

Military-Intelligence- Militant Nexus in Pakistan: Fighting a War of Asymmetry against India

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The sense of insecurity created by a regionally preponderant and militarily powerful India is the central catalytic factor that influences the dynamics of Pakistan's regional security perception. The military-militant nexus in Pakistan, built around army's misguided obsession with India, pursues strategic priorities in the name of protecting its national interests in Kashmir and Kabul. Sadly, both the Kashmir and Afghan policies of the military have started hurting Pakistan - internally and externally - more than India. In the post-9/11 period, the Pakistani military must give up its twisted logic of insecurity and focus on building a stable and progressive society, by denying the use-value of the non-state actors (militants) against India. This paper highlights the changing role of military-intelligence-militant nexus in Pakistan in fighting a war of asymmetry against India from the 1970s, to the post-9/11 period.

Introduction

The fact of the matter and the historical truth is that India has occupied a central position in Pakistan's foreign policy and domestic policy right from 1947. Within the South Asian region, Pakistan is unwilling to accept India's centrality and stabilising security role in the region. Islamabad has strong reservations about this India-centric model of regional security that conflicts with the regional aspirations of Pakistan. Further, India is not perceived as the guarantor of security and stability in South Asia, but as a threat, by Pakistan which is why it seeks to neutralise India's power potential in the region. Therefore, it has adopted a strategy of asymmetric warfare against a conventionally superior Indian military. It thus patronises groups that it believes will help it in gaining regional influence, even though the negative fallout on Pakistan's stability far outweighs the benefits.

Pakistan continues to nurture terrorist groups as a means of securing geo-political goals under its nuclear umbrella. The Pakistani army over the years has found a natural ally in the radicals, not only in domestic politics, but also for pursuing its

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foreign policy goals. In fact, civilian governments in Islamabad have no control over the policies of its military and intelligence agencies that control militant groups operating in and from Pakistan. Given the history of the last 40 years, it is clear that Pakistan's military deems Islamic militants to be its allies against India.

The military-madrassa-mullah nexus has deliberately manipulated and encouraged jihadism, by preferring a tactical deployment of jihadi groups in Kashmir and Afghanistan for expansion of regional influence. "The use-value of these militants increased substantially when Pakistani military elites incorporated its preferences into Kashmir and Afghan policies vis-à-vis India".¹ This militant religious constituency has been used by the Pakistani military and the ISI to designing its foreign and domestic policies. The internal situation in Pakistan has also deteriorated throughout these decades because of its focus on building up the military and grooming Islamic extremist groups as weapons in its eternal obsessive struggle against India.

Military-Intelligence-Militant Nexus

Right from 1947-48 Pakistan has been providing aid to secessionist forces in India in which clerics and religious ideology often played a key role. Yahya Khan allied with Islamists in Bangladesh and Kashmir. But it was General Ayub Khan who realised that "much of the increasing militancy of the mullahs had to do with the madrassas. For the first time his government sensed the dangers posed by the madrasas in promoting Islamic militancy"². Since Pakistan's creation, state institutions, notably national security institutions such as military and the intelligence services, have played a leading role in building Pakistani national identity on the basis of religion. This political commitment to an ideological state gradually evolved into a strategic commitment to the jihadi ideology, especially during and after the 1971 (Bangladesh) war. The Jammāt-e-Islami, an Islamist party in Pakistan made its first foray into militant jihad in 1971, when its cadres sided with the Pakistani army in opposing the creation of Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan). This collaboration with the army helped the Jammāt forge closer links with Pakistani military and its intelligence services. The Jammāt has also actively participated in Jammu and Kashmir militancy with the full backing of the ISI and the Pakistani military³. Pakistan was transformed into an Islamic-military combine that evolved into a highly radicalised society in the post-1971 period. From the 1970s the Pakistani army has consciously co-opted the Islamic fundamentalists to discredit and oppose Pakistan's political parties. In this process the army has been taken over by an Islamic fundamentalist military hierarchy⁴.

During his 11 year rule (1977-88), General Zia-ul-Haq devoted considerable energy and effort to Islamise Pakistani society, including the army. He Islamised the army by including Islamic teachings into the military's training. Ever since there have

been increasing numbers of devout bearded men within the rank and file as well as the officer corps of the Pakistani army and the ISI⁵. An ideological component was therefore added to the army's role, which apart from defending national security became a defender of the faith as well. This was what Zia frequently referred to as defence of the country's ideological frontiers⁶. Zia was also known for his sympathy for the hard-line religious groups. Under Zia, a close alliance also emerged between the military and orthodox Sunnis⁷. The state also used madrassas to strengthen Sunnism and much of this effort was undertaken by the military and its intelligence wing. The military saw the large number of madrassa-trained jihadis as an asset for its covert operations in Kashmir and Afghanistan.

According to prominent American academics and analysts many Pakistani army officers share the religious zeal of the fundamentalists⁸. Since the 1980s, following Pakistan's arming of the Mujahideen for fighting against the infidel Soviets in Afghanistan and army's continued support for Islamist militants, Islam has taken a radical turn in Pakistan.

The 1980s were the years when the CIA-ISI relationship blossomed, and during this period the ISI grew in strength and reach. Further, "the realisation that nuclear neighbours cannot fight a war without the possibility of its slipping out of control led General Zia to tap the mullahs and madrassas to wage a new covert war in India and Afghanistan"⁹. Religious movements, such as Jammāt-e-Islami and Tablighi Jammāt were allowed by Zia to operate inside army barracks. The consequence of the presence of religious movements within the military was arguably to create a cadre of Islamists within the military with an Islamist vision of Pakistan for which they were willing to kill and be killed¹⁰.

Under Zia, the ISI grew in size and strength in the power structure due to the dependence of the regime on intelligence and the Afghan operation. From being an implementor of policy, the ISI became the policy maker. In fact, the imposition of martial law in Pakistan for the first time in 1958 under General Ayub Khan brought the ISI into political realm. Moreover, Ayub gave the ISI primacy amongst the other intelligence agencies in Pakistan, like the MI (Military Intelligence) and the IB (Intelligence Bureau) because it combined in the one agency the dual roles of internal and external intelligence. The ISI however, concentrated more on internal rather than external intelligence for the first three decades. Till the seventies, the organisation had a limited external agenda which was largely India-centric. This was because Pakistan had fought three wars with India and remained preoccupied with an Indian military threat to her national security¹¹.

However, the proxy or sub-conventional war in Jammu and Kashmir in the eighties was preceded by the ISI's linkage with militancy in Indian state of Punjab. General

Zia had a belief that Kashmir dispute would be solved within the context of an Islamic government in Kabul, a struggle in Kashmir and an uprising in Indian Punjab. As India's own Punjab problem grew in dimension, Pakistan was held responsible for training Sikh terrorists. The first indication that New Delhi got of Zia's intentions was a report about the military training of groups of Sikhs in Pakistan in 1978, within a year of Zia's taking over¹². Zia pursued the low-cost option of aiding and abetting terrorists in Punjab intentionally to keep that border state in a state of permanent turmoil. The ISI was the chosen instrument of Zia to handle Punjab.¹³ The destabilisation of Punjab was a part of Islamabad's strategy to soften Indian defences in a frontline state. In fact, Zia relied on the lunatic-fringe and self-serving leaders of the Sikh community in India to bolster his efforts to bring about a second division in India in the name of Khalistan¹⁴.

Kashmir as a Jihadi Battleground

Pakistan's known stand on Kashmir and Afghanistan has not only radicalised but also militarised Pakistani society. The continuation of civil war in Afghanistan made Pakistan more vulnerable to such challenges. It is well known that the ISI has had longstanding ties with militant groups. The ISI's fostering of surrogate militants to serve Pakistan's strategic interests in Kashmir and Afghanistan played a crucial role in the rise of transnational jihadism. In fact, Hamid Gul, the former ISI chief, believed jihadism to be an instrument of Pakistan's foreign policy. Obviously, the actions of the ISI in particular have been dangerous and morally reprehensible in Kashmir. Since the 1980s, the ISI's asymmetric assault against India continues to pose a major security threat not only to India but to the region as well. This assault of the army-ISI-militant nexus, that has allowed "most radical Islamic groups to function on a wider stage, equipping and training them when necessary and providing overall political and strategic guidance for their activities"¹⁵.

Having designated Islam as the creed that was potent enough to challenge the communist thrust into Afghanistan, it became necessary for Pakistan to promote the combative and aggressive aspects of the faith (Islam) on the part of Pakistan, and India had to bear a major brunt of it in Kashmir¹⁶. From the 1980's, the ISI adopted a much more assertive strategy to destabilise Jammu and Kashmir. The main elements of this plan were four fold (a) to divert arms and ammunition from Afghan conflict to empower favoured Jammu and Kashmir separatist groups; (b) to expand the number of madrassas and training camps inside Pakistan administered Kashmir to boost the number of trained and indoctrinated fighters who could be infiltrated into Indian-controlled territory; (c) to transit Afghan and international Muslim fighters from the Afghan conflict to the new pan-Islamist jihad in Jammu & Kashmir; and (d) to create new militant organisations which could become the vehicles for ISI's control of the separatist insurgency¹⁷.

Although Pakistan did not begin the 1989 uprising in Kashmir, the temptation to fan the flames there was too much for Islamabad to resist. The ISI with its guerrilla warfare expertise gained during the Afghan war, started providing active backing to Kashmir Muslim militants¹⁸. The effect of this policy was to escalate the violence in the valley throughout the 1990s. The ISI has been covertly supporting the Kashmir Mujahideen in their fight against India. Reportedly, 'Operation Tupac' was the codename of the three part action plan for the capture of Kashmir through proxy war, initiated by General Zia in 1988 after the failure of Operation Gibraltar. Pakistan's objectives were to (a) disintegrate India, (b) to utilise the spy network to act as an instrument of sabotage and (c) to exploit India's porous borders with Nepal and Bangladesh to conduct anti-India operations.

Islamabad, in the name of jihad, intended to divide Jammu and Kashmir on communal lines by tearing apart the socio-cultural fabric of Hindu-Muslim unity, to undermine Kashmiriyat so that the notion of Islamic brotherhood (Ummah) defeats the prevailing centuries-old Sufi-Sant (saint) thesis of the brotherhood of man¹⁹. The idea of Islamic brotherhood got wider international support, particularly from the Islamic countries. This inspired the Pakistani military to use Wahhabi oriented radical Islamic groups to wage a low intensity conflict to bleed India white in Jammu and Kashmir²⁰. Pakistan promoted jihadi ideology and organisations to indoctrinate the masses in Kashmir with select discourses on radical Islam as opposed to tolerant facets of Sufism and overturned everything that liberal Islam stood for. In Kashmir, ISI trained militants would incite the religious sentiments and susceptibilities of Kashmiri Muslims and channelise them into an anti India and anti-Hindu direction.

The first casualties of this jihadi ideology have been Sufism and Kashmiriyat. Within a few years, there was a marked erosion of the concept of Kashmiriyat (the secular Kashmiri ethos) and a Muslim identity with fundamentalist overtones started emerging rapidly. The Pakistani planners long-term strategy during the first half of the 1990s was to eliminate the contradictions between the Kashmiri Sufi Islam and their own Sunni Islam, by absorbing Kashmir's special brand of syncretic Islam into the larger pan-Islamic Sunni tradition. Initially, the ISI used the Afghan support infrastructure in Pakistan to support Kashmiri militants, later it provided material and moral support to Kashmir insurgents including safe sanctuaries across the border.

During the first phase of the militancy in Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan-backed militants systematically attempted to bring about structural changes in Kashmiri society²¹. The militant groups used both terror tactics and fundamentalist ideology to cleanse the Kashmir valley of its un-Islamic elements and gave an Islamist orientation to the indigenous uprising in Kashmir. The forced displacement of the Kashmir Pandits is a classic case of ethno-religious cleansing that had long-term

implications for the composite culture and secular polity in Kashmir²². In fact, these Pakistan-sponsored militants adopted the philosophy of Sikandar Butshikan the barbaric ruler of Kashmir (1389-1413), who persecuted the Hindus and issued orders that prohibited people of any other religion apart from Muslims to stay in Kashmir²³.

During the 1990s, several Kashmir-specific militant outfits were sponsored by Pakistan. The ISI helped create, mentor, finance and train outfits like Jaish-e-Muhammed (JeM), Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM), Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT) and several other shadowy extremist groups to fight a proxy war against Indian forces in Jammu and Kashmir, admittedly part of the larger Pakistani strategy to bleed India with thousand cuts²⁴. The Lashkar-e-Tayyeba and Jaish-e-Muhammad came into existence because of sympathy for Muslims in India and in Kashmir in particular²⁵. These two groups (JeM and LeT) along with Harkat-ul-Mujahidden (HuM) are involved in India-specific struggle²⁶.

From 1989, indigenous Kashmiri militant outfits like the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) and pro-Pakistan Hizbul-ul-Mujahidden were used by Pakistani military. Since local militancy was on the wane by 1995 and disappointed with the performance of the local (Kashmiri) militant groups, Islamabad took direct control of the insurgency. At the end of 1995, it was reported that the ISI in collaboration with the Jammat-e-Islami (Pakistan's oldest religio-political party), was raising a Taliban type force consisting of young students from Pakistan with the sole purpose of fighting Indian forces in Jammu and Kashmir²⁷. From the 1990s, the LeT became the ISI's favourite terrorist outfit operating in Kashmir and in the rest of India. The nineties were difficult years for India as jihadi violence aimed at splitting Indian territory as a revenge for 1971 defeat continued. In 1971, "the Pakistani military saw the bifurcation of the country as the result of collaboration between secular nationalists and India. This led to the belief that Islamists were the most dependable political allies of the Pakistani state, especially in resisting Indian ascendancy in South Asia"²⁸.

Later, General Musharraf, emulated Zia in supping with the Islamic elements and encouraged the ISI to foment terrorism in India using jihadis²⁹. Musharraf has been equally reluctant to crack down on groups that are fighting Indian sovereignty in Kashmir because they are serving Pakistan's national interests. His refusal to abandon the extremist assets that the Pakistani military had built up during the long years of officially sponsored jihad always remained a latent concern³⁰. During Musharraf's time, the infamous mullah-military alliance was strengthened³¹ even in the face of his growing unpopularity after joining the US-led war on terror³². Since 9/11, the Pakistani military has tried to distance itself from militancy in Jammu and Kashmir under intense US and international pressure. The militant groups that had long depended on ISI support described Musharraf's U-turn on

Kashmir as a betrayal of their struggle for independence. The changing nature and interpretation of the military establishment's national interests compelled Musharraf to rein in the ISI by transforming the agency from one that abetted militancy to one that combatted it³³. Pakistan was caught between the US and Islamic fundamentalism owing to the half hearted approach to tackling militancy at home and Musharraf's dubious distinction of good and bad jihadis.

In fact, the April 2003 peace initiative by the Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee brought about a major improvement in the bilateral relationship, including a January 6, 2004 Islamabad Declaration to launch a composite dialogue for the peaceful settlement of all bilateral issues including Kashmir, to the satisfaction of both sides. Musharraf's January 2004 commitment to India-Pakistan peace process was influenced by his moderate attitude while Vajpayee dared to transform challenges into milestones as he focused on the possible. This attitude on the part of the two leaders allowed a groundswell of peace to emerge leading to an optimism that the course of India-Pakistan relations could change. At the heart of the renewed peace process after 9/11 was an apparent acceptance by India to learn to deal with Musharraf. India endorsed Musharraf's assertion that Pakistan was also a victim of terrorism. India also appreciated Musharraf's efforts in fighting hardliners and jihadi outfits in the post- 9/11 period. Musharraf knew that these jihadi groups not only threatened the peace process but Pakistan's own stability.

Under significant international diplomatic pressure and the threat of India's possible use of force, Musharraf vowed to end the presence of terrorist entities on Pakistani soil. With the collapse of the jihadi policy and mounting international pressure, Musharraf used the peace initiative with India to rebuild his credibility both at home and abroad. As a shrewd military man, he understood the basic need of not having to fight on more than one front so as not to overstretch the army. He, therefore, needed peace with India to reduce the heat on the eastern front. Hence, "the sham rapprochement process with India by Musharraf was more of a tactical ploy than a strategic change of heart"³⁴. Musharraf, therefore, under US and international pressure moderated the activities of the terrorist groups operating against India.

Therefore before the 2008 Mumbai attacks things were relatively calm and friendly between India and Pakistan. After 26/11, the vulnerability of the peace process stood too quickly exposed. A continuing pattern of evasiveness and denial in Pakistan's response might have forced India to adopt a two-pronged approach towards Islamabad to get it to work firmly against terrorist networks. If one element of the approach is to downgrade relations and remind it that the military option is not entirely off the table, the second element is to cajole Islamabad to legally proceed against the jihadi groups responsible for the attack³⁵. Though involvement of the Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT) in the Mumbai attacks has been

admitted by Islamabad, but what has not been acknowledged by the Pakistani government, so far, is the symbiotic relationship that exists between the LeT and the Pakistani army. Parts of the Pakistani security establishment would still like to view the organisation (LeT) as a valuable asset for the future. The intention behind Islamabad's plea that those involved in the 26/11 incident were non-state actors, not within the control of the state, was to conceal the military-militant nexus. Those involved in Mumbai were not strictly non-state actors but rather extensions of the state intelligence apparatus. This strategic military-militant collusion in Pakistan shows no sign of ending, and will remain the most crucial stumbling block in any future attempt to mend the bilateral relationship between India and Pakistan.

Paranoid Search for Strategic Depth

In the 1980s the Pakistani army became the vehicle for formulating and implementing the US Afghan policy in close concert with the ISI. 'The Islam is in danger' slogan was used by the Pakistani army to encourage jihad to throw the infidel Soviets out of Afghanistan. The Pakistani military has been playing dirty tricks with the help of Afghan Taliban. A pliable government in Kabul would mean that Pakistan could then concentrate on Kashmir and the rest of India³⁶. Initially, during the Afghan war, the ISI got a chance to support its favourite guerrilla groups and co-ordinate the flow of foreign aid, including the recruitment of volunteers and graduates of local madrassas³⁷. These activities strengthened the ISI and the military-mosque nexus. Even General Zia believed that victory by resistance in Afghanistan could produce for the first time a genuinely friendly regime in Kabul that in turn could enable Pakistan to gain strategic depth against India. The military-mosque nexus in Pakistan got strengthened when the US supported Pax-Pakistan (a policy by default) in Afghanistan during the 1980s and early 1990s, which suggested that Islamabad could count on the US to tilt the regional balance of power in its favour in relation to India³⁸.

After Zia's sudden death, the ISI and the military continued to advance his ambitious agenda in Afghanistan, aided by radical Islamic groups. Islamabad's efforts first led to the temporary control of Kabul by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and then to the 1996 victory of Taliban who assumed power in Kabul. The Taliban were recruited from Afghan refugee camps, indoctrinated in Pakistani madrassas and trained and equipped by the ISI. In fact, Pakistani military's association with Afghan jihad contributed to the emergence of the Taliban movement in Afghanistan from 1994.

Traditionally, the Pakistan military believed that Afghanistan gave them strategic depth against the India threat and had strengthened ties with Taliban and Al Qaeda to obtain that strategic advantage³⁹. The Pakistani military deliberately did not insist on the Durand line being formalised because of this agenda. Pakistan's

thinking has been that if there is no recognised international border, Islamabad cannot be accused of violating international law and would be free to cross into Afghanistan and provide all kinds of help to the Taliban and other destabilising elements⁴⁰. Also Pakistan's military planners view Afghanistan as a strategic space in the event of a military confrontation with India, and for this they need the help of the Taliban. The army generals who run Pakistan's Afghanistan policy, therefore, are not willing to sever their Taliban connections.

One of the primary reasons for the Pakistani military and intelligence support to the Taliban is the excessive Indian influence in Afghanistan. As long as Pakistan remains wary of India's intentions, this policy will not change. Despite the Taliban regime's ouster in 2001, the Pakistani military and the ISI under the aegis of General Musharraf, did not sever ties with the Taliban. This is the reason why the Pakistani army and the ISI still continue to make a deceptive distinction between the good Taliban (strategic assets for employment against India and Afghanistan) and the bad Taliban (those not within the control of the army or ISI). "As a price for its support to the United States in the global war on terrorism, Pakistan urged the US to engage with moderate elements of the Taliban".⁴¹

It has been the experience of India that the Pakistani military and the ISI invariably stand by the jihadis. According to Pakistan the good jihadis are those who are willing to export terrorism to India. This criteria for the identification of good jihadis by Pakistan will only preserve the bad elements to be manipulated in future by the military-intelligence establishment to serve Islamabad's regional interests. Therefore, a Pakistani government which plays footsie with Taliban will be detrimental to Indian interests, when the so-called good Taliban are brought back into the governing mechanism or political process in Kabul. The search for good Taliban could, therefore, see the return of those under Pakistan's influence. Through them, Islamabad could regain its strategic depth and counter Indian influence in Afghanistan.

According to Pepe Escobar: "Even historically whenever the ISI felt that some Taliban groups are going out of its control, it has tried to politically divide them".⁴² This is how the Pakistani military and the ISI have created a split within the Taliban, terming one group as hardliners and the others as moderates. These good jihadis form the frontline in the asymmetric warfare being waged against India by the Pakistani military. Pakistan's military planners still believe in Afghanistan's importance as a strategic space and for this they need the help of Afghan Taliban, dominated mostly by the Pashtuns. Islamabad believes that any Pashtun government in Kabul would be more compliant and favourable to it. Further, it is argued that once Pakistan acquires the strategic depth through these moderate elements of Taliban and is assured of its western border, Islamabad may

concentrate its entire attention and energy on the eastern border with India⁴³. India is apprehensive that any accommodation with the moderate faction of Taliban would result in re-emergence of threat to Kashmir and neutralise Indian influence in Afghanistan and marginalise those who support New Delhi.

The Pakistani military therefore, while ready to fight the Pakistani (home grown) Taliban, is reluctant to act against the Afghan Taliban based in Pakistan. The Pakistani security establishment is playing a double game in Afghanistan with the ISI providing financial, military and logistic support to the insurgency⁴⁴. The present army chief General Kayani has admitted that only rogue elements within the ISI have been assisting the Taliban. Even Jalaluddin Haqqani, the Taliban leader responsible for bombing of the Indian embassy in Kabul in July 2008, is still considered as a strategic asset by the Pakistani army⁴⁵. It is the Haqqani faction that the Pakistani army and the ISI have been cultivating in the hope of having a stake in the power sharing arrangement in Kabul after the withdrawal of the US forces. Over the last three decades, Pakistan has had a close relationship with the Haqqanis who are still seen as a crucial anti Indian asset⁴⁶. This highlights the fact that the Pakistani military still projects this group as part of the Afghan solution.

Pakistan has been using its ISI and its military officials to influence the post-Taliban nation building process in Afghanistan, in which India is a major participant. The ISI is determined to regionally isolate India and weaken its influence in countries like Afghanistan. This has prompted the military to provide safe sanctuaries to the Taliban and other militant groups in its tribal areas. The ISI believes that it will be left free to deal with the mess created by the US presence in Afghanistan, and it is in the interest of Islamabad to try to control the Afghan affairs after the US exit. This means using militant proxies like it did after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989. But for New Delhi, a friendly Afghanistan is important not just to neutralise Pakistan's influence but also for regional peace including in Kashmir. After the US exit, the ISI seems determined to bolster the Taliban, with the sole objective of making that country a Taliban-controlled client state. This will have adverse implications for India.

Security Implications for India

Pakistan has been using militancy for short-term gains in Kashmir vis-à-vis India. It has been a strategic move to settle old scores. Islamabad is unwilling to forsake its jihadi policy because of the belief that terror is now its only remaining card so far as Kashmir is concerned. Over the years, the connection with Kashmir has provided social respectability to the jihadi movement. These jihadi groups are a creation of the Pakistani military and remain by and large under its control.

Since army's long-standing support for the jihadi groups in Kashmir has been tactical, therefore, Islamabad is not yet ready to dismantle its terror infrastructure. This is also the reason for the institutionalised support base in Pakistan for the Kashmir cause.

India's relations with Pakistan remained tense in the decade prior to 9/11, as Pakistan-based militants became increasingly assertive in Jammu and Kashmir. The war on terrorism has focused international attention on the terrorist aspects of the anti-India struggle led by the Pakistani military. But because of India's centrality in Pakistan's foreign policy, Islamabad is still wedded to the dangerous belief that it could talk peace and at the same time fuel a proxy war. In the backdrop of 26/11, it may be difficult for the common man to believe that Islamabad is not vigorously abetting militancy in Kashmir any more. It is an unambiguous indication that Pakistan has not given up its strategy of using terrorism to implement its foreign policy objectives.

Pakistan-sponsored militancy in Jammu and Kashmir has seriously affected the regional security environment. The nuclearisation of the sub-continent underscored the urgent need for India-Pakistan joint effort to resolve the issue of Kashmir. An insecurity dilemma has been created in the minds of the policy makers in India by Islamabad linking its own nuclear programme to the unresolved Kashmir dispute. The Kargil war proved beyond doubt that India could not escalate the situation due to fear of provoking an all-out nuclear war. Under the nuclear umbrella, Pakistani military has used terrorism as a major instrument of its foreign policy especially in Jammu and Kashmir. Nuclear weapons have reinforced Pakistan's strategy of low-intensity conflict and proxy-wars because they are seen to minimise the likelihood of conventional military confrontation between the two countries.

Pakistan's continued policy of waging a selective war on terror –supporting some groups who fight against India and lend a helping hand in Afghan insurgency and fighting against those who threaten the army's control of Pakistan - poses a serious threat to the regional security and stability. This selective strategy no doubt impacts the current Indo-Pak peace process. Going the extra mile in the peace process is worth its value only if the Pakistani military corrects its misperceptions about India. The military, therefore, has to change its institutional orientation on the issue of Kashmