

AAKROSH

ASIAN JOURNAL ON TERRORISM AND INTERNAL
CONFLICTS

CONTRIBUTORS

SHUBHRA SANYAL is the former reader NICFS (MHA), consultant UVCT and research fellow of the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund.

RAMTANU MAITRA contributes to Executive Intelligence Review (EIR), a weekly magazine published from Washington, DC, and 21st Century Science and Technology, a Washington DC-based news quarterly, regularly. He contributes to Asia Times Online and Nueu Solidaritat, a German weekly published from Wiesbaden.

JAI KUMAR VERMA is a former director of the Cabinet Secretariat. He is a Pakistan watcher and has written extensively on the nefarious designs of the ISI, smuggling of fake Indian currency notes, etc. He is also writing on other SAARC countries. He has written articles on Islamic terrorism and left-wing extremism. He is a strategic analyst and delivers lectures in training academies of paramilitary and intelligence organisations.

ALI AHMED is the author of *India's Doctrine Puzzle: Limiting War in South Asia* (Routledge, 2014). His commentaries have been self-published in *On War in South Asia* and *On Peace in South Asia* (both CinnamonTeal Publishing, 2015).

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EDITORIAL PERSPECTIVE

THE CREEPING TERROR

MAJ. GEN. AFSIR KARIM (RETD)

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) may be forced to retreat from Iraq-Syria under relentless pressure from forces allied with Western powers, but the retreat is going to be painfully slow and despite retreat, ISIL will be far from being finally defeated. If ousted from west Asia, ISIL is likely to relocate in Africa and the Af-Pak and launch new offensives. It is already gradually moving to the south Asian region, which has the largest congregation of Sunni Muslims, who support the ISIL ideology. South Asia will also provide ISIL greater safety from Western forces and open opportunities to spread its tentacles in various countries of the south and central Asian region. If it eventually moves to south Asia in force, India will face a new, dangerous challenge from Islamic forces.

FUTURE LODGEMENTS

LIBYA

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant – Libya Province, a branch of the ISIL, was established in November 2014 when it pledged allegiance to ISIL leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and it is still active in Libya. Al-Baghdadi, thereafter, created three branches in Libya: Cyrenaica in the east, Fezzan in the desert south and Tripolitania (or Tarabulus) in the west. ISIL also had some following in al Bayda, Benghazi, Sirte, al-Khums and the Libyan capital, Tripoli. The Cyrenaica branch of ISIL has a large number of well-trained fighters. ISIL also has significant presence in the Jebel Akhdar area where North African fighters are trained. ISIL suffered several reverses from mid-2015 onwards. In April 2016, Libya's interim government launched a major offensive against ISIL located around Sirte. Libya

may, however, may be the first country where ISIL will relocate its fighters once forced to retreat from west Asia.¹

NIGERIA

Another location for ISIL in Africa where it may move in force is Nigeria, where Boko Haram, a staunch ally of ISIL, is in retreat but has got a significant presence. ISIL has described this region as an expansion of the group's caliphate to West Africa. ISIL publications from late March 2015 began referring to members of Boko Haram as part of *Wilayat Gharb Afriqiya* (West Africa Province). Although Boko Haram has suffered major reverses following its pledge of allegiance to ISIL and the Nigerian government recently declared the defeat of Boko Haram, Boko Haram is, however, still in a position to facilitate the relocation of ISIL in Nigeria.²

SOUTH ASIA AF-PAK

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant – Khorasan Province (IS-K *Wilayah Khorasan*) is a branch of ISIL, which is active in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

ISIL announced the group's formation in January 2015 and appointed former Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan militant Hafiz Saeed Khan as its leader, with former Afghan Taliban commander Abdul Rauf Aliza appointed as deputy leader. Aliza was killed in a US drone strike in February 2015, while Khan was killed in a US airstrike in July 2016. Its current leader is unknown. The Khorasan group's area of operation also includes other parts of south Asia, including India.

ISIL is assiduously cultivating and aiding Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Afghan Taliban and Tehrik-e-Taliban of Pakistan may give the much-needed real estate required by ISIL for operations in Af-Pak. ISIL-Taliban's and Tehrik-e-Taliban's Islamic interests coincide in Af-Pak; intelligence reports suggest that Russian intelligence agencies have been aiding and arming Uzbek jihadists in Kunduz, Farah and Herat, who are all supporters of ISIL. These developments clearly indicate extensive ISIL plans in Af-Pak. ISIL has a sizeable presence and influence in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Waziristan and some other tribal belts. Various reports suggest it is gradually increasing its presence in Punjab, Pakistan's most populous and important province.³

SITUATION IN KASHMIR

Pakistan is trying its best to turn the political turmoil in Kashmir into a religious struggle but has so far achieved little success. But the mainstream political parties of Kashmir have lately shown an inclination to sympathise with the

terror-mongers and want to collaborate with the separatist groups. This is a dangerous turn of events that must be reversed by appropriate political moves by the centre, as all separatist groups are the main architects of religious struggle.

Pakistan, in the meanwhile, has embarked on a desperate, relentless attempt to attack Indian security forces, especially the army camps in J&K. Over 63 army personnel, including a number of officers, are reported to have been killed this year. There is little doubt that the army has to be far more vigilant to avoid such attacks and high casualties and bring about requisite changes in its operational methods to reverse this trend. It is rather disconcerting that terrorists have succeeded time and again in inflicting heavy casualties on our security forces. A factor that seems responsible for this state of affairs is our defensive posture and mind-set. We are currently dependent on barbed wire fencing and other fortifications to ward off terrorist attacks instead of adopting offensive methods to locate and kill the terrorists who enter our country before they can launch attacks. We must pre-empt and destroy terrorists to prevent surprise attacks.

The continuous exchange of fire on the LoC seems a wasteful exercise and has mainly caused huge losses among the civilian population. We must change this situation by taking fresh initiatives to restore ceasefire along the LoC.

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The Psycho-Linkages in the War on Terror

SHUBHRA SANYAL

Terrorists, irrespective of their country, class and culture, form one community so far as their basic functions are concerned. Primarily, they intend to wage a psychological war and strike terror through assassinations or bomb explosions. The terrorists also aim to inflict material destruction by destroying and damaging the enemies' utilities, communication networks and industries, thereby attacking the economic structure of the country. A government confronted with the terrorist challenge may adopt a soft, compromising view on one hand and a tough non-confessional authoritarian stand on the other. The result is that many times, the public itself develops a hard, non-resistant attitude towards the government for its apparently diffused policies.

The Indian response to terrorism needs to reckon with some of its structural inadequacies in order to evolve into an effective strategy; primary among these are the psyche of a multi-ethnic society that stands easily vulnerable to exploitation by terror elements, which is even more accentuated by disparate economic development in which poverty -stricken youth are often hired to fight a war they have little to gain from.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VICTIM, VICTIMISER, SOCIETY AND GOVERNMENT

Terrorism has a huge impact on the international society. The fear psychosis spreads like a current into the masses and divides the world population into different segments on the basis of their perceptions about the various aspects of terror and terrorism and its consequences. The terror scenario unfolds into a psychological drama, with each actor performing his or her

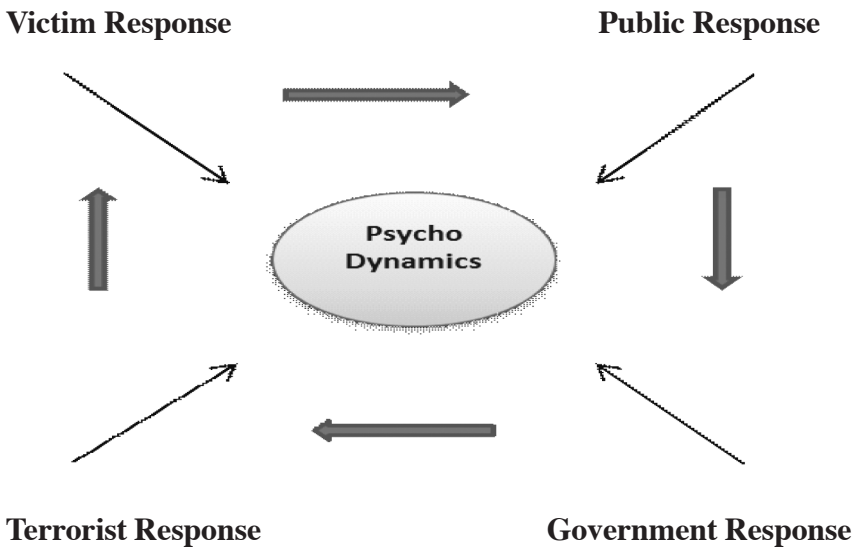
role as (1) victim, direct or indirect, (2) victimiser, that is, the terrorists of different colours and strata, (3) global response and, thereafter, (4) policies of the governments of various countries in combating terrorism. This article focuses solely on the psychological dynamics which contribute to the action plan of terrorism and countering it. The factors which entwine all the significant sections in one place in the war on terror and finalise the drama are studied individually to understand their contribution in the act. We can then arrive to a decision table regarding how to counter or control terrorism.

Terrorists, irrespective of their country, class and culture, form one community so far as their basic functions are concerned. Primarily, they intend to wage a psychological war and strike terror through assassinations or bomb explosions. The terrorists also aim to inflict material destruction by destroying and damaging the enemies' utilities, communication networks and industries, thereby attacking the economic structure of the country. A government confronted with the terrorist challenge may adopt a soft, compromising view on one hand and a tough, non-confessional authoritarian stand on the other. The result is that many times, the public itself develops a hard, non-resistant attitude towards the government for its apparently diffused policies.

It is well understood that every human being in this world behaves according to his or her beliefs, attitudes, values and personality traits. These traits determine each person's response towards a given situation. Determining what drives people to terrorism is no easy task. Tori DeAngelis¹ believes that terrorists aren't likely to volunteer as experimental subjects and examining their activities from afar and making assumptions can lead to erroneous conclusions. What's more, one group's terrorist is another group's freedom fighter, as the millions of Arabs who support Palestinian suicide bombers will agree. She mentions that psychologists are amassing more concrete data on the factors that lead some people to terrorism – and using those insights to develop ways to thwart it. The paper carries some good findings of Johan Hegan, director of Pennsylvania State University, International Center for the Study of Terrorism, who explained that people who are more open to terrorist recruitment and radicalisation feel angry,

alienated or disenfranchised and, therefore, believe that joining a movement offers social and psychological rewards, such as adventure, camaraderie and a heightened sense of identity.

This paper concentrates on the fact that all individuals are psychologically related to any acts they perform and these acts are driven by their perceived attitudes and beliefs acquired from the environment they belong to. While one chooses to be the victimiser, the other section in the same vicinity becomes a known or unknown victim. In the meantime, two other groups, that is, the public and the government are both affected by the war on terror and become judgemental in their approach. The public's critical evaluation or condemnations drive the government to formulate policies to combat terrorism. Thus to understand this war on terror more clearly, the act has to be understood by segregating each player in the drama and studying the psychological dynamics involved in it.



Researchers (Crenshaw, 1986; Helmus, 2009; Hudson, 1999; Horgan, 2005; and Victoroff, 2005)² – like many in the general public – have been preoccupied with the notion of terrorist motivation. Acts of terrorism are relatively uncommon, often shocking, and sometimes self-destructive. They seem to defy easy explanation.

Early efforts tended to predominantly focus on the individual level, assuming that the aberrant behaviour so prominently associated with the dramatic consequences of terrorism must reflect some mental or personality abnormality (Schmid & Jongman, 1988). This thinking led some to propose clinical explanations and gave rise to attempts to identify a unique terrorist profile. However, 40 years of research has firmly debunked the notion that only crazy people engage in terrorism and has yet to reveal a meaningful, stable terrorist profile. Borum, Crenshaw and Horgan³ believed it to be futile to type a terrorist into one personality trait. While a few may show psychopathic behaviour, others are motivated by certain ideologies. Horgan explained that the terrorist must be viewed from some other angle as a complex and dynamic process. The focus must shift to the vulnerabilities which motivate terrorists or act as a mechanism to make them commit terror. Some of these vulnerabilities commonly identified are frustration, distress, identity seeking and a feeling of belonging to the particular group. I fully believe in this new-found concept that instead of labelling a war terrorist as abnormal or psychopathic, we must relate them with possible psychological dynamics which make them vulnerable or otherwise motivated to join the terrorist group.

The need for belonging is significant in determining a person's emotional growth. *Who am I and where do I belong* upholds his or her sense of identity, which goes a long way in deciding the route the person takes to any action he or she chooses to adopt. Crenshaw⁴ argues that for the individuals who become active terrorists, the initial attraction is often to the group, or community of believers, rather than to an abstract ideology or to violence. Besides we all will agree that the pattern of terrorism is regularly changing and so is the character of the terrorist. The ground reality is that many researchers have begun to distinguish between reasons for joining, remaining in, and leaving terrorist organisations, finding that motivations may be different at each stage, and not even necessarily related to each other.

When people are not free, they will revolt, mostly violently, be they of any class or creed or belonging to any economic status. It is asserted by many that the terrorism of today is purely a result of altruistic

philosophy and stifling of initiative. Therefore, our attention should shift to the fact that poverty is not a potential factor of terrorism; rather terrorists with their activities affect the economic stability of the society. The conditions in which terrorism flourishes need to be studied in depth to obtain a definite reply. We must come to realise that the human conditions themselves will necessarily lead to ideas which necessitate violence to achieve goals. According to Newman,⁵ the challenge is not in preventing these ideas from materialising but rather in creating a proactive means by which to identify and deal forcibly with terror in its infancy, before it gathers the momentum and means to infect a society

Bertrand Venard,⁶ professor, Audencia Business School, gives insight into the mind-set of the ISIS recruits and explains the reasons the organisation is all powerful in today's time. Analysing the studies done from a criminological point of view, he explains that terrorists use five techniques to neutralise their sense of guilt. The first recourse is the 'denial of responsibility'. In this way, terrorists might refer to forces beyond their control, relieving them of responsibility for their actions. Second, ISIS terrorists employ 'denial of injury' to justify violence. This technique of neutralisation centres on the injury or harm involved in the delinquent act. Any acts of cruelty hurt people, of course, and it is hard to deny the injury done by terrorists to their victims. But terrorists may believe that their actions will not have consequences for them since their cruelty will lead them to paradise, a better world under the Islamic rule of ISIS. He adds the third technique of condemning the condemner. This technique is called 'denial of the victim'. Rather than explain their actions, terrorists attack those who disapprove of their deviance. For them, the condemners – journalists, judges, police officers and the like – are corrupt, depraved, brutal hypocrites and deviants. Finally, the ISIS group appeals to 'higher loyalties' to explain its crimes. Social control may be neutralised by sacrificing the demands of the larger society for the needs of the smaller social groups to which the terrorists belong. Thus Bertrand believes that with the help of these diverse neutralisation techniques, it's unlikely that even the most violent ISIS members suffer any feelings of guilt. Using total justification in their quest to achieve ISIS global domination, terrorists

thus give themselves free reign to strike any supposed enemy, by any means necessary.

I have mentioned in my book *Terrorism, the Many Dimensions*⁷ that the roots of terrorism can thus be discovered, not in any unique pattern of abnormality, but in man's innate propensity to violence, to war, to aggression, and to brutality and the 'instinct' for destructiveness that Freud categorised under his notion of 'Thanatos'⁸. There is no evidence of such an inherent tendency in the animal kingdom. Man, it appears, is the only species that kills its own kind in such numbers, with such cruelty and with such abandon.

Thus those who are killed, abandoned and tortured form the second segment of the drama of war terror. They become the direct victims, who in turn send messages of stress, trauma and revolt to the public in general inside and outside the country. Victims of terrorism experience a reaction that is unique and differs significantly from victims of any other circumstances to the extent that terrorism is itself a phenomenon that defies comparison, and by definition, implies the use of brutal and extreme methods. Its victims are, consequently, a group set apart from others. Critically, they are ordinarily unprepared for the shock of terror to which they are subjected and are not mentally equipped to adopt any strategy before, during and after the incident or to develop adequate mechanisms of psychological defence against its impact.

The trauma that a victim of terrorism undergoes is more painful, long lasting and detrimental than most other situations of violence. Situations of severe stress and catastrophic experiences create abiding psychological trauma. Death, injury and destruction; situations of extreme physical and psychological threat; and displacement, social chaos, separation and loss are the realities of war, of extreme devastation, as in the case of Hiroshima, and of concentration camps. Survivors have made it clear that the consequences of such circumstances, that is, the 'Survivor Syndrome' comprise chronic anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, nightmares, sleep disturbances, psychosomatic disorders, chronic fatigue, emotional lability, loss of initiative and general, personal, sexual and social maladaptation.

Studies were carried out in areas of civilian violence, riots and civil wars, such as Belfast, Northern Ireland, Malaysia, Cambodia and Lebanon. These instances indicated high levels of psychological morbidity among the victims. Psychosomatic complaints, fear, insomnia and other manifestations of anxiety and depression were common in the survivors.

Terrorism challenges the natural need of human beings to see the world as predictable, orderly and controllable. Jessica Hamblen and Laurie B. Slone⁹ have shown that deliberate violence creates longer-lasting mental health effects than natural disasters or accidents. The consequences for both individuals and the community are prolonged, and survivors often feel that injustice has been done to them. This can lead to anger, frustration, helplessness, fear and a desire for revenge. Since the 9/11 attacks, there has been an increasing amount of research about how people are affected by terrorism. A consistent finding is that while most individuals exhibit resilience over time, people most directly exposed to terrorist attacks are at higher risk for developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Problems with anxiety, depression and substance use are also commonly reported among those with PTSD. Predictors of PTSD include being closer to the attacks, being injured or knowing someone who was killed or injured. Those who watch more media coverage are also at higher risk for PTSD and associated problems.

A wave of bombings struck France in 1995 and 1996, killing 12 people and injuring more than 200. A research was conducted to follow up evaluations with the victims in 1998 to determine the prevalence of and factors associated with PTSD. Pierre Verger, William Dab, Donna L. Lamping, Jean-Yves Loze, Céline Deschaseaux-Voinet, Lucien Abenhaim and Frédéric Rouillon conducted the study on a total of 196 respondents (86%).¹⁰ Of these, 19% had severe initial physical injuries (hospitalisation exceeding one week). Problems reported at the follow-up evaluation included attack-related hearing problems (51%), cosmetic impairment (33%), and PTSD (31%) (95% confidence interval = 24.5%–37.5%). Results of logistic regression analyses indicated that the risk of PTSD was significantly higher among women (odds ratio = 2.54), participants aged 35–54 years old (odds ratio = 2.83), those who had severe initial injuries (odds ratio

= 2.79) or cosmetic impairment (odds ratio = 2.74), and those who perceived substantial threat during the attack (odds ratio = 3.99). The authors emphasised the need for improved health services to address the intermediate and long-term consequences of terrorism.

It was observed that violent crimes are negative events that usually happen suddenly, generate fear and helplessness, threaten people's physical or psychological well-being and leave victims in an emotional state which they are unable to deal with using their normal psychological resources.¹¹ Studies found that any kind of trauma – and a violent crime is a type of trauma for the victim – involves a collapse of the person's feelings of security, also affecting indirectly his or her immediate family circle. It is necessary, therefore, to understand that knowledge of psychological harm, and the need for its assessment, should not get confined only to the academic circle.¹¹ The crucial objectives are to (a) identify the psychological situation of the victim, (b) treat it appropriately, (c) repair the damage caused, (d) prevent re-victimisation and (e) avoid the creation of new victims. These basic elements must become the guarding principles of any government policies to address the grievances of victims of war crime enabling them psychologically and emotionally to regain their lost spirit, courage, and identity. Post-traumatic pain no doubt will continue to trouble, bringing unpleasant memories, yet the victims can afford to look to the future with a new approach.

Studies on the public perception and psychological impact of terrorist attacks have increased in recent years due to the occurrence of a number of high-profile events, such as the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and the Madrid and London bombings of 2004 and 2005, respectively. A survey conducted by Schuster et al.¹³ immediately following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 revealed substantial psychological stress among the US public, particularly among women, visible minorities and residents of close proximity to the attacks. Another survey conducted shortly after, in November 2001, by Lerner et al. showed that almost half of respondents perceived the average American as likely to be hurt in a terrorist attack within the coming year.¹⁴ A fifth of the respondents perceived themselves as being likely to be personally hurt in a terrorist attack over

the next year. When respondents were revisited one year later, perceptions of being personally hurt in a terrorist attack over the upcoming year remained high (19.2%) (Fischhoff et al., 2005).

It is worth accepting that there is a variation in recognising the shock of the terror war from person to person and from one country to another. The response, therefore, becomes semantic, from a confused response of a person in an area remote to the scene of occurrence to the response of a more serious nature of a person in the neighbourhood of the scene. Moreover, the wider the gulf between the public conception of morality and that of the terrorist organisation, the less likely it is that the public will understand how the terrorist organisation justifies its actions, not only to the world at large but also to its own members and supporters. In a sense, terrorism is a test of the moral fabric of the afflicted society. All individuals who are vulnerable to the risk of terrorist attacks need to prepare themselves both physically and psychologically. Lieutenant General Chandra Shekhar¹⁵ believed that an Indian response to terrorism needs to reckon with some of its structural inadequacies in order to evolve as an effective strategy. Primary among these are the psyche of a multi-ethnic society that stands easily vulnerable to exploitation by terror elements, which is even more accentuated by disparate economic development in which poverty-stricken youth are often hired to fight a war they have little to gain from.

A poll was conducted to assess the attitude of Britain towards the threat of terrorism. In July 2005, after the 7 July terrorist attacks on the London transport system, MORI conducted a survey for King's College London on how Londoners were affected. The survey found that 51% thought it was very likely that London would be attacked again in the near future. The survey also assessed how people learned about the attacks and their behavioural responses in the aftermath of the attacks. A MORI survey of 1,014 adults in London in late September 2005, two months after the 7 July attacks, found that 43% of those surveyed thought it was very likely that there would be another terrorist attack in London while 39% thought it was somewhat likely. There were mixed attitudes in responses as to what were considered to be appropriate responses to the threat of

terrorism. Of those surveyed, 79% thought it was acceptable to deport non-UK citizens who encourage terrorism and 45% thought it was acceptable for the police to have a policy of 'shoot to kill' for suspected terrorists; 51% thought it was unacceptable.

In a survey in March 2004 on 1,000 adults aged 16 years and older, MORI also found that 83% of the people were happy to carry identity cards, a government proposal at the time which was in part justified as a response to the threat of terrorism. Three in four (74%) were either not very or not at all concerned that the introduction of cards could have a negative impact on their civil liberties¹⁶. Since the 9/11 attacks, there has been an increasing amount of research about how people are affected by terrorism. A consistent finding is that while most individuals exhibit resilience over time, people most directly exposed to terrorist attacks are at higher risk for developing PTSD. Problems with anxiety, depression, and substance use are also commonly reported among those with PTSD. Predictors of PTSD include being closer to the attacks, being injured or knowing someone who was killed or injured. Those who watch more media coverage are also at higher risk for PTSD and associated problems. Jessica Hamblen and Laurie B. Slone¹⁷ noted in their research that those who are most at risk for more severe traumatic stress reactions, such as PTSD are those who have experienced the greatest magnitude of exposure to the traumatic event, such as victims and their families. However, sometimes rescue workers also have direct relationships with or indirect exposure to those who are missing or killed. Therefore, these rescue workers need to cope with their own losses as well as with the demands of the rescue mission. In the case of 9/11, for example, a particularly difficult task for these rescue workers was the identification and removal of the casualties. These activities have been shown to be particularly traumatic and associated with higher rates of PTSD, fear and shock. This has historically resulted in markets recovering from long-term bullish periods. Such turnarounds were witnessed after terrorist acts like the Kennedy assassination, the World Trade Center Bombing and the Oklahoma City Bombing. The market

turnaround is attributed to many things, ranging from a society that bonds together to overcome a tragedy to changes in security that make people feel more secure and more confident than before.

Terrorism, being an act of violence seeking to unsettle a legitimate political society through horrific death and destruction, is to be viewed as fundamentally a criminal act and is to be faced with coercive, legislative or military means. The destructive potentials of terror acts fuelled by religious fundamentalism and obscurantism have grown all the more vicious. Theories of good terrorists, so-called freedom fighters or poverty as the breeding ground of terrorism are outcome of either a failure to read the situation or efforts to digress from the core of the menace, or both. Transnational solidarity of terror groups like al-Qaeda or the presence of mercenaries in the terror attacks is proof. The one objective involved in the campaign against terror is to secure the inviolable right to life of the innocent so vulnerable to the terrorists' bullets.

In a traumatic situation, how long can the government of any country remain passive and silent? The terrorist succeeds in maintaining prolonged pressure on the common public to force it to accept its challenges. The Indian response to terrorism needs to reckon with some of its structural inadequacies in order to evolve as an effective strategy. Primary among these are the psyche of a multi-ethnic society that is vulnerable to exploitation by terror elements, which is even more accentuated by disparate economic development in which poverty-stricken youth are often hired to fight a war they have little to gain from. This view is also supported by Lieutenant General Chandra Shekhar (retired) PVSM AVSM in his article 'International Terrorism India's Long Term Strategy and Concerns.'

The political decisions to fight terror must be fast and fair so as to win the confidence of the collage of language, culture and beliefs of the country. The government needs to take steps that would weave the collage into a compact whole by equitable development across the country and promote values and practices that stand for secularism. When

successful, this would invariably lend confidence in the political setup, weed out the fissiparous and the deflector and raise a sense of belongingness. In spite of numerous disparities and differences in the Indian society, the government has recently taken a firm stand in putting the terrorist sponsor agencies under a scanner.

Other countries who got affected by terrorism have also developed certain strategies to contain it. In 2000, the United Kingdom legislated the Terrorism Act of 2000, replacing the older laws against the IRA campaign, followed by the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 2005. The United States passed the USA Patriot Act after the 9/11 attacks, as well as a range of other legislation and executive orders relating to national security. The Department of Homeland Security was established to consolidate domestic security agencies to coordinate the antiterrorism as well as national response to major natural disasters and accidents.

The Israeli supreme court in 2006 ruled that targeted killing was a permissible form of self-defence. In 2016, the Israeli Knesset passed a comprehensive law against terrorism, forbidding any kind of terrorism and support of terrorism and setting severe punishments for terrorists. The law also regulates legal efforts against terrorism. Since 1986, France has enacted more than a dozen laws to strengthen its counterterrorism efforts. The November 2014 Patriot Act authorises a travel ban on suspected terrorists in an effort to scuttle their possible plans to commit terrorist acts outside France. The law also authorises the government to block websites that 'glorify' terrorism. The country also launched its 'Stop-Djihadisme' (Stop Jihadism) campaign in late January 2015 in an effort to counter the threat of Islamic extremism throughout French society.

Nearer home, the Sheikh Hasina government of Bangladesh has resolved to root out terrorism from the country after its worst militant attack on 1 July 2016. The government was expected to initiate tough antiterrorism measures in the wake of the brutal killing of 20 foreigners at the Gulshan café. The government had to act promptly to foil the diabolic designs of the terrorists linked to the dreaded international jihadi group

the ISIS. Sri Lanka lifted its wartime emergency powers and introduced in September 2011 new regulations under the 1978 Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), allowing it to keep captured separatist fighters in detention. In August 2016, the government said it would replace the draconian antiterror law with a counterterrorism act.

Limitations in the international laws are many. It has been accepted by legal experts that international law is not effective when it comes to dealing with terrorists and international terrorism. Some terrorists are killed and others are captured who are at times not even brought to courts and, instead, quietly dispersed to some safe haven. Even the states' response towards the definition or the basic legal concepts of terrorism remain confused. Worse still, how might a definition impact what seems like terrorist acts by a state's armed forces? It's a million-dollar question said Subramaniam (2002)¹⁸ to know how far special laws would be of use in containing the menace of cross-border terrorism. Terrorism has to be fought according to the rule of law, and combating terrorism must be legal. The United Nations has made a concerted effort to arrive at a consensus definition of terrorism, and as per survey all states desire that the UN should play a more significant role in controlling terrorism.

In the end, I repeat, as mentioned in my book, that the states of the world should comply with the principle of free and fair justice so that terrorists would have no opportunity to remain unpunished for their crimes and moreover certain crimes would not go unpunished in the name of being a means to any political end. The establishment of a permanent International Criminal Court of Justice could play a very important role in the antiterrorist struggle. The states would be able to use it instead of their national courts. It would help them to avoid political tension between the states. However, law alone will not eradicate terrorism from its very roots. Systematic and intensive investigations are needed to study the causes promoting terrorism, and thereafter attempts should be made to

mitigate the grievances through political, legal and administrative process. Sometimes, extreme economic deprivation, organised exploitation and police brutalities also lead to an outburst of violence and organised resistance through terrorist methods. The government must understand that these incidents are to be handled with care and appropriate restraint.

Thus the war on terror is a response to the human drama of terrorism played by a human body against another human being trying to attain some goals. It is necessary to appreciate the psychological dynamics of this war on terror to put an end to it for a long-term positive result.

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IS Presence Along the Durand Line Prompts a Regional Alliance

RAMTANU MAITRA

Locked in fierce battles with Russia, Iran, Syria and a hesitant United States and trying to protect the territory it seized in the Levant, the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is losing ground rapidly. According to an IHS Markit report released on 9 October, the Islamic State's caliphate shrank during 2015 from 90,800 km² to 78,000 km², a net loss of 14 per cent. And in the first nine months of 2016, that territory shrank by another 16 per cent. As of 3 October, the Islamic State was left with control of roughly 65,500 km² in Iraq and Syria, an area roughly the size of Sri Lanka, the report notes.

As the Syrian troops, under cover of heavy Russian air attacks, have begun to close in on areas held by ISIS and other rebel groups, it is likely that the so-called Islamic State will continue to lose ground in the coming months, stalling the group's growth in that region. Yet with thousands of fighters – most of whom are Arabs, fortified by a large retinue of Caucasians and central Asians and a smattering of fighters from elsewhere – ISIS may shrink but is not likely to vanish. Carrying black flags and promoting a hateful brand of anti-Shi'a Islam, this virulent group could show up in force in those Islamic countries where governance is weak. One such location could be the Maghreb region of north Africa; another is the virtually ungoverned region that stretches between eastern and south-eastern

Afghanistan and Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA).

In fact, available ground reports indicate that alleged followers of ISIS have already begun to appear in eastern Afghanistan under the name of the Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP). Though they are few in number, disunited and lacking both known sponsors and known connections to ISIS at this time, the emergence of these fighters over the past several years seems to be prompting something of a realignment in the greater south Asia region vis-à-vis the Taliban. In particular, Iran, Pakistan, China, Russia and Kabul appear to be converging around support for that Pashtun-dominated terrorist grouping – which has been viewed for more than a decade as the primary obstacle to peace in war-torn Afghanistan by both Kabul and its various allies – as a bulwark against the ISKP and Islamic State inroads. What is going on? What is at stake? What do these developments actually mean? For answers, we need to take a much closer look.

DIFFERENCES AND COMMONALITIES

Before diving into the details of the ISKP's appearance and the consequences of that, it is worth making several general observations concerning the main players: the ISKP, the Taliban, the Kabul elites and, of course, Pakistan. First, the name ISKP, itself, gives pause. The KP refers to the historical Khorasan province – a vast swath of land, only a small part of which now exists within Iran in the form of three provinces, North Khorasan, Razavi Khorasan and South Khorasan. Up to the nineteenth century, the historical Khorasan stretched from north-eastern Iran eastward through most of Afghanistan.

There can hardly be serious concern that the small band of ISKP fighters will ever develop enough muscle to wrest any part of the historical province from Iran. They have not yet developed a direct link with the ISIS fighters, who are battling for their lives in the Levant. So far, the only known link between the two groups is that the ISKP fighters have raised the ISIS flag and pledged their allegiance to the ISIS caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Further, like ISIS, these fighters are mostly Salafi Sunnis who have taken up the cause of annihilating the 'heretic' Shi'as to purify Islam.

To assert at this time that ISKP is part of ISIS is a stretch. The birth of ISIS was a complex phenomenon aided by a mix of the colonial West's mistreatment of Arabs in their own Islamic land, a full-scale military invasion of Iraq and Libya by the United States in the early part of this millennium and the Washington-London-Paris-Riyadh-led efforts to undermine Iran and Russia by helping disgruntled Syrians by all means, including violent ones, to change the regime in Damascus.

Though also complex, very different circumstances and dynamics have given birth to the ISKP. Broadly speaking, as we shall see, the ISKP is a product of Pakistan's endless meddling in Afghan affairs, driven as Islamabad is by its obsession to control its neighbour, and Kabul's utter inability to bring back security and stability to its war-torn society.

The internal conflict, that began decades ago between Kabul and the Taliban, within Afghanistan, remains as destructive as ever. Over the years, the Taliban (once heavily funded by the Saudis and armed by the Pakistanis) and various anti-Taliban militant groups such as the ISKP have broken down the societal and tribal infrastructure that had kept the loosely-bound Afghan society in harmony for centuries.

Significantly, however, the ISKP, the Taliban and the elites in Kabul do have one thing in common: they are all Pashtuns. True, they have differences: the elites are identified as believers in a 'moderate' form of Islam who have financial and cultural ties to

London, Paris and Washington; the Taliban is an orthodox group of Sunni-Islamic organisations that belong to the Hanafi school of Islam and are imbued with Pashtun sectarian-nationalism; and the ISKP is dominated by the Salafis, who want to establish a caliphate in the historical Khorasan province. Despite these differences, however, all three groups of players want Afghanistan to be ‘Pashtunland’, brushing aside the vast number of non-Pashtun Afghans (who, together, form the majority and consider Afghanistan to be their land as much as the Pashtuns’).

Over the years, Pakistan has succeeded in exploiting the differences and common interests of these three groups, playing one group against the other for tactical advantage. And all the while those in power in Kabul have always ‘wanted’ to trust Pakistan because, like them, Islamabad/Rawalpindi wants the Pashtuns to dominate and control Afghanistan.

THE BIRTH OF ISKP: A SUMMARY

Although the exact nature of the ISKP and level of its potency as a military power remain murky, most observers more or less agree on how it evolved within Afghanistan. According to Borhan Osman of the Afghan Analysts Network (AAN), many of today’s ISKP fighters were, in fact, Pakistanis ‘who had long been settled in the southeastern districts of Nangarhar, in the Spin Ghar mountains or its foothills, bordering the tribal agencies on the Pakistani side of the Durand Line.’ Before joining the ISKP, these militants operated under different names under the umbrella of the loosely assembled Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

Let’s back up for a moment to get some context. First, it is widely acknowledged that the Pakistani military, through its Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) outfit, has long been a patron of the Afghan Taliban. Pakistan’s objective has been to protect the Afghan Taliban, including providing shelter inside Pakistan as and when needed, in order to keep Kabul in line and to weaken New Delhi’s

influence there. Just a year ago, in January 2016, the then ISKP head Hafez Saeed Khan, former chief of the TTP's Orakzai branch in Pakistan's tribal areas, told the ISIS mouthpiece, *Dabiq*, that the Pakistan-based terrorist outfit involved in masterminding the 2008 attack in Mumbai, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), and the Afghan Taliban follow the dictates of Pakistan's ISI. (Hafez Saeed Khan was killed in a US drone strike on 26 July 2016.) Pakistan's support to the Afghan Taliban is so widely known, and has been spelled out by Kabul so many times, that many Afghans call the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, set up in 1996 by the Taliban, the 'ISI Emirate'.

In 2001, following the US invasion of Afghanistan after 9/11, the Pakistani military made a show of helping the Americans to weed out the Taliban, but it was a smokescreen and Washington chose to look the other way. This two-timing policy allowed Islamabad/Rawalpindi to bring hundreds of Taliban fighters, who would otherwise have been eliminated by US forces and their Northern Alliance allies, into Pakistan for protection.

This two-timing policy encouraged the emergence of a group of defiant Pashtuns within Pakistan. This came to surface violently in July of 2007 when hundreds of religious zealots, many of whom were Pashtuns, were killed at Lal Masjid in Islamabad following an army raid. The controversial cleric and leader of Lal Masjid, Maulana Abdul Aziz, fled the area wearing a burqa, while his younger brother, Maulana Abdul Rashid Ghazi, died within the Masjid complex. Some analysts claim the incident catalysed the formation of the TTP within FATA and Swat Valley.

Five months later, in December 2007, at least a dozen groups of anti-Islamabad dissidents from Pakistan's FATA joined hands somewhere in the South Waziristan Agency to form the TTP under the umbrella of a tribal leader, Baitullah Mehsud. The group's objective at the time was to retaliate against the NATO forces based in Afghanistan, to punish Islamabad/Rawalpindi for the Lal Masjid massacre and to join hands with the non-Muslim NATO

and the United States against fellow Pashtun brothers located on the other side of the nonexistent Durand Line. Housed along the non-demarcated Durand Line in FATA, these TTP fighters were anti-Islamabad/Rawalpindi. These were identified by Islamabad as ‘bad Taliban’.

To begin with, Pashtuns residing in FATA never trusted the Punjabi-controlled Pakistani military, and they resisted efforts by Pakistani authorities to change their distinctive way of life. In some districts of FATA, these tribes and sub-tribes rule the roost, and they were the seedbed for Pakistan’s ‘bad Taliban’, which emerged in the form of the TTP in 2007.

Over the years, the ‘bad Taliban’ carried out a series of major operations inside Pakistan, often targeting Pakistani military bases, education centres and various accessories of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Under pressure, the Punjabi-dominated Pakistani military launched operations in different areas of FATA. While the Pakistani authorities’ objective was, in part, to kill off some of these Pashtun tribal leaders associated with the TTP, the other, no less significant objective was to drive them into Afghanistan.

A majority of the ISKP militants have arrived in Nangarhar since 2010, mainly from the Orakzai, North Waziristan and Khyber tribal agencies. According to local residents, the first groups moved into Afghanistan, often with their families, to flee military operations by the Pakistani army that year. They settled in the Achin, Nazian, Kot, Deh Bala, Rodat and Ghanikhel districts, among others. Calling themselves muhajerin (refugees) in search of shelter, they invoked support from the local communities in Nangarhar, who deemed it their moral obligation to extend a helping hand to their Pashtun brothers escaping violence in their home towns. The ‘refugees’ also opened madrassas and schools for their children in Achin and Nazian.¹

GUESTS TURNED INTERLOPERS

Kabul was not initially upset by the influx of muhajer families, numbering more than 2,000 according to an Afghan government estimate. The authorities believed that these militants would work against the Afghan Taliban operating in the area and fight back against Pakistani infiltrators. However, that did not happen. Although some of the fighters who had fled Pakistan did engage in skirmishes with the Taliban, others did not.

Describing this development, Osman writes: ‘While, since as early as 2010, the mainly TTP militants from various tribal districts on the Pakistani side of the Durand Line existed in Nangarhar’s Spin Ghar districts, their attitudes mirrored the overall lack of cohesiveness within the TTP, which usually had little control and command over the fighters, including those scattered across Nangarhar. As wider splits within the TTP ranks emerged following the death of the group’s leader Hakimullah Mehsud in November 2013, militants in Nangarhar also turned into autonomous, often ruthless factions, further divided in smaller groups. That was the pattern throughout 2014.

