initial military engagement may lead to a pause and a de-escalation of fighting. This is a highly dubious presumption, as the chances of an initial use of nuclear weapons leading to a rapid escalation to full-scale thermonuclear exchange is an obvious possibility.
- The United States will seek to broaden existing alliance and partnership agreements and establish new partnerships as part of the strategy to counter Russian and Chinese advances.
- While rebuilding military systems and modernising war-fighting doctrine, the United States will seek areas of collaboration with both Russia and China, including counterterrorism, nuclear disarmament and conflict resolution (North Korea, Syria and Iran).
- The United States will respond to unfair trade practices by punishing specific trade abuses and intellectual property theft and will pursue policies to maintain American energy dominance.

THEORY AND PRACTICE

Any serious analysts reviewing the published documents will come to the same conclusion: the doctrine put forward is more of a continuity than a break from the policies of the post-Cold War administrations of Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama. The global context has changed since Paul Wolfowitz defined the post-Soviet era as one of American unipolar advantage. Russia and China have advanced their military resources and have developed systems that offset the long-standing unchallenged American global military supremacy. Russia has modernised its thermonuclear arsenal rapidly. China has developed anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) systems, including anti-ship missiles that offset the American global deployment of aircraft carrier groups.

Wolfowitz, as advisor to the then defense secretary Dick Cheney, had anticipated, in a 1991 talk with General Wesley Clark, that the United States would retain global primacy for a quarter of a century and then face strategic challenges from great state rivals. His timetable was reasonably accurate. The piper has come for his payment.

While the global challenges and circumstances have changed, the underlying objectives have not. The doctrine produced by President Donald Trump's national security team addresses those new challenges but does not stray from the core objectives of American security policy for the past quarter-century.

While the president has criticised the Cold War alliance systems and called for greater focus on bilateral security and trade relations, the administration has endorsed the idea of an Indo-Pacific democratic alliance, anchored in the US, Japan, Australia and India. Japanese prime minister Abe initiated this idea of a 'diamond democratic security alliance'. The Trump administration has revived the quadrilateral security dialogue with Japan, Australia and India and is also helping to evolve an economic partnership with the same nations to counter China's Belt and Road Initiative.

While criticising flaws in the alliance architecture, President Trump is seeking ways to reinforce and expand those very alliances and partnerships.

There should be no surprise that the Trump administration's national security strategy is an update on previous strategies, reflecting the changing threat environment. Not much else has changed – on paper.

The question now becomes, Will President Trump actually follow the guidelines set forth in the studies he, himself commissioned? In other words, is there a 'Trump Doctrine' that offers a framework for evaluating US actions?

At best, the answer is yes and no. The Pentagon is securely in the hands of experienced military traditionalists, who are war-weary after the unending post-9/11 wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen. Secretary of Defense James Mattis is the only senior advisor to President Trump who has so far gone unscathed in the president's tweet storms. Mattis has repeatedly told Congress and the press that there are no good options for military action against North Korea and that American diplomacy must take centre stage in developing a solution to that crisis. However, the Pentagon has been working constantly on updated war plans for action against North Korea, in the event that diplomacy fails to reach a satisfactory solution.

President Trump announced early in his first year in office that the previous administration's strategy of 'strategic patience' has failed, giving North Korea sufficient time to nearly perfect a nuclear bomb and an intercontinental ballistic missile to strike the American homeland and all of America's key Indo-Pacific allies. The prospects have increased that a solution to the Korea crisis will play out during Donald Trump's time in office.

The president seized the opportunity recently presented to him to meet face-to-face with the North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. While critics focused on the president's 'little rocket man' barbs at Kim, the fact is that, from the time of his campaign for president, Donald Trump has held out the prospect of a meeting with the reclusive North Korean leader. At one point, he expressed public empathy for the North Korean leader, who was thrust into power, with the premature death of his father, at the age of 28. Once again, Donald Trump has been consistent. His logic is simple: there is only one person in North Korea capable of making a deal, and that

person is Kim. Donald Trump is the only American in a position to negotiate with him face-to-face and reach a deal.

