

AAKROSH

ASIAN JOURNAL ON TERRORISM AND INTERNAL
CONFLICTS



CONTRIBUTORS

PINAKI BHATTACHARYA is an editorial consultant with a new news daily that is being published from New Delhi, *Millennium Post*, and is also the editor, *Defence and Security of India (DSI)*, published by Media Transasia, Ltd. He writes on strategic and security issues.

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 *Nieuw 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.

HAFIZULLAH EMADI is Fellow at the Kennan Institute, Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, DC; Fellow at the International Relations Program, East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii; and instructor at the University of Hawaii System, HCC, Honolulu, Hawaii. Currently, he is a scholar and a consultant, writing on state and institutional development in central Asia and the Middle East.

RAJESHWARI KRISHNAMURTHY is research officer and coordinator at the Centre for International Research and Security, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, and member of IPCS Editorial Board. At the IPCS, she focuses on the security dynamics and politics in South Asia (specifically Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh), and West Asia. She has been a journalist, having reported on Tibetan politics for Agence France-Presse and on crime and civic issues for the *Hindustan Times*.

AAKROSH

ASIAN JOURNAL ON TERRORISM AND INTERNAL CONFLICTS

JULY 2016

VOLUME 19.NUMBER 72

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL PERSPECTIVE: FUNDAMENTALIST ONSLAUGHT <i>Maj. Gen. Afsir Karim (Retd.)</i>	3
BANGLADESH AND POLITICAL ISLAM: THE WARP AND WEFT OF EXTREMISM <i>Pinaki Bhattacharya</i>	7
SECURITY DILEMMAS ON INDIA'S WESTERN AND EASTERN BORDERS <i>Ramtanu Maitra</i>	22
ROLE OF THE PAKISTANI ARMY IN SPONSORING TERRORISM IN INDIA & AFGHANISTAN <i>Jai K. Verma</i>	40
THE UNITED STATES AND THE ISLAMIC STATE: SURREPTITIOUS RELATIONSHIP <i>Hafizullah Emadi</i>	59
THE EMERGING AFGHAN TALIBAN <i>Rajeshwari Krishnamurthy</i>	79



INDIA FOUNDATION
ANALYSIS | ADVOCACY | AWARENESS

CENTRE FOR SECURITY AND STRATEGY
INDIA FOUNDATION, NEW DELHI



EDITORIAL PERSPECTIVE

Fundamentalist Onslaught

MAJ. GEN. AFSIR KARIM (RETD.)

BANGLADESH

On 1 July, Islamic fanatics shouting, 'Allahu Akbar,' attacked an upscale cafe in Dhaka, killing 20 foreigners. Although the attack was claimed by the Islamic State (IS), it was basically the handiwork of home-grown groups inspired by IS ideology. This attack indicated a major change in the pattern of attacks witnessed over the past 18 months on individuals advocating secular values and moderate religious culture.

During this operation, the Bangladesh Army killed six terrorists and captured one and more than a dozen of the hostages were saved. Overall, it was commendable effort on part of the Bangladesh Army to neutralise the armed terrorist group with minimum casualties.

Since 2013, at least 50 people have been killed by lone-wolf attacks, and in the recent months, a Christian shopkeeper, a Hindu priest and a monastery administrator were hacked to death by Islamic terrorists. The mass-scale casualties in the recent attack on the upscale Dhaka cafe brought home the reality that large ISIS-inspired terrorist groups are now firmly established in Bangladesh.

The ISIS has been using the neighbouring countries to radicalise Bangladeshis. The Singapore home ministry announced on 3 May 2016 that it had arrested eight Bangladeshi construction and marine industry workers on the suspicion that they were part of an Islamic State affiliate in their home country. According to reports, the IS has plans to 'overthrow the democratically elected government through the use of force, establish an Islamic state in Bangladesh and bring it under IS' self-declared caliphate.'¹



MAJ. GEN. AFSIR KARIM (RETD.)

Construction workers from Bangladesh are generally housed in isolated compounds in Singapore, where it is easy to quietly indoctrinate them. These workers, after returning to Bangladesh, are expected to motivate and train youth in their homeland for launching attacks within the country and on India and some other nearby countries.

After the Dhaka attack, it seems Bangladesh will emerge as a major launch pad of the IS for lethal attacks on south Asian countries. Stringent measures must be urgently initiated by the Bangladesh government to check the spread of domestic fundamentalism by organisations like Jamaat-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh before they gain greater support and strength.

The discovery of Singapore-based IS operations should be an eye-opener for India. It must now undertake a review of its regional counter-terror, information and intelligence capabilities.

NEW CHALLENGES IN J&K

The Vale of Kashmir has come back to life a little earlier this year, after the long Kashmir winters, and terror groups composed of local and foreign terrorists are mounting frequent attacks on security forces. They are using new tactics of involving common people as cheer leaders and supporters for hindering operations of the security forces. This is now becoming a common phenomenon.

According to official estimates, infiltration has gone up compared to last year; more than 50 terrorists are reported to have infiltrated successfully in the last five months. An attack killing eight CRPF men on 25 June was the fourth of its kind on security forces in the state in June this year. Nearly a score of security personnel were killed beside several others injured in other major attacks this year.

The public support to terrorists witnessed during recent encounters in Kashmir has added a new dangerous dimension to the Kashmir political and security scenario. Highly motivated young domestic terrorists now form part of all encounters. Local terrorists who openly flaunt their sophisticated weapons on videos and social media channels have now become heroes of the valley. The tactics of combining lethal armed attacks



supported by hordes of local supporters will require new methods of dealing with terrorists in the Kashmir Valley.

The local terrorists are well equipped and trained and have a regular supply of weapons and ammunition; their attacks are becoming more lethal now. Mass anti-government civil disobedience movements are also being planned to bring the civil administration to a standstill. However, the separatist leaders who have been the main instruments of bandhs and strikes have been losing support in the Valley; their influence has been gradually reduced to just a few towns, and even their bandh calls receive little response now as the people feel that they have done nothing for them and only brought misery to them. Pakistani handlers understand this, and they are now urging them to create religious unrest and join IS-supported religious campaigns. The number of Wahhabi-run mosques has multiplied, and they are preaching that stone pelting, killing of policemen and other acts of violence are a religious duty. The Wahhabi movement is being greatly helped by the local media, especially the social media. Little has been done to counter their propaganda by secular parties; this requires the immediate attention of our central agencies.

A type of intifada, along with domestic and cross-border operations, is so far mainly confined to a few pockets of the Kashmir Valley, but now the area of such operations is being extended to many other sensitive areas. These operations are a sign of a new, vigorous and widespread sub-conventional assault by Pakistan. A comprehensive review of the current concepts and doctrines of fighting Pakistan-sponsored terrorism will be necessary to meet this threat.

A religious colour is being given to civil disobedience movements to garner greater support; Pakistan has been quietly inducting a large number of Wahhabi religious teachers in the valley, with the mission of gradually changing the moderate Sufi culture of a common Kashmiri and motivate him to fight for establishing sharia laws in the state. The changes in dress and the insistence on following orthodox practice in large areas of the Valley are already visible. This movement is the vanguard of a new phase of religious indoctrination by the agents of the ISI.



MAJ. GEN. AFSIR KARIM (RETD.)

Islamic radicalism is bound to increase sectarian divide and spread internal strife. The past and current Kashmir governments or political parties have done precious little to counter this religious-cultural Wahhabi onslaught, which obviously cannot be halted without a vigorous counter-religious and cultural movement led by the government and the people of Jammu & Kashmir. If this Wahhabi movement is not stopped in its tracks, the agents of the Islamic State will soon step up their activities to further aggravate the situation in the state.

A new wave of violent protests erupted in the valley in July over the killing of Hizbul Mujahideen commander Burhan Wani, a local. Police and government buildings were attacked and torched by violent mobs, as we go to the press violence continues unabated. This development is new political challenge for the state and central governments.

Civil strife and violence by well-armed domestic and foreign radical groups will ultimately be able to paralyse the state administration; the new plan of spreading disorder and chaos in Kashmir by Pakistan and IS agents must be checked vigorously. The state government and the central government both must play an effective role in pre-empting and checking Pakistani and IS plans.

Notes and References

1. Ministry of Home Affairs. 'Detention of Eight Radicalised Bangladeshi Nationals under the Internal Security Act.' Press Release, 3 May 2016. <<https://www.mha.gov.sg/Newsroom/press-releases/Pages/Detention-of-Eight-Radicalised-Bangladeshi-Nationals—under-the-Internal-Security-Act.aspx>>.



Bangladesh and Political Islam: The Warp and Weft of Extremism

PINAKI BHATTACHARYA

In the last 17 months, 49 people have been killed by shadowy killers in Bangladesh. Amongst those who have been killed are newspaper editors, professors of colleges and universities, and writers and bloggers. The most targeted are those who were atheists or at best, agnostics. They have invariably been killed assassination style – thus carrying the message that they have been ‘punished’ for challenging the state religion, Islam.

Indeed, this is one of the two ongoing ‘great’ debates in Bangladesh that has hardly had any civilised exchange between believers and disbelievers – with the latter’s blood being mostly spilled on the streets of Dhaka and Rajshahi and Khulna districts. And the nature of these tussles has stayed the reformist hands of the Awami League (AL) government, led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed.

Periodically, she has balked at reinstating the spirit of the 1972 Constitution promulgated by a Constituent Assembly led by her slain father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, as the president of the revolutionary government. While the Preamble to the 1972 Constitution survived an onslaught on it by Ziaur Rahman, the chief martial law administrator (CMLA) and army chief, the fundamental principles of Sheikh Mujib’s Constitution (if it should be called that) survived because of legal proceedings that began in 2005 in the Dhaka High Court and were upheld by the Supreme Court in 2010.

He made Bangladesh into an Islamic state and removed secularism from the preamble, which included three other fundamental principles of the country: nationalism, socialism and democracy. The Fifth Amendment to the Constitution (in 1977) he brought had added the salutation *Bismillah-ar-Rehmane-ar-Rahim* to Allah and declared the nation as Islamic.



While the Supreme Court's 2010 Constitutional Bench ratified the Dhaka High Court judgement of 2005, the Court also declared the governments – from 15 August 1975 to 1979 – 'illegal'.

This brings us to the second inflection point of the country, which is about its birth. At front and centre was the debate regarding who owned the legacy of '*Mukti Juddho*', or the war of liberation, and so to say, the 'Father of the Nation' moniker.

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) was formed by General Ziaur Rahman to legitimise his political positions in 1978, three years after his coup of 1975 that killed Sheikh Mujib and nine other family members. Sheikh Hasina and her sister Rehana survived because they were abroad.

Ziaur Rahman's party sought to rewrite the history of the foundation of Bangladesh, with his and his political legatee Begum Zia's tacit design. They sought to undermine the role of the original liberator of the nation, Sheikh Mujib, whose protracted struggle got 'West' Pakistan's authorities evicted from Dhaka.

The crucial element in this BNP strategy was to highlight a rebellion by Major Ziaur Rahman, while being posted with a unit of the combined army at Chittagong and declaring independence on 26 March 1971. This was the same day when Sheikh Mujib was 'arrested' and flown to the 'West' and a pogrom was launched against the intellectual capital of the emergent nation – its educationists, professionals, journalists and many others.

Zia had declared from a captured radio station in Kalurghat, Chittagong, 'This is Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra. I, Major Ziaur Rahman, Provincial Head of the government, do hereby declare [the] Independence of the People's Republic of Bangladesh on behalf of our leader Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.'

This was the crux on which the BNP thesis of being the true representative of the liberation struggle lay, and thus the motivating factor for rewriting Bangladesh's history.

Yet, Begum Zia failed in her endeavour. And this is the second 'great' debate of Bangladesh that got settled in favour of the late Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his party Awami League, now led by one of his two surviving daughters, Sheikh Hasina, the incumbent prime minister.



With the judicial executions of the ‘collaborators’, who formed a militia fostered by the Pakistan Army and undertook the killings, rapes and pillage of the vast numbers of nationalist population of the country, a national consensus appears to have emerged in favour of AL.

Curiously, those ‘razakar’ perpetrators who have been hanged apparently had found a cosy nook in the Jamaat-e-Islami (JEI) and a few in the ‘nationalist’ BNP even. So the political fallout of the existential crises thus born between these two allied partners is reflected in the disarray of the opposition ranks.

Considering the fact that the 2014 general election was boycotted by the BNP-Jamaat combine, with AL getting a walkover, the people of the nation do not seem to harbour any genuine desire for another poll. On the contrary, the almost-90-day-long violent siege they held Bangladesh in that year, has raised the cost in political terms almost unbearably high.

But the first ‘great’ debate, the one about Bangladesh being a progressive, secular nation is being still fought on the streets of the many big cities and towns of the country. The succeeding sections of this article will seek to understand the politico-security situation and what role India has played in the recent years and can play still.

With the Muslim communities being in turmoil across the world, Bangladesh cannot be an island with its 160 million-odd population. But a majority of the people of Bangladesh know they have actually broken the jinx of continued mass communal violence, even though its birth was so blood-soaked.

They have risen above the straitjacket of religion and limiting impulses and found common ground on a common language and common ethnicity. They celebrate that identity on the basis of these factors, on each testing turn the still-young nation has taken. There was a time that New Delhi would look at them through the prism of being an equally recalcitrant neighbour, like Pakistan.

But Indian policies towards the eastern neighbour underwent a change, especially during the first UPA government, possibly because the Congress Party leadership understood the country better after having midwived it. A turning point was reached when the BNP government went out of office in 2006.



The caretaker government that was established in its place, under a Constitution amendment of 1996, continued for two years with the support of the army whose then chief was General Moeen Khan. He proved lacking in any personal ambition for the highest office of the country beyond restoring a healthy political tradition and creating grounds for democratic partisan politics, only after these politicians showed reformist zeal.

ISLAMIST DANGER

Sheikh Hasina made the cut. She returned to power with a thumping majority in the Bangladesh parliament. As prime minister, she was a changed person. She was far more determined to have a good relationship with India: she picked up a substantial number of United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and Bodo leaders who had taken refuge in the country, only to launch operations across the border, with or without the quiet support of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI). This is an organisation that had shades of becoming another ISI *a la* Pakistan.

Soon after taking over power, she faced the mutiny of the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) – it had become a goon squad in Begum Zia's time. It is believed that during the rebellion at the main campus of the BDR, close to her official residence Gano Bhaban, that was quelled by the army – Moeen Khan still on the saddle – at a great cost, New Delhi had an aircraft ready to fly her out of danger. Pranab Mukherjee, who had a good equation with her, was the minister for external affairs then. But the situation was brought under control by the Bangladesh Army, albeit with a lot of bloodletting.

In fact, the army was chafing at the edges because of the toll its officers had taken – those who headed the BDR – but it did not go for a coup to replace the fledgling government. The organisation was totally disbanded. A fresh new force, Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) took its place. And they were no longer jaw-jawing at the Indo-Bangla border with the Border Security Force (BSF) on this side of the national boundary, more for communal reasons.



Soon after when Hasina settled down, she started accounting for the terrorist organisations that had earlier had an immunity of sorts to terrify the public and bring them to the Islamist fold – organisations like Jagrata Muslim Janata, Bangladesh, of Banglabhai, who had earned a name for making the people of the nation turn away from their loose affiliation with Islam and forcing them towards a more extreme form of religion-related regimentation. Banglabhai was arrested in March 2006 and was put on trial.

The Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), which was raised during Begum Zia's reign and had gained notoriety rather quickly, also picked up Abdur Rahman, a supposed affiliate of the then surviving Osama bin Laden.

Jamiat-ul Mujahideen (JUM) and Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam (HUJI) drew their strength directly from Pakistan's ISI, which in turn had found in their former stomping ground – where they attacked, killed, raped and maimed hundreds of thousands common citizens seeking to subdue the Bengalis – a cosy biosphere from where it could open a second front of asymmetric warfare against India.

Revisionist powers like Pakistan often seek to make their target territories mutate into their own likeness. They sought to do the same with Bangladesh. Aided and abetted by the Begum Zia regime between 1991 and 1996 and then again between 2001 and 2006, Bangladesh became the hub of anti-India forces, including the Islamist terrorist groups.

It is a well-documented fact that when Indian interlocutors would raise these issues with her government, they would face a strong wall of denial. This continued even when Indian authorities treated Begum Khaleda with kid gloves.

On the other hand, an attempt is now being made, especially by the Anglo-American quarters, that a strong connection to ISIS be established with Bangladesh. This is despite the national government strongly and consistently denying any such a connection. In fact, it has been denied at the level of the prime minister, where Sheikh Hasina has categorically stated that there appears a hiatus between what the West says and what actually exists at the ground level.

In the case of the killings of the liberal writers, journalists and bloggers, Bangladesh's security agencies have identified a comparatively



new group, Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), to be the perpetrators. More ominously, they have been linked to the Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS), the students' wing of the Jamaat.

The ABT appears to be a particularly virulent kind of organisation – a copycat version of ISIS, though with a larger footprint in West Asia and northern Africa. They kill people by hacking them to death, mostly by machetes and meat cleavers. Terrorism researchers have found that it had roots in an earlier organisation, Jama'atul Mujaheedin¹, founded in 2007 by Mohammad Jasimuddin Rahmani as the spiritual fount of the organisation. Rahmani was in turn influenced by Anwar al-Awlaki,² an al-Qaeda ideologue who was killed by US drones. The group wound up shortly after as its funding dried up, being sourced from foreign NGOs, including expatriate Bangladeshis who have been radicalised while working in West Asia.

Jama'atul Mujaheedin re-emerged as ABT in 2013. The organisation finds its human fodder in the campuses of the universities of the country and is very active on social media networks, where it even posts the names of its individual targets.

But an interesting facet of this development is the reaction at the level of both the state and the civil society. While the former seeks to disengage organisations like ABT from any affiliation with international terrorist organisations, like ISIS and al-Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), the civil society in Bangladesh is uniquely focused on progressive, secular agendas with firm roots in the rich heritage of its common language and ethnicity. Religion plays only a subliminal role in its existence.

In this milieu, none of these obscurantist organisations basing their religio-cultural activities in violence finds a friendly ecosphere where it could flourish. As a result, it becomes easy for the state – suitably in tune with the civil society – to isolate these organisations and eliminate them.

On the other hand, internationally well-known news organisations like the New York Times (NYT) Company rail and rant about how Bangladesh's power circles are oblivious about the existence of ISIS and the AQIS on its soil. Two examples of these kind of practices can be had in a report on 30 October 2015 by the NYT's South Asia bureau chief, Ellen Barry:



Last month, United States officials told Bangladeshi authorities that they had information suggesting that terrorists linked to the Islamic State were preparing to ramp up activity within Bangladesh's borders.

In the days that followed, a series of unusual attacks and threats seemed to substantiate the warnings. An Italian aid worker was fatally shot in this city's diplomatic zone. A Japanese agriculturalist was shot in the north of the country. Last Saturday, a bomber sneaked into a huge gathering of Shiite Muslims, weaving through rings of police officers before killing a teenage boy and wounding dozens of other people. After each attack, claims of responsibility by the Islamic State appeared on social media accounts believed to be used by radicals.

But Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh's prime minister, has responded to the developments with suspicion and outright skepticism. Even as foreign embassies informed their citizens that they could become terrorist targets, Bangladeshi officials have insisted that the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL, does not exist in their country. They have noted, pointedly, that the United States has promulgated flawed intelligence in the past, as in the run-up to the Iraq invasion.³

A clear contradiction of this is evident in a longish report (by website standards) provided by the latest favourite of Western 'securocracy': Rita Katz, founder of the SITE Intelligence Group. "As soon as the Islamic State began carrying out attacks in Bangladesh, we predicted attacks would increase while the group and AQIS competed," says SITE Director Rita Katz. "This is exactly what we are seeing now as the Islamic State claimed six attacks in 2016 alone."⁴

She continued, 'Since its first claim in Bangladesh on September 28, 2015, just seven months ago, IS has taken responsibility for 15 attacks in the country so far. The attacks accompany AQIS' and its affiliates' longstanding grip in the country, tallying 13 attacks in the country (11 killed and five wounded) since 2013.'⁵



Finally, the big blooper:

Both AQIS and IS have shown drastically different targets and attack methods in this time. AQIS has focused on those perceived to insult Islam, largely resorting to *knife and machete attacks* [author's emphasis] . . . and then again 'IS' target range has shown to be contrastingly open-ended, including foreigners of "*Crusader coalition states*" [author's emphasis], Christian converts, Hindus, police, and Shi'ite buildings. Methods have included shootings, stabbings, and the use of explosive devices.⁶

There are three types of inconsistencies between what Barry says the Western agencies had talked of about an ISIS attempt at ramping up attacks. And Katz says that she had talked of competitive killings between ISIS and AQIS.

One, clearly, Barry was at fault in quoting official intelligence agencies warning about just ISIS, without any mention of the AQIS.

Two, calling the Christian-majority Western states as 'Crusader coalition states' is a known linguistic characteristic of al-Qaeda, not ISIS. And three, knives, machetes and meat cleavers are the weapons of choice of ISIS, as we all know. They also use bombs. The al-Qaeda is in favour of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), other bombs and shootings.

So, was the PM of Bangladesh correct when she appeared to suggest that Western intelligence reporting was not necessarily 'god's own truth.' Till now, it seems so. The identification of ABT by the Bangla intelligence agencies as the main group perpetrating these acts of crime appears more accurate than the Western sources are talking about.

Instead, Sheikh Hasina and her other party leaders have consistently held that these ABT killers are allied to Islami Chhatra Shibir and the Jamaat-e-Islami. Their contention has been that these killers are not just killing the intellectuals for their obscurantist views on religion but are actually targeting them to besmirch the reputation of Bangladesh so that its economic and social growth gets stunted. They also indicate that these acts of violence are born out of a desire to avenge the judicial executions of 1971's 'war criminals'.



Clearly, the solution has to be two-fold: one, the elimination of the terrorist threats, and two, a political discourse that includes the BNP-Jamaat combine, which makes it understand that history writing is the job of the victors and not the defeated. As a rather perceptive commentator of Bangladesh, Mohammad Jahangir, wrote on 2 January 2016, in *Prothom Alo*, as translated by this writer: ‘The BNP has to decide whether they will take part in 2019 polls.’

Will it again rake up the issue of an ‘independent caretaker government’, considering that the AL government has already changed the constitutional provision for it? As Jahangir states, ‘It will have to deal with the various legal cases against innumerable leaders of the party.’ The BNP will have to write a contemporary, modern and practical manifesto that caters to the people’s needs now. It will also have to find 300 ‘popular, patriotic and honest candidates’ as candidates for the general election’ (author’s translation).

And that is where the rub lies. In 2009, they had to go to the polls with the image of a kleptocratic government led by an extraconstitutional authority who was Begum Khaleda Zia’s son, Tarique Rahman. He is now in London. And *Prothom Alo* commentator Mohammad Jahangir wrote in his article that Tarique is trying to control the party from there, while his trial in the court on various charges of corruption hang over him.

POLLS AND AFTER

The 2014 general election came and went. What it left behind is the debris of a fledgling democracy. Why? Because the BNP-Jamaat combine, with some other smaller parties in tow, believed they could not hope to win if AL is allowed to contest the poll under its own supervision. For, they said, that it would not be a free and fair poll. They wanted a ‘caretaker government’ to be in charge of the polling process.

The subtext of that could be the reasonable success AL had enjoyed during its rule in terms of a favourable public opinion. More importantly, and thus pertinently, they had overturned the provision of the Constitutional change of 2005, by which there was no need for a ‘caretaker government’ to be at the helm of the polling process.



Indeed, Sheikh Hasina and her close comrades showed tremendous courage by risking their hard-earned political capital on a poll that turned out to be unopposed virtually, excepting for the rump Islami Oikya Jot (Islamic Unity Coalition) taking part in it.

The AL won the poll, but it could have cost the party enormously in terms of legitimacy for governance both domestically and internationally. On the other hand, the BNP and the Jamaat together made it easier for the party in power to take the top hand. For, almost 90 days, from early January of 2014 till early March 2014, they virtually held the country to ransom with a kind of protest that witnessed the killing of 232 people and the injuring of many thousands – minor and major.

Yet, they could not overthrow the government. As a result, since the latter had time in its hand and, of course, the resources of the state, they won the round of incredible violence that Bangladesh had not ever witnessed, except during the pogroms of the army of Pakistan and its locally formed militias.

The people squarely blamed the BNP coalition for the violence and the attendant shutdowns. The crisis of legitimacy was thus won by the AL government domestically to rule. Internationally, it still needed to convince those who watched the process.

In that, a firm hand at the wheel counted. Let us examine some statistics. For one, an economic census of 2013 threw up an exciting statistic: there are 56 lakh non-agrarian commercial units in a mostly rural nation, and above 7 per cent of all commercial institutions units are run by women. These facts appeared to impress those who wanted a successful rare case study to underwrite the otherwise challenged legacy of institutions like the World Bank.

Such was Hasina's command over these international votaries that she could even cut to size a Nobel peace laureate like Mohammad Yunus, a favourite of the development-oriented agencies offshore. Yunus had founded the Grameen Bank model, which has now been replicated in many parts of the developing world. His Nobel had given him a stature that could match the PM's. Plus, there were indications that he had harboured political ambitions, possibly born at the rostrum of Oslo.



But soon, he was vanquished. He was stripped even of the chairmanship of the bank he himself had founded. Hasina soon made him a bit player, with barely a murmur rising from all those conscientious voices that drum up their own lots the most – the so-called international community.

Next, she took on the BNP and the Jamaat. For the latter, she had a special tribunal that continues to judge their war crimes of 1971. And for the BNP, she had the anti-corruption court procedures, which could send them to jail to cool their heels for a while. Those left out of the dragnet cooled off within the confines of their homes – an activity that does not reflect a desire of active politics.

How could Hasina achieve so much? Her first stint of the twenty-first century, in 2009, was preceded by a two-year reign from 2007 of a ‘caretaker government’ headed by a World Bank-affiliated economist who took over the reins after some dramatic developments in the form of an army takeover that was limited to its oversight on government functions and functionaries. The now-retired general Moeen Khan had shown no signs of vaulting ambitions barring having his country’s governance, which was different from the rule of the kleptocratic Begum Zia’s rule.

The government took two years to hold the election, which it held on the helm of an ever-strengthening public protest. And Hasina had swept to victory. In these interim years, she had obviously grown in her vision and administrative capabilities.

Bangladesh was called a ‘basket case’ once by the West-sponsored ‘international community’ members. They now turned around and watched as the nation moved from the list of the less developed country to the list of developing countries. In the process, they even went past the ‘Big Brother’ India in some important human development indicators.

That does not mean Bangladesh is out of the woods. It is largely a single-commodity economy – garments. It is like being a country that could market only its primary products, like minerals or crude oil. So the trade basket of the nation has to expand. More manufacturing has to be taken on.



The enlightened civil society of the country is aware of it. Its international peers understand that a democratic, socialist, secular and nationalist Bangladesh, with a population of 160 million Muslims, could be a beacon of progressive politics in the Islamic world, which is in a huge ferment.

At the beginning, Sheikh Hasina and her close political aides were aware it could be difficult to run a government that had won an election but whose legitimacy could be easily challenged. So they had floated an idea that there could be another election soon. A political scientist, Dilara Choudhury, while writing in *Prothom Alo* in January this year wrote, ‘Nobody in AL is talking about an early election now. Everybody in the party is asking why we don’t end the term in 2019.’

A slightly more ominous situation may just be rearing its head. An absolutist section of the party has floated an idea that since in 2021, the nation completes 50 years of independence, why should the AL not remain in power until that period?

On the other hand, Begum Khaleda Zia has realised her grave mistake of 2009 and declared on 20 December 2015 that this government won’t be replaced by a popular mobilisation but by the ballot box. So the clanging of the cymbals has begun.

NEW DELHI LOOKS EAST

Indira Gandhi’s rare sagacity in triumph was visible in 1971 December, when she had withdrawn all of the eastern army of the country soon after Lieutenant General A. A. K. Niazi – later stripped of his rank – leading Pakistan’s eastern army of almost 100,000 soldiers, surrendered to Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Aurora. She did show rare reticence towards ‘nation building’ and left the leadership of the new nation thus born to take care of their own homeland.

But the problem of Delhi was that it soon forgot about the country it had given birth to. And it woke up again on 15 August 1975, when the coup took place in Dhaka that saw the obliteration of Sheikh Mujib’s family.



In the interim, Bangladesh went through various convulsions. Mujib had grown certain authoritarian traits that Gandhi did too. It led to the downfall of both. Since then, when New Delhi engaged with Dhaka, it gave advice – lots of it – so much that it began to be called by the Orwellian nomenclature.

When the Bangladesh Army exercised, as the ‘Red Force’, it had the Indian Army. New Delhi was slow to take note of that and other such developments. Meanwhile, India’s north-eastern states could either be accessed through a long and arduous eastern chicken’s neck in Siliguri or through a much shorter Bangladesh route.

Ironically, that is the route fugitive north-eastern militants and terrorists took, faster than the Indian officials could. The DGFI, Bangladesh’s external intelligence agency, was becoming a clone of the ISI, and even China began showing a keen interest in what was beginning to happen with the country. This interest of Beijing had translated into war material that was sold – almost gifted – to the Bangladesh armed forces.

The realisation that something was gravely amiss with Indo-Bangla relations dawned on Delhi when Begum Zia’s government started stonewalling Indian diplomatic pressure about checking the growth of Indian militants like the ULFA, the National Security Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) (NSCN-IM) and various Bodo factions as they began attacking the north-eastern states and returned untrammelled to their safe havens across the border.

By the 1990s, the tussle between Dhaka and New Delhi had become tough. Even though the normally friendly AL government came to power after two martial law rules – one of that was of General Ziaur Rahman and the other of General Hossain Mohammad Ershad (retired) – ended in 1996, Sheikh Hasina ventured little from a hesitant path of governance.

She would make a lot of promises to New Delhi about how she would take action against the north-eastern militants, curb the DGFI and evict the ISI. But once in Dhaka, Hasina would be too scared to act. She was mortified of the army – possibly because the threat of another coup and an assassination would stay her hand. An indication of that was available in how she never shifted her family – her husband and her two children – from Germany.



On India's part, thus, the government looked at Bangladesh through the lens with which they looked at Pakistan. Here was another Muslim-majority country that has turned inimical to Indian interests – possibly more religious extremism.

Thus in 1999, when the first NDA government was formed, the then national security adviser, Brijesh Mishra, began a process of feeding the Islamic angle of India having the second-largest Muslim population in the world and its role in the nation's birth, while seeking concessions. Soon, the AL government lost the polls and Begum Zia returned to power. For Mishra, the process became easier as they were interested not just in the Islamic or liberation part of the story but also the personal financial gains to be made by the ruling family.

Some sophistication returned to the Indian side of the diplomatic moves in 2004, after the UPA I came to power. Senior diplomats like Deb Mukherjee, Veena Sikri and Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty got posted to Bangladesh and began to sense the hiatus that existed between the ruling classes, with their Islamic orientation, and the civil society that had kept its religious beliefs strictly personal.

This civil society behaviour made them markedly present on two special days – 21 February (Bengali Language Martyrdom Day) and 14–15 April (Poila Boisakh, the Bengali New Year's Day). They hold these sociocultural totems so dear that Bangladesh emerges in all its colours.

The diplomats and other officials realised the value of this civil society, which could be transformed to create politico-economic gains for India. They, in turn, made the decision makers back home understand that if India kept the hard power sheathed, and played with the soft power tools, that could bring more bang for the buck.

These in a way framed an anecdote that one of India's finest diplomats, J. N. Dikshit, had recalled to this writer once. He was a young director on the Pakistan desk in 1970–71. So when the war broke out between the two countries for Bangladesh's liberation, he was posted in Kolkata as a protocol officer. Dikshit had the good fortune – in his words in a rather bemused style – to be associated with Maulana Bhasani, one of the finest leaders of the 'Mukti Juddho' who actually created a reputation as an extremely capable guerrilla war leader.



One day, Bhasani expressed the desire to visit the memorial of Chittaranjan Das, one of the finest freedom fighters India had. Dikshit recalled that through the journey from Kolkata's south-east in Park Circus to the deep south in Keoratala crematorium, on whose campus the memorial was situated, Bhasani was quite.

After reaching the destination, Dikshit was shocked that the old man shed copious tears. The latter spent some time there and then returned to the car. On the way back, the mercurial leader was in quite a talkative mood. He told young Dikshit, 'Mani (Dikshit's nickname), your leaders don't know what they are creating. The people of the east (Pakistan) are so deeply parochial. You will have a lot of problems dealing with them.'

India got a taste of that, and Bangladesh got a taste of short-sightedness. Still, as Mohammad Ghulam Rabbani of Jehangirnagar University, has recorded in a piece again in *Prothom Alo*, 'The way the two countries have resolved the land boundary issue that included exchange of the enclaves is exemplary to the world' (author's translation).

The rest of undoing the negativities of history will follow.

Notes and References

1. Siegfried O. Wolf. 'Ansarullah Bangla Team: A Major Threat for Bangladesh's Democracy.' *E-International Relations*, 30 January 2016. <<http://www.e-ir.info/2016/01/30/ansarullah-bangla-team-a-major-threat-for-bangladeshs-democracy/>>.
2. Globalsecurity.Org, accessed on 19 June 2016
3. Ellen Barry. 'Bangladesh Pushes back as Warnings of ISIS Expansion Gather Steam.' *New York Times*, 30 October 2015. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/31/world/asia/bangladesh-isis-terrorism-warnings.html>>.
4. SITE Staff. 'Special Report: Terror Rising in Bangladesh.' *Insite Blog on Terrorism & Extremism*, 26 April 2016. <<https://news.siteintelgroup.com/blog/index.php/categories/jihad/entry/410-the-rising-tide-of-terror-in-bangladesh>>.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.



Security Dilemmas on India's Western and Eastern Borders

RAMTANU MAITRA

India's troubled western border, epitomised by never-ending terrorist-led events in the states of Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir (J&K), has been kept unstable for decades. Terrorist incidents continue to occur at regular intervals – more regular in J&K than in Punjab. While it is all too certain that these terrorist activities are initiated from across the border, with the crystal-clear involvement of the powers that be in Pakistan, Indian authorities nonetheless tend to overlook – and in the process help to exacerbate – the growing number of terrorism facilitators within India. Led by their own financial interest, these facilitators have steadily undermined Indian security by allowing outside forces to meet their objectives to carry out deadly terrorist acts within India, thus preventing New Delhi from developing an economic presence in its west.

THE PROBLEM OF DOMESTIC FACILITATION FACTORS

Along India's eastern borders with Bangladesh, as well as with Nepal, terror threats exist and are, in fact, mounting. The corrupt terrorism facilitators within the Indian state of West Bengal, as well as in Assam and Tripura, among other bordering states, are deeply involved in the proliferation of all kinds of illegal activity; some of this activity has allowed external and domestic militants to set up bases within India. As of now, it should be noted that there is no indication of any involvement on the part of Dhaka or Kathmandu to wittingly undermine India's security along these borders.



What is disturbing, however, is the fact that New Delhi is seemingly unwilling to identify the domestic criminal elements and, instead, continues to identify external forces as the prime cause for various terrorist acts occurring in these border areas.

EXTERNAL FORCES: KASHMIR AND PUNJAB

Pakistan's efforts to destabilise the border with India to weaken New Delhi's 'grip' over the state of Jammu & Kashmir has been widely acknowledged and long recorded. It is also widely known that the Khalistan Movement, rooted in Britain and Canada and led by secessionists in Punjab in the quest of carving out a separate Sikh state from India, enjoyed support from within Pakistan in the past. That support came in various forms, including running training camps for the terrorist Babbar Khalsa group and financing the secessionists from abroad.

The real objective of Pakistan since 1947 has been to deny India its control over the state of J&K, in Pakistan's north-east. That princely state, among many other such states not under direct British rule during the Raj, had to decide whether to join India or Pakistan or to remain independent when the British left the subcontinent in August 1947. In October of that year, the Pakistan military, dressed up as tribals, invaded J&K. Indian forces prevented a Pakistani occupation, but the subsequent inadequate response from New Delhi left the state divided. Both India and Pakistan have since occupied parts of J&K, and each claims to be the rightful owner of the entire state. While India possesses a letter of annexation sent by the then maharaja of the princely state to join the Indian Union, Pakistan rests its claim on the argument that since J&K is a Muslim-majority state and India was divided up by the British on the basis of Muslim- and Hindu-majority provinces, J&K belongs to Pakistan.

While New Delhi, because of its inconsistent and, indeed, gutless policies, could never stabilise the Indian part of the state of J&K, Pakistan proceeded to unleash its home-grown terrorists to rev up pro-Pakistan and pro-independence Kashmiris. Serious threats, however, did not emerge until the 1980s. Badly mauled by the Indian military in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in the early 1970s – having surrendered and left behind more



than 90,000 prisoners of war – the Pakistan military sought ways to get even. Aided by a military ruler, General Zia ul-Haq, Pakistan set about to create, nurture and maintain Islamist terrorist groups dedicated to undermining the not-so-stable Indian part of J&K. Pakistan established training camps close to the Indian border, and its military intelligence arm, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), developed close working relations with these terrorist groups. Subsequently, those terrorists began infiltrating in large numbers into the Indian-held part of J&K, committing terrorist acts and inciting Kashmiris against India. The Pakistan military institutionalised this policy as its ‘Bleed India’ campaign. Those terrorists groups still exist to carry out assigned tasks.

Although the ‘Bleed India’ operation has become virtually irrelevant now because security within the Indian-held part of J&K has been strengthened significantly, Islamabad has shown little inclination to dismantle these terrorist outfits, whether for lack of interest or, perhaps, courage. It is likely that dismantling the Kashmir-bound terrorist groups is difficult, at least in part, because they have infiltrated Pakistan’s intelligence and military institution over the years.

Moreover, Islamabad may consider such measures unnecessary. It is fair to say that being in contact with these terrorists on an almost daily basis, Pakistan’s military does not perceive them as a threat to Pakistan itself. And one might even assume that this lot of anti-India terrorists has become a part of the country’s security architecture.

The Khalistani secessionist activities inside Punjab began in full earnest in the 1980s and stumbled through the first half of the 1990s. There have been recent reports that indicate efforts are afoot to rejuvenate that secessionist movement. Last year, on the anniversary of New Delhi’s 1984 Operation Blue Star, which shut down the Khalistani secessionist movement in India, the UK’s *Daily Mail*, citing an intelligence report, said that more than 3,000 people gathered at Hyde Park in London to stage a protest, and some of the prominent personalities at the protest included British MPs. The *Daily Mail* also referred to an earlier intelligence report that said Sikhs have a strong influence on Canadian politics due to their large population in the country, and prominent Canadian leaders have



been taking part in events organised by groups sympathising with the cause of the Khalistan Movement.