‘It was from these “guests” that the bulk of the Nangarhar-based ISKP foot soldiers emerged, following the official announcement of the Islamic State’s expansion to “Khorasan Province.” Before they openly changed their allegiance (or sympathy) to IS, they exhibited other signs of regrouping under a new *modus operandi*. From the autumn of 2014, they started to act more autonomously of the TTP and as if trying to establish some sort of control over the areas they lived in, for instance, by casually setting up checkpoints. They also appeared to be preparing for a major battle, transporting huge shipments of weapons from Tirah valley in Khyber agency with unprecedented quantity and frequency. This coincided with a new wave of muhajer families arriving from Khyber agency and North Waziristan. In part, this was triggered by the Pakistani army’s Operation Khyber 1, which

started in October 2014, and the subsequent Operation Khyber 2, which started in March 2015. According to Pakistani officials, the two-phased Khyber operations, which targeted Khyber and parts of Orakzai agencies, were aimed at repelling militants who had fled there from the Zarb-i-Azb operation in North Waziristan. This increased relocation was concentrated in Achin, Nazian and, to a lesser extent, Deh Bala and Kot districts.

‘It took the local population several months to understand what their muhajer “guests” were actually up to. In May 2015, they woke up to the fact that the guests had changed their own flags to those of the IS. The militants then turned Mahmand, which had been the center of the increased migration, into ISKP’s headquarters. The highly mountainous terrain, hard to conquer for outsiders but providing easy supply and exit routes to Tirah, was the perfect choice for the command center of the new group, which had previously cached huge amounts of weapons transported from Tirah in Mahmand’s Takhta and Kharawy areas.

‘Mahmandis (residents of the valley) remember ISKP’s initial rule from mid-May until early July 2015 as a period of great relief. They initially thought that ISKP was a pro-government force in a new garb and cited the group’s commanders as stating that “we are here to fight the ISI Emirate,” referring to the Afghan Taliban and their link to the Pakistani intelligence service. Their reaction to the Afghan National Security Force made the new group of old fighters look even more benign to the residents, who also cited the ISKP fighters as saying “we have nothing against government forces.” An Afghan National Army soldier from Mahmand told AAN: “We celebrated the coming of Daesh and the disappearance of the Taliban. We could come home and roam around without any fear of being stopped by Taliban.”’²

ISKP TAKEOVER OF NANGARHAR

It is evident that the ISKP fighters exhibited that benign posture initially to establish themselves in the area. Once they succeeded

in getting a foothold, the group ‘mounted a campaign of protracted violence against farming households in parts of the southern districts of Nangarhar’, according to David Mansfield, in his February 2016 report.

‘Locally there are doubts as to whether those groups currently flying the banner of IS in these valleys have direct links to Syria and Iraq. The prevailing view amongst those that have been forced to leave these upper valleys and the neighboring villages and districts is less one of Taliban dissidents unhappy with the new leadership re-branding themselves as Daesh,’ Mansfield wrote.

‘Rather,’ he continued, ‘the narrative that gains greater resonance is one where Pakistan’s forces have rebranded their funding, supporting a new group of militants that will serve the ambition of maintaining instability on the borders and maintaining leverage over the Taliban leadership; a reminder to the Taliban that they are not the only show in town.

‘As is ever the case in rural Afghanistan, the truth is defined not by the facts but by what the population believes to be true. And for those living in the southern districts of Nangarhar, neither the government nor those proclaiming to be fighting for Islamic State are what they say they are.

On one hand, those in the government, whose mobility has become restricted to the district centers and main roads, are seen as self-serving. They are viewed by large swathes of the rural population as being unable to provide the requisite leadership, security and economic support; they are “a government in name only.” On the other hand, those in Daesh are seen as interlopers: largely Pakistani militants reliant on foreign funding and weapons.’³

THE TUTAP PROTESTS

From these detailed reports by researchers and analysts, it is clear that the ISKP has established itself in a relatively small area along the Af-Pak border, but there has been little evidence of a

game-plan to secure control over the vast area known as the Khorasan – at least, not until the ISKP claimed responsibility for the suicide attack on the TUTAP protests in Kabul on July 23.

TUTAP – an acronym for the participating countries Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan – is an initiative designed to close the large gap in Afghanistan's current need for electrical power by connecting existing 'insular' grids within the country and linking this unified grid system to neighbouring countries. The plan would allow the export of surplus electricity from Afghanistan and the central Asian republics to Pakistan and be used to cover seasonal power shortages in participating countries by the use of two-way lines.⁴

According to the original TUTAP plan, the grids were to be connected through Bamiyan province, in the central highlands, where most of the country's Hazara Shi'as live. In 2013, the Karzai government changed that 500 KV power transmission line route to bring in power from Turkmenistan to Kabul – bypassing areas with large Hazara communities. Hazara Shi'as believe that the re-routing was done to satisfy the dominant Pashtun Sunnis and demonstrated yet another instance of bias against the Hazara Shi'a community, which accounts for up to 15 per cent of Afghanistan's estimated 30-million-strong population.

The Hazara Shi'as began protesting in Kabul in May, and by all accounts the protests were peaceful. On 23 July, however, a suicide bomber who had slipped in among the protestors blew himself up, killing at least 80 of the Hazara protestors. The ISKP claimed responsibility. If the ISKP was, in fact, behind the killings, it would mean it has not only developed a killing capability beyond eastern Afghanistan, but it has also developed a network within Afghanistan's capital.

KABUL'S TURNABOUT

Whether or not the ISKP actually had a role in the killing of Hazara Shi'as in Kabul and elsewhere, its existence has already

brought about a sea change amongst the regional powers in attitudes toward the Afghan Taliban – starting in Kabul. And that raises an interesting question: Was Kabul also involved in the ISKP's emergence, allowing the group to germinate in eastern Afghanistan?

For several decades, Kabul's chief problem has been the Taliban, while its secondary problem was the Pakistan-aided Haqqani faction of terrorists. Kabul has been extremely vocal against Islamabad for helping both the Haqqani group and some of the Afghan Taliban. In particular, Kabul targeted the Quetta Shura group that operates from within Pakistan's Balochistan province bordering southern Afghanistan and has brought a few Pakistani anti-Shi'a terrorist groups under its umbrella.

So it was somewhat surprising to see Afghan president Ghani extend a friendly hand during his November 2014 visit to Pakistan, soon after he became the Afghan president. During that trip, Ghani – along with his high-ranking delegation, including defence minister General Bismillah Muhammadi, Afghan chief of general staff General Sher Mohammad Karimi and other senior Afghan security officials – paid a visit to Pakistan's military general headquarters in Rawalpindi to meet the then Pakistani chief of army staff Raheel Sharif.

Such a visit by the Afghan head of state to meet the top Pakistani general is not only unusual, in hindsight, it suggested some sort of deal was in progress. What transpired during the meeting has not been revealed. And subsequently, President Ghani came out strongly against Pakistan's continuing meddling in Afghan affairs. But then, surprisingly, in September 2016, President Ghani formalised a peace treaty with the Hezb-i-Islami (G), a small armed group led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a Pashtun mujahideen. According to Kabul, this was done to lure other non-Taliban fighting groups to support Kabul.

There are two distinct reasons why this peace pact smells of a deal with Pakistan. To begin with, Hekmatyar's Hezb-e-Islami faction is a tiny and dormant group that has confronted neither the

Taliban nor any other group. His role during the Civil War period (1991–1996) is one of an extreme level of butchery. That includes indiscriminate shelling of civilians in Kabul, targeted assassinations of intellectuals and disappearances of political opponents. Hekmatyar's followers are accused of throwing acid at women and of running an underground torture prison in Pakistan.

Reacting to Hekmatyar's signing of the peace treaty with President Ghani, Omar Samad, former Afghan ambassador to Canada and France, a Senior Central Asia Fellow at the New America Foundation in Washington, DC, and now senior adviser to Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, the chief executive of Afghanistan since 2014, said: 'It is difficult to imagine that Hekmatyar, who until a few months ago was one day courting the Taliban, and another day al-Qaeda, would undergo a sudden personality makeover, unless he felt that he has reached the end of the militant path he started on 40 years ago.'⁵

The Hekmatyar-Ghani alliance is intriguing from another standpoint. If, indeed, President Ghani were truly disillusioned with Pakistan's role vis-à-vis Afghanistan, why court Hekmatyar – a well-known puppet-mujahideen of Rawalpindi? A product of pan-Islamist groups linked to the Muslim Brotherhood at Kabul University in the early 1970s, Hekmatyar lives, and has lived for decades, in Pakistan with his family. Since 1979, when he was projected as a 'major' mujahideen leader by Washington, the Pakistani ISI took charge of his career.

Like most Muslim Brotherhood/al-Qaeda affiliates, Hekmatyar also mouths anti-America rhetoric. But Washington likes him because, as Wahid Mujhda, now a Kabul-based analyst who had earlier fought against the Soviet invaders and interacted with the leaders in Peshawar, pointed out, Hekmatyar was an efficient 'Russian-killer'. 'Americans said they supported Hekmatyar because he was a good killer of Russians. They didn't care who was cursing the United States; what was more important to them was who killed more Russians,' Muzhda says.⁶

But, above all, Hekmatyar is Rawalpindi's man. In 1972, Hekmatyar murdered a Maoist student in Kabul University, an act that landed him in prison for two years. After his release, he fled to Pakistan, where he founded Hezb-e-Islami in 1975 and developed ties with the ISI. When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, Pakistan was in a high Islamist phase and felt deeply threatened by the godless communists on its border. Hekmatyar became the ISI's chief proxy warrior against the Soviets – with the help of what would eventually be some \$600 million in US aid.⁷ Hosted by Pakistan's Jamaat-e-Islami, then flying high with the covert Jamaati General Zia ul-Haq at the helm, patronised by the ISI, funded by the CIA and Saudi Arabia to the tune of USD 600 million, and armed by the Chinese, Hekmatyar was given carte blanche to run the massive Shamshatoo refugee camp near Peshawar that fed fighters into the jihad.⁸

After Hekmatyar concluded the peace treaty with President Ghani, former lawmaker and leader of the National Participation Party of Afghanistan, Najibullah Kabuli, speaking at a press conference in Kabul, urged Hezb-e-Islami leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar not to act on the instructions issued by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence.⁹

REGIONAL CONVERGENCE: 'LESSER OF THE TWO EVILS' DICTUM AT PLAY?

If President Ghani's undercover alliance with Pakistan has been veiled, the change of heart vis-à-vis the Taliban by the big power to Afghanistan's north, Russia, and Moscow's establishment of a closer relationship with Pakistan, is now out in the open. Recently, Russian ambassador to Kabul Alexander Mantytskiy made clear that his government maintains ties with the Taliban insurgent group, though they are not 'intensive', as he put it. 'Yes, we do have contacts [with the Taliban] but they are aimed at ensuring safety of Russian nationals and encourage the Taliban to engage in peace

talks [with Kabul],’ Mantytskiy told the Afghan Senate Committee on International Relations in unprecedented testimony on 10 December.¹⁰

Last year, Reuters cited Interfax news agency quoting Russian president Vladimir Putin’s special envoy to Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov, telling the news agency that Russia’s interests in Afghanistan ‘objectively coincide’ with those of the Taliban movement in its fight against the Islamic State. Russia has established communication channels to exchange information with the Taliban, Kabulov told Interfax. Russia is also ready to supply weapons to Afghanistan, he said, but would do this ‘with caution and on a commercial basis.’¹¹

It is also evident that the presumed threat of the ISKP could be one of the reasons Russia has begun making efforts to get closer to Pakistan. Like the Americans – who claim that though Pakistan is not extending its full help to stabilise the Afghan situation, Islamabad is a key ingredient for its resolution – Russia apparently believes that Pakistan’s help is necessary to get closer to a stabilised Kabul. Making its intent clearer, during a 16-day period, from 24 September 2016 to 10 October 2016, Russia conducted its first ever joint military exercises in Pakistan’s Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province at a Special Forces academy. In addition, Russia has agreed to sell helicopters to Pakistan, lifting its decades-old arms embargo against Islamabad.

Russian interest in Pakistan had begun to emerge prior to the military exercise. On 16 October 2015, Pakistan and Russia signed an intergovernmental agreement for the construction of a 1,100-kilometre pipeline with a capacity of 12.4 billion cubic meters from Lahore to Karachi. Russia agreed to invest \$2 billion in the project, the first phase of which is expected to conclude by December 2017.¹²

In the days following the military exercise, Pakistan offered Russia the use of Gwadar port, its new China-built port on Balochistan’s Makran coast on the Arabian Sea. The port is yet

to become fully operational, and its use by foreign ships is still some way off. On the other hand, the Chinese navy has already been granted landing rights there.

The new Russo-Pakistani embrace cannot, however, be attributed solely to the new regional equation emerging around Afghanistan. Pakistan is already slated to become a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, where Russia is a major player and is deeply concerned about regional security, in 2017. Now that more than 25 years have passed since the dismantling of the Soviet Union, and Russia is in the process of developing closer relations with all Asian countries, it is only natural that Moscow would seek to develop an interactive relationship with Pakistan, a large and important Asian neighbour. Additionally, Russia's access to the transportation corridor to move goods between China, Africa and Europe that China is in the process of installing through Pakistan could be of immense help to its own economy.

As for Afghanistan's western neighbour, Iran, that country has long been involved in Afghan affairs. Historically, the Shi'a-majority nation under clerical rule has supported the Tajiks in the north and the Hazara Shi'as living in western Afghanistan. When Saudi Arabia, a sworn enemy of Iran, pumped in money and, with the help of Pakistan, set up Taliban rule in Afghanistan in 1996, Iran did not ignore the development. When US troops moved into Afghanistan in 2001 and ousted the Taliban, Iran began cooperating with the United States.

IRAN'S INCREASING SUPPORT FOR THE TALIBAN

The US military relied heavily on Northern Alliance foot soldiers to defeat the Taliban. And Iran's military, elements of which were embedded with Northern Alliance units, could well have assisted the US military effort, Alireza Nader and Joya Laha pointed out in their Rand National Defense Research Institute's Occasional Paper in 2011.

‘Both Iran and the United States were eager to create a centralized Afghan government that would prevent the Taliban’s resurgence. Iran’s influence was instrumental in the establishment of the Karzai government. The Northern Alliance, dominated by Tajik commanders with close ties to Iran, was reluctant to share power with Hamid Karzai, a prominent Pashtun tribal leader. Iranian political pressure on Northern Alliance leaders during negotiations in Bonn, Germany, persuaded them to reach a compromise and agree to the formation of the new government,’ Nader and Laha said.

‘Iran has also played an active role in Afghanistan’s reconstruction since 2001; it initially pledged \$570 million in 2002. At the Conference on Afghan Reconstruction held in February 2006, Iran pledged an additional \$100 million in aid, making it one of the largest donor states since 2001. According to Danesh Yazdi, former Iranian representative to the United Nations, as of March 2007, Iran had spent more than US \$270 million of its pledge on “mutually agreed projects in the areas of infrastructure, technical and educational services and financial and in-kind assistance.” Furthermore, Iran has substantially increased trade and investment between the two nations. Current annual bilateral trade stands at approximately \$1.5 billion. Iran’s major investments in Afghanistan include infrastructure and education. One of Iran’s many development projects included a \$100 million university.’¹³

But now Iran’s fears about the Taliban may have subsided, reports indicate. And the reason could be the threat of the ISKP, an avowed enemy of the Shi’as, emerging in Afghanistan. As much as Iran disliked, if not feared, the American troops’ presence in Afghanistan, Tehran was quick to notice that the departure of the bulk of American troops in 2014 created a void in Afghanistan that neither Kabul, nor the Taliban, could fill. Tehran fears the void would attract a more virulent anti-Shi’a/anti-Iran terrorist group like the Islamic State. According to an article in *Foreign Policy* magazine, ‘Iran teams with Taliban to fight Islamic State in

Afghanistan,’ Iran now believes that the Islamic State poses a far greater threat than the Taliban.

Foreign Policy quoted the European Union’s special representative to Afghanistan, Ambassador Franz-Michael Mellbin, saying: ‘The Iranians are already trying to secure their immediate borders towards Afghanistan against ISIS penetration by working together with various groups—warlords [and] Taliban—along their own borders to create a buffer zone. They are already working on this.’ Mellbin also said Iran’s willingness to set aside its historic enmity toward the Taliban stems, in part, from its intensifying rivalry with Saudi Arabia. The article also cites an unnamed US intelligence official who declined to comment on the nature of Iran’s cooperation with the Taliban, but said, ‘Given Iran’s efforts against ISIL elements in Syria and Iraq, it would not be surprising if Iran is concerned with retribution from ISIL affiliates, including ISIL’s Khorasan branch.’¹⁴

Over the years, Iran’s contacts with the Taliban have been reported by the media. Last October, the Pajhwok News Agency of Afghanistan cited Pakistan’s news daily *Express Tribune* report that said, ‘Maulvi Nek Muhammad, who was education director when Taliban ruled southern Kandahar province before being toppled in 2001, is the Taliban’s envoy in Tehran. “Maulvi Nek Muhammad is a frequent visitor to Iran,” the newspaper quoted a source in the group as saying.’ Officially, Iran has never confirmed the Taliban visits; however, Iranian media close to the security establishment has confirmed such visits on several occasions, the *Express Tribune* noted. ‘Taliban leaders were now frequent visitors to Iran as they are campaigning to find new allies, a second Taliban leader told the Express Tribune. A three-member Taliban military delegation, headed by Military Commission Chief Ibrahim Sadr, visited Tehran this year in an apparent move to “seek military aid” from Iran.’¹⁵

Iran assiduously denies reports of its contacts with the Taliban. However, it has been widely reported that Mullah Mohammad

Akhtar Mansoor, the Taliban leader who succeeded Mullah Omar and was killed last May inside Pakistan by a missile fired from a US-operated drone, had first entered Iran almost two months ago, according to immigration stamps in a Pakistani passport found in a bag near the wreckage of the taxi he was travelling in when he was killed. The passport, in the name of Wali Muhammad, also showed he had only just returned to Pakistan from the border crossing of Taftan, some 280 miles (450 km) away from the site where he was killed, an area called Ahmed Wal, where he had stopped for lunch.¹⁶

According to the Pajhwok report, the Taliban is seeking out Iran because of the increasingly lukewarm response it is getting from the Saudis. It is likely that the Saudis are now diverting most of their Wahhabi-promotional funds to the ISKP and have virtually abandoned the Afghan Taliban. According to the *Guardian*'s Farhad Peikar, from Tehran's standpoint, '[A]n Iran-Taliban alliance would not only serve as deterrence vis-à-vis ISIS, it could also act as a bargaining chip in Tehran's relations with the new government in Kabul, whose recent signals of support for Saudi Arabia's military strikes against Shi'a factions in Yemen did not go unnoticed. Supporting a fundamentalist Sunni group could also show that Tehran is not in an all-out-war against Sunni Muslims.'¹⁷

CHINA GETS INTO THE ACT

Another Afghan neighbour, to the north-east, China has now become an important voice in Kabul. China has long had concerns about Afghanistan in the context of its own security. When the Soviet Red Army moved into Afghanistan in 1979, Beijing began military assistance to the US-Saudi-Pakistan-backed Afghan Mujahideen. Ostensibly Beijing feared encirclement from Moscow, as the Soviets and their allies were already in control in Vietnam and Cambodia. On 31 December 1979, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs told the Soviet ambassador that 'Afghanistan is

China's neighbor . . . and therefore the Soviet armed invasion of that country poses a threat to China's security. This cannot but arouse the grave concern of the Chinese peoples.' Later, the then Chinese deputy defence minister Su Yu said that China 'would firmly stand by the Afghan people.' China boycotted the 1980 Moscow Olympics and supported United Nations Security Council and General Assembly resolutions in favour of the withdrawal of Soviet Forces.¹⁸

After the defeated Soviet military withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, not much was heard from China on Afghanistan. But after the National Unity Government (NUG) was set up in Kabul in 2014, the relationship began to move forward. President Ghani made China the venue of his first foreign visit. The *Diplomat* pointed out that during Ghani's visit to China, Ghani and Xi Jinping reached a 'new important consensus' on combating the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), also called the Uyghur terrorist groups, of China's western Xinjiang province, bordering Badakhshan province of Afghanistan. 'Afghanistan will not allow any activities that threaten China's (security) on Afghan territory,' the Afghan president stated. A Chinese Foreign Ministry official clarified that Ghani had pledged to 'firmly support China to fight the ETIM,' the *Diplomat* noted. After Ghani's visit, in February 2015, the Afghan government arrested and handed over 15 alleged ETIM members to China.

Clearly Beijing is keen to have a 'friendly' Kabul. That would help China invest in Afghanistan's vast mineral resources and also prevent anti-China activities from being carried out from Afghan soil by the Uyghurs. In January 2015, the *Washington Post* reported that China had hosted a Taliban delegation in Beijing in December 2014. The visit was believed to be part of an effort by the Chinese government to mediate a dialogue between the Afghan government and the Taliban. While Beijing did not confirm the Taliban visit, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said China is willing to play a 'constructive role' in supporting the Afghan reconciliation process.¹⁹

In July 2016, a Taliban delegation led by Abbas Stanakzai, head of the group's political office in Qatar, visited China at the invitation of the Chinese government, a senior member of the Taliban told the media. China, along with Pakistan, the United States and Afghanistan, is a member of the four-country group that tried to restart peace talks with the Taliban earlier this year. But that effort was wholly sidelined with the killing of the Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Akhtar Mansoor by a US drone. China has also expressed concerns about the growth of the ISKP and, in essence, has lent its support for the Taliban.

All these developments taken together suggest a regional alignment taking place between Iran, Pakistan, China, Russia and Kabul around a collective assessment that the much-dreaded terrorist group, Taliban, is the new horse to ride against the threat of the so-called Islamic State. The gelling ingredient for this realignment, the IS threat, is the reported growth in eastern Afghanistan of the ISKP – a loosely knit outfit compared to the Afghan Taliban and one whose source of arms and funds remains mysterious.

So while some may wish to see in this a new and potentially viable path toward peace in Afghanistan, are we not in fact simply witnessing a new instalment of Pakistan's 'Pashtun game'?

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The Independence Movement of Balochistan

JAI KUMAR VERMA

In a bold departure from the old practice, Prime Minister Modi made a reference to Balochistan, Gilgit and Baltistan in his Independence Day speech; nonetheless the move was criticised by the Pakistan government as well as by leaders of Indian opposition parties. But the nationalist leaders of Balochistan welcomed the move. The Khan of Kalat declared independence and never wanted to be a part of Pakistan. Jinnah forcibly merged Balochistan. The mineral-rich Balochistan is the biggest province of the country, but it is the poorest region in south Asia. The federal government, with an ulterior motive, is hindering the progress of the province. The Pakistan government, instead of redressing the legitimate problems of the province, alleges that the insurgency in the state is fuelled by foreign powers. Baloch leaders oppose the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as they fear that under the garb of the CPEC, the Pakistan government would settle outsiders in the state, which would change the demography of the province. The Baloch leaders also mention that the CPEC is not in the interest of the state. Pakistani forces have adopted the policy of 'kill and dump' to terrorise the Balochis.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a momentous departure from the old policy of defending India against Pakistani onslaught about the human right violations in Kashmir, made a direct reference to the Balochistan freedom movement, Gilgit and Baltistan as well as Pakistan-occupied Kashmir from ramparts of the Red Fort in his Independence Day speech of 15 August 2016.¹

He stated that 'The way people of Balochistan, Gilgit and Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) have thanked me, they have thanked the whole population of my country. I want to offer my gratitude to these people.'

Before the Independence Day speech, Modi also mentioned on 12 August, in an all-party meeting on the situation in Kashmir, that although he was sorry for the prevailing situation in Kashmir, there can be no negotiation on the integrity of India. He also mentioned emphatically that the whole of Jammu & Kashmir, including POK, is a part of India and cross-border terrorism is responsible for the turmoil in the valley. He further stated that there are gross human rights violations in Balochistan and POK and the neighbouring country must provide an explanation to the world about these abominations.²

The prime minister also blamed Pakistan for eulogising terrorists while India condemned the terrorist attack on school children in Peshawar. The international community would certainly observe the vast difference in the approach of both the neighbouring nations. Here it is pertinent to note that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif termed Burhan Wani a 'martyr' and declared that Pakistan would observe 19 July as 'Black Day'. Wani was the commander of the Hizbul Mujahideen, a terrorist outfit, and was exterminated by security forces in an encounter on 8 July 2016.³

The Pakistan government, which has launched a low-intensity war against India, perpetually alleges that India is assisting various secessionist outfits and fomenting trouble in Balochistan. However, it could not provide any trustworthy evidence about India's assistance to the Balochistan nationalist movement.⁴

The Pakistan government was under acute pressure from India and the international community when the Indian security agencies provided conclusive evidence about the involvement of military-controlled Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) in the training and infiltration of the Pakistani terrorists who attacked the Pathankot airbase on 2 January 2016. As the

ISI could not refute the infallible evidence, it arrested an innocent Indian national, Kulbhushan Jadhav, and alleged that he was an agent of the Research & Analysis Wing (R&AW) and was abetting secessionist organisations in Balochistan.⁵

The ISI arrested Jadhav with the ulterior motive of distracting the world attention from its assistance to multifarious terrorist outfits in India, especially in J&K. Pakistan publicized the arrest of Jadhav and his involvement with separatist outfits of Balochistan within the country as well as abroad. Jadhav was badly tortured and compelled to sign several fictitious documents with the nefarious intention of giving adverse publicity to India and concealing Pakistan's own surreptitious assistance to terrorists. Pakistan also emphasised that the separatist movement of Balochistan was not a home-grown movement but is continuing because of foreign assistance, especially that from India.⁶

Pakistan, which always alleges that India is fomenting trouble in Balochistan, issued a hard-hitting statement within hours of Modi's Independence Day speech. Sartaj Aziz, the Pakistani prime minister's advisor on foreign affairs, mentioned in a statement that the reference to Balochistan in Modi's Independence Day speech proves Pakistan's contention that R&AW is inciting terrorism in Balochistan. Aziz further alleged that the Indian spy Jadhav also confessed to India's involvement in Balochistan. Pakistan People's Party chairman and leader of the main opposition party Bilawal Bhutto also criticised Modi's comments on Balochistan. He stated that Modi's statement was 'highly provocative, irresponsible and inflammatory'.⁷

Pakistani analysts claimed that Modi's speech was harmful for the Baloch cause as it confirmed Pakistan's argument that the Balochistan secessionist movement is not indigenous but a handful of Balochis are creating law and order problems at the behest of India. They also mentioned that now the Pakistani army would enhance the brutality in Balochistan as Balochi separatist leaders would be branded as Indian agents. They also mention that India is using the Baloch issue to shift the international attention from the atrocities Indian security forces are committing on Kashmiris.