LESSONS FROM LIFE

Donald Trump became a billionaire in business by operating as his own, or the Trump Organization's, chief executive officer, chief operations officer and chief financial officer. His cabinet and his White House staff are just that: staff. They are dispensable and can be replaced at a moment's notice. Witness the departures of Michael Flynn, Steven Bannon, Gary Cohen, Rex Tillerson and H. R. McMaster in just 14 short months. Should John Kelly leave his post as White House chief of staff, there is a good chance that he will not be replaced by anyone. In reality, for better or for worse, Donald Trump is his own chief of staff.

With all of these unique and complex factors taken into account, President Trump has demonstrated a significant consistency in moving to fulfil many of his campaign promises.

- He moved the US embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. Almost all previous presidential candidates promised to make the move, but once in office, they invoked national security waivers and never fulfilled the pledge. Donald Trump viewed these predecessors as hypocrites who failed to live up to their campaign promises. Ignoring the advice of all of his national security aides, President Trump announced the embassy move, rejecting the idea that geopolitical considerations argued against it.
- He imposed tariffs on countries with balance-of-trade surpluses with the United States.
- He moved to renegotiate or abandon the North American Free Trade Alliance.
- He withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership.
- He abandoned the 'strategic patience' policy towards North Korea.
- He ended the sequestration that had frozen defense spending for half a decade, and he boosted the Pentagon budget to a record-setting \$700 billion.

- While taking tough stands towards Russia and China when they took actions that jeopardised the US standing in the world, he has pursued cordial personal relations with Presidents Putin and Xi Jinping, in spite of the 'Russiagate' allegations that he was under Moscow's thumb.
- He has pursued a policy in South Asia aimed at deepening collaboration with India, whose prime minister Narendra Modi is pursuing policies that in many respects echo President Trump's 'America First' rhetoric. At the same time, he has taken a hard stand against Pakistan for its support of the Taliban and other jihadist factions.

Is there a unifying doctrine undergirding President Trump's agenda? Not really. The president clearly believes that if he can reach an accord with the two other global powers – Russia and China – many of the world's most daunting problems can be solved. At the same time, he is willing to take actions that demonstrate that he will not be bullied by rivals, whether they are nominal allies or 'revisionist states'.

Donald Trump's 'business pragmatism' defies traditional labels. Nor can his administration be defined by key personalities other than the president himself. When the mainstream American media tried to label Donald Trump as a 'Bannonite', Steven Bannon soon was out as White House's grand strategist.

The unprecedented series of strategic studies coming out of the Pentagon and the National Security Council in the first 18 months of the Trump administration give a clue about but do not define Donald Trump or clearly define parameters of the decisions he will be taking.

The big question going forward is whether Donald Trump's pragmatism will be informed by an increasing grasp of global realities and experiences dealing with grave challenges, world leaders and other branches of the federal government.

Trojan Horses: Counterterror Laws¹ and Security in India

N. MANOHARAN

If terrorism is defined as ‘an act of violence which targeted civilians for the purpose of political subversion of the state to intimidate a population, or to compel a government or an international organisation to do or abstain from doing any act,’² then the threats arising from such acts are phenomenal. A principal characteristic of terrorism, distinguishing it from many other forms of violence, is its ability to strike directly at perceptions of personal security. Terrorism is a complex phenomenon imbued with political, social, economic and psychological factors. The emergence of terrorism as a weapon of proxy war between hostile nations has further added to this complexity. Terrorism, thus, not only is a threat to state security but has become a primary source of ‘human insecurity’.³

Terrorism is taken seriously not just because of what it represents but also because of what it brings about. Directly, terrorism is a threat to core human rights, like the right to life, the right to personal liberty and security, the right to humane treatment, the right to due process and to a fair trial, the right to freedom of expression and the judicial protection and its correspondent obligation to respect and ensure all human rights without discrimination.⁴ Terrorism threatens norms, rules and institutions, largely because it dents the rule of law, human rights, democratic procedures for settling political disputes and the laws of war. In this sense, ‘[T]errorism is a threat to the global normative structure without which security would be impossible to realise.’⁵ In the post–Cold War era, terrorism figured at the top in the list of new threats to security.

TERRORISM AS A SECURITY THREAT

After 9/11, the threat from terrorism has been identified as the most dangerous threat by states. This is so not only because of the increased ruthlessness of the attacks but also due to their lethality and unpredictability. A growing percentage of terrorist attacks are designed to kill as many people as possible. The trend toward higher casualties reflects the changing motivation of today's terrorists. Terrorist groups lack a concrete political goal other than to punish their enemies. The terrorist threat is also changing in ways that makes it more dangerous and difficult to counter. New terrorist threats can suddenly emerge from isolated conspiracies or obscure cults with no previous history of violence. Guns and conventional explosives have so far remained the weapons of choice for most terrorists. Such weapons can cause many casualties and are relatively easy to acquire and use. Increased possibilities of weapons of mass destruction reaching terrorist groups like al-Qaeda have further heightened the threat level. The adoption of suicide tactics by several terrorist groups has raised the threat perception to alarming proportions. 'Globalised terrorism,' thus, effectively assimilates diverse forms of political violence, with the consequence of unifying and amplifying the threat.

In the Indian context, her long struggle with various forms of politicised violence has created a 'chronic crisis of national security'.⁶ Since security is perceived as 'an integral component of India's development process', it has become part of the very 'essence of India's being'.⁷ The main sources of insecurity to India are terrorism, organised crime, violence based on communal and caste divides, criminalisation of politics, inequality and so on. Of these, terrorism figures prominently. In fact, India is one of the worst-affected countries by terrorism. In the recent period, although the situation has improved, India still has witnessed more terrorist incidents than all countries other than Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Syria, Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia, in that order.⁸ However, the international community recognised and acknowledged this only very recently.

Traditionally, the threat to India's territorial integrity and internal security existed in four main forms: rebellion in Punjab, militancy in Jammu and Kashmir, insurgency in the north-east of the country and left-wing

extremism in its central part. Every case has ‘a distinct identity moulded by its geopolitical and socio-economic context’.⁹ In addition to these four main forms, a new dimension has come to the fore in the garb of jihadist terrorism with international linkages, especially aided by Pakistan. External sponsorship of all the above violent manifestations has also added to the complexity of the threat.

THE RESPONSE OPTIONS

Responding to threats like terrorism encompasses a range of actions. Counterterror strategies adopted by various states differ, depending on their understanding of terrorism as a security threat. When confronted with terrorism, democracies face a unique challenge. The challenge comes in the form of the undemocratic nature of terrorism. Terrorists are fundamentally anti-democratic and have no regard for human rights; they have their own ‘code of conduct’ and seek to destroy the very structures and institutions that form the basis of democratic life. Terrorists often view democracies as ‘soft’, usually on the grounds that ‘their publics have low thresholds of cost tolerance and high ability to affect state policy’.¹⁰ This is what is known as the ‘democratic dilemma’, faced by every democratic country confronted by terrorism. On the one hand, it has to protect the territorial integrity, sovereignty and security of its people from the arbitrary violence perpetrated by terrorists. If it fails to fulfil this task, its authority and credibility are undermined. On the other hand, a democratic state alienates the population and loses its legitimacy in case it slips into repression and authoritarianism in the process of combating terrorism.¹¹

It is generally assumed that the ‘criminal justice model’ is the better option for democracies to overcome the democratic dilemma they face. It is found, however, that the existing criminal laws are not sufficient to equip the institutions of the government, especially the security forces, to deal with the rising sophistication of terrorism. Terrorists are now widespread, well networked, with support links all over, and more organised in terms of technology and resources. Some call this ‘new terrorism’, where a group may be a ‘networked, multinational enterprise with a global

reach which aims to inflict death and destruction on a catastrophic scale'.¹² Added to this is the new dimension of a criminal-terrorist nexus of dangerous proportions. So, to deal with the 'well-armed and far more dangerous and modernised enemy', exclusive counterterror laws are required to supplement the existing criminal laws, as what is at stake is not just law and order but the very existence of state and society. As terrorism tends to exploit the very values of democracy, special counterterror legislation would try and plug those loopholes which the terrorists take advantage of. Accordingly, the deterrence value of the existing criminal laws is raised to a new level.

When it comes to the Indian case, India's national security strategy is still evolving and is based on the security environment, the threat assessment and the capability to meet those threats. India is yet to have a clear-cut published security strategy to approach both internal and external security threats. Although, in recent years, India has been approaching security in a wider sense in the name of 'comprehensive national security',¹³ internal and territorial security continues to enjoy high priority over other components of security.