There have been intelligence inputs that Pakistan spy agency the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) is using Sikh militants taking refuge in Pakistan to gather political support from the Sikh community in the West to support the Khalistan movement. According to reports, funds were being collected for such activities through donation boxes in gurdwaras openly seeking financial help for a separate homeland for Sikhs, assistance to families of militants, legal help for under-trial and convicted Sikh militants in India and publication of pro-Khalistani material. Intelligence inputs also revealed that Babbar Khalsa International and Khalistan Zindabad Force were making desperate efforts to regroup and become active again. 'We have information that they have set up bases in countries like Italy, Germany and the U.K. These groups are also getting funds from people settled in these countries,' said an intelligence official.¹

More recently, an article in the *Indian Express* stated:

The movement for Khalistan remains alive in Canada and particularly so by way of influence in Canada's political parties. The Islamists, too, have succeeded in infiltrating the political parties in Canada. They share with the Khalistanis the desire to undermine the unity and integrity of India. And unfortunately some of [Canadian Prime Minister Justin] Trudeau's insiders and gatekeepers, particularly in Ontario and British Columbia, have been associated with the Khalistanis. Their influence reaches deep into the Trudeau government. Surprisingly, the City of Surrey [in Canada's British Columbia province] just hired a prominent Trudeau backer, a former president of a separatist organization, to work on its behalf vis-a-vis the federal government.²

A large group of Sikh Liberals in British Columbia quit the Trudeau-led Liberal Party in late 2014, saying Trudeau is being 'manipulated' by Sikhs under the banner of the World Sikh Organization (WSO).³ Although the



WSO tries to deny its Khalistani connections, its glorification of terrorists, such as the assassins of Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi, and its casting doubt on the proven role of Sikh separatists in the 1985 bombing of an Air India flight between Montreal and New Delhi, make those denials trivial.⁴ One WSO leader said in 1991 that Air India bomb-maker Inderjit Reyat was a good friend.⁵ Inderjit Singh Reyat, who was charged with perjury in 2006 for repeatedly lying during his testimony at the trial on the 1985 Air India bombing deaths of 331 people, mostly Canadians, was granted statutory release from prison to a halfway house in January.

If the limbs of the 1980s Khalistan Movement were in Pakistan and Punjab, the brain was in old colonial Britain and Canada, a British dominion that acknowledges the British queen as Queen of Canada. The Khalistan Movement had its beginning in London during the Cold War, when India, considered an ally of the Soviet Union, was a target for break-up by colonial Britain. British intelligence created Jagjit Singh Chauhan, a nondescript, small-time political figure who had moved from Punjab to London in the 1960s, as the leader of the Khalistan Movement. He was made visible to the outside world by MI6 when, in 1971, in the wake of Bangladesh's liberation from Pakistani rule, this insignificant individual took out a half-page advertisement in the *New York Times* calling for the creation of Khalistan. It was also the time when the Anglo-American geopolitical strategists had sent the US Navy's Seventh Fleet into the area to boost the genocide campaign carried out by Islamabad to deny the liberation of Bangladesh.

WHY THE REVIVAL, IF INDEED THERE IS ANY?

Though Khalistanis living abroad had never abandoned their plan, there are two major internal reasons that could have led to the recent stirrings. The first is the steady weakening of Punjab's economic situation, which has pushed the Sikh community within Punjab to a state of apparent hopelessness. This development has been fortified by the drug trade and associated corruption, which has made the state highly vulnerable.

Neither is the economic decline in the state of Punjab new, nor has it gone unnoticed in New Delhi. Yet New Delhi has done very little to make



this border state, a frontier against Pakistan-inspired security threats, an economic powerhouse once more and thus bring fresh hope to the present generation of residents of Punjab. An October 2015 *Indian Express* article pointed to some of the conditions on the ground:

Endowed with ample water and good soil, Punjab's happy, progressive people had a dream that is now a distant memory. Punjab's decline started with its trifurcation. In its bid to establish a separate identity, the political establishment obsessed over a religious-political agenda and steered the state towards the dark days of terrorism. Haryana, once considered the backwater of joint Punjab, focused on an economic agenda. Today, it's far ahead of Punjab in terms of per capita income.

The Centre's policies aimed at increasing food production to ensure an adequate supply of grain, coupled with export restrictions, have taken a toll. The expected progression of Punjab from agricultural economy to industrial powerhouse to service-sector leader never took place. Food processing, essential for agricultural prosperity, never bloomed —for instance, Punjab exports wheat but imports wheat flour. Till such time as off-farm jobs aren't created, discontent is going to rise. Over the last decade, Punjab has had a more-than-fair share in the Union cabinet. But this hasn't contributed to the state's progress.⁶

The failure of New Delhi to realise and act has resulted in an unprecedented level of corruption, aggravated by a steady flow of drugs in the form of heroin and other variations of this opioid that fetch a lot of cash. The drug trade has caused an epidemic, addicting hundreds of thousands of Punjab's male population. A recent article in the *Hindustan Times* cited an All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS) survey that estimates the number of Punjab's adult population that has at least 'used' opioid-based drugs, including smack and heroin, at 860,000, which is 4.5 per cent of Punjab's population. 'These are dangerous figures,' says Dr. Atul Ambekar of AIIMS.⁷ He adds perspective, stating: 'Our study, in fact, found that 99 percent of the addicts are male. If one were to consider the survey total by that logic, the figures are double what they appear to be!'⁸ To avoid



dealing with the problem, New Delhi suppresses the number of drug users in Punjab.

New Delhi may undermine these statistics, but the facts are not invisible. 'Visit any farming town near the Punjabi border of Pakistan, like Ajnala, an otherwise serene district of canary-yellow flowers and sprawling rice farms, and you will not have to look hard to find people shooting heroin. There, locals visit what anti-drug activists call 'hot spots,' typically empty areas of greenery along dirt roads, to inject the drug. Discarded heroin needles can be found in these unassuming places by the hundreds, streaked with blood and often snapped in half.'⁹

While drug trafficking from Pakistan, helped by state authorities, has made the security situation in Punjab ominous, drugs are also being pushed through the state of J&K, where the addict population has proliferated. Less talked about is the fact that drug cultivation itself has become prevalent in Kashmir. 'Poppy and cannabis cultivation has been steadily growing since the mid-1990s, after the law enforcement agencies completely withdrew because of the militancy. But the trend continued even after the militancy waned in 2004. Experts say that large-scale unemployment and poverty contributed to the growth in the cultivation of these lucrative crops in the south Kashmir belt from Pulwama to Anantnag.'¹⁰

To begin with, the state of Jammu & Kashmir is unstable. The drug flow has surely added to the insecurity and could mature into a long-term problem, the kind Punjab is encountering now. Moreover, there are no available statistics that could provide a grip on how much of J&K's drug trade is making its way into Punjab and worsening the security situation there.

THE DRUG TRADE BUYS THEM ALL

One dangerous aspect of the drug flow into Punjab is the destruction of the state's productive workforce and the destruction of nearly a generation of Punjabi youth. The other equally dangerous aspect is the money power the drug traffickers have accumulated to corrupt the lawmakers and security personnel. What has already been proven worldwide is that wherever



opioids are grown in large amounts and trafficking networks flourish, the security apparatus breaks down. Indian authorities tend to ignore these historical facts. The operations of organisations dedicated to illegal drug trafficking can be analysed as business phenomena that, like any other, involve risk. Like any commercial entity, a trafficking organisation seeks to maximise profits by transporting illegally to its retail market. The process leads to corruption of so many important officials in a state institution that the entire entity becomes corrupt enough to facilitate or permit wide-ranging illegal activities. In an article in *Global Asia*, Saroj Kumar Rath cited a June 2012 report that appeared in *Mail Today* that warned that 'the drug trail' from Pakistan and Afghanistan into India meant 'easy drugs for all' and the scourge of heroin addiction.¹¹ 'Heroin is first bought in Afghanistan for about 100,000 rupees (\$1,800) per kilo and is then moved to Pakistan, usually Karachi or Lahore, for shipping and packaging. By the time it reaches India's Punjab state, the price has been inflated 30-fold to 3 million rupees a kilo. On the streets of Punjab it grows to 10 million rupees, and when it reaches the rest of the country, the price is as high as 50 million rupees per kilo. India has entered into bilateral agreements with several countries, including the United States, on co-operation in drug-related matters, and is keen to see more co-operation from Pakistan. But given the suspicions of Indian intelligence agencies, which accused the ISI of aiding and abetting drug smuggling across the border into India, this seems unlikely.'¹²

Notwithstanding the alleged suspicions that Indian intelligence agencies harbour, the fact remains that the abundant drug-related money has compromised most, if not all, of Punjab's and, in effect, India's security. In addition to creating a large population of addicts, it has deeply corrupted authorities whose prime responsibility is to secure the state's people and nation's security.

THE PATHANKOT QUANDARY

The 2 January 2016 attack on the Indian air base in Pathankot, a Punjab city bordering the state of Himachal Pradesh, has been told and retold in many forms. From all that has been said so far, it appears that the terrorists



who came from Pakistan were aided and abetted by various individuals within the state of Punjab who, in essence, facilitated their actions. It is also evident from all that has been said that the terrorists were working hand in glove with the drug traffickers and beneficiaries of drug money within Punjab. The terrorists were not airdropped from the sky. They made their way from their entry point to their target location over a period of time and were sheltered for more than 36 hours.

The involvement of drug handlers and protectors of these handlers in the Pathankot attack is evident, but what has not been ferreted out is how large this network is and who controls it.

It's a brazen fact that Punjab's notorious drug market has provided a breeding nest to an illegal arms trade racket and has also aided terrorism, both home-grown and external. Punjab's proximity to the Golden Crescent and around 550 km of shared border with Pakistan has made it a drug haven for smugglers. According to a study conducted by the Institute of Defense Studies and Analyses, porous borders have rendered areas like Gurdaspur and Amritsar prominent heroin collection centers.¹³

Another report states:

Highly placed sources said there was a strong suspicion that the arms and ammunition used by the Pakistani terrorists were part of a drug consignment which was concealed by smugglers, and the group of terrorists entered separately using the same route. The possibility of connivance of Indian officials will also be probed, sources said, adding that Gurdaspur SP [Superintendent of Police] Salwinder Singh, who was kidnapped along with a jeweler friend and cook by the terrorists, would also be investigated. National Investigation Agency (NIA) will be questioning him, along with other agencies, to verify his antecedents.¹⁴

The Pathankot air base attack should be considered a wake-up call on the extent to which Punjab's security has been compromised by the drug money and drug traffickers tied to the destabilisers based in Pakistan. For New Delhi, that means taking the bull by the horns – setting aside the



immediate political ramifications and dismantling this network ruthlessly. From what has been reported so far, very little effort has been made to take on the 'big guys'. How big are these 'big guys' in Punjab? How far has one to reach to dismantle this network?

One report indicates the drug-trafficking network is connected to the high-ups in Punjab who have been entrusted with running the state:

According to sources, the police have registered some 18,000 cases against consumers, peddlers and smugglers of drugs in the past two years alone. This is despite the fact that the local police are often 'a tool in the smuggling setup.' In 2013, former DSP Jagdish Singh Bhola, accused of running a major synthetic drug racket, had confessed to funding politicians during the last assembly election. He had named the minister Bikram Singh Majithia as a 'key mastermind' of the state's drug trade. Majithia is the brother of Harsimrat Kaur Badal, the daughter-in-law of Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal and union minister for food processing. Majithia had dismissed the allegations as an attempt to malign him. The same year, Maninder Singh Aulakh, alias Bittu, a leader of the ruling Akali Dal party, and Jagjit Singh Chahal, a businessman, were arrested for drug smuggling. Aulakh reportedly told his interrogators that he would use government vehicles for transporting drugs.¹⁵

The involvement of Punjab's top-level politicians, and their minions, makes belling the cat an immediate task to be undertaken by New Delhi, leaving aside vote-bank and other typical concerns. Otherwise, New Delhi will be accused of compromising India's security. Shashi Kant, a former additional director-general (intelligence) of Punjab Police, had earlier claimed that drugs and drug money are widely used in Punjab's assembly elections, which means almost all political parties are involved in cosyng up to the drug traffickers to generate large sums of cash.

In a January 2016 expose, Shashi Kant presented the following:¹⁶

- In 2007, a list naming the state's drug lords and politicians involved in the nefarious trade was prepared.



- Sukhbir Singh Badal was kept informed under the instructions of his father, the chief minister.
- When the list was taken to the chief minister, Badal senior said: ‘Such things are not brought in writing, you could have verbally told me about it.’
- Soon enough, the state’s intelligence chief was booted out of the department.

ALONG THE EASTERN BORDERS: PROBLEMS ARE PERHAPS MORE INTERNAL THAN EXTERNAL

Along India’s eastern borders with Bangladesh and Nepal, the security threat is similar but the external players are different. Unlike the western border, where Pakistani authorities’ involvement in undermining Punjab’s and Jammu & Kashmir’s security is clear, there is little evidence that either the Nepali or Bangladeshi authorities or intelligence agencies are involved in the growing security threats in West Bengal, in particular.

In Bangladesh, however, despite efforts by Dhaka under Sheikh Hasina’s rule to curb the Islamic extremists, jihadis remain powerful. One of the reasons is that they enjoy strong political support from the Khaleda Zia-led political party, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) – the main opposition party. In January 2005, a Bangladeshi human rights group claimed that 31 Islamic militant outfits were operating at the time in the country, targeting non-Muslims and seeking to establish a ‘greater Islamic nation’ that also included parts of some adjacent Indian states. The Jama’atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) was the youth front of Al Mujahideen, the parent organisation that began working in the mid-1990s. Other organisations, such as Jama’atul Jihad, Ahle Hadith Andolan Bangladesh (AHAB), Ahle Hadith Jubo Shangha, Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HUJI), Hizbut Tahrir, Tawhidi Janata, Islami Jubo Shangha, Islami Shangha, Al Falah A’am Unnayan Shanstha and Shahadat-e al Hiqma, were functioning under the wide umbrella of the Al Mujahideen network.

Their activities were mostly funded by the Saudis and the Pakistan ISI. While the Saudi source of money was its vast pool of oil, how



the ISI could get such unlimited funds was always a question. Nonetheless, it was evident that the funding was enough to maintain these jihadi groups, whose intent was to 'Talibanize' Bangladesh with the blessings of Khaleda Zia's BNP.¹⁷

Moreover, the *Guardian* (London) reported last September on Britain's Bengali population's links to extremist groups active in Bangladesh and elsewhere, including JMB, Islamic State and al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS).¹⁸

This came to light after Touhidur Rahman, a British citizen, and two other 'active members' of Ansarullah Bangla Team, which was banned in May over a series of killings of bloggers, were arrested last August. It is likely that British intelligence, MI6, provides protection to these anti-Dhaka and anti-India jihadi killers.

According to Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium, Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) is an al-Qaeda-inspired Islamic extremist group in Bangladesh that started its activities during 2007 as the Jama'atul Muslemin, funded by different NGOs. The group ceased to operate when funding ended and resurfaced during 2013 as the ABT. The group is influenced by renowned extremist ideologues, such as the late Anwar Al-Awlaki, an American and Yemeni imam and Islamic lecturer who the US government officials identified as a senior recruiter and motivator involved in planning terrorist operations for the Islamist militant group al-Qaeda. ABT objectives include the radicalisation of youth in Bangladesh, inciting active participation in a local jihad and seeking control of areas in Bangladesh. ABT has been blamed for a series of murders of bloggers and activists in Bangladesh over the last two years. All those killed have been prominent critics of extremist religious doctrines, especially in Islam. The group has issued a hit-list of secular bloggers, writers and activists around the world, saying they will be killed if its demands are not met.

While these dangerous killers are very much active in Bangladesh, it is also evident that because of highly compromised border security, some terrorists have crossed borders over the years to set up their camps inside West Bengal and other states, such as Assam and Tripura. Some of the Bangladeshis who have crossed the ungoverned borders were



illegal immigrants, leaving Bangladesh for sheer economic survival. The anti-India jihadi networks use some of them to smuggle in synthetic drugs and heroin. Once an industrialised state, now de-industrialised by the political powers that be, West Bengal – now almost at the bottom of India's economic rungs – has become a fertile ground for such terrorists.

Besides the state's de-industrialisation – presided over by the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) and continuing unabated under the present Trinamool Congress governance – the CPI-M's political decision to use the minority Muslim community as its important vote bank helped smugglers and terrorists establish their operations. Prior to the rise of the CPI-M as the ruling power in 1977, the majority of the Muslim community backed the ruling Congress Party electorally. When the CPI-M took control, which was about six years after the liberation of Bangladesh, Muslims made up close to 21 per cent of the total population in West Bengal. Today, Muslims constitute close to 35 per cent of the state's population.

Although this sharp rise in the population of Muslims in West Bengal cannot be fully attributed to illegal immigrants moving across the border from Bangladesh – many of those immigrants moved to other parts of India and even to Pakistan – the rising Muslim population acted as a boon for the stay-in-power-at any-cost CPI-M. The CPI-M not only turned a blind eye to the smugglers' takeover of the West Bengal-Bangladesh borders but allowed the border areas to turn into hotbeds of illegal activity. The border is also used widely for bringing counterfeit currency into India.

During the CPI-M rule of West Bengal, smuggling and drug trafficking – much of it opioids in the form of Speed and Ecstasy and also in the form of cough syrup, phensedyl, laced with codeine – became rampant, criss-crossing the borders. Needless to say, by allowing these illegal activities for the purpose of consolidating its minority vote bank, the CPI-M also earned a good deal of cash.

But it also endangered the nation's security, and that threat is growing by the day. Drug smuggling is increasing, which means illegal cash generation is flourishing. In a 28 November 2014 report, the Indo-Asian News Service cited an unnamed Border Security Force (BSF) official saying, 'BSF troopers have seized and destroyed drugs and cannabis plants valued at Rs. 270 crore along the India-Bangladesh border in Tripura.'



A more recent report paints an even more dangerous picture. At Gopalganj in Malda district, which borders Bangladesh to its east and Jharkhand and Bihar on its west, vast fields are blooming with poppy, the illegal crop and source for opium and heroin. States the report:

Narcotics money is at the heart of lawlessness in this West Bengal district bordering Bangladesh. The police say a large portion of this drug money goes into buying sophisticated weapons smuggled through the porous Bangladesh border and running hundreds of un-recognized madrassas in the Muslim-dominated (a little over 52 percent, on last count) district. 'It is true that the region is an epicenter of illegal drug trade and a counterfeit currency racket because of its strategic location along the international border,' West Bengal Director General of Police, Intelligence Branch, Raj Kanojia told Mail Today.¹⁹

The same article quoted Malda BJP Secretary Biswapriyo Roychowdhury as stating, 'Malda district administration knows everything, but they are just sitting idle for the sake of their (Trinamool Congress) vote-bank politics. They are protecting anti-national elements at the cost of national security and overall law and order situation of the district.'²⁰

The smuggling network, the drug money and an indifferent attitude on the part of West Bengal's powers that be have enabled those keen to undermine India's security. For instance, in October 2014, *India Today* cited a National Investigating Agency (NIA) report that noted the strengthening of terror groups within West Bengal:

The terror groups, most of whom are members of the banned Jama'atul Mujahideen, a Bangladeshi outfit, have managed to infiltrate and start operations with the help of local support since October 2011. They recruited young men and women and set up several illegal madrassas in order to introduce their radical philosophy among the minority community. The initial findings indicate that the investigating agency would require more time to unearth the real magnitude of the conspiracy hatched by terrorists in the rural belts of West Bengal.²¹



That article also mentioned the burgeoning of madrassas along the border areas:

The situation is very complex now. There are several direct and indirect factors involved in it. These illegal madrassas mushroomed over a period of time as practically there was no monitoring or intelligence mechanism available with the local administration,' informs a senior official of the State police. 'By cozying up to the ruling Trinamool administration, the terror groups successfully avoided any queries pertaining to their identities from law enforcement agencies,' the official alleges.²²

THE BURDWAN INCIDENT, ALSO AN EYE-OPENER

On 2 October 2014, a bomb went off in a rented two-storied building in Khagragarh, located in the district of Burdwan. The building was reportedly owned by Nurul Hasan Chowdhury, a Trinamool Congress leader. The ground floor of the building was used as a party office, news reports said. Initial news indicated two suspected Indian Mujahideen terrorists were killed and a third person was injured in the explosion. The explosion led to the discovery of a cache of arms and ammunition. Two persons, identified as Shakil Ahmed and Swapan Mondal, died in the blast. The injured, identified as Abdul Hakim (alias Hasan Saheb), was severely injured and admitted to the Burdwan Medical College and Hospital.²³

Subsequent detailed investigation by the NIA produced a report more than six months later that resulted in charging 21 people, including four Bangladeshi nationals.

A press statement issued by the NIA says the charge sheet has been filed against the accused 'for their involvement in the conspiracy of Jama'atul-Mujahideen (Bangladesh) (JMB), a proscribed terrorist organization in Bangladesh, to overthrow the existing democratic government in Bangladesh through violent terrorist acts and replace it with a hardline Sharia-based Islamic rule, which came to light after the accidental blast.'

The NIA claims the terrorist outfit, JMB, has established its network in the states of West Bengal, Assam and Jharkhand.



'Its activities in India primarily included recruitment, radicalization and training of vulnerable youth in a systematic and organized manner,' said the agency in its statement.²⁴

The report also noted that 'the accused have been charged under various sections of the law relating to offences of terrorism, conspiracy, recruitment, funding, running terrorist training camps, possession of arms and explosives, forgery and offences related to foreigners act and passport act.'²⁵

Beyond what the NIA reported, there are indications that the network is even larger. In November 2014, a Myanmarese, Khalid Mohammad, a Rohingya Muslim ousted from his homeland in the Arakan Hills, was picked up by Indian security authorities in Hyderabad. The authorities allegedly found explosive-making training videos and papers that showed he is a member of the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO), and he ran terrorist-training camps in the Bangladesh-Myanmar border area. Mohammad was trained by Tehreek-E-Azadi-Arkan and Tehrik-e-Taliban of Pakistan (TTP). Some security analysts associate the RSO with al-Qaeda, as well. Moreover, Myanmar is a heroin-exporting nation. It is not unlikely that this individual is also part of a drug-trafficking network that operates between Myanmar and West Bengal border areas via Bangladesh.

Only a neophyte would believe that the Burdwan incident is an isolated occurrence. A lot of bombs go off in West Bengal from time to time, and these are indicators of the weakening of that state's security. Among several factors, the active participation of Indian authorities in shielding antisocial elements to earn cash, for political reasons or out of sheer fear, is a major contributor to the deteriorating security conditions. It is also worth noting in this context that, according to a report on 30 October in the *Hindustan Times*, a pamphlet appeared in Kolkata that called for 'establishing an ISIS-style Islamic caliphate in Bangladesh—one that eventually includes several eastern and northeastern Indian states.'²⁶

The article cited a translated version of the pamphlet, written in Bengali language, that said: 'If we manage to establish a Syria-like reign here (in Bangladesh) then Muslims from Assam, Arakan [former name of Myanmar's Rakhine State, where most of the Rohingyas reside: Editor]



and West Bengal, too, would be able to come here for hijrat [migration with a religious agenda].

Simultaneously, anti-India revolts would intensify in seven eastern Indian states.²⁷ The pamphlet, the *Hindustan Times* article notes, is suspected to have been smuggled into the state through Bangladesh and was discovered a few days before the 2 October Burdwan blast.

Notes and References

1. Abhishek Bhalla. 'Intelligence Report Claims Groups Are Trying to Revive Sikh Militancy.' *Daily Mail*, 16 June 2015.
2. Ujjal Dosanjh. 'Dictum & Diaspora: Kurdistan, Khalistan, Canada and India.' *Indian Express*, 14 February 2016.
3. Terry Milewski. 'B.C. Sikhs Quit Liberals to Protest Justin Trudeau's "Star" Candidate.' CBC News, 9 December 2014.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ajay Jakhar. 'Breadbasket to Basket Case.' *Indian Express*, 28 October 2015.
7. Aarish Chhabra. 'Udta Punjab: Facts, Figures and Falsehoods of Punjab's Drug Problem.' *Hindustan Times*, 8 June 2016.
8. Ibid.
9. Michael Edison Hayden. 'Kashmir's Heroin Highway' Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, 17 April 2015.
10. 'Why the Valley Blooms.' *Tehelka Magazine* 7, no. 20, 22 May 2010.
11. Saroj Kumar Rath. 'Why Narcotics in India Should Be Treated as a Threat to National Security.' *Global Asia* 8, no. 1, Spring 2013.
12. Ibid.
13. Shikha Pathak. 'The Pathankot Attacks: The Link Between Terrorism and the Drug Market.' Takshashila Institution, 6 January 2016.
14. Abhishek Bhalla. 'Pathankot Attack: Drug Cartels-Indian Officials' Nexus Under Scanner.' *Mail Today*, 6 January 2016.
15. Rajeev Khanna. 'Toxic Trail: How Punjab's Drug Trade May Have Enabled Pathankot Attack.' Catch News, 11 January 2016.



16. *Quint*. 'Parkash Singh Badal and the "Secret File" on Punjab's Drug Barons.' 12 January 2016.
17. Ramtanu Maitra. 'How Far Does the ISI Money Go? Quite Far, for Sure.' *Vijayvaani.com*, 17 December 2011.
18. Simon Tisdall and Anna Ridout. 'British Jihadis in Bangladesh Fanning Flames of Extremism, says Dhaka.' *Guardian*, 16 September 2015.
19. Soudhriti Bhabani. 'The Region Is an Epicenter of Illegal Drug Trade: Kaliachak Is India's Afghanistan Where Poppy Farming, Weapons Smuggling and Radicalization Make a Lethal Cocktail.' *Daily Mail*, 9 January 2016.
20. Ibid.
21. Soudhriti Bhabani. 'West Bengal Turns into New Haven for Terrorist Activities.' *India Today* (Kolkata), 19 October 2014.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Monideepa Banerjee. 'Burdwan Blast Case: Charge Sheet Against 21, Including 4 Bangladeshi Nationals.' *NDTV*, 30 March 2015.
25. Ibid.
26. Snigdhendu Bhattacharya. 'Al Qaeda Leaflets Talk of Bengal Caliphate.' *Hindustan Times*, 30 October 2014.
27. Ibid.



Role of the Pakistani Army in Sponsoring Terrorism in India & Afghanistan

JAI K. VERMA

Pakistan, which is a terror exporter and a nuclear proliferator, has waged a low-intensity war against India and follows the policy of attaining strategic depth in Afghanistan by assisting multiple terrorist outfits. The Pakistani army, which enjoys several privileges, does not allow the civilian government to build cordial relations with India. Terrorism has emerged as a weapon of the twenty-first century, and Pakistan has mastered it in a short time. Several senior leaders of Pakistan accepted that it is using terrorism as a weapon to achieve short-term gains. Numerous intelligence organisations of the world, including India, have conclusive evidence that Pakistan sponsors terrorism. The military offensive 'Zarb-e-Azb' is a farce as the Pakistani military gave time to 'good terrorists' to escape before start of the operation.¹

The Pakistani army, which pursues terrorism as state policy, assists several terrorist outfits, including al-Qaeda, Lashkar-e-Omar, Brigade 313, Sipah-e-Sahaba, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), several splinter groups of Taliban, Indian Mujahedeen (IM), Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HUM), and Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HUJI), just to name a few.

The Pakistani army must realise that more than 60,000 Pakistanis have been killed, approximately USD 110 billion have been lost and the image of Pakistan has lowered in the international arena because it sponsors terrorism.

China is using Pakistan against India because China does not want a strong India as it might emerge as a powerful rival to China. Therefore, China is supporting Pakistan financially, militarily as well as diplomatically so that it keeps



troubling India. Pakistan should comprehend the game of China and should try to cultivate friendship with India, which will be beneficial for both.

Pakistan, which is a terror exporter and a nuclear proliferator, is sponsoring terrorism in India and Afghanistan to gain political supremacy, attain a strategic depth in Afghanistan and convince the hardliners that Pakistan's archenemy India is bleeding because of terrorist activities sponsored by them. The Pakistani army, which is enjoying several privileges, also propagates that the army is the saviour of Pakistan, which would otherwise be annihilated by a Hindu India.

The army continues with its anti-India rhetoric and does not want cordial relations with India. It will also not allow the civilian government to take credit for cultivating friendly ties with India. Hence, the military-controlled Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) planned an attack on the Pathankot air force station to sabotage foreign secretary-level talks, and after the talks broke down, the radicals blamed India for anti-Pakistan activities.²

The Pakistani army is aware of the hard reality that India is much more powerful than Pakistan in conventional warfare and it is difficult to enhance influence in Afghanistan. Hence, it has launched a low-intensity war against both of its prime adversaries. Terrorism has emerged as a weapon of the twenty-first century, and Pakistan has mastered it in a short time and is using it against its eastern as well as western neighbours vigorously.³

Asif Zardari, the former president of Pakistan and senior leader of Pakistan Peoples Party, accepted that Pakistan has created terrorist outfits like the LeT and the JeM and has assisted several other terrorist groups to gain short-term tactical benefits.

Pervez Musharraf, ex-president and former chief of the Pakistani army, also boasted that the army trained and abetted terrorists and they carried out terrorist activities in Jammu & Kashmir and that this was done to put pressure on India so that the Kashmir issue is resolved as per the dictates of Pakistan. He also admitted that known terrorists, like Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, Amir of Jamaat-ud-Dawah (JuD), Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi



(the operational commander of the LeT and mastermind of the 2008 Mumbai attacks), Osama bin Laden and others, were the heroes and freedom fighters.⁴

On 18 May 2016, Punjab's law minister again accepted that the government cannot take any legal action against terrorist groups, especially the JuD and the JeM, as the government machinery was also involved with these terrorist outfits.

Pakistan has adopted the policy of sponsoring terrorism because it has constant skirmishes over the Durand Line with Afghanistan and it fought more than three wars with India. The Pakistani military, which formulates foreign policy towards India and Afghanistan, sends terrorists, including suicide bombers, to both countries. These terrorist outfits do not follow any rules, and when their terrorists are caught, Pakistan mentions that they are non-state actors and hence the government is not responsible for their deeds. The Pakistani army, which is sponsoring terrorism in several countries of the world, especially in India and Afghanistan, became a unique country as it is the principal sponsor of terrorism on one hand and a record sufferer of terrorism on the other hand.

Intelligence agencies of India, the United States and several European countries have conclusive evidence that the ISI is funding and training terrorists, extending them support in border crossing, and providing them lethal weapons and intelligence outputs so that they can carry out terrorist activities in India and Afghanistan. Several times, trained Pakistani army officers also provide operational plans to terrorists for carrying out terrorist activities in both these countries. The defence and ISI officers posted in diplomatic missions of Pakistan also render full support to terrorist outfits.⁵

The Pakistan chief of staff General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, who overthrew and hanged the democratically elected president of Pakistan Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in July 1977, Islamised the Pakistani society with the ulterior motive to give legitimacy to his rule. He radicalised the society and allowed the opening of a large number of madrassas in the country. These madrassas were funded by Middle Eastern countries as well as by the ISI and various terror outfits sponsored by the Pakistani army.

Zia-ul-Haq also promulgated several Islamic laws that made the country more fanatic, and it became easy to recruit suicide bombers for carrying out terrorist activities in Afghanistan. Once Russian forces left



Afghanistan, the Pakistani army started sending large chunks of extremists to India for terrorist activities.⁶

Pakistan's military operations against terrorists, including the joint military offensive Zarb-e-Azb, are a farce. The Pakistani army informed the 'good terrorists' much before launching operation Zarb-e-Azb so the terror outfits that toe the line of the ISI could migrate from Waziristan and the military action was against those terror groups that were not obeying the dictates of the Pakistani army.

The informed sources emphatically mention that the ISI not only warned but also provided safe passage to the 'good terrorists', which included Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani group, which was founded by Jalaluddin Haqqani. The Haqqani network, which is led by Sirajuddin Haqqani since the death of his father, Jalaluddin Haqqani, has been close to the ISI since its inception. The outfit had headquarters in North Waziristan and was attacking the US-led NATO forces, the Afghan forces and the Indian installations at the behest of the ISI. The Haqqani group did not carry out terrorist activities inside Pakistan but acted more under the instructions of the ISI. Consequently, the ISI not only informed the Haqqani group but also facilitated the shifting of its headquarters from North Waziristan before the start of Zarb-e-Azb.⁷

Besides these outfits, the Jaish-e-Mohammed, the Lashkar-e-Taiba, etc., are also considered good terrorist organisations as they do not indulge in terrorist activities in Pakistan and carry out terrorist actions in India and Afghanistan. Pakistani security forces also did not destroy the terrorist infrastructure as they need the 'good terrorists' to implement the state policy of exporting terrorism to their neighbourhood. Pakistani security agencies do not arrest the 'bad terrorists' but exterminates them as the Pakistani army does not care for human right violations.

ISLAMISATION OF THE PAKISTANI ARMY

Pakistan was created in the name of Islam. Hence, the Islamisation of the society started right from the creation of Pakistan. In 1947, when Pakistan was carved out, the society was not fundamentalist, but slowly and steadily, more and more Islamic education became part of school education and a



large number of madrassas were opened, which made the society radical. Several leaders and generals of the Pakistani army with an ulterior motive made the society as well as the Pakistani army fundamentalist.

In the early stages, the Pakistani army was fully professional and promotions were on the basis of competence and ability. Nonetheless, the Pakistani army realised soon that Islam can be used to recruit Muslim volunteers to attack India. It played the religious card in 1947 and sent razakars as well as fanatic army personnel in the garb of volunteers to attack Jammu & Kashmir. Again, General Mohammad Ayub Khan used Islam for countering the political parties of East and West Pakistan. In the 1965 war, General Ayub Khan again used Islam to conquer Kashmir.

General Yahya Khan wanted to crush the uprising in East Pakistan in the name of Islam, but the Pakistani army and its henchmen resorted to carnage and rape, besides other atrocities. The grievances of East Pakistan were so genuine that the brute force of the army could not control the mass movement of East Pakistan, and Bangladesh was created.⁸

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, an elected leader, also fell prey to the Islamic sentiments by introducing Islamic Socialism and declaring the Ahmadiya Muslims as non-Muslims. Nevertheless, he was betrayed by General Zia-ul-Haq, who overthrew him and promised to convert Pakistan into a true Islamic state.

General Zia-ul-Haq, who seized power in the name of the promulgation of Islamic laws, transformed the Pakistani army into a radical force. He included religion as part of the annual confidential report, posted religious preachers in military establishments and gave madrasa-educated persons preference in recruitment. These changes converted the Pakistani army into an Islamic fundamentalist army.

The efforts of General Musharraf to de-radicalise the army were foiled by the fundamentalist forces. The Pakistani army felt humiliated by the use of drones by the United States on the Taliban, and it generated anti-US feelings as well as strengthened religious fervour.

On 14 April 2016, five officers of the Pakistani navy were sentenced to death by a navy tribunal as they had tried to hijack a Pakistani frigate from the Karachi naval dockyard in September 2014 with the objective of destroying a US Navy refuelling ship. However, there were reports that



these Pakistani navy officers owed allegiance to the Islamic State and they wanted to destroy a US aircraft carrier. In the gun battle at the Karachi dockyard, about 10 persons, including 4 navy officers, were killed and 5 arrested. The attack on the Karachi naval dockyard and the death sentence later to the Pakistani navy officers indicate that the Pakistani defence personnel are thoroughly radicalised and are ready to work as suicide bombers in the name of Islam.

The whole world is worried as Pakistan has a large arsenal of nuclear weapons, which is under the command and control of the Pakistani army. The religious extremism in the army is treacherous, and several Islamic terrorist outfits, including the Islamic State and the LeT, are trying to acquire nuclear warheads. They may succeed in alluring some senior army officers in the name of Islam and procure the nuclear warheads, which may be disastrous for mankind.⁹

Analysts fear that in case of hostilities with India, the Pakistani army may clandestinely provide some nuclear warheads to the terrorist outfits created by them to use against important cities of India and later claim that the warheads were stolen by non-state actors.¹⁰

An Islamised Pakistani army would continue a low-intensity war against India. It is also assisting various Taliban factions in Afghanistan, and these terrorist outfits will try to occupy major portions of Afghanistan, including Kabul.¹¹

PAKISTANI ARMY-SPONSORED TERRORIST ACTIVITIES IN INDIA & AFGHANISTAN

The nefarious ISI, which is a part of the Pakistani army and was created in 1948 to collect information against India, has strength of more than 10,000 officers and staff. However, the real strength of the ISI lies in the sources, casual contacts, leaders of terrorist outfits, diplomatic contacts and the large number of sleeper cells in India and Afghanistan.

The rogue intelligence agency, which was constituted to gather intelligence, is deeply involved in drug trafficking and psychological warfare with the intention to demoralise neighbouring countries. It created several terrorist groups and assists quite a few other terror groups and is actively



involved in training, financing and sending terrorists to India and Afghanistan to carry out terrorist activities. The ISI is running several madrassas directly or through various terrorist outfits. These madrassas produce terrorists as well as suicide bombers and are used in carrying out terrorist activities in India and Afghanistan.

TERRORIST ACTIVITIES IN INDIA

The Pakistani military-sponsored terror groups, like the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM), the Jaish-e-Mohammed, the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Indian Mujahideen, have carried out several terrorist activities in Jammu & Kashmir as well as in the whole of India. The army-controlled ISI has recruited strong-arm agents, support agents and action agents in J&K. These agents enhance religious divide and hatred towards security agencies. Therefore, whenever security agencies take actions against terrorists, the ISI agents organise demonstrations, rallies and agitations and project that the terrorists are innocent and security agencies are killing them as they are Muslims. The LeT is the most reliable proxy of the Pakistani army in India.

The media in J&K also obeys the dictates of Pakistan-sponsored terrorists and publishes fictitious stories in their favour and against the security agencies. Several foreign journalists, think tanks and intelligence organisations have reported that terrorism in Kashmir is sponsored by Pakistan.

The basic agenda of the Pakistani army is to disintegrate India. Hence, it has rendered assistance to several terrorist groups of the North East, including the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), the People's Liberation Army (PLA), the National Security Council of Nagaland (NSCN), the North East Students Organisation (NESO), the National Liberation Force of Tripura (NLFT) and the All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF). Previously, Pakistan also got assistance from Bangladesh in helping these terror outfits, but after Sheikh Hasina came to power, she has stopped any support to Pakistan in fomenting terrorism in India.

As the main aim of Pakistan was to harm and disintegrate India, it also helped Sikh secessionists who were demanding a separate Khalistan. The Sikhs settled in Europe, Canada and other places launched the Khalistan



Movement at the behest of the Pakistani army but as the movement had no mass support, it died down soon.

PAKISTANI ARMY'S INVOLVEMENT IN DRUG SMUGGLING

Analysts mention that Pakistan smuggles drugs worth more than D7,500 crores every year into India with the active involvement of the Pakistani army. The senior officers of the Pakistani army smuggle drugs from Afghanistan and send it to India, mainly from Punjab. The money generated by the smuggling is used in financing various terrorist groups to carry out terrorist activities in India and Afghanistan. A large number of residents of border villages have become drug addicts, and a few of them are also working as support agents of the ISI. The Pakistani army is instigating drug addicts to raise the Khalistan issue; they are also used in supplying arms and ammunition to terrorists.

Unfortunately, a few security personnel have also become drug addicts and work under the instructions of the ISI. It is a serious matter as they can also be involved in terrorist activities.¹²

SMUGGLING OF INDIAN FAKE CURRENCY NOTES

The Pakistani army pumps billions of Indian Fake Currency Notes (IFCN) into India through India's neighbouring countries and Middle Eastern countries, as well as directly from Pakistan. IFCN are printed in government-controlled printing presses. Consequently, the quality of the IFCN is so good that even for the bank employees, it is difficult to differentiate between real and fake notes with the naked eye. The ISI prints IFCN of D1,000 and D500 denominations only.

Pakistan is achieving two goals by the smuggling of IFCN. On one hand, it is weakening the Indian economy and on the other hand, the money generated by smuggling is used in carrying out terrorist activities in India.



JAI K. VERMA

MAJOR PAKISTAN-SPONSORED TERRORIST ACTIVITIES IN INDIA

According to reports more, than 1,930 persons have lost their lives in Pakistani military-sponsored terrorist incidents in the last 25 years in India. The important terrorist assaults are as follows:

- On 12 March 1993, ISI-trained terrorists exploded 13 bombs in Mumbai with the connivance of Dawood Ibrahim, in which more than 350 innocent persons were killed and about 1,200 were injured. After this ghastly act, Dawood and his accomplices took refuge in Pakistan.
- In December 1996, Pakistani agents planted a bomb in Brahmaputra Express, in which about 33 people lost their lives.
- In October 2001, the Pakistani army created the terrorist outfit Jaish-e-Mohammed and sent terrorists who killed 38 persons in Jammu & Kashmir State Legislative Assembly Complex.
- In August 2003, the Pakistani military-sponsored terrorists of the Lashkar-e-Taiba exploded two car bombs in Mumbai, in which 25 persons were killed and 54 were injured.
- Again on 29 October 2005, LeT terrorists exploded three bombs in busy markets of Delhi, in which 62 persons were killed while more than 210 were injured, a few of them grievously.
- LeT terrorists exploded several bombs in the religious city of Varanasi on 7 March 2006, in which 28 persons were killed while more than 100 were injured.
- LeT activists exploded seven bombs in suburban trains in Mumbai in July 2006, in which 209 persons were killed and more than 700 were injured.
- In May 2008, the Indian Mujahedeen, in which disgruntled Indian Muslims were recruited by the Pakistani military, blasted nine bombs in Jaipur, killing more than 63 and injuring 216 persons.



- The IM exploded 21 bombs in Ahmadabad in July 2008, slaying more than 56 innocent people and injuring more than 200 persons.
- The IM again exploded five bombs in Delhi in September 2008, in which 30 persons were killed and more than 100 injured.
- In November 2008, the Pakistani army sent 10 fully armed Pakistanis through the sea route to India. They killed more than 164 persons and more than 308 were wounded. Indian security agencies nabbed one Pakistani, Ajmal Kasab, who was hanged later.
- In February 2010, the IM exploded bombs in Pune, killing 17 persons, including a few foreigners.
- In July and September 2011, in separate terrorist incidents in Mumbai and New Delhi, more than 43 persons were killed while about 200 were injured.
- In 2013, in different incidents in Hyderabad and Patna, more than 22 persons were killed while 200 were injured.
- In 2014, in various ISI-sponsored terrorist incidents in Budgaon, Jammu, Bangalore, Chennai and Gurdaspur, more than 30 persons were killed while about 65 persons were injured.
- On 2 January 2016, six Jaish-e-Mohammed-trained terrorists entered the strategic Pathankot airbase with the intention of destroying airplanes and helicopters. Although the terrorists could not damage any high-value monetary assets, one lieutenant colonel and six others were martyred.

According to an estimate, the Government of India has spent more than D20,000 crore to counter terrorism in the country.

TERRORIST ACTIVITIES IN AFGHANISTAN

Pakistan pursues the concept of 'strategic depth', which was propounded by General Mirza Aslam Beg, former chief of Pakistani army. Accordingly,



JAI K. VERMA

the Pakistani army wants to control Afghanistan. Hence, it created several Taliban factions that carry out terrorist activities in Afghanistan. These Pakistan-sponsored terrorist outfits have attacked US-led NATO forces, Indian establishments (including diplomatic missions) and Afghan security forces, together with their institutions.

Afghanistan security forces, including former president Hamid Karzai, have stated several times that Pakistan is sponsoring terrorism in the country. The CIA has satellite imageries of Pakistani army-run terrorist camps in areas abutting Afghanistan, and the US has killed several topmost terrorists through drone attacks in Pakistan.

Mike Mullen, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the United States, also mentioned that the Haqqani network was working as a part of the ISI and the intelligence agency was rendering all types of assistance to the terrorist outfit. Analysts mention that the Haqqani group attacked the US embassy in Kabul in September 2011, after getting clearance from the ISI.

In the same way, Pakistan-supported terrorists bombed the Indian embassy in Kabul in 2008. Besides this attack, several other assaults were made on the Indian embassy, the Indian consulates and other Indian establishments in Afghanistan as the Pakistani military is averse to Indian influence in Afghanistan. US intelligence agencies also confirmed on the basis of various intercepts and related information that the ISI was responsible for the attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul in July 2008.

TERRORIST GROUPS SPONSORED BY THE PAKISTANI ARMY

The Pakistani army, which pursues terrorism as state policy, assisted several terrorist outfits, including al-Qaeda, Lashkar-e-Omar, Brigade 313, Sipah-e-Sahaba, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, several splinter groups of Taliban, Indian Mujahideen, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen and HUJI, just to name a few.¹³

Slowly but steadily, the Pakistani society has become more and more radical. In the beginning, the Pakistani army was assisting terrorist groups as state policy, but soon, several army personnel, including senior



army officers, also became fanatics and started supporting terrorist outfits not as a policy but as an ideology. Several terrorist outfits have headquarters in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (POK), Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Pakhtunkhwa and even Punjab.

As the Pakistani army renders support and protection to numerous terrorist organisations, they work with impunity in the country. The terrorist organisations have to follow no norms. Hence they inflict considerable damage in India and Afghanistan, and the Pakistan government shows ignorance and denies its involvement and declares that the terrorists who have carried out terrorist activities in India and Afghanistan are non-state actors and the government has no role to play in it. Besides deniability, the ISI is carrying out terrorist activities at a very low cost. The ISI is providing them training, latest weaponry, free movement in the country, help in border crossing, financial assistance and information about targets and also backing in the target country through support agents, which are commonly known as sleeper cells.

Pakistan claims that it has no control over terrorist outfits that carry out terrorist acts in India and Afghanistan, but Article 2(4) of the UN Charter clearly mentions that all member states shall refrain from use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.¹⁴

The US State Department should include Pakistan in the list of countries that sponsor terrorism because the state machinery of the country provides assistance to various terrorist outfits. Osama bin Laden perpetrated terrorism in several countries while stationed in Pakistan. He was nabbed and killed by US forces from Abbottabad near Pakistan Military Academy, which clearly indicates the involvement of the Pakistani army. It is also reported that al-Qaeda was providing suicide bombers as well as financial assistance for carrying out terrorist activities in India and Afghanistan.

The Pakistani army supports terrorism in Punjab with the intention of creating Khalistan while creating disturbances in Kashmir as part of foreign policy with the ulterior motive of its merger with Pakistan.

Analysts claim that although the registered madrassas are approximately 24,000, unregistered madrassas are many more in number. Officially, these madrassas teach the Quran and Islamic tenets, but in



reality, they teach a violent form of Islam and produce terrorists, including suicide bombers. The Pakistani army, which recruits terrorists and suicide bombers from these madrassas, also encourages their functioning on the pretext that they provide free food, clothes, education and place to stay to underprivileged and needy Muslims.

INDIAN MUJAHDEEN (IM)

The IM, which consists of Indian Muslims, was created by Pakistan-based Mohammed Ahmed Sidibapa, alias Yasin Bhatkal, in 2008 under instructions of the Pakistani army with the object of carrying out terrorist activities in India. The plan was that in case the culprits are caught alive, it will be portrayed that Indian Muslims are maltreated in the country and so they resort to violent activities. In this way, Pakistan will not be blamed for fomenting terrorist activities in India.

According to an estimate, the IM has more than 5,000 agents, including action agents, strong-arm agents and support agents. India banned the IM in 2010, but it is active clandestinely in the country.

The IM recruits deprived youths from madrassas and then brainwashes them by narrating concocted stories of atrocities on Muslims by Hindus. The new recruits are shown fabricated videos of communal riots, and it is impressed on them that jihad is obligatory on all Muslims and if they perish during jihad, they will be duly recompensed in heaven.

After recruitment, the dedicated cadres are sent to Pakistan to acquire training in preparation of improvised explosives devices (IEDs), selection and reconnaissance of target, and operation of firearms (including weapons used by Indian security forces). The terrorists are also trained to attack and snatch weapons from Indian security personnel. The IM cadres are further indoctrinated in extremism in Pakistan, and once they come back to India, they train other misguided Muslims to join the IM.

STUDENTS ISLAMIC MOVEMENT OF INDIA (SIMI)

SIMI was created in 1977 with the perverted aim of converting India and other neighbouring countries into Islamic countries, to be governed under



sharia laws. Although SIMI was banned in India in 2006, the ISI liberally uses its cadres as support agents. The Pakistani military sends action agents from Pakistan, and here in India, the *ansars* (full-time workers) and *ikhwans* (ordinary members) of SIMI assist them in lodging, area familiarisation, supply of arms and ammunition, etc.

SIMI has close links with several Islamic terror outfits, particularly those terrorist organisations that are working under the patronage of the Pakistani army, including the IM, the LeT, the Jaish-e-Mohammed, HUJI and others. Although SIMI is banned in India, it has considerable following among the Indian Muslims residing in the Middle Eastern countries. SIMI recruits young Muslims primarily from madrassas by brainwashing their young minds by showing them the rosy picture of a Muslim India.¹⁵

LASHKAR-E-TAIBA (LET)

The Pakistani army has sponsored several terrorist outfits in India, but the Lashkar-e-Taiba is the most dreadful and well trained and equipped with the latest weaponry. Like other Islamic terrorist outfits, the LeT also wants to convert the whole of South Asia into an Islamic state through jihad and forced conversion. It has carried out numerous terrorist acts in India, especially in Jammu & Kashmir.

The LeT runs quite a few training camps at the behest of the Pakistani army, where training is imparted in close-quarter combat, small arms, light weapons (e.g., light machine guns and hand grenades), etc. Training camps are mostly in POK, Pakhtunkhwa and FATA. The LeT also runs more than a few madrassas, and young Muslim students are recruited for terrorist acts from these madrassas. The LeT has been declared a terrorist organisation by India and several other countries, but the Pakistani army continues to help it covertly.

Abu Dujana, self-proclaimed chief of the LeT, who carries a cash reward of D8 lakh, has been involved in several terrorist activities in India, including the Udampur attack.

JAMAAT-UD-DAWAH (JUD)

When the LeT was banned by the United States and other countries, including India, the all-powerful Pakistani army changed the name of the



JAI K. VERMA

LeT to Jamaat-ud-Dawa, and when the JuD was proscribed, another organisation with a different nomenclature, Tehreek-e-Tahafuz Qibla Awal, was created. The Pakistani army is using all these terrorist outfits to carry out terrorist activities across India, especially in Jammu & Kashmir.

The JuD, which is also close to several terrorist organisations, plans and carries out terrorist activities in India at the behest of the Pakistani army with the intention of disturbing the law-and-order situation and creating communal disturbances so that the economic progress of the country is hampered.

HIZB-UL-MUJAHIDEEN (HM)

The Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, which came into existence in 1989 at the behest of the Pakistani army, fights for the merger of J&K with Pakistan. According to analysts, the Pakistani army created the HM to weaken the Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). The HM was successful in sending a large number of Kashmiri youths to Pakistan for training. The ISI, besides training youths from J&K, also sent young residents of POK for jihad. Besides the ISI, the HM also gets support from the Jamaat-e-Islami of Kashmir, which does not owe allegiance to the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind. It runs more than 200 schools in the state and wishes to merge J&K into Pakistan and for the promulgation of Islamic rule.

JAISH-E-MOHAMMED (JEM)

The JeM was created in 2000 by Maulana Masood Azhar under instructions and support of the Pakistani army. The JeM is a progeny of the Harkat-ul-Ansar, which was very active in J&K and was also the creation of the ISI. When Harkat-ul-Ansar was banned, it changed its name to Harkat-ul-Mujahideen. However, the foremost task of all these terrorist outfits is to foment trouble in J&K under instructions of the Pakistani army.

THE HORRENDOUS BRIGADE 313

The Pakistani army created a terrorist organisation with the name of Brigade 313 to provide extra zeal to jihadists as 313 soldiers fought under the



leadership of Prophet Mohammed and defeated a much bigger army. Brigade 313 works more closely with the Pakistani army, and it enrolls terrorists from other terror groups and assigns them tasks to carry out terrorist activities in India and Afghanistan. In the past, it also interrupted the POL supply to US-led NATO forces in Afghanistan.

Although Brigade 313 was the creation of the Pakistani army against India, Israel and the US, after sometime, a splinter group of the outfit started working against Pakistani security forces also because Pakistan was helping the US. They also planned to kill General Musharraf and other important Pakistani leaders. Ilyas Kashmiri, chief of Brigade 313, was killed on 3 June 2011 in North Waziristan in a drone attack. The outfit carried out several terrorist activities in India and Afghanistan, especially the November 2008 attacks on Mumbai and the 2010 attacks on Delhi and Varanasi.

Besides these terrorist outfits, the Pakistani army has created several other terror groups, especially the 'Pashtun Taliban', which carry out terrorist attacks in Afghanistan and 'Punjabi Taliban' to disturb peace and tranquillity in India.¹⁶

THE WAY FORWARD

Pakistan plays a dual role. On one hand, it claims that it is the worst victim of terrorism and taking stringent actions against terrorist outfits and on the other hand, it has constituted several terrorist organisations and sponsors terrorism in several countries of the world, where India and Afghanistan are the main targets.

The theory of good and bad terrorists should be abandoned. Terrorists should be treated as terrorists. The Pakistani army must realise that though they have created, trained and nurtured diverse terrorist outfits, including Brigade 313, but at one stage or the other, these same terrorist groups have become anti-establishment and attacked several important leaders of Pakistan, including General Pervez Musharraf.

According to rough estimates, more than 60,000 Pakistanis were killed and more than USD 110 billion were lost because of terrorist activities in the country. The image of Pakistan is also lowered in the international



arena because of terrorism. Hence, the Pakistani army should stop assisting terrorists immediately.

The Pakistani army, which is patronising terrorist outfits for petty gains, must demolish all the training centres and stop the flow of financial assistance to them. It cannot stop the economic growth of India by big or small terrorist attacks. In fact, the army should allow the civilian government to have cordial relations with India, which will benefit both countries.

India should realise that Pakistan has waged a low-intensity war against India and Afghanistan and created a big terrorist structure in the country, which it will not dismantle just because of requests from India or reluctant pressure from foreign powers, including the US. Hence, India must invigorate security agencies, particularly intelligence organisations.

In most of the cases, Indian intelligence organisations fail to produce pinpointed actionable intelligence. They should be provided modern equipment and should try to raise high-level, quality agents. In India, there are quite a few security organisations and there must be good coordination between them.

India needs to revamp the police force of all the states. The strength of the police force at all levels, particularly at the middle and junior levels, is not enhanced corresponding to the growth of the population. The state police should be equipped with latest weapons and electronic gadgets. Police thanas and police chowkis should be strengthened, and the age-old system of beat constables should be given due importance.

The local police should raise agents so that they get information about the support agents and about any unwanted activities in their areas. Terrorists who are action agents cannot work without support agents. It is not difficult for an intelligent beat constable or an active station house officer (SHO) to know about support agents. The support agents should be caught and punished under the law of the land.

A national counterterrorism centre (NCTC) should also be created as it can function as a nodal agency to deal with all terrorist activities and outfits and it can coordinate various security agencies.¹⁷

The Pakistani army is aware that Indian forces are more powerful in conventional warfare. Hence it always threatens to use nuclear warheads



in case of defeat. India must caution Pakistan diplomatically that Pakistan is a small country and if both countries use nuclear warheads, Pakistan will be destroyed completely while some portions of India will remain. Hence even a nuclear war is not in its favour and so it should stop threatening India.¹⁸

India should also make it clear that it is ready to bear the pain of nuclear warfare. Hence the Pakistani army must stop threatening India about the use of nuclear warheads.

China, which does not want India to ascend as a strong nation, is using Pakistan against India. So China has built nuclear power plants and provided nuclear launch facilities, missiles and financial assistance to Pakistan so that Pakistan can train and send terrorists to India to obstruct India's economic growth. Although China has helped Pakistan and the name of Maulana Masood Azhar, chief of the Jaish-e-Mohammed, could not be included in an international blacklist of terrorists and China is also preventing India's joining of Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) till Pakistan is also allowed to join NSG, Pakistan must understand that all these are small favours. China never came to the rescue of Pakistan although it was defeated thrice by India. Hence Pakistan should stop the low-intensity war against India and Afghanistan so that there is peace and tranquillity in the region.

Pakistan should also try to resolve the Kashmir issue bilaterally and till the Kashmir problem is not solved, both countries must live in peace so that the desired economic progress is achieved.

Notes and References

1. Wikipedia. 'Pakistan and State-Sponsored Terrorism.' <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pakistan_and_state-sponsored_terrorism>.
2. *Hindu*. 'State Involved with Terror Groups, Says Pak Minister.' 19 May 2016.
3. Yusuf Ebadi. 'State-Sponsored Terrorism in Pakistan.' *Republic of the East*. 5 August 2014. <<https://russia-eastern-republic.com/2014/08/05/state-sponsored-terrorism-in-pakistan/>>.
4. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Prime Minister of Pakistan, *Encyclopedia Britannica*.



5. Ayaz Gul. 'Pakistan: No Military Action Against Afghan Taliban on Its Soil.' *Voice of America*. 3 May 2016. <<http://www.voanews.com/content/pakistan-no-military-action-against-afghan-taliban-on-its-soil/3313370.html>>.
6. Carey Scholfield. *Inside the Pakistan Army: A Woman's Experience on the Frontline of the War on Terror*. Biteback Publishing, 2011.
7. Jason Roach. 'The Growth of Islamism in the Pakistan Army.' *Small Wars Journal*, 30 January 2013.
8. Franz-Stefan Gady. '5 Navy Officers Sentenced to Death in Pakistan for Trying to Attack US Warships.' *Diplomat*, 25 May 2016.
9. South Asia Monitor. 'ISI-Sponsored Drug Menace in Punjab a Security Nightmare for India.' January 2016.
10. Kanti Bajpai. *Roots of Terrorism*. Penguin Books, 2002.
11. Muhammad Nawaz Khan. 'Pakistan's Counter Terrorism and Extremism Strategy.' *London Post*, 23 April 2016.
12. *Indian Express*. 'PM Narendra Modi's Speech in US Congress.' 10 June 2016.
13. Raghu Raman. *Everyman's War: Strategy, Security and Terrorism in India*. Noida, India: Random House India, 2013.
14. Jai Kumar Verma. 'Association of the IM and SIMI with LeT, Al-Qaeda & the IS.' *Aakrosh* 19, no. 70. January 2016.
15. India Today News. 'Watch: Lashkar Commander Abu Dujana Attends Associate's Funeral in Pulwama.' 4 May 2016.
16. Muhannad Nawaz Khan. 'Pakistan's Counter Terrorism and Extremism Strategy.' *London Times*, 23 April 2016.
17. Rohan Joshi. 'Should Pakistan Be Designated a State Sponsor of Terror?' *Diplomat*, 26 June 2015.
18. Raj Kumar Singh. *Past, Present and Future of Kashmir*. Gyan Publishing House, 2008.



The United States and the Islamic State: Surreptitious Relationship

HAFIZULLAH EMADI

The establishment of the Islamic State (IS) is the direct outcome of collusion between two opposing forces – the imperial powers intending to maintain their domination of the Middle East and the people fighting to rend asunder the imperial domination of their countries. In the absence of revolutionary and nationalist forces, with the interests of people at the centre of their political platform, to lead the struggle for democratic change, Islamic extremists with insidious relationship to imperial powers emerged as the sole opposition. Their strategy of governance is based on terrorising local people to submit to their rule and practicing medieval methods of punishment such as beheadings to justify their jihad (religious war) as well as terrify people they refer to as infidels.

INTRODUCTION

The Middle East has been an arena of contestation by imperial powers since the Cold War period as both the United States and the Soviet Union worked to carve out their spheres of influence. Each imperial power supported Arab rulers who worked to defend the interests of their masters and demonstrated their lack of regard for the safety, security and welfare of their people. The collapse and disintegration of the Soviet imperial state in December 1991 paved the road for the emergence of the US as a sole imperial power determined to restructure the existing political system to suit its interests. The inability of Russia to provide military, technical and economic aid compelled its former client states to move to improve relations with the US and other Western countries. Despite changes in the political orientation of these countries, the US was more than ever



determined to restructure the geopolitical configuration in the region in order to expand its strategic influence.

The reconfiguration of existing political structures necessitated the removal of old guards and their replacement with new ones. The US decided to remove the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussain, who was no longer useful to its objectives, and conveniently accused Iraq of developing weapons of mass destruction and providing shelter to Islamic extremists. The US built a coalition of international forces and launched military offensives that led to the disintegration of Baath rule and the establishment of a government headed by pro-US technocratic elites. In a similar vein, the US also accused Syria of violation of human rights. The US also supported political and religious organisations fighting for sociopolitical and economic reforms, and as the struggle morphed into a full-fledged civil conflict, the US supported the prevailing Islamic extremists in their efforts to topple the regime.¹ The US did not distinguish one Islamic extremist group from the other and supported them as long as they fought the Syrian regime. Such a policy provided opportunities for Islamic extremists to expand their networks and continue violent activities aimed at creating an Islamic state that is guided by the Islamic sharia law.

The focus will be on examination of factors that led to the emergence and consolidation of Islamic extremists in the Middle East and how US policy contributed to their expansion without exploring their objectives and intentions of activities. It explores how the conflict of interest between the US and Islamic extremists caused the US to generally declare them as terrorist networks and wage war on them to dismantle their bases of operation. Factors that led to the failure of the US war on terrorism are studied – a conflict that claimed the lives of thousands of innocent men and women and led to the displacement of millions from their homes – and an escalation of armed conflict in the region.

THE US AND ISLAMIC EXTREMISTS

Colonial and imperial powers maintained their domination of the Middle East for over a hundred years. After World War II ended, the US emerged as a dominant power and worked to consolidate and expand its spheres



of influence in the region. The US managed to maintain its domination by co-opting the core pillars of traditional order – the nobility, the clerical establishment and ethno-tribal chiefs – and simultaneously suppressing revolutionary, nationalist and patriotic forces fighting for democracy and societal justice. The US maintained closer ties with the Shah of Iran and did not confront him for violation of human rights. However, when the Shah was no longer able to deal effectively with anti-systemic movement, the US distanced itself from him and after his departure from Iran, tacitly supported and facilitated the return of Ayatollah Rohullah Khomeini to the country. After consolidating his power base, Khomeini waged war on anti-systemic and revolutionary organisations, imprisoning and executing *en masse* opposition figures. Although Khomeini portrayed himself and the clerical state as anti-American and referred to the US as the greatest Satan, his regime discretely made deals with the US that later on became exposed and known as the Iran-Contra affair. According to the deal, '[T]he Reagan administration sold arms to Iran, a country desperate for materiel during its lengthy war with Iraq; in exchange for the arms, Iran was to use its influence to help gain the release of Americans held hostage in Lebanon; and the arms were purchased at high prices, with the excess profits diverted to fund the Reagan-favored "contras" fighting the Sandinista government in Nicaragua.'²

The Khomeini regime expanded the reach of Islamic extremism by supporting global jihadi networks to fight for the establishment of an Islamic state. Iran organised, trained and provided financial aid to its Shia client parties in Afghanistan after the Soviet Red Army invaded and occupied the country in December 1979. Pro-Iranian Shia parties adhered to Khomeini's dictum 'Neither East nor West but Islam' and referred to the US-backed Sunni Islamic fundamentalist parties as US agents. The Soviet occupation heralded the rise and growth of Islamic extremism in Afghanistan and beyond. Although Islamic extremists maintaining anti-US posture, they secretly remained on the US payroll and the US continued to provide them with arms and financial and technical assistance in order to defeat the Soviet forces and transform Afghanistan into a Soviet Vietnam. After the Soviets withdrew their troops from the country in February 1989, the Kabul regime collapsed and disintegrated in April 1992 and the US-backed



Islamic warriors seized power and fought each other for domination of the country's polity – a brutal civil war that recognised no bounds.³ A number of Islamic extremists of Arab background who fought the Soviet occupation forces remained in Afghanistan while most others returned home and focused their attention on fighting corrupt and tyrannical Arab rulers with the goal of establishing an Islamic state.

One of the Islamic extremist organisations that fought the Soviet occupation army is al-Qaeda. The organisation dominated rival Islamic groups because of its wealth and resources, and it received a substantial amount of aid from the US, Saudi Arabia and other conservative states in the Middle East. The organisation's leader Osama bin Laden, a Saudi national, managed to enlist violent Islamic fighters from the Middle East and other regions to come to Afghanistan and fight the Soviet Army. In the post-Soviet period, the organisation allied with an ultraconservative Islamic group, the Taliban, and supported it in its efforts to establish an Islamic emirate.

The US accused Bin Laden of attacks on its embassies in Africa and demanded that the Taliban hand him over to the US for trial. The Taliban's refusal to acquiesce to its demand caused the US to turn against it. The US declared al-Qaeda as a terrorist organisation, and after its men attacked the World Trade Center buildings in New York and the Pentagon near Washington, D.C., in September 2001 using civilian aircraft as weapons of mass destruction, the US launched military offensives on the Taliban for sheltering Islamic extremists. Although individuals who hijacked the planes and crashed them onto the World Trade Center buildings were Saudi nationals associated with Bin Laden, the US did not hold the Saudi king responsible and even facilitated the return of Bin Laden's relatives from the US to Saudi Arabia soon after the incident for their own security due to rising anti-Muslim sentiments in the US (Bin Laden's family has close ties to the Saudi ruling family). The US and its allies continued to nurture good relations with Saudi Arabia's ruling family despite the fact that they are aware that the leadership continues to spread Islamic extremism – the Wahhabi ideology – and support Islamic client parties internationally.

The US also turned a blind eye towards its other ally, Pakistan, as it too sheltered the Taliban and other Islamic extremists fighting the US-



backed government in Kabul, operating from their safe bases in Pakistan. Pakistan also protected Bin Laden, who stayed in a well-guarded compound in Abbottabad until a US special commando team located and raided the house and killed him in May 2011. The US did not confront Pakistan for harbouring the Taliban and Osama bin Laden – factors that enabled Islamic extremists to thrive and continue their destructive activities. Although the US regarded al-Qaeda as a terrorist organisation, it supported splintered al-Qaeda groups that adopted different nomenclatures to topple down regimes in the Middle East that it perceived to now be unreliable allies. The US also waged war on the same Islamic extremists whenever they came into conflict with its interests.

The war on terrorism failed to dismantle the terrorist network but rather contributed to its expansion because the US did not target Islamic extremists as a whole and did not hold accountable the ruling classes in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan for aiding and abetting these organisations, because the two countries are US allies (Saudi Arabia is major market for US arms, and Pakistan, now a nuclear power, has close ties with the US).

EVOLUTION OF THE ISLAMIC STATE

Islamic extremists emerged as a force in the Middle East after the US launched offensives on Iraq in 2003, toppled the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussain and installed a pro-US leader to maintain its interest. This factor encouraged al-Qaeda to reorganise their resources and fight the US occupation forces. Sharp differences on the scope of religiously motivated jihad among senior al-Qaeda leaders paved the road for dissension. Bin Laden stressed the need to fight Western imperial powers for their continued support of Arab dictators and corrupt leaders such as those of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Egypt, etc., and the establishment of a caliphate system with himself as its *caliph*. Bin Laden's deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri emphasised the need to seize territories for establishing the seat of the caliphate there and argued that organised violence against moderate Sunnis would reduce their base of support among the Sunni community.

One of al-Qaeda's notorious commanders in Iraq was Ahmad Fazl al-Nazal al-Khalayleh, known as Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. After al-Zarqawi



was freed from prison in Jordan, he went to Afghanistan, where he formed a group known as Jund al-Sham, which was later renamed Jamat al-Tawhid wa Jihad; and he fought alongside al-Qaeda and Taliban militias. Al-Zarqawi was forced to flee to Iran when the US overthrew the Taliban, and afterwards he went to Iraq. He regarded the US occupation of and the Shia-dominated government in Iraq as major threats to the Sunni power and saw himself as its guardian who will fight to restore its power. He exploited Sunni grievances and political marginalisation, trying to organise the Sunni people to oppose and fight the US and the Iraqi government. Al-Zarqawi was killed in June 2006 during an air strike by US forces.⁴ After his death, the organisation appointed Abu Hamza al-Muhajir as head of the organisation and a few months later, al-Muhajir announced the formation of Al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi Iraq (the Islamic State of Iraq) but under the leadership of Hamid Daoud Muhammad Khalil al-Zawi (Abu Omar al-Baghdadi). After the outbreak of civil war in Syria, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi announced a merger of al-Nusrah in Syria with the Islamic State of Iraq under the variant name of ISIS as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Al-Qaeda leader al-Zawahiri asked al-Baghdadi to restrict ISIS activities in Iraq, but he refused and continued his own political agendas that caused al-Zawahiri to sever ties with ISIS.

Muslims (Sunnis and Shias) may have been forced to not be outspoken during particular war-saturated periods, for the sake of their safety, but in general, they do highly despise wanton killings and executions of innocent people at the hands of Islamic extremists and regard their cruelty and barbaric actions to be against Islamic teachings. This factor may have alarmed the ISIS leadership into projecting a different image for ISIS to make it more appealing to Muslims. Muslims are well aware of the concept of caliphate and marvel at the leadership of the four caliphs and Prophet Muhammad's companions: Abu Bakr, Omar, Osman and Ali. A new outfit was tailored in the hopes that it would make ISIS more acceptable to the public. ISIS leaders adopted the title of caliphate, and on the first day of the Islamic month of Ramazan (fasting), on 29 June 2014, its spokesperson declared the establishment of a caliphate with al-Baghdadi as caliph of the Islamic State, also referred to as the IS. The IS tried to exploit Al-Baghdadi's background as imam and preacher in Samara and the



fact that he holds a doctorate in Islamic studies from the Islamic University of Baghdad to give it the veneer of legitimacy.

The news of the establishment of the IS resonated loudly among Islamic extremists, and many welcomed such a development. A number of these organisations in countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Indonesia, the Philippines and Egypt pledged allegiance to the Islamic State and recognised al-Baghdadi as caliph. Former Baath Party officers still active in the armed insurgency in Iraq seem to have played a major role in propping up the IS. One such individual is former Iraqi vice president Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri, who fled after the US overthrew the Baath-led government and issued a \$10 million bounty on information leading to his whereabouts. Al-Douri was made the 'King of Clubs' in the playing card deck on the most-wanted men issued by the US government. It is suggested that al-Douri is commander of the Naqshbandi Army, which fights the government of Iraq and has close ties with IS leaders Abu Muslim al-Turkmani and Abu Ayman al-Iraqi because these two men held senior positions in the Baath-led government. Al-Turkmani was a lieutenant colonel in the Estikhbarat department (intelligence agency) of the Special Republican Guard, and al-Iraqi was a colonel in the Iraqi defence intelligence unit. It is claimed that in June 2014, a meeting was held between representatives of al-Daouri and al-Baghdadi to discuss issues of mutual interest. In July 2014 al-Douri, issued a statement in which he praised what he called 'heroes and knights of al-Qaeda and the Islamic State' fighting the government of Iraq. He expressed admiration of the self-proclaimed caliph al-Baghdadi despite existing tensions between them.

IS leaders were cognisant of former Baath leaders' experience and management of brutality and repression and tried to exploit their skills for advancing their own agendas. A former Baath Party intelligence service officer known by the pseudonym 'Haji Bakr' was claimed to be the mastermind behind the rise of the IS who plotted 'its growth through the systematic application of incredible violence'.⁵ Baath Party officers collaborated with the IS for reasons of their own (de-Baathicisation of the state structure by the pro-US government led to the removal of Baath Party members from the political structure, compelling most to join the IS as a way to return to power). It is suggested that Baath officers assisted



IS fighters when they seized Mosul and Tikrit cities from government forces in June 2014 and al-Baghdadi appointed former Baath army general Azhar al-Obeidi as governor of Mosul and army general Ahmad Abd al-Rashid as governor of Tikrit.

In Syria and Iraq, the IS's base of support is restricted to Sunni communities and the IS increasingly exploited political marginalisation to its advantage and formed alliance with various armed Sunni factions. In Syria, the Shia Alawis, headed by Bashar al-Assad, consolidated their rule over the Sunni majority, causing Sunni militant groups to oppose the regime, which eventually culminated into a full-fledged civil war in 2011. Sunni opposition to the Shia-led government in Iraq also grew stronger soon after the US withdrew its military forces in 2010. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's practice of consolidating his own party's power base (Islamic Dawa Party) by purging officers whom he perceived to be a threat and arresting opposition political leaders backfired, causing greater disenchantment among Sunnis, who referred to him as the 'Shia version of Saddam'. Al-Maliki's politics of exclusiveness and rampant corruption gradually but certainly contributed to the collapse of the Iraqi army as many Sunni officers deserted the army – a factor that helped IS forces seize more territories in Iraq. IS militias seized control of the northern city of Raqqa in Syria, where they established their de facto capital with judicial, security, health, educational and economic institutions, etc., and worked to deliver a modicum of public services in an effort to consolidate their positions and win public support for their cause.

Submitting to the caliph and carrying out his orders serve as the principal moral campus of the IS's political project – protection and consolidation of the Islamic State and enforcement of strict Islamic sharia law (based on the IS's own literal interpretation) are central to its system of governance. This includes, among others, banning alcohol and drugs, segregating genders and requiring women to submit and defer to their husbands or fathers. The IS also issued a fatwa (legal rulings) with regard to the unfavourable status of non-Muslim women. Public statements issued by the IS refer to al-Sabi as non-Muslim women that may be permissibly degraded when captured because they are Ahl al-Harb (people of war) and unbelievers deserving of punishment.⁶ To maintain the façade of Islamic



rule, the IS forces Muslims and non-Muslims to abide by its rulings. For example, in Mosul:

The IS followed its introduction of the Dhimmi Pact with the threat of nothing but the sword if non-Muslims failed to agree, failed to convert to Islam or failed to flee the city within 48 hours. Properties owned by Christians and Shia members of the Shabak and Turkmen communities were subsequently painted with the Arabic letters 'noon' (for *Nasrani*, or Christian) and 'ra' (for *Rafida*). The IS admitted in October 2014 that it had labelled Yezidis as *Mushrik* (polytheists), and thus Satanists, who could be legitimately enslaved and whose women can be made IS concubines.⁷

For the IS, building an Islamic society necessitated the destruction and elimination of cultural, religious and historical symbols associated with non-Muslim communities. IS militants destroyed many archaeological sites in Iraq and Syria, including the 1,400-year-old St. Elijah's Monastery near Mosul and the nearly 2,000-year-old temple of Baalshamin in Palmyra; bulldozed Hatra and Nimrod, ancient sites in northern Iraq; and destroyed precious antiquities at museums. They justified their actions on the grounds that such monuments and artefacts are heresy to the IS's ideology. The IS had expressed a similar view regarding such cultural artefacts and historical sites associated with Islamic history and traditions. They destroyed a Shia and a Sufi historic tomb in Palmyra, regarding such structures to be a form of idolatry and anathema to the Islamic faith – based on their own rigid interpretation of the Islamic doctrine.⁸

Although the IS came into conflict with imperial powers, its goal is not to break away from the imperial order but to advance its own interests within the imperial system and use Islam as a tool to rally people in support of its agendas. Like other Islamic extremist organisations, the IS remains parochial to the core. It is neither a nationalist nor a patriotic entity; it is an oppressive entity with international efforts made to impose medieval laws to govern people's lives. With the weakening and subsequent decline and demise of progressive, liberal, democratic and revolutionary forces to oppose and fight imperial domination of the region, Islamic extremists seek to represent a dominant role of opposition to imperial powers.



HAFIZULLAH EMADI

THE US AND THE IS

US policy has been to maintain its domination of the Middle East, and to this end, it supported opposition groups to overthrow Arab dictators whom the US believes are no longer useful in implementing its policies. For example, once Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak was a liability to the US, he was removed from the office through popular uprising and a general election that followed brought the Muslim Brotherhood to power, only to be toppled through a military coup by pro-US Army general Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.⁹ The major reason publicly expressed was his abuse of human rights, in order to ensure a negative image that will be despised worldwide and undefended. It also conveniently implied deep caring about human rights by parties seeking to remove him.

The US continues to support the client state in Iraq against Islamic extremists but does not support the government in Syria in its war against Islamic extremists and insists that the Syrian dictator must step down – a contradictory policy that has enabled the IS to reinforce its fighters in Iraq via Syria and vice versa. The US viewed the IS as a threat to peace and stability in the Middle East and elsewhere and pledged to do whatever it could to diminish its military capability; it provided arms to the so-called moderate Syrian rebels not only to fight the IS but also to topple the Syrian dictator.¹⁰

A question that remains unanswered is, To what extent are Islamic extremists anti-US or are they simply groups financed by the US to do accomplish its hidden agenda – a regime change in the Middle East? IS leader al-Baghdadi was in US custody, held for over a year in Camp Bucca in Iraq, and the US freed him and his associates from prisons in 2006 as part of its policy of fighting tyrant Arab rulers whom the US perceived to be unreliable allies.¹¹

Although the US refuses to acknowledge links with the IS, evidence on the ground suggests otherwise. The US airdropped weapons and equipment to IS forces in the region of al-Dour, Salahuddin province, and when the news leaked, out the US admitted to the fact, stating that the airdrop was a mistake. Key US allies, such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, provided a substantial amount of funds and



weapons to violent Islamic groups, including al-Nusrah, an al-Qaeda branch in Syria, and facilitated the return of Islamic extremists from various regions to Syria and Iraq. Israel also supported al-Nusrah, and this caused the Druze minority to protest against Israel's policy of provision of medical services to al-Nusrah and IS fighters. Israel defence minister Moshe Yaalon justified the country's support to al-Nusrah fighters, stating that 'we've assisted them under two conditions . . . of the Israeli medical aid to the Syrian rebels, some of whom are presumably fighting with al-Qaeda affiliate al-Nusrah Front to topple Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. That they don't get too close to the border, and that they don't touch the Druze.'¹²

The US played a significant role in the destabilisation of the Middle East through support to the Shia-dominated state of Iraq as well as the moderate Sunni Arab forces there to contain the growing influence of the Shia-dominated state of Iran over Iraq. By supporting Sunni militias in Lebanon to carry out clandestine activities against pro-Iranian Shia political group, Hezbollah, the US actively promoted destructive sectarian conflicts.

The US battle with the IS and its continued support of authoritarian rulers in the Arab world served to motivate Islamic extremists to rally in support of the IS, which claims political and religious authority over the Muslims. The IS's increasing and rapid victories on the battlefields also encouraged an increasing number of young Muslims to go to Syria and Iraq and support the IS.

THE IS'S SOURCES OF FUNDING AND METHODS FOR RECRUITING FIGHTERS

The IS has been self-financed since as early as 2005, and donations from external sources to its treasury were negligible. However, it became a wealthy entity after its fighters seized large swathes of territories in Iraq and Syria, where they simultaneously fight and administer social, cultural, economic and political affairs of the territories. From territories under its control, the IS not only expands but also works to manage its resources. The IS gained access to huge amounts of cash when militants seized control of state banks in Ninewah, al-Anbar, Salahuddin and Kirkuk. The IS treats private banks differently and levies a 4 per cent tax on customers



withdrawing cash from these institutions. It charges taxes on utility service companies, and the bulk of its income derives from the sale of crude oil to private businesses and middle men, with a net income of \$3 million a day.¹³ By selling oil below market prices, the IS has ensured that many private companies engage with it in black market deals, and it is suggested that sworn enemies of the IS, such as the Syrian government, Turkey and the Kurds in Iraq are also IS customers.

The IS's income also includes levying taxes on people living in territories under its command as well as individuals who operate some type of business activity. The IS collects *zakat* (religious taxes) from farmers and store owners and collects custom and passage taxes from those transporting goods into and out of IS-held territories, and drivers of such commercial vehicles are forced to pay fees and bribes that range from \$200 to \$1,000. Ransom for hostages taken by IS men is also considered to be a lucrative business. According to the United Nations, in 2014 alone, the IS collected about \$35–\$40 million in ransom money. These resources have enabled the IS to pay high amounts of salaries to its fighters. For example, an IS fighter is 'paid \$400 and \$1,200 a month, plus a \$50 stipend for their wives and \$25 for each child.'¹⁴ The amount is more than what the Syrian and Iraqi governments can afford to pay their regular soldiers and several times more than any wage common people earn in territories under IS administration. The IS receives financial donations from networks of supporters in the Gulf region and Western European countries. It is reported that in 2013–2014, the IS received up to \$40 million from individual donors in Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait.¹⁵ Some analysts also maintain that sales of looted artefacts and antiquities constitute another high revenue source of income for the IS. Such items are sold to potential customers in the neighbouring countries or smuggled to the West, and it is suggested that the IS allows excavation of historic sites and also levies 20–25 per cent taxes on excavation teams.¹⁶ The promise of a good life in its held territories and its ability to present an image of wealth and rapid victory on the battlefields initially increased the IS's appeal to Syrians and Iraqis.

The use of modern technology, sophisticated production techniques and social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) has enabled the IS to communicate its message to a burgeoning pool of potential



recruits (young religious idealists who struggle to make ends meet with the promise of a good life – free accommodation, food and stipend and adventure in Syria and Iraq by travelling to Syria and Iraq in support of Islamic warriors. Young men and women from Europe and North America were also surprisingly lured by what they seemed to interpret as a promise to establish domestic freedom and comfort or an opportunity to challenge imperialists and adventurously save suppressed and religious people.

The IS's false narrative enticed many individuals with the desire to escape frustration of life in the US, UK, France and Australia as well as religiously motivated individuals of affluent families to join IS forces, including young schoolgirls who believe it is their religious obligation to go there and support the IS. The number of foreign nationals joining the IS has increased to the extent that by February 2015, it is estimated that more than 13,000 foreign nationals were fighting in support of the IS in Iraq and Syria and about 10 per cent of them included young girls between 18 and 25 years old. When a US citizen returned to Syria and joined the IS, he proudly stated that he is there to fight for the Islamic State and ridiculed the US leadership, saying that 'I am back, Obama, and I am back because of your arrogant policy toward the Islamic State.'¹⁷ Such a statement was a calculated effort by the IS as one of its propaganda tools to persuade naive young people from the West and other places to join the group and support it against continued offensives by Western powers. The IS expresses to potential recruits that the West tries to destroy the Muslim's way of life and eliminate the newly established caliphate and it is the religious duty of Muslims and religious warriors to defend the Islamic State.

THE ISLAMIC STATE AND POLITICS OF REPRESSION

Islamic extremists, fuelled by sectarian motivations, also use excessive violence when forcing Muslim religious minority communities to embrace the Sunni faith of Islam. They regard Shias (both Ithna Ashariyya and Ismailis) as apostate and have warned them to convert to the Sunni faith or face death. They attacked government forces in Salamiyah, central Syria, and issued a statement to the Ismaili residents of the city either to



surrender or to face execution by IS militants. IS men have murdered scores of Ismailis, and when an Ismaili delegation visited Damascus and asked for government protection, the delegation was received with cold reception and al-Assad dispassionately told them that they have 24,000 draft dodgers in Salamiyah and will let them join.¹⁸

The IS treats members of minority religious groups, Christians, Jews and Yezidis, with contempt and forces them to either convert to Islam or leave the region. Yezidis are ethnically Kurdish and adhere to a distinct form of religious tradition. In the Yezidi religious belief, which is influenced by aspects of earlier Manachean, Zoroastrian ideas and Islamic tradition, God is the creator of the universe and has placed it under the care of seven angels, with the fallen angel, *Melek Taus* (Peacock Angel), being the principal angel that causes good and bad fortune to fall on people. The belief system of Yezidis was branded as devil worship, but despite years of oppression and threatened extermination, they have remained internally strong and persevered wherever they have resided.

In August 2014, IS militias attacked the Yezidi district of Shingal in Sinjar, killing more than 5,000 people, including 40 children. Threatened with death, some 40,000 left their homes and sought refuge in the safety of mountains. Many of these people managed to flee to Dohuk or Irbil in the Kurdish region of Iraq, and others remained there and returned home only after the Iraqi Kurdish *Peshmargah* defeated IS fighters in November 2015 and freed Shingal from IS control. IS fighters raped and molested women and girls (seven- to nine-year-olds) and sold some 7,000 women and girls through a liaison office in Antep, Turkey, bordering Syria, to the highest bidders for prices that ranged from \$15,000 to \$20,000.¹⁹ The IS also demanded a similar amount of ransom money for freeing Yezidi captive men, women and children. They also burned alive many Yezidi girls for refusing to convert to Islam and marry their fighters. The IS's repressive administration and killing of Muslims and non-Muslims alike drew worldwide condemnation, but Turkey, a member of NATO and a US ally, turned a blind eye to Yezidi women and girls being sold in its territory and continued to allow IS fighters and arms to cross its borders.

IS fighters had no regard for the safety, security and lives of foreign nationals working in Syria and Iraq. They found and seized 40-



year-old American journalist James Foley and demanded payment of ransom for his release. When the US did not acquiesce to their demand, they beheaded him, justifying their action as a response to the US air strikes on IS fronts in Syria and Iraq. The IS also captured 31-year-old US journalist Steven J. Sotloff and after keeping him for months in captivity, they executed him. They abducted British aid worker David Haines near Atmeh refugee camps in Idlib, close to the Turkish border, and later executed him. The IS justified its barbaric action on the grounds of claims that these people were spies for Western countries. Mohammad Emwazi, known as Jihadi John, has been suggested as primarily responsible for the execution of these people in an unsuccessful attempt to generate more ransom revenue.

CONVOLUTED EFFORTS TO DEGRADE THE IS

The US viewed the IS as a threat to security in the region and beyond and decided to eliminate its military capability so that it does not threaten its allies, attack Western interests or carry out subversive activities in the West by establishing sleeping agents. The US provided humanitarian aid to displaced peoples and refugees and did not engage in direct military action against the IS. However, it carried out several air strikes, bombing IS military positions in Iraq. The US supported IS rival groups to fight the IS and offered a \$10 million reward for the capture or death of IS leader al-Baghdadi, now added to the 'most wanted terrorists' listing.²⁰

Although the US organised an international coalition force to defeat the IS, there are sharp differences among coalition partners as each has its own reasons to protect its interests and leverage its strategy for the defeat or manipulation of IS. For example, Turkey and the US have differences over the Kurds, who have played a major role in the fight against the IS in Iraq and Syria. Oppression of Kurds in Turkey has been the principal policy of Ankara as Kurds have been fighting Ankara for an independent state. Ankara does not want Kurds to gain an upper hand in Iraq and Syria, fearing that strong and well-armed Kurdish fighters in its southern borders would be a threat to stability in Turkey as they would then support their counterparts' struggle in Turkey for an independent



state of Kurdistan. Certainly such a development, if it happens, may disrupt and interfere with the Turkish rulers' efforts to consolidate their quasi-fascist rule in Turkey. However, as IS gained territories and consolidated its foothold in Iraq, the US deployed more than 3,000 soldiers and armed the Kurdish *Peshmargah* to fight on the side of the Iraqi army.

Al-Maliki's unwillingness to work towards a broad-based representational government caused the US to exert pressure on him to step down in September 2014, and his successor Haider al-Abadi promised that his government will pursue a more inclusive policy and bring the Shia militia army under state control – a group that human rights organisations condemned for the murder and disappearance of Sunnis and others.

As the Syrian war goes on without any resolution and al-Assad remains in office, the US has shifted its policy from changing the regime, which it aggressively pursued earlier, to defeating and degrading IS militants and dismantling IS networks. Although there are already existing nationalist and radical groups and organisations fighting the Syrian regime and challenging the IS in Syria, the US and its allies do not support them. For example, the People's Protection Unit (YPG) is one of the Syrian Kurdish groups that proved to be effective in the fight against IS but the US and its allies consider the group as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and currently regard it as a terrorist organisation.²¹

Russian involvement in the Syrian conflict bolstered the morale of al-Assad's army fighting Islamic extremists. As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, it vetoed a draft resolution by Western countries to force al-Assad to resign and opposed Western-sponsored measures imposing economic and trade sanctions on Syria. Russia was concerned about the scores of Russian nationals who joined the IS and feared that when they return home, they would pose a major security problem for the country. Its suspicions were reinforced when a Russian plane en route to St. Petersburg from Sharm el-Sheikh crashed in the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt, killing 224 passengers on board. Intelligence information indicated that the crash was the result of explosive materials on board the plane. Russia intensified its bombing of Islamic opposition groups after Turkish jets shot down a Russian plane near its Syria border – a factor that soured Russia-Turkey relations, causing Russia's renewed commitment



to supporting al-Assad. In September 2015, Russia deployed military forces and launched offensives targeting IS and Islamic extremists such as al-Nusrah. Although Russian military offensives did not turn the tide of war but helped al-Assad's soldiers to seize captured territories from IS militias.

The war in Syria and Iraq is also complicated because of the involvement of regional states – the Shia-dominated government of Iran and conservative Sunni Gulf states. Sectarian-motivated conflict will continue as long as Iran remains committed to supporting its Shia allies – the governments of Iraq and Syria and the Gulf States continue to support the IS in its efforts to oppose and fight the Shias. These conservative rulers are more interested in containing Iran's interference in the internal affairs of the Arab states.

CONCLUSION

The US policy of supporting the Syrian opposition groups did not result in a regime change, and the Syrian dictator al-Assad prevailed because of several reasons: (a) the US-backed militias' policy of repression, torture, and execution of Muslims and non-Muslims backfired and convinced the Syrians to not support them, (b) continued military and political support by Iran helped the al-Assad regime to sustain power and (c) Russian involvement in the conflict targeting Islamic extremists forced them to retreat, helping al-Assad to further consolidate his position.

The war among regressive contending forces in Syria resulted in the death of 4,70,000 people.²² It led to the displacement of about 5 million into refugee camps and thousands of others on treacherous treks trying to reach Western European countries. As the war continues, the US portrays itself as a humanitarian-oriented superpower whose mission is to free Syrians from al-Assad's repressive rule and to protect and defend them against the menace of the Islamic State. In a similar vein, the regressive IS tries to depict itself as the only opposition to the US imperialism determined on subjugating the Muslims. The IS's current objective is a return to the medieval way of life – oppression of women and violent enforcement of the medieval system of governance based on the promotion of ignorance, fear and superstition. The absence of a revolutionary



organisation with the interests of people at the centre of its policy platform drives people into the fold of regressive and repressive Islamic extremists.

Although the IS remains a de facto entity in Syria and Iraq, President Barack Obama stated that the US goal is to 'degrade and ultimately destroy IS'. Obama's chief of staff, however, used a different tone, elaborating on what Obama had said. According to him, success is an IS that exists but is no longer capable of threatening the US and its allies and no longer possessing the ability to threaten Muslims in Syria and Iraq. No matter what US leaders say or how they polish their words, the US will continue to remain engaged in the Middle East and will never abandon its imperial objective – extensive influence in the region. As the US is determined to expand and consolidate its reach in the Middle East, the IS is committed to opposing its domination, but the real danger is that sectarianism reinforced by the goal of a belief-based state will exacerbate the violent spiral of conflict among ethno-religious communities and this will derail people's struggle for building a modernised and effective civil society free from Islamic extremists and overbearing influences of imperial powers. The situation will never change and improve for good, and people will be forced to take sides – the US-backed opposition groups representing the old order (an Islamic government friendly to the US) and the IS representing regressive policies of development (return to a medieval system of governance). People will be left with no alternative but to choose one or the other.

Notes and References

1. Hafizullah Emadi. 'Requiem for the Baath Party: Struggle for Change and Freedom in Syria.' *Mediterranean Quarterly* 22, no. 4, 2011, pp. 62–79.
2. *Washington Post*. 'The Iran-Contra Affair – 1986-1987.' <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/special/clinton/frenzy/iran.htm>>.
3. Hafizullah Emadi. 'The US and the Axis of Extremism in Afghanistan: From Alliance to Antipathy.' *Aakrosh* 19, no. 70, January 2016, pp. 10–28.



4. Ellen Knickmeyer and Jonathan Finer. 'Insurgent Leader al-Zarqawi Killed in Iraq.' *Washington Post*. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/08/AR2006060800114.html>>.
5. Quoted in Ken Gude, 'Anti-Muslim Sentiment Is a Serious Threat to American Security,' *Center for American Progress*, November 2015, p. 3.
6. Kenneth Roth. 'Slavery: The ISIS Rule.' *The New York Review of Books*, 5 September 2015. <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/09/05/slavery-isis-rules>>.
7. Charles Lister. 'Profiling Islamic State.' Brookings Institution, Brookings Doha Center, Analysis Paper No. 13. November 2014, p. 27.
8. Sarah Almkhtar. 'The Strategy Behind the Islamic State's Destruction of Ancient Sites.' *New York Times*, 28 March 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/06/29/world/middleeast/isis-historic-sites-control.html?_r=0>.
9. Hafizullah Emadi. 'Egypt: The Fall of a Modern Pharaoh.' *Contemporary Review* 293, no. 1700, Spring 2011, pp. 1-9.
10. Simon Tomlinson. 'US Scraps Its \$500 Million Programme to Train "moderate" Syrian Rebels After Producing Fewer Than 80 Soldiers, Most of Whom Were Either Shot or Ran Away.' *Daily Mail*. <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3266509/US-scraps-500million-programme-train-moderate-Syrian-rebels-producing-fewer-80-soldiers-shot-ran-away.html>>.
11. Hunter Walker. 'Here Is the Army's Declassified Iraq Prison File on the Leader of ISIS.' *Business Insider*. <<http://www.businessinsider.com/abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-declassified-iraq-prison-file-2015-2>>.
12. *Global Research*. 'Israeli Military Admits to Supporting al-Qaeda and ISIS in Syria.' <<http://www.globalresearch.ca/israeli-military-admits-to-supporting-al-qaeda-and-isis-in-syria/5464484>>.
13. Karen Leigh and Syria Deeply. 'ISIS Makes up to \$3 Million a Day Selling Oil, Say Analysts.' *ABC News*. <<http://abcnews.go.com/International/isis-makes-million-day-selling-oil-analysts/story?id=24814359>>.
14. Jose Pagliery. 'ISIS Cuts Its Fighters' Salaries by 50%.' *CNN*. <<http://money.cnn.com/2016/01/19/news/world/isis-salary-cuts/>>.
15. Carla E. Humud, Robert Pirog and Liana Rosen. 'Islamic State Financing and U.S. Policy Approaches.' CRC Report Prepared for Members and Committees of Congress, Congressional Research Service, 10 April 2015.



16. Amr al-Azm, Salam al-Kuntar and Brian I. Daniel. 'ISIS' Antiquities Sideline.' *New York Times*, 2 September 2014, p. A27.
17. Dana Ford. 'Apparent ISIS Executioner: I Am Back, Obama.' CNN. <<http://www.cnn.com/2014/09/02/world/meast/isis-beheading-videos/>>.
18. Jean Janie. 'As ISIS Progresses in Western Syria, Ismaili Minority Fears Similar Fate as Yezidis.' ARA News. <<http://aranews.net/2016/02/as-isis-proceeds-to-western-syria-ismaili-minority-fears-similar-fate-as-yezidis/>>.
19. Uzay Bulut. 'ISIS Selling Yezidi Women and Children in Turkey.' Gatestone Institute. <<http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/7078/turkey-isis-slaves>>.
20. 'US Has \$10M Bounty on ISIL Leader It Previously Held.' *Voice of America*. <<http://www.voanews.com/content/us-has-10m-bounty-on-isil-leader-it-previously-held/1951892.html>>.
21. 'US Support of Syrian Kurds Ruffles Turkey's Feathers.' *Al-Monitor*. <<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/08/turkey-syria-united-states-kurds-pkk-ypg-pyd-kuridsh-reality.html>>.
22. Anne Barnard. 'Death Toll from War in Syria Now 470,000, Group Finds.' *New York Times*, 11 February 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/12/world/middleeast/death-toll-from-war-in-syria-now-470000-group-finds.html?_r=0>.



The Emerging Afghan Taliban

RAJESHWARI KRISHNAMURTHY

On 21 May 2016, Afghan Taliban chief Mullah Mansour was killed in a US drone strike in Balochistan, Pakistan.¹ On 25 May 2016, the insurgent group's Rahbari Shura – the central leadership council – declared Mansour's first deputy Haibatullah Akhundzada as his successor.² Two other significant appointments were announced: former Afghan Taliban chief Mullah Omar's 26-year-old son Mullah Yakoub succeeds Akhundzada as one of the chief's two deputies and Sirajuddin Haqqani – Mansour's other deputy – retains his position.³ Cumulatively, these bear distinctive signs of a 'coherent' strategy – the implementation of which began much before Mansour's death. Akhundzada's and related appointments indicate a trend in the Afghan Taliban towards unity, operational consolidation and continuity, as well as the complicity of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Furthermore, this could well be a watershed moment for the long-continuing security problems, one that could bear severe consequences for Afghanistan and the regional security setup.

TRENDS

UNITY

Although Haqqani is now the de facto head of the Afghan Taliban, a formalisation of him as the chief would have meant further splintering within the group. He does not enjoy the support of all commanders – particularly southern. Akhundzada's selection as chief is more palatable to a major section of the group. A large number of Afghan Taliban fighters regard him as a respectable religious scholar and view him as comparatively less political. He is originally from Kandahar and belongs to the Noorzai tribe – influential within the Taliban structures. This will help the Taliban stem further splintering and dissensions within the group and perhaps even to heal factionalism to an extent. The Taliban's political office in



Qatar, which had differences vis-à-vis Mansour's succession of Omar, declared their allegiance to Akhundzada almost immediately after the announcement.⁴

Significantly, the Taliban would be comparatively less divided on him being leader, especially because he was close to Omar and had over the past months been more actively involved in running the group. Regardless, he will still require further confidence building on his part with the other commanders in Afghanistan to consolidate his position. Among other reasons, this is because the decision to choose Akhundzada was taken during a meeting of a relatively smaller group of the Rahbari Shura members as opposed to a large gathering as journeying to Quetta by a larger number of members was deemed too risky.⁵ Also, he is viewed more as a religious leader than as a military commander; but this does not mean much because in many ways, so was the perception regarding Omar.

CONSOLIDATION OF OPERATIONS

Since July 2015 especially, the Haqqani network, via Sirajuddin Haqqani, has steadily become the Afghan Taliban's backbone, a source of its stability, and its actual leadership, albeit from behind the scenes. This is not sudden or a coincidence. Haqqani is responsible for gradually uniting the Taliban structure after splintering plaguing the terrorist group escalated over the legitimacy of Mansour's succession.⁶ With Akhundzada as the chief and Haqqani as one of the deputies, the Afghan Taliban now has one chief executive officer (CEO) – Akhundzada – and one chief operating officer (COO) – Haqqani. Importantly, this COO is more powerful than the CEO. This means the chiefs could keep getting changed/eliminated, but the operations will continue without interruptions/fluctuations. Also, Haqqani as a deputy and not the chief will be a secondary target compared to the chief – thus remaining comparatively more secure.

CONTINUITY

Akhundzada's own background,⁷ along with the appointment of Omar's son Yakoub – who had initially disputed Mansour's succession of Omar⁸ – as one of the deputies means the Afghan Taliban is demonstrating to



its fighters and commanders a continuity of Omar's legacy and the group's original mission and character he symbolised.

COMPLICITY

The Rahbari Shura, also called the Quetta Shura, gathered in less than two days of Mansour's killing to deliberate on succession.⁹ That the members of the Shura were able to travel so promptly and hold meetings for three days – however small the participation – and not get targeted only highlights the ISI's complicity. While there are intensive military operations underway in Afghanistan, it is bizarre that Pakistan's security agencies were unable to trace the location of the meeting that had been underway at least since 22 May 2016.

STATE OF AFFAIRS

THE US

For the US, this strike was a clear step away from its tendency of not carrying out drone strikes in south-western Pakistan. Unmistakably, it was Washington's way of conveying to Islamabad that the US will not shy away from striking inside Pakistani territory if required. However, with this move, the US has evidently cleared the path for Sirajuddin Haqqani to become the de facto Afghan Taliban chief.

With Mansour's death, Washington scored a tactical victory but has inarguably created for itself a strategic headache.

Incumbent US president Barack Obama has already signalled that the US troops will stay on in Afghanistan longer.¹⁰ Aerial attacks by the US Air Force have already increased in Afghanistan.¹¹ The new commander of the Resolute Support Mission, General John Nicholson, appears all set for a full-blown offensive,¹² and he does not come without support from those in the higher echelons of the US government. The succession in the Afghan Taliban leadership, the various types of struggles by various types of people it will bring with it and all the games that were played in and with the process and its duration have created a whole new paradigm – mostly a new chapter of the same unending book, one that the next US president will inherit.



PAKISTAN

The extent to which Pakistan would like to admit to its association with the Haqqani network is of prime consideration here. Without deniability, Islamabad/Rawalpindi will be unable to maneuver the plot to its advantage; and if Sirajuddin Haqqani had become the chief of the Afghan Taliban, not only would that deniability have been lost, but there would have been a real question on how solid the Afghan Taliban structure will remain. In that context, Akhundzada – who has been associated with the Afghan Taliban for a long time – will work in favour of the Afghan Taliban structures, where the Haqqani network now occupies a strong position.

Besides, the US has been pressurising Pakistan to target the Haqqani network for some time now.¹³ Mansour, although close to the ISI, had increasingly become an unstable ‘asset’ for the latter. Conversely, the Haqqanis have been the ISI’s steady, ‘stable’ and ‘dependable’ ‘asset’, and the latter has expressed no intention of giving them up. Furthermore, according to reports, the Haqqani network has been proven to be adept at raising funds not just from ideologically likeminded donors but also by penetrating ‘key business sectors, including import-export, transport, real estate and construction in Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Arab Gulf and beyond.’¹⁴ A Haqqani Prominence in the Afghan Taliban thus eases the finance-related pressure on the letter.

Additionally, the rise of the Islamic State (IS) in eastern Afghanistan provides the ISI an opportunity to prop the Haqqani network as a counter capable of ‘delivering results’ against the IS. Although the IS is not the primary factor that might drive the ISI to do this, it is not difficult to imagine Sirajuddin Haqqani – and by extension, the Haqqani network – being hawked as a strong, ‘dependable’ asset. Chances are that the ISI will batten its hatches to keep the security situation as grim as possible.

Simultaneously, there appears to be a change in assessment in the Pakistani establishment vis-à-vis its porous borders with Afghanistan. Cross-border access between Afghanistan and Pakistan of undocumented individuals, which was once considered beneficial, is now being viewed as adversarial. The border-crossing row at Torkham, and Pakistan’s construction of a gate on its border with Iran indicate a change in the cost-benefit analysis in Pakistan.¹⁵ Reportedly, several Afghans have been



found to be holding National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) ID cards that are issued for Pakistani nationals.¹⁶ It has been reported that this had been done by bribing NADRA officials.¹⁷ It is also possible that some of those cards were issued with the knowledge of the higher-ups in the Pakistani establishment. For instance, Mullah Mansour was found to be in possession of a valid Pakistani passport where his name was listed as Wali Muhammad.¹⁸ It is unlikely that this particular instance took place without the ISI's knowledge. Chances are, now, the ISI presumes the possibility of an infiltration by Afghanistan's National Directorate of Security (NDS) into Pakistan's government structures.

Unless the Afghan forces – who are at present stretched extremely thin because of counter-insurgency operations across the country against a resurgent Taliban – are reinforced by NATO and US troops in combat missions, chances of any substantial change in the security situation in Afghanistan will remain bleak. Reportedly, 'White House officials have given the administration's tacit approval to allow U.S. commanders in Afghanistan to conduct offensive airstrikes against the Taliban and other insurgent groups and to let American troops restart joint ground operations with Afghan forces.'¹⁹ The NATO too has expressed its intention to fund the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) to sustain them through 2020.²⁰

In this backdrop, it is highly unlikely that the ISI will target the Haqqani network inside Pakistan. With the US presidential election fast approaching, the calculation in the ISI would be that it would take at least a year before the new US president settles in; that is the window that the Afghan Taliban, and by extension, the Haqqani network, will utilise, with an aim to cause as much damage as possible.

AFGHAN TALIBAN

The question on the stability of the Afghan Taliban's structures will come up because the Haqqanis, albeit strong in their network across the region, do not necessarily enjoy the confidence of all the commanders, especially the ones from Afghanistan, and particularly, southern. A Haqqani leadership of the Afghan Taliban would have effectively meant a further splintering of the Afghan Taliban. However, with Akhundzada's succession of Mansour,



and al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri's endorsement of him, factionalism in the Afghan Taliban has slowed down,²¹ but the established breakaway groups continue to clash in different provinces of the country.²²

Meanwhile, on 11 June 2016, the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), formerly known as the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, a long-time ally of the Afghan Taliban and the al-Qaeda, released an audio message condemning the IS and criticising the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) for switching allegiances from the Afghan Taliban to the IS.²³ This is important because the TIP and the IMU used to maintain close ties;²⁴ the TIP's current chief, Abdul Haq, had trained several militants in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region prior to 2001;²⁵ and the Afghan Taliban and the IS oppose each other.

Furthermore, the Afghan Taliban has been steadily increasing the numbers of non-Pashtun fighters across all its ranks. Reportedly, not just have the numbers of fighters from Uzbek, Tajik and Turkmen ethnic backgrounds in the Afghan Taliban swelled, the insurgent group has also begun appointing fighters from Afghanistan's aforementioned ethnic minorities to leadership positions in different provinces.²⁶ Given how northern Afghanistan's is home to most of the ethnic minority populations, this development signals an apparent change in strategy within the Afghan Taliban wherein the manpower resource base is being diversified. This serves two ends for the Afghan Taliban: increased manpower and increased capability to mount attacks in the north. Since the fighters from the minority communities have never been too forthcoming on the idea of fighting under Pashtuns, their positions of responsibility have been assigned in their traditional homelands in Afghanistan, bordering those central Asian states where their ethnic origins lay.²⁷ Added to this mix are foreign fighters, including Chechens and Uighurs, many of whom had escaped into Afghanistan after the Pakistan Army launched Operation Zarb-e-Azb, which flushed militants across the porous borders.²⁸ The Afghan Taliban has found a way to co-opt those groups they warred against, 20 years ago, by granting them a level of autonomy; and by making members of each ethnic group responsible for their traditional bases, it has managed to find a way to keep the groups from fighting each



other, thereby consolidating its own overarching presence all over the north and the south.

It would also be useful to bear in mind that Sirajuddin Haqqani's family hails from south-eastern Afghanistan,²⁹ and commanders from southern Afghanistan – who would prefer to take orders from someone from the south – still wield considerable influence in the group's leadership council. This co-opting of minority ethnic fighters and groups by the Afghan Taliban might also serve to dilute that influence to a certain degree. Such a turn of events would only make Sirajuddin Haqqani's authority within the Afghan Taliban structures relatively less vulnerable. This development has been in the making for the past four years, and more so over the past two years – approximately around the time former Afghan Taliban chief Mullah Omar died and since Mullah Mansour took over as the de facto chief, with Haqqani as his de facto deputy, until the 'designations' were formally announced in 2015.

Evidently, insurgent ranks across Afghanistan, Pakistan and the central Asian states are in the process of aligning themselves. The consequences of warring between opposing insurgent groups that is likely to escalate could be disastrous for Afghanistan. However, given the increasing proximity China and Pakistan share, it remains to be seen how the TIP's role and stature play out, especially given how Beijing wants them eliminated and Sirajuddin Haqqani – who is close to the ISI – currently wields strong operational control over the Afghan Taliban. Will he get ambitious? One has to wait and watch.

Meanwhile, the Afghan Taliban has been consistently carrying out kidnappings of civilians, possibly to maintain pressure on the Afghan government and to keep the irritant factor high. There have been numerous instances of civilians being kidnapped in large numbers from buses and other vehicles, and many hostages often get released.³⁰ This is because the Afghan Taliban would not want to antagonise the public too much – as has been expressed in the code of conduct document released by the Afghan Taliban leadership during the launch of its 2016 spring offensive, 'Omari'.³¹ However, foreign nationals in the country, particularly Indians, will be among the prime targets of the insurgent group for some time to come.



Additionally, the Kabul-based Kabul Attack Network (KAN) – a consortium of sorts, comprised of foot soldiers from the Haqqani network, the Afghan Taliban and some other groups, and which has a reach in eastern Afghan provinces such as Wardak, Nangarhar, Logar, Kunar, Zabul and Parwan – is active. Reportedly, the KAN has worked alongside al-Qaeda as well as the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba. In fact, according to some reports, the NDS has traced the KAN's connections to Pakistan's ISI as well.³²

AFGHANISTAN

For Afghanistan, Mansour's killing spells both good and bad news. The positives are that there will be a certain degree of increase in the public's confidence in the government and the Afghan security forces will get a morale boost. However, if the older leaders of the Afghan Taliban are killed off, the odds of peace talks making any breakthrough will be bleak. The older Taliban leaders are comparatively more seasoned and calculative in terms of both strategy and tactics. The younger cadres tend to be more brutal in their ways. The higher the number of relatively younger individuals in the Taliban leadership structures, the higher the chances of more brutal and less conciliatory approaches. If such a scenario unfolds, a potential deterioration of the security situation in Afghanistan will not be difficult to imagine.

However, Afghanistan's biggest problem is not insurgency but governance. Unless there are efficient governance and justice delivery systems in place that deliver on their duties substantially and on time, the disenfranchisement among the civilians, particularly the minorities, and those living in the northern and eastern border provinces will continue to fester and they will become easy targets for the Afghan Taliban to take advantage of.

LOOKING AHEAD

These emerging dynamics will further complicate targeting the Haqqanis, especially in the wake of Afghanistan's peace negotiations with the Afghan Taliban, thus enabling the ISI to excuse itself and perhaps even help



prevent others from directly targeting the Haqqanis. Moreover, that Pakistan was informed (albeit later, according to their foreign ministry³³) about the attack on Mansour will give Islamabad room to manoeuvre, distract or switch between playing the ally card and playing the victim card to try and bargain on related matters. Another potential scenario is that the security situation on the ground will deteriorate to such an extent that antagonising Pakistan will become extremely complicated for the United States. In fact, even the United States' unsubtle signalling – in words as well as in action, as seen in the targeting of Mullah Mansour in Balochistan, among others – has so far had no substantial impact on the Pakistani establishment's current trajectory. This is not new; and neither has the US-Haqqani network relationship always been mutually adversarial.³⁴ Effectively, the war machines have been ignited in Afghanistan, and it will require astute planning and an extremely comprehensively informed strategy to tackle this once and for all.

Notes and References

1. Jon Boone and Sune Engel Rasmussen. 'US Drone Strike in Pakistan Kills Taliban Leader Mullah Mansoor.' *Guardian*, 22 May 2016. <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/21/us-airstrike-taliban-leader-mullah-akhtar-mansoor>>.
2. *Daily Times*. 'Mansour Named Haibatullah, Haqqani His Successors: Sami.' 24 May 2016. <<http://dailytimes.com.pk/khyber-pakhtunkhwa/24-May-16/mansour-named-haibatullah-haqqani-his-successors-sami>>.
3. Ibid.
4. Tahir Khan. 'Taliban Pick 'Apolitical' Successor to Mansoor.' *Express Tribune*, 26 May 2016. <<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1110674/taliban-pick-apolitical-successor-mansoor/>>.
5. Rahimullah Yusufzai. 'Hardliner New Taliban Leader, Deputies May Oppose Peace Talks.' *News*, 26 May 2016. <<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print/122860-Hardliner-new-Taliban-leader-deputies-may-oppose-peace-talks>>.
6. *France24*. 'Death of Mullah Omar Reveals Rift in Taliban Command.' 1 August 2015. <<http://www.france24.com/en/20150731-death-mollah-omar-exposes-rifts-taliban-leadership-divisions-mansour-afghanistan.7>>.



7. *Indian Express*. 'New Taliban Chief Akhundzada a Scholar, Not a Soldier.' 25 May 2016. <<http://indianexpress.com/article/world/world-news/taliban-chief-mullah-haibatullah-akhundzada-mullah-mansour-2819023/>>.
8. Ibid.
9. Mirwais Harooni and Phil Stewart. 'Afghan Taliban Meets on Succession After U.S. Drones Target Leader.' *Reuters*, 23 May 2016. <<http://in.reuters.com/article/usa-afghanistan-taliban-idINKCN0YD01C>>.
10. CBS News. 'U.S. Could Change Afghanistan Troop Withdrawal Plan.' 15 June 2016. <<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-troops-afghanistan-resurgent-taliban-ash-carter-nato-troop-level-obama/>>.
11. Al Jazeera. 'First US Raids Target Afghan Taliban Since Obama Order.' 25 June 2016. <<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/06/raids-target-afghan-taliban-obama-order-160625053117257.html>>.
12. World Bulletin. 'More Support for Afghan Troops Part of Latest Obama Strategy.' 12 June 2016. <<http://www.worldbulletin.net/asia-pacific/173719/more-support-for-afghan-troops-part-of-latest-obama-strategy>>.
13. Anwar Iqbal and Baqi Sajjad Syed. 'US Calls for Tough Action Against Haqqani Network.' *Dawn*, 31 August 2015. <<http://www.dawn.com/news/1203938>>.
14. Gretchen Peters. 'Haqqani Network Financing: The Evolution of an Industry.' *Combating Terrorism Center*, June 2012. <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/CTC_Haqqani_Network_Financing-Report_Final.pdf>.
15. *Indian Express*. 'Amid Torkham Gate Controversy, Pakistan Starts Constructing Gate at Iran Border.' 18 June 2016. <<http://indianexpress.com/article/world/world-news/amid-torkham-gate-controversy-pakistan-starts-constructing-gate-at-iran-border-2860471/>>.
16. *Pakistan Today*. 'NADRA Officer Arrested for Issuing Fake CNICs to Afghan Refugees.' 31 May 2016. <<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2016/05/31/national/nadra-officer-arrested-for-issuing-fake-cnics-to-afghan-refugees/>>.
17. Ibid.
18. Qadeer Tanoli and Faraz Khan. 'Mullah Mansour or Muhammad Wali: Fake Name but Genuine Credentials on CNIC.' *Express Tribune*, 24 May 2016. <<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1109001/mullah-mansoor-muhammad-wali-fake-name-genuine-credentials-cnica/>>.



19. Carlo Muñoz. 'Obama Effectively Restarts Afghanistan Combat Operations a Year After Officially Ending Them.' *Washington Times*, 14 June 2016. <<http://m.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/jun/14/obama-effectively-restarts-afghanistan-combat-oper/#!>>.
20. *Sputnik International*. 'NATO Allies Intend to Fund Afghan Defense Forces Until 2020. 15 June 2016. <<http://sputniknews.com/military/20160615/1041373807/nato-fund-afghan-defense-forces.html>>.
21. Hamzah Rifaat Hussain. 'Haibatullah Akhundzada and the Resurgence of the Taliban.' *Diplomat*, 4 June 2016. <<http://thediplomat.com/2016/06/haibatullah-akhundzada-and-the-resurgence-of-the-taliban/>>.
22. *Business Standard*. '20 Militants Killed in Afghan Taliban Infighting.' 22 June 2016. <http://www.business-standard.com/article/international/20-militants-killed-in-afghan-taliban-infighting-116062200795_1.html>.
23. SITE Intel Group. 'TIP Leader Rejects IS' "Caliphate," Explains Downfall of IMU in Audio Interview.' 27 June 2016. <<https://news.siteintelgroup.com/Jihadist-News/tip-leader-rejects-is-caliphate-explains-downfall-of-imu-in-audio-interview.html>>.
24. UN Security Council Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee. 'Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement.' 7 April 2011. <https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/1267/aq_sanctions_list/summaries/entity/eastern-turkistan-islamic-movement>.
25. Ibid.
26. Frud Bezhan. 'Ethnic Minorities Are Fueling the Taliban's Expansion in Afghanistan.' *Foreign Policy*, 15 June 2016. <<http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/06/15/ethnic-minorities-are-fueling-the-talibans-expansion-in-afghanistan/>>.
27. Ibid.
28. Geo News. 'COAS Demands US Target TTP, Fazlullah in Afghanistan.' 10 June 2016. <<https://www.geo.tv/latest/107615-COAS-demands-US-target-TTP-Fazlullah-in-Afghanistan>>.
29. Ashish Kumar Sen. 'In Afghanistan, the Taliban Has a New Leader, but It's His Deputy Who Is Raising Eyebrows.' Atlantic Council, 31 July 2016. <<http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/in-afghanistan-the-taliban-has-a-new-leader-but-it-s-his-deputy-who-is-raising-eyebrows>>.
30. *Al Arabiya*. 'Taliban Kidnap 60 in Afghanistan Bus Attacks.' 21 June 2016. <<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/asia/2016/06/21/Taliban-kidnap-60-in-Afghanistan-buss-attacks.html>>.



31. 'Statement by Leadership Council of Islamic Emirate regarding Inauguration of Spring Offensive Entitled "Operation Omari".' *Jihadology* (Originally on the Afghan Taliban Website), 11 April 2016. <<http://jihadology.net/2016/04/11/new-statement-from-the-islamic-emirate-of-afghanistan-regarding-the-inauguration-of-the-spring-offensive-operation-omari/>>.
32. Bill Roggio. 'Suicide Assault Team Targets Civilian Guesthouse in Kabul.' *Long War Journal*, 10 August 2016. <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/08/suicide_assault_team_3.php>.
33. John Boone. 'Pakistan Condemns US Drone Strike That Killed Taliban Leader Mansoor.' *Guardian*, 24 May 2016. <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/24/pakistan-condemns-us-drone-strike-that-killed-taliban-leader-mansoor>>.
34. Stanford University. 'Haqqani Network.' 15 May 2015. <<http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/363>>.

ORDER FORM

Please find enclosed crossed bank draft no.dated
For Rs/\$drawn onBank* in favour of
Central News Agency Ltd, New Delhi, towards the subscription for *Aakrosh*
From.....to.....(month/year).

* Any bank in New Delhi.

NAME

Institution

Individual

ADDRESS

City

State

Country

Postal Code

Please send circulation enquiries and subscription order forms/drafts to: Central News Agency Ltd, P-23, Connaught Circus, New Delhi-110001, India (Phone: 011-43631313; Fax: 011-23626036; E-mail: info@cna-india.com

Subscriptions: single copies Rs 130/US \$40; annual Rs 400/US \$100 (individuals); Rs 500/US \$130 (institutions). All inclusive of postage.