The strategic analysts claim that the mention of Balochistan by the prime minister in the Independence Day speech is a gargantuan departure from the past practice. POK, Gilgit and Baltistan are parts of India, while Pakistan always claimed Balochistan as an integral part of the country.

In the past, the Ministry of External Affairs showed India's concern about Balochistan in 2005, when the Pakistani air force bombarded Balochistan and in 2006, when the Baloch leader Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti was killed in an air raid. Although several senior retired Indian diplomats acknowledged that it was a major change in India's policy towards Pakistan, they also admit that in view of Pakistan's aggressive policy towards India, this change was obligatory.

Not only Pakistan but also opposition parties in India reacted sharply against Modi's speech. The Congress Party as well as other political parties mentioned that the ruling party should formulate a long-term policy towards Pakistan instead of imprudent reactions.⁸

However, the Indian prime minister's reference to Balochistan evoked a positive reaction from Baloch leaders within or outside Pakistan. They welcomed the statement, as they felt that highlighting of the Baloch issue by the Indian prime minister would attract world attention, including that of the United Nations. The chairman of the Baloch National Movement, Khalil Baloch, accepted that the Indian prime minister's statement on Balochistan is a 'positive development'. He also anticipated that soon the 'United States and Europe' would also team up with India in condemning Pakistan for continued atrocities on the people of Balochistan since the last 68 year.⁹

ORIGIN OF THE BALOCHISTAN PROBLEM¹⁰

Balochistan nationalist leaders claim Greater Balochistan, which would include not only the Balochistan province of Pakistan but also Sistan and the Balochistan province in south-eastern Iran and the Balochistan region of southern Afghanistan. The Baloch population in 2014 in Iran was approximately 2 million.

Before independence, the Balochistan province of Pakistan was divided into four princely states, namely Makran, Las Bela, Kharan and

Kalat. The first three states readily merged with Pakistan. However, Mir Sir Ahmad Yar Khan Ahmedzai, the then Khan of Kalat, refused to merge with Pakistan and declared Kalat as an independent nation on 15 August 1947. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, governor general of Pakistan, threatened the Khan of Kalat to amalgamate with Pakistan but when he delayed the merger, Pakistani forces attacked Kalat in March 1948 and forcibly merged it. Pakistani forces also compelled Ahmad Yar Khan to sign an accession treaty.

However, his younger brothers Princes Agha Abdul Karim Baloch and Muhammad Rahim continued to attack Pakistani forces under the banner of Dosht-e-Jhalawan. In June 1958, Yar Khan declared himself as the Khan of Kalat in defiance of the government of Pakistan. Nonetheless, on 6 October 1958 Pakistani forces arrested him under charges of sedition. His arrest provoked Balochis, and rebellion started under the leadership of Nauroz Khan. Later, Yar Khan was released and his title was also restored in 1962. The Balochistan nationalist movement can be divided into the following five phases.

THE FIRST PHASE OF INSURGENCY

The insurgency started in Balochistan when Pakistani forces forcibly amalgamated the area ruled by the Khan of Kalat on 27 March 1948. The Khan of Kalat signed an accession treaty under duress, but his two brothers started guerrilla war against Pakistani forces.

THE SECOND PHASE OF INSURGENCY

The second phase of insurgency, in 1958 and 1959, was led by Nawab Nauroz Khan, who was the head of Zarakzai tribes of Balochistan. Nauroz Khan revolted against the federal government as Pakistan wanted to implement a one-unit policy, which was against the tribal system of the province; nonetheless he was arrested and put in Hyderabad jail, where he died. His five family members, including his sons and nephews, were also charged with treason and were hanged in jail.

In this phase, the Khan of Kalat also declared independence, dishonoured Pakistani flag and hoisted the old flag of Kalat. Reports suggest that President Major General Iskandar Mirza instigated the Khan of Kalat to declare independence as he wanted to promulgate martial law in the country. Pakistan was passing through a critical period, and control of the central government was waning. President Iskandar Mirza, on the pretext of Balochistan uprising, promulgated martial law across the whole of Pakistan, abrogated the constitution, dismissed central and provincial governments, banned political parties, dissolved assemblies and appointed General Mohammed Ayub Khan, chief of Pakistani army, as chief martial law administrator.

The then interior minister Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti offered to go to Kalat and bring the Khan of Kalat for negotiations, but President Iskandar Mirza, who wanted to promulgate martial law, prohibited Bugti. The Khan of Kalat was arrested on 6 October 1958 under the charges of treason.

The Balochis felt humiliated as the ‘Sardar of Sardars’ Khan-e-Azam was arrested, jailed and mortified by the Punjabi-dominated Pakistani army. Hence the Balochis revolted against the federal government.

THE THIRD PHASE OF INSURGENCY

The third phase of insurgency began when a new constitution was enforced which curtailed the provincial autonomy and introduced the one-unit concept. The Pakistani army also opened new bases in the province to strengthen its presence, which was resisted by the Balochis. Besides this, the Balochis were also demanding royalty for the mineral resources, including the gas extracted from the Sui gas field in Balochistan and sent to other provinces. Sher Muhammad Birani Marri, the chief of Marri tribe, launched fierce guerrilla warfare against the Pakistani government from 1963 to 1969. Several other tribal heads, including Mengal and Bugti, also joined the struggle, which covered an area of about 72,000 km. The Balochis bombed railway tracks, attacked army installations and convoys and killed several security personnel. The army, which retaliated with a vengeance, killed

and arrested a large number of Balochis, raped their women and burnt their houses, which further intensified the insurgency. The rebellion ended in 1969, when the Pakistan government scrapped the one-unit policy and Balochistan became the fourth state of west Pakistan.

THE FOURTH PHASE OF INSURGENCY

The turmoil in the state continued at a low pace even after the ceasefire of 1969 as Pakistani forces continued the monstrosities against the Balochis. Hence the fourth phase of insurgency in Balochistan commenced, in 1973, which continued till 1977. In 1973, the then president Zulfikar Ali Bhutto dismissed provincial governments of North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Balochistan under the charges of sedition. Bhutto also promulgated martial law in both these states. Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri, who was head of the Marri tribe, constituted Balochistan People's Liberation Front (BPLF), in which a large number of fighters from Marri and Mengal tribes joined, and BPLF started a guerrilla war against the federal government. Tribesmen of Marri and Mengal were spirited fighters and killed more than 400 Pakistani armed personnel. Pakistani army also killed thousands of Balochis, destroyed several houses, raped women and perpetrated diverse kinds of atrocities on civilians as the real guerrilla fighters were hiding themselves in the hills, where the Pakistani army was hesitant to go. In the fight against Balochistan revolutionaries, Irani forces also helped Pakistani troops as they were afraid that the uprising may instigate the Balochis of Iran too.

THE FIFTH PHASE OF INSURGENCY

The Punjabi-dominated Pakistani army continued with carnage of Balochis, hence their freedom struggle continued. In 2005, Nawab Akbar Bugti and Mir Baloch Marri, both respected leaders of Balochistan, presented a 15-point agenda to the Pakistani government, demanding more autonomy, more royalty for the mineral resources of the province and stoppage of construction of military bases in the state. The federal government did not

respond to the memorandum, and in the meantime, the separatists attacked the Frontier Corps' Major General Shujaat Zamir and a brigadier.

The Pakistani army became furious and used lethal weaponry against the Balochis, in which 79-year-old Nawab Akbar Bugti was killed. Nonetheless about 60 Pakistani soldiers and 7 officers were also exterminated. President General Pervez Musharraf charged Akbar Bugti for several bomb blasts as well as firing of rockets with the intention to kill him.¹¹

The Pakistani forces abducted Baloch National Movement (BNM) president Ghulam Mohammed Baloch and two other prominent leaders of BNM in April 2009 and after torturing killed them and threw their bodies in the market to show that the rebels would be eliminated ruthlessly. The Pakistani forces resorted to mayhem but could not break the resolve of the Balochis.

Mir Suleiman Dawood Khan of Kalat, on 12 August 2009, declared himself the ruler of an independent state of Balochistan which included Sistan and the Baluchistan province of Iran. Several secessionist groups of Balochistan, including Nawabzada Brahdagh Bugti, declared their allegiance to the Khan of Kalat.

The international media also commented that the barbarity in Balochistan downgraded the image of Pakistan in the world. General Abdul Waheed Kakar, former chief of the Pakistan army, while criticising the abomination by Pakistani security forces in Balochistan also stated in a seminar in May 2010 that the military operation launched in 2006 was 'a crime against Pakistan'. He also stated that Musharraf 'committed a big mistake' by launching an operation in Balochistan and it was totally unjustified.

The Balochistan High Court issued a bailable arrest warrant against General Musharraf in connection to the murder of Nawab Akbar Bugti. The Baloch leader was killed at Taratani in Kohlu district in August 2006 when President General Musharraf ordered an operation in Balochistan to suppress the independence movement.¹²

According to a rough estimate, more than 15,000 civilians were massacred by Pakistani defence forces in Balochistan from 1973 to 2009

and more than 4,500 Balochis were arrested during 2004 and 2005, while more than 14,00,000 persons were displaced during Musharraf's operation.

EXPLOITATION OF BALOCHISTAN RESOURCES¹³

Balochistan is the largest province of Pakistan and has an area of 3,47,190 km, which is about 44 per cent of Pakistan's total area. It is a sparsely inhabited province as the total population of the state is only 1,31,62,222 persons. Of this population of this mineral-rich region, 54.1 per cent is Baloch. However, there is extreme exploitation of the resources of the state by the central government and it is an important reason behind the insurgency.

According to statistics, Balochistan is the poorest region in south Asia, and the condition is worsening. In 1970, Balochistan's share of GDP was 4.9 per cent, which further dropped to 3.7 per cent. It has the highest rate of infant and maternal mortality and has the lowest literacy rate in the country. Clean drinking water is not available, employment opportunities are very limited and because of insurgency and poor living conditions, hundreds of thousands of people are internally displaced. The Pakistani army does not allow nongovernmental organisations or international organisations to work freely in Balochistan, citing security reasons. The Balochis assert that the federal government, with disingenuous reasons, is methodically prohibiting the progress of the state, although the government mentions that because of secessionist activities, Pakistani industrialists as well as foreign investors do not want to invest in Balochistan.

The Pakistani government also alleges that Baloch Sardars do not want progress of the state as they want to retain their supremacy and that is the reason they oppose developmental projects. The federal government of Pakistan, instead of developing the state manipulates the elections so that their henchmen come to power. The nationalist forces of Balochistan lost 2002 elections because security forces rigged the elections so that Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA), which was a coalition of six Islamic parties, including Musharraf's Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-i-Azam (PML-Q), won the elections and it was also a cause of insurgency in the province.

Baloch leaders are apprehensive that the federal government is slowly but steadily changing the demography of Balochistan in such a way that the Balochis would become a minority in their own state. A large number of Pakhtuns and Afghan refugees were settled in the state, which is disadvantageous to the Balochis.

The Baloch leadership also opposes megaprojects because these projects bring lot of non-Balochis and they permanently settle in the state, even after the expiry of these projects. Balochistan, which supplies nearly 80 per cent of the natural gas and coal to the whole of Pakistan, receives the lowest royalty among the states. The mineral-rich Balochistan also has copper and gold mines. Not only this, the central government charges a heavy fee in the name of operational charges and the money given to the state does not reach the masses because of rampant corruption in the country and in the state. The central government has not developed any road network, and the roads developed by the British were mainly in Pashtun-inhabited areas, which is deeply resented by Balochis.

The Chinese developed the Gwadar port, but it did not generate employment for the Balochis as the Chinese brought their own engineers and workers. The Pakistan government sold the adjoining land to Punjabi builders, who earned huge profits but the income was not transferred to the locals. In fact, the property was purchased by non-Balochis and they settled in Gwadar. The Balochis protested against the settlement of non-Balochis and posting of the army in Gwadar. The Balochis are apprehensive that the Punjabi-dominated central government would make Gwadar like Karachi, where Sindhis have become a minority because of a large influx of people from other provinces.

The Pakistan government, with an ulterior motive, has not developed the educational system in the state. The nationalists feel that because of less education, the Balochis are not proficient to work in modern-day industries. Hence a large number of workers of other states come and settle in the province. They demand that more professional and technical colleges, universities and educational institutions should be opened in the state so that the Balochis also obtain technical and professional education. Balochis also point out that the Pakistani army is Punjabi

dominated and the Balochis are discriminated against and the army crushes their independence movement ruthlessly.

PAKISTAN ALLEGES FOREIGN ASSISTANCE TO REBELS¹⁴

The Pakistan government alleges that the Baloch movement is not indigenous but it is abetted by foreign countries, especially India and Afghanistan. Pakistan security forces arrested an Indian national Kulbhushan Jadhav and portrayed him as an Indian spy.

Pakistan, which supports several terrorist outfits, including the Hekmatyar group, to create terrorist activities in Afghanistan perpetually alleges that Afghanistan assists Balochistan secessionist organisations. In 2012, Rehman Malik, interior minister of Pakistan, alleged that Brahmdagh Bugti of the Balochistan Republican Army had taken houses in Kabul and Afghan intelligence personnel were rendering training to Baloch separatists. Major General Obaidullah Khan Khattak of the Frontier Corps also alleged in 2012 that Baloch secessionist outfits were running more than 30 camps in Afghanistan, where Baloch rebels were getting training.