To secure, especially, the 'high priority' internal security, India has relied more on military option. Political and developmental models have been underplayed. As a post-colonial developing state, use of force came naturally to India. Since terrorism challenged the very credibility and legitimacy of the state, the military approach also came as a reflex action of what the state knew 'best and found convenient to resort to'.¹⁴ The military approach involved, apart from employment of security forces, extensive use of legal provisions like counterterrorism laws and emergency provisions to strengthen the hands of the security forces. The colonial strategy of 'overawing the people' with the use of force continues to this day.¹⁵ For instance, despite various reform proposals, the Police Act of 1861 remains to govern policing throughout India even today. Although the law and order function is bestowed with federal units (states), the Indian Constitution authorises the central government to legislate exclusively on matters involving national security and the use of the military or central police forces to help state civilian authorities to safeguard overall internal security of India.¹⁶ Pursuant to this authority, the Indian

government enacted several laws conferring sweeping powers, like search, arrest and preventive detention authority, upon the armed forces, even authorising them to shoot to kill suspected terrorists or insurgents. While doing so, the governments could not resist the pressures to ‘give short shrift’ to the fundamental rights of their citizens.

AN OVERVIEW OF LEGAL RESPONSES

India has a long tradition of antiterror and other security laws dating back to its pre-independence years. These laws have been enacted, repealed and re-enacted periodically since independence. The basic argument placed during the enactment of such special laws is that the existing criminal laws are incapable of meeting emerging threats – that the conventional criminal laws approach crimes ‘as an individual infraction violating individual rights’, missing out ‘movements that collectively subvert and disrupt the structures of governance and enforcement themselves’.¹⁷ The impulse to enact special laws, therefore, stems from real and perceived problems concerning the effectiveness of the regular criminal justice system itself, which creates intense pressures to take particular offenses outside of that system. In this regard, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) noted that antiterrorism laws are ostensibly justified because:

- It is difficult to secure convictions under the criminal justice system
- Trials are delayed (under the regular courts).¹⁸

There is, thus, ‘a tendency towards the “routinising of the extraordinary” through the institutionalisation of emergency powers during non-emergency times and without formal derogation from human rights obligations.’¹⁹

Justification for counterterrorism laws also drew significantly on the prevailing international environment. Especially in the aftermath of the 9/11 and 26/11 terrorist attacks, pro-terror law arguments got bolstered by the antiterrorism initiatives of developed countries like the United States and the United Kingdom and stipulations from the United Nations Security Council. The UNSC Resolution 1373 explicitly called upon all member

states to ensure that adequate antiterrorism measure are taken to prevent and criminalise the financing or collection of funds for ‘terrorist acts’; to freeze assets or resources of persons who commit or are involved in the commission of terrorist acts; to prohibit the making of any assets, resources or services available to persons who commit or are involved in the commission of terrorist acts; to bring to justice any persons who commit or are involved in financing, planning, preparing or supporting ‘terrorist acts’ and to legislate separate, ‘serious criminal offenses’ proscribing ‘terrorist acts’ under domestic law.²⁰ To monitor states’ implementation and compliance, Resolution 1373 established the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC). The resolution called upon states to report their progress towards the implementation to the CTC within 90 days and periodically thereafter.²¹

During the debate on the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) in the Indian parliament, the proponents of the law repeatedly invoked Resolution 1373 to argue that the bill was not simply justified on local conditions but required under international law. After the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO) was promulgated in 2001, for example, the then home secretary publicly stated that the ordinance ‘implements in part the obligation on member states imposed’ by Resolution 1373.²² Upon introducing the bill in the parliament, the then home minister, L. K. Advani, asserted that the Security Council’s adoption of the resolution prompted the government to conclude it was India’s ‘duty to the international community . . . to pass [POTA].’²³ Such justification went on to affect the later adjudication of POTA’s legality before the courts. For instance, the Supreme Court of India upheld POTA by stating that because of Resolution 1373, ‘[I]t has become [India’s] international obligation . . . to pass necessary laws to fight terrorism.’²⁴

As new laws have been enacted in response to terrorism and other threats to security in recent years, they have shared a number of continuities with earlier emergency and security laws, both before and after independence. These laws broadly fall under three categories:

- **Nationwide Laws:** In the first category fall nationwide laws like the Preventive Detention Act (PDA) of 1950, which authorised detention for up to 12 months by both the central and state governments if

necessary to prevent an individual from acting in a manner prejudicial to the defence or security of India; the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act of 1967 and its amended versions of 2005 (that was brought in as a replacement for the repealed POTA) and 2008 (amended in the wake of Mumbai attacks on 26 November 2008); the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) of 1971, which gave wide powers of preventive detention, search and seizure of property without warrants, telephone and wiretapping, etc.; the National Security Act (NSA) of 1980 to combat ‘anti-social and anti-national elements including secessionist, communal and pro-caste elements and elements affecting the services essential to the community’;²⁵ the Terrorist Affected Areas (Special Courts) Act (TAAA) of 1984 to establish special courts to adjudicate certain ‘scheduled offenses’ related to terrorism in areas designated by the central government, for specified time periods, as ‘terrorist affected’;²⁶ the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) (1985), which defined a series of new, substantive terrorism-related offenses of general applicability, which could be prosecuted by state governments throughout the country without any central government designation that the area in which the offense took place was ‘terrorist affected’; and POTO and later POTA (2002), brought in the charged atmosphere of attack on the Indian parliament in December 2001.

· **Act-Oriented Laws:** The second category comprises act-oriented or area-specific laws, which include the Anti-hijacking Act, 1982, that was brought in response to a spate of hijackings by Sikh terrorist organisations to deter hijackers. The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, No. 28, of 1958, was passed on 11 September 1958 to confer certain special powers on the members of the armed forces in disturbed areas in the state of Assam and Manipur, and after an amendment in 1972, it was extended to the whole north-eastern region. The same act was invoked in the state of Jammu and Kashmir in 1990 under the Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act, No. 21, of 1990. The Armed Forces (Punjab and Chandigarh) Special Powers Act, No. 34, of 1983, enabled the governor of the state to declare the whole

or parts of the state as ‘disturbed’. The aim was to entrust special powers to the security forces to quell violence in the state.

· **State-Specific Laws:** In the third category, special laws in the individual states can be stated. Notable among them are (in the order of chronology):

- o The Madras Suppression of Disturbances Act (1948)
- o The Bihar Maintenance of Public Order Act, 1949
- o The Assam Maintenance of Public Order (Autonomous District) Act (1952)
- o The Assam Disturbed Areas Act (1955)
- o The Nagaland Security Regulation Act (1962)
- o The Uttar Pradesh Control of Goondas Act (1970)
- o The West Bengal Maintenance of Public Order Act (1972)
- o The Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act (1978)
- o The Assam Preventive Detention Act (1980)
- o The Punjab Disturbed Areas Act (1983)
- o The Chandigarh Disturbed Areas Act (1983)
- o The Gujarat Prevention of Anti-Social Activities Act (1985)
- o The Uttar Pradesh Gangsters and Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act (1986)
- o The Jammu and Kashmir Disturbed Areas Act (1990)
- o The Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (1999)
- o The Karnataka Control of Organised Crime Act (2000)
- o The Andhra Pradesh Control of Organised Crime Act (2001)
- o The Chhattisgarh Special Public Security Act (2005)

WERE COUNTERTERROR LAWS ABLE TO AUGMENT SECURITY?

All the above three categories of special laws of India are characterised by:

- Emphasis on the protection of state rather than people
- Over-reaction to the threat posed and far more drastic measures than necessary

- Hasty enactment without giving much room for public debate or judicial scrutiny
- Overly broad and ambiguous definitions of terrorism that fail to satisfy the principle of legality
- Pretrial investigation and detention procedures which infringe upon due process, personal liberty and limits on the length of pretrial detention
- Special courts and procedural rules that infringe upon judicial independence and the right to a fair trial
- Provisions that require courts to draw adverse inferences against the accused in a manner that infringes upon the presumption of innocence
- Lack of sufficient oversight of police and prosecutorial decision making to prevent arbitrary, discriminatory and dis-uniform application
- Broad immunities from prosecution for government officials, which fail to ensure the right to effective remedies²⁷

Due to the above-mentioned characteristics, counterterrorism laws of India did not fully serve the very purpose for which they were enacted. Most importantly, they could not help in apprehending the key members of terrorist organisations involved in violence. Instead, the laws were liberally used as ‘political weapons’ to settle scores with political rivals and those who dissented with the ruling regimes. As a result, it removed moderate voices from the scene, allowing enough space for the militant ones to fill in.

The anti-terrorism legislation could not prevent harassment of the innocent civilians. This increased the public discontent and in effect strengthened the belief in the repressive nature of the regimes. Consequently, those innocents who got affected due to harassment by security laws played into the hands of the militants to resist ‘repressive regimes’. As the Supreme Court of India rightly recognised, ‘[T]errorism often thrives where human rights are violated,’ and ‘the lack of hope for justice provides breeding grounds for terrorism.’²⁸ The very name ‘prevention of terrorism’ (in POTA) sent wrong signals, especially to the minority communities, who had already lost trust in the state. The provisions

of these laws entrusted the security forces with enormous discretionary powers, which were blatantly misused. This inflicted more wound by creating a 'uniform phobia'. Terror laws were seen as part of the 'grand design for legitimising repression'.

The safeguards in terror legislation were not adequate enough to prevent the misuse. Most importantly, the counterterror laws hid the rot in the entire criminal justice system. The net effect was that these laws quickened the isolation of the affected community and increased the number of sympathisers and recruits of militancy. Those who fled their homes felt more secure in the militant ranks than at home or at work. Even if some of the youth did not like to join militancy, parents forced them to leave the country or to join any militant organisation just to escape the grip of these laws. The alienated, as a result, are also less likely to cooperate with law enforcement, depriving the security forces of information and resources that can be used to counter terrorism.

Such a trend is evident in Jammu and Kashmir and the north-east of India. Citing the example of counterterrorism in Punjab, Jaswant Singh noted that the singling out of Punjab for emergency treatment may have contributed to the 'psychological isolation of beleaguered state'.²⁹ This applied to other states of India as well. The enactment of powerful, nationwide antiterrorism laws without sufficient safeguards to constrain their misuse and ensure national uniformity in their application led to human rights abuses and disparate patterns of enforcement throughout the country. Even developed countries, like Britain, are not devoid of such a trend. When the House of Lords found that legislation permitting the administrative detention of foreign terrorist suspects violated human rights, Lord Hoffmann observed,

'Terrorist crime, serious as it is, does not threaten our institutions of government or our existence as a civil community. The real threat to the life of the nation, in the sense of a people living in accordance with its traditional laws and political values, comes not from terrorism but from laws such as these. That is the true measure of what terrorism may achieve. It is for parliament to decide whether to give the terrorists such a victory.'³⁰

Since terrorists often deliberately seek ‘to provoke an over-reaction’ and thereby drive a wedge between government and its citizens – or between ethnic, racial or religious communities – adhering to human rights obligations when combating terrorism helps to ensure that advocates of violence do not win sympathy from the ranks of those harmed and alienated by the state. One reason why state terrorism goes unrecognised is that often it ‘masquerades as justice’.³¹ In the words of the Supreme Court of India, ‘[I]f the law enforcing authority becomes a law breaker, it breeds contempt for law, it invites every man to become a law unto himself and ultimately it invites anarchy.’³²

As the then UN secretary general Kofi Annan observed, in the name of security, liberties are being sacrificed, weakening rather than strengthening common security. ‘Internationally, the world is seeing an increasing misuse of what I call the “T-Word” terrorism, to demonise opponents to throttle freedom of speech and the press, and to delegitimise legitimate political grievances. The “collateral damage” of the war against terrorism individual bodies and values including damage to the presumption of innocence, to precious human rights, to the rule of law, and to the very fabric of democratic governance.’³³

Such concerns are more widespread in developing countries when compared to the developed. The main reason for this is that the special laws in developing countries undergo less democratic scrutiny compared to the developed states. The institutions in the developing democracies are not adequate enough to conduct such scrutiny. This is not to say that the scrutiny is far superior in developed democracies; it is only comparatively better.

While terrorism is destructive of human rights, counterterrorism, its opposite, does not necessarily restore and safeguard human rights. These special antiterrorism laws have not proven particularly effective in combating terrorism. Terrorism has persisted as a problem, notwithstanding the presence of numerous special laws, under which few of the individuals charged have been convicted. Ironically, several major terrorist acts, including the attack on the Akshardham temple complex and the 2003 Mumbai blasts, took place when POTA was in place. In fact, the attack on the Indian parliament on 13 December 2001 took place when POTA was in

existence in the form of an ordinance. The Indian state of Maharashtra has had a comprehensive antiterrorism legislation in place for several years. Yet most of the terrorist attacks took place in this state. As Jaswant Singh commented in 1988 on the use of such laws in Punjab, ‘Unfortunately, [the Indian] government is a classic example of proliferating laws, none of which can be effectively applied because the moral authority of the Indian government has been extinguished, and because the needed clarity of purpose (and thought) is absent. Not surprisingly, therefore, [the government] falls back to creating a new law for every new crime . . . and a new security force for every new criminal. . . . But the primary error lies in seeking containerized, instant formulae; there is no such thing as the “solution”.’³⁴

Similarly, a noted human rights lawyer and former attorney general of India observed that ‘[A] liberal democratic system that replicates the methods of terrorists in its anti-terrorist policies threatens to undermine its own foundations.’³⁵

One cannot, therefore, come to a firm assertion that the counterterrorism legislation in India increased the overall security in general. On the other hand, it was counterproductive because of significant human rights concerns. As one commentator aptly puts it, ‘[I]f the purpose of terrorism is to terrorize, that of antiterrorism is to terrorize more.’³⁶ Some go to the extent of arguing that the danger to democratic values ‘comes more from our reaction to terrorism than the thing itself.’³⁷ As Ignatieff emphasises, ‘. . . the historical record shows that while no democracy has ever been brought down by terror, all democracies have been damaged by it, chiefly by their own overreactions.’³⁸ Such situations, thus, result in the ultimate paradox of the response of democracies to the threat of terrorism: it is not the terrorism itself, but the reaction to that threat that can destroy the democratic states.³⁹ Andrew Silke writes in this respect, ‘Terrorist groups can endure military strikes, “targeted assassinations” and other harsh measures not because the people and resources lost are not important, but because the violence works to increase the motivation of more members than it decreases and works to attract more support and sympathy for the group than it frightens away.’⁴⁰

CONCLUSION

As one strategist has noted, '[T]errorism is not ubiquitous and neither is it uncontainable, but the potential for its occurrence is virtually as widespread as is the manifestation of bitter political antagonisms . . . reduce the latter and you will reduce, though not eliminate, the former.'⁴¹ The main objective of security laws should be to moderate political antagonisms rather than to aid the repressive arm of the state. It should be acknowledged that socio-economic pressures, unmet political aspirations, personal bitter experiences of innocents and their relations with the repressive arm of the state, etc., contribute to the terrorist reservoir. The aim of the terror laws should be to take all these into consideration. As David Fromkin said, 'Terrorism wins only if you respond to it in the way that the terrorists want you to: which means that its fate is in your hands and not in theirs.' It is in the hands of the state. As the former UN secretary general pointed out, '[W]e should all be clear that there is no trade-off between effective action against terrorism and the protection of human rights. On the contrary, I believe that in the long term we shall find that human rights, along with democracy and social justice, are one of the best prophylactics against terrorism.'⁴² Security laws could be one of the 'best prophylactics' in countering terrorism, provided they plug all loopholes that provide space for human rights abuses. The core counterterrorism strategy should revolve around 'less fear-mongering' and 'more confidence'.⁴³ Adhering to human rights obligations when combating terrorism, therefore, helps to ensure that advocates of violence do not win sympathy from the ranks of those harmed and alienated by the state.⁴⁴ It must be emphasised that attentiveness to human rights concerns is not simply a moral and legal imperative but also a crucial strategic imperative. Special laws must also seek to ensure that terrorism-related offences are investigated, prosecuted and adjudicated more effectively and, in turn, bring down the 'crisis of legitimacy'. For this, comprehensive reforms are required in the entire criminal justice system.

Notes and References

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20. To be read with UNSC Resolutions 1456 (20 January 2003) and 1566 (8 October 2004).
21. All 191 UN member states submitted initial reports documenting their efforts to comply with the resolution, with 160 states doing so within nine months of the resolution's adoption. This record of compliance is particularly striking when compared with the much lower level of compliance with reporting obligations under human rights treaties such as the ICCPR.
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25. *Seminar* 512. 'Time to End Abuses.' April 2002. Available at <http://www.india-seminar.com/2002/512/512%20seminarist.htm>.
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property’ with the intent to ‘put the public or any section of the public in fear,’ ‘affect adversely the harmony between different religious, racial, language or regional groups or cases or communities,’ ‘coerce or overawe the Government established by law,’ or ‘endanger the sovereignty and integrity of India.’

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