Pakistanis also contend that Iraq also assists Baloch rebels. In February 1973, Pakistani security agencies searched the Iraqi embassy in Islamabad and seized a large cache of arms and ammunition which was meant for Baloch secessionist outfits. Besides these countries, Pakistan security agencies also charge that Israel and the United States also support Baloch rebels.

GROSS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE STATE¹⁵

Pakistani security forces abducted, tortured and killed thousands of innocent Balochis between 2003 and 2012. Balochis mention that the reprehensible ISI initiated a policy of 'kill and dump' to terrorise the Balochis. Under this policy, they abduct suspected Baloch activists and political and student leaders and burn and break the body parts and then throw their mutilated bodies on roads to scare the masses.

A July 2011 report of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan clearly blames the ISI and the Frontier Corps for disappearances of and atrocities on Balochis. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Pakistan Taliban also killed several Shias, Hindus and other minorities in Balochistan at the behest of the ISI to intimidate the Balochis and create communal disharmony. Human rights activists mention that these systematic killings and abductions of teachers and the literate community would not only hamper the progress but also take the state back to the primitive age.

IMPORTANT OUTFITS FIGHTING FOR THE INDEPENDENCE OF BALOCHISTAN

Baloch leaders were fighting for the independence of the state just after the creation of Pakistan. As the federal government continued with the discrimination against and exploitation of Balochistan, the resentment increased and several Baloch nationalist as well as sectarian groups emerged. The prominent outfits are as follows.

BALOCHISTAN LIBERATION ARMY¹⁶

The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) is a prominent nationalist outfit and fights for the independence of the state. The outfit regularly attacks government installations and in 2000, it carried out a series of bomb blasts in government offices. It was declared a terrorist outfit and banned by the Pakistan government on 7 April 2006.

The BLA was getting assistance from Russians and was very active during Russian occupation in Afghanistan. The activities of the BLA dried up after the departure of Russian forces from Afghanistan, but in 1973 a large cache of arms was seized from the Iraqi embassy in Islamabad, which was meant for the BLA.

Khair Bakhsh Marri and Hyrbyair Marri were prominent leaders of the BLA. The ISI alleges that Russia and India assist the BLA in training and also fund the outfit. In December 2005, the BLA fired several rockets on a paramilitary camp where President General Musharraf was scheduled

to visit. The BLA extremists also killed a few teachers considered near the administration, Punjabi labourers and security officials. On 21 November 2011, the BLA killed about 40 security personnel who were guarding a private coal mine. Again on 31 December 2011, it attacked the house of a former minister in which 13 persons were killed and more than 30 were injured. BLA insurgents also destroyed Quaid-e-Azam Residency in Balochistan in June 2013. The BLA has 500 full-time cadres but has the sympathy of a large number of Balochis as they are fighting for the independence of Balochistan. Analysts mention that the BLA has the support of other nationalist outfits, especially the Baloch Republican Army (BRA), Lashkar-e-Balochistan, Balochistan Liberation United Front (BLUF), etc.

BALUCHISTAN REPUBLICAN ARMY¹⁷

The BRA was constituted in 2006 to liberate Balochistan from the repressive Pakistani forces. It is fighting for the restitution of a sovereign Balochistan. The banned BRA uses guerrilla techniques against Pakistani forces and resorts to ambush, sabotage and hit-and-run methods. It attacks Pakistani security forces as well as their installations, including communication systems, offices, outposts, power stations, and railway tracks, as Pakistani forces use these places to exploit the natural resources of the state. The BRA opposes Pakistani as well as foreign firms as all of them work against the interests of Balochistan. The dedicated cadres of the BRA successfully attacked several offices of Pakistani and foreign firms, including Chinese firms. The outfit is against the CPEC. Brahmdagh Bugti is the president of the BRA.

BALUCH LIBERATION FRONT¹⁸

The ideology of the Baloch Liberation Front (BLF), led by Dr. Allah Nazar, is to establish an independent sovereign country. The organisation, which has 6,000 active cadres, continuously attacks Pakistani forces. In July 2013, BLF militants attacked a coastguard checkpost and killed more than

25 coastguards. In Balochistan, most of the parties have feudal leadership but Dr. Nazar belongs to a middle-class family and participates in real fighting with the federal forces and that is the reason that he has great respect among BLF cadres as well as among other belligerent groups of Balochistan. The BLF was banned on 8 September 2010.

UNITED BALOCH ARMY¹⁹

The United Baloch Army (UBA) was constituted due to an interfamily feud between Mehran Marri and his brother Hyrbyair Marri. BLA cadres alleged that Mehran Marri and his friends embezzled USD 3 million and stole weapons worth USD 800 million from the BLA and founded the UBA. The newly constituted party bombed a Rawalpindi-bound train at Sibi station and killed more than 17 persons. Again, on 29 May 2015, UBA militants killed 22 ethnic Pashtuns. However, the BRP and BLA mention that the UBA is weakening the Baloch struggle by these terrorist acts. The Pakistani government declared the UBA as a terrorist organisation and banned it on 15 March 2013; nevertheless, the outfit is working clandestinely.

LASHKAR-E-BALOCHISTAN²⁰

Javed Mengal, the son of Ataullah Mengal, was the founder member of Lashkar-e-Balochistan (L-e-B) and Khan Baloch was the spokesman of the organisation. The group claimed responsibility for a series of bomb blasts in 2012 in Lahore, Karachi and Quetta, in which a large number of persons were killed and wounded. The outfit is active in Pakistan and Afghanistan and functions in the pattern of an army. The lowest unit is called a battalion, which consists of about 20 militants. The outfit was declared a terrorist organisation by the Pakistan government and banned in August 2012.

BALOCHISTAN LIBERATION UNITED FRONT²¹

The BLUF was founded in 2009, and it was carved out from the cadres of the Baloch Students Organisation (BSO). The outfit came to limelight in

February 2009 when it kidnapped John Solecki, an American who was working in Quetta for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The outfit demanded the release of several Balochis who were in Pakistani prisons, but in April, Solecki was released on humanitarian grounds. According to statics, the BLUF carried out about 28 terrorist attacks in which about 29 persons were killed, including Shafq Ahmed Khan, the education minister of Balochistan province. The outfit was banned by the Pakistan government on 8 September 2010.

BALUCH STUDENTS ORGANISATION²²

The BSO was founded in November 1967 in Karachi, and it is the largest Baluch organisation but it is divided into various smaller factions, like BSO (Pajjar), BSO (Mengal) and BSO (Azad). BSO (Azad) was declared a terrorist organisation by the Pakistan government and banned on 15 March 2013. There were several splinter groups, including BSO (Awami), BSO (Sohb), BSO (Yaseen), BSO (Hayee), BSO (Aman), BSO (Star), BSO (Nadir), and BSO (Muttahida). These factions had some ideological and personal differences, but overtly all were against the subjugation of Balochistan by Islamabad.

BALUCH NATIONALIST PARTIES ARE AGAINST THE CPEC²³

The 3,000 km long China-Pakistan Economic Corridor would connect the Gwadar port of Balochistan to the Xinjiang region of China. The USD 46 billion megaproject includes several hydro-power projects, railway tracks, multilane all-weather highways, etc. The federal government claims that the CPEC would provide more than 7,00,000 jobs and would uplift the economic condition of Balochistan.

The nationalist leaders of Balochistan contradict the claim and point out that the CPEC is neither good for Pakistan nor beneficial to Balochistan; it would only be advantageous to China. They further reveal that several projects had to be made by Pakistan and the present economic

condition of the country is pitiable and it cannot afford to complete these projects. The economists also claim that China is giving loan at a higher rate of interest and Pakistan would not be able to repay the same. The other terms and conditions of the agreement are kept secret, which may damage the country in the long run. The Balochis claim that China might act like the East India Company and would hegemonize the area.

However, the principal objection of the Balochis is that although the CPEC is passing through their areas, the basic benefits would be usurped by the Punjabis. They also fear that under the garb of the CPEC, several non-Balochis would come and settle in Balochistan and would change the demography of the province. Not only this, the government would extract more minerals from the state without giving due compensation.

The Baloch nationalist organisations have already threatened that they would not allow the CPEC to pass from their areas. The Pakistan government has to provide extra security to Chinese workers as in the past, a few Chinese were killed by these outfits.

The Chinese are also apprehensive about the security of their personnel who would be working on this megaproject. The Baloch nationalist outfits attacked an electricity grid in January, which disrupted about 80 per cent of the power supply of the country. In the past, Chinese engineers and workers were kidnapped and killed by different terrorist organisations. Baloch rebels also interrupted the supply of articles to Chinese firms although it seldom comes in the press. Baloch nationalists also attack the Chinese to hamper work in the Gwadar seaport. The analysts indicate that the Chinese would not invest the promised money in the CPEC as it passes through a turbulent region where the clout of the Pakistan government does not exist.

THE WAY FORWARD

First of all, Pakistan should discontinue fomenting trouble in other countries, especially in India and Afghanistan, and should also stop alleging that other countries are assisting Baloch rebels. The despicable ISI arrested an innocent Indian Kulbhushan Jadhav and after inhuman torture, got the

statements signed that he was an Indian spy. Nevertheless, the ISI had no proof against him and on 7 December 2016, Sartaj Aziz, foreign affairs advisor to the prime minister, accepted that Jadhav was arrested with 'insufficient evidence' and the security agencies have no proof except the statements of Jadhav. It strengthens the Indian point of view that India is not involved in the Balochistan uprising.²⁴

In fact, the Pakistani government should develop infrastructure, open educational institutions, construct all-weather roads, establish new industries, create jobs and do work on women empowerment so there is all-round development of the state. The security forces should also stop gross human rights violations in the state. The Pakistan government should also give more autonomy and royalty to Balochistan.

The Pakistan government should restore proper law and order in the state as the deteriorated law and order strengthens the insurgency. At present, nationalist outfits have successfully attacked more or less all government installations, including army cantonments.

Security agencies should galvanise their intelligence networks and should use more technical gadgets to unearth separatists instead of using primitive police techniques of torture and getting forged statements signed. These primordial techniques generate more hatred towards the government.

The federal government of Pakistan should try to resolve the grievances of the people of Balochistan. Otherwise, nationalist elements of Sindh, Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit, Baltistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir would also revolt against the Punjabi-dominated central government. On 25 February 2012, Sindh nationalists bombed railway tracks in Karachi, Hyderabad, Benazirabad, Mirpur Mathilo, Khairpur and Ghotki, which disrupted the railway traffic of the whole of Sindh. It was the handiwork of the Sindhu Desh Liberation Army (SDLA), which is fighting for the establishment of Sindhu Desh.²⁵

The military-controlled federal government is not allowing independent or foreign journalists to visit and report about the real picture of Balochistan; there is a virtual news blackout. The media is under tremendous pressure to paint a positive picture of security forces and the condition of Balochistan. As the media is not allowed to depict the true picture of the province, there is little coverage of the province in the

national newspapers. The government must lift the embargo on the press so that journalists can project the true picture; it will help Islamabad to formulate a long-term policy about Balochistan.

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Internal Security Duties and Their Impact on the Army

ALI AHMED

India's internal security commitment in the North East is well over the half-century-long mark. In J&K, it has gone beyond a quarter of a century. In both cases, it can reasonably be argued that there have been periods of quietude in which the peace process could have been progressed to see a viable termination of respective insurgencies. In neither case has this apparently been possible. A consequence of political inattention to conflict resolution has been a continuing deployment of the army under an unpopular law, the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Acts (AFSPA). It can be inferred that the belief underlying the status quo is that the army can indefinitely sustain such deployment and its effects.

Successive army chiefs have, usually while demitting office, pointed out that this is an unsustainable belief. Internal security duties have a long-term and deleterious effect on the army and, therefore, they have urged political engagement in restoring normalcy. However, the situation has remained largely unchanged. There is even a danger of the army itself buying into the belief that its deployment is indispensable to national integrity. An argument could go that though there was some respite from 2004 onward in Kashmir, its disruption in 2008–2010 and more recently this year, suggests that army deployment is inescapable. Not all effects of such deployment are harmful, and those that are can be mitigated by requisite leadership and training. The army has sufficient depth in terms of numbers and moral resilience to be able to sustain such deployment indefinitely – or so an argument can go.

This article argues that the assumption of the army's ability to sustain army deployment in a counter-insurgency role in numerous states is fallacious. The army has to push back on the internal argument that this is possible and to push on with persuading the political leadership that democratic solutions politically arrived at are the answer to the disaffection of people. A lack of energy in a narrative along these lines is a pointer that winning the argument for this internally will be probably as difficult as selling it to the political class. The danger is in the counter argument – of the army's indispensability in militarily propping up national integrity – making the army acquire a stake in the disrupted security situation. It should not be that institutional interests keep the army from a strong case arguing for its return to barracks, where such distancing from an internal security situation warrants it.

THE PAKISTAN FACTOR

Doctrinally, the distinguishing feature between internal security situations that call for army deployment appear to be the prevalence of or potential for an 'external' hand. For instance, where this is stark – such as in J&K – for the army to have a role is perhaps understandable. On the other hand, the army's reluctance to get into anti-Maoist operations in central India had the absence of the external factor marking it. Interrogation of this rather easy distinction yields some startling revelations.

A popular portrayal of Pakistan is that it is out to repay India for India's success in East Pakistan. Pakistan wishes to go further by administering India 'a thousand cuts'. Its army being in charge of that state ensures adversarial relations in order that it gains a giant cut of the state pie. In a nutshell, there are cultural and organisational theory relevant arguments explaining Pakistani hostility. The realist argument is somewhat muted, since it shows up Pakistan's security dilemma that might be prompting Pakistani action. The realist argument needs unpacking further since it provides a rational basis for Pakistani actions, something Indian

analysts are largely in denial about. Their view is that India is a non-threatening power, and a counterview that it is threatening to its neighbour is an unsustainable aspersion. To the extent that the power imbalance is taken into account, it is to arrive at a conclusion that Pakistan should instead choose to be on the same bandwagon as India rather than try and balance it.

The argument here is that Pakistan, led by its army, is a rational actor in the realist mode. It espies a power imbalance with India that it then proceeds to respond to with external and internal balancing. The external balancing is in the form of action as a rentier state, renting out its strategic location for use by great powers, both the US and China. Internal balancing is in the creation of ideational resources, such as a jihadi sentiment and proxy forces, as force multipliers. The external imprint of the latter is in the proxy war. The latter is less on account of rationalisations such as Kashmir being a 'jugular vein' than on account of tying down India's surplus military power in troop-intensive counter-insurgency operations.

India emerged as a pre-eminent power in South Asia in the wake of cutting Pakistan down to size in 1971. It continued on its power trajectory with one doctrinal and organisational move following another. India's going nuclear and mechanisation date to the '70s. Continuation of mechanisation, regional power aspirations and covert nuclearisation were in evidence in the '80s. A third strike corps, expansion through raising of the Rashtriya Rifles and over-nuclearisation were hallmarks of the '90s. The 2000s saw doctrinal evolution to ensure the continuing utility of conventional forces into the nuclear age. The current decade has seen an arming so as to make doctrinal aspirations a reality. The security dilemma India posed Pakistan through its periodic military upgrades and power aspirations led to a Pakistani counter.

Analysts selling the notion that India is a reactive and defensive power purvey the narrative that it is Pakistan's covert nuclearisation that spurred India down the nuclear path. It is Pakistan's proxy war in Punjab that furthered mechanisation so as to enable India to conventionally deter this and to administer a punch if needed. Its raising of the Rashtriya Rifles

was to refresh its conventional deterrence against a proxy war that shifted from Punjab to Kashmir. Its doctrinal movement was once again to refurbish conventional deterrence since Pakistan upped the ante in Kargil and through mega terror attacks. India's spending on arms has only kept pace with its economic trajectory and is designed to keep Pakistan from yet again stepping up the proxy war in Kashmir. Pakistan's irrational attempted matching of India has led to its own security dilemma in India's counter action.

This essay cannot settle this debate. Suffice it to point out that Pakistan's India strategy is rational in the realist vein. Armies universally are known to be realist and conservative institutions. Pakistan's army has trained in US military institutions since the '50s. Realism has been the dominant perspective in the US all through its superpower years. Realism provided Pakistan the best perspective to cope with its tragic halving in 1971. It enabled the Pakistan army to ignore its own actions in East Pakistan and see India's actions and power as accounting for this debacle. It has, therefore, deepened the realist hue with which Pakistan views India. It sees India's power unmistakably, something Indian analysts are unable to see themselves. Further, there are aspects of India's power and its instruments that escape scrutiny in India but are not lost on Pakistan. Ambassador Rasgotra, in his memoirs, describes an encounter with Musharraf in which Musharraf cryptically refers to Indian actions that Pakistan is best positioned to register that account for what Pakistan does back to India. This requires factoring in to understand Pakistan's view of India.

Further, Pakistan has largely proved a rational actor. It did not provoke a war in 1971 till the very last minute, when it was obviously into its third week. Emerging history of the war indicates that India had ventured across the International Border (IB) around 20 November. Musharraf's memoirs tell of his frustration at missing out the war when Yahya Khan refrained from opening up the southern Punjab and Rajasthan front.

Another example of Pakistani rationality is in its Kargil intrusions. Whereas this example might not readily be taken on board, it can be seen as a limited incursion with limited aims as part of conflict expansion along

the Line of Control (LC). What India did along the Neelam valley and earlier in taking Siachen, Pakistan attempted to replicate in Kargil. Pakistan rationally kept to its limited aims, even while being evicted, by not upping the ante and stepping down when it knew its game was up, even at the cost of loss of face. Attributing expansive aims to Musharraf prevents grasping the limitations. The relatively insignificant locale enabled India to keep its counter limited and Pakistan to retrace its steps. The bonus Pakistan got, and perhaps the gains it was really seeking, was in enabling an extension of the proxy war in Kashmir by another half decade. The spurt was such that India was unable to regain the status quo ante without upping the military ante in Operation Parakram. The resulting pressures led up to the tacit ceasefire and the Vajpayee-Musharraf deal that brought about a hiatus in Kashmir in 2004.

This recounting is necessary to establish that Pakistan's army is rational. It is seized of the power asymmetry with India and imbued with realist rationality, seeks to address it. A counter fact helps prove the point. A liberal perspective might have helped it to join the bandwagon. However, that is not the case. The cultural argument that Pakistan is out to wreck 'Hindu' India is to resort to mirror-imaging. It is an argument trotted out in majoritarian nationalist circuits to serve the prescription that this is what India ought to be doing to Pakistan in the first place. The institutionalist argument that Pakistan army needs an Indian bogey to keep its bread buttered is an after-the-fact argument. It focuses on the institutional bonus for the Pakistan army rather than on what prompted Pakistan's view of India as a bogey in the first place.

This appears charitable to Pakistan by letting it off the hook as the sole South Asian villain. However, it is a sobering view of India in that it establishes that India's growing power and India's adeptness in its use will prompt certain actions by actors subscribing to realism. Pakistan's sandwich of India's conventional prowess with action at the other two levels – subconventional and nuclear – is better explained thus. This explains the proxy war. Understanding this is necessary to examining its impact on the Indian army.

IMPACT OF INTERMINABLE OPERATIONS

Seeing Pakistan's hand in Kashmir is easy. Assuming that it is to wrest Kashmir is to overstate Pakistani aims. As seen, Pakistan fears India's power. It deems it necessary to tie this down. It got an opening it exploited fully in Punjab when India was moving towards mechanisation. It gained another opening in Kashmir even as India was able to best the situation in Punjab. The Kashmir pot has been kept boiling so as to keep India's shoulder to the wheel. This has in some estimates kept up to a quarter to a third of India's army tied down in Kashmir. This includes the 740 km length of the LC in Siachen and in counter-insurgency operations – protective, defensive and offensive. Since the expectation is that insurgency will spike in the case of conventional operations, India raised the Rashtriya Rifles so as to recreate its offensive capacity. The Kargil War experience suggests that loosening the grip in conventional conflict might rebound over the long term. The disturbances this summer indicate that the Rashtriya Rifles might not be readily available for relieving the infantry from defensive tasks on the LC. It would have its hands full in its primary task. The Mountain Strike Corps has reportedly been aborted temporarily as being too manpower heavy. Thus, India might not have the offensive capability necessary to expand the scope of offensive operations in the mountain sector.

This leaves the plains and deserts for a conventional punch, deemed necessary for refurbishing conventional deterrence to begin with. In the deserts, Pakistan has taken care to brandish its tactical nuclear weapons that can only be used where there is little collateral damage. This leaves the developed terrain for offensive operations. Analysts have pointed out that this is the place to apply military power since it neutralises Pakistani tactical nuclear weapons. However, this suggestion was first made when the power of irregular – jihad-inspired – forces to stump conventional forces in urban terrain was not quite so evident. In the wake of Iraq and from the experience in Syria, it is clear that venturing into urban space would be to step into a meat grinder. Even if this is so for both sides, it is not a sane strategic choice to make at the outset when one has the initiative.

This brings one to the salient point in this essay: Pakistan appears to have succeeded beyond its expectations. It has tied down surplus Indian military power. This is what it wished to do, but it has manipulated India into believing in a narrative that enables it to keep India tied down. The Indian army sees its indispensability to conflict management in Kashmir. This prompted the army to stay on though the insurgency indices did not warrant this through the mid- to late 2000s. The summer disturbances through three consecutive years did not alert the army to the possibility that its continuing presence might be part of the problem. Instead, the resumption of disturbances this year has only served to impress the army that it needs to stay on, and obfuscates the possibility that doing so sets up a self-reinforcing loop – its staying on provides the rationale for it to stay. It's staying on keeps the AFSPA intact and popular disaffection alive.

The army would be loath to accept this view widely held in liberal circles. It can be expected to be more responsive, however, if the view is spelt out in the realist lens. As seen, the army's conventional deterrent is under siege. Equipment injections are one manner of resuscitation. But there are other – perhaps less clear – areas that need equal attention. Most of these fall in the organisational realm. Take, for instance, the current-day fracas between the arms and between the arms and services. The infantry and artillery officer corps have largely cornered the top echelons through the idea of pro rata representation being extended into the general cadre. Their numbers elbow out other officer cadres from upper echelons. This has to some analysts contributed to a mandalisation of the army, with the elevation of mediocrity resulting in a deficit in operational art. The rise of the infantry and artillery in the ranks makes the brass from these corps secure what got them there in first place. Thus, counter-insurgency and LC fire assaults are set to enter into the third decade. The second underside is that the army as a sop to the mechanised lobby has not been able to reconfigure the strike corps that are veritable steel dinosaurs in the nuclear age. Thus, we see the baleful effects of the counter-insurgency era taking its toll.

Equally less remarked on – and in retrospect this might be deliberately so – is the continuous expansion of the army. The army, realising that its forte is manpower, is ready with manpower accretions as a solution to each operational challenge, be it Rashtriya Rifles in the face of insurgency in Kashmir or a mountain strike corps to face the Chinese. There is the two-front rationale thrown in for good measure. This is at the cost of quality at intake which an assembly line system of training cannot remedy. The officer corps is an example. The army's intake of officers is of the order of over a thousand per year – a third more than the civil services. While the officers are to regulate a million-strong and disciplined army, the civil services help run a billion-strong country that is dysfunctional in some respects. This implies that there is no premium being placed on leadership or strategic sense since manpower is a solution to every challenge.

This has a drawback best viewed through military sociology. The composition of the army gets impacted in the case of increase since this increase can only be serviced by regions that have recruitable manpower and without employment opportunities in other sectors. The figures routinely put out by the academies in relation to the recruitment base of graduates on their commissioning suggest a steady narrowing to a certain north Indian belt. In a voluntary army, this is taken as unremarkable but needs to be seen in relation to their subsequent employment in counter insurgency in Indian regions with little resemblance to where they come from. There are also political tides in the north Indian belt that cannot but permeate the consciousness of the citizens from such areas and impact their attitudes. This implies there is a potential political bias in officers from such areas which might colour their professional showing.

Finally, the military leadership that has risen on the counter-insurgency tide of the '90s has to reckon with the ethical shortfalls some of its members took while in such operations. It is widely held that the agitating generation of today in Kashmir was witness to much gratuitous violence, some of which spurred leaders under whose watch this took place up the military hierarchy. Their sphere of impact has risen with their rise in rank. How this has affected the overall ethos of the army is a moot question. Since these issues are seldom discussed, this is liable to be

mistaken as impressionistic. The point is that just as we view the Pakistani army's institutional wellsprings for its military actions, the focus on similar thrusts from within the Indian army must not elude analysis.

COUNTERING INSURGENCY POLITICALLY?

An institutional argument for exiting counter-insurgency commitment is not the best line to take. Because the fact that counter insurgency is having a negative effect on the army is not quite the reason to advocate other-than-military-operations counter to insurgency, the realist argument is perhaps the more saleable one. The institutional argument is not one the military can easily admit to, and the realist argument is one that it can acknowledge and sell to the political class better. The argument made here is that the army has fallen into a trap set by Pakistan and it has done so with open eyes. This is a criticism seldom heard, especially in a day and age when speaking bluntly is mistaken for sedition. But then retaining institutional good health and regaining an uncluttered realist(ic) picture imply stating and hearing some home truths.

While the army has tried to bring home to the political class that it needs to get its act together and address national problems politically, this has been somewhat low key. It leaves the political class the impression that the lid can continue on the army with army deployment. The bureaucratic class that interposes can be expected to reinforce this impression in the political class since it keeps the army from being professionally state of the art and embroiled in internal squabbles. The resulting national security scene is one in which the army's actions suggest it cannot rely on the diplomats to keep the external sphere tranquil and on Home Ministry bureaucrats to keep the internal sphere so. It sees itself as the answer, failing to see that the host populace in counter-insurgency areas might think otherwise.

A realistic appraisal of its presence as part of the problem bothering the people can help it re-appraise solutions. For instance, the graduated removal of AFSPA from either of the counter-insurgency prone regions can do more for easing the insurgency than the respective army-based

paramilitary in the two regions can do. In its environment scan, the army needs to factor in its presence and not only its effects on the insurgency but vice versa too – of the counter insurgency on itself.

The army's disengagement should not imply a corresponding militarisation of the central armed police forces or the provincial police service. The lesson from the counter insurgency in central India is that it is better to have the army undertake such operations than to have army clones to undertake the same. Asking for political solutions politically arrived at is a tall order. The Naga talks, for instance, are closing on to their third decade. A government that promised to deliver on these has lost its way midway into its tenure. Therefore, it might be a tad too pat to advocate a politically driven counter-insurgency strategy. It is a liberal delusion. Since this finding leaves the army with the baby, it is best that the army look deeper and for longer into the mirror held out for it here.

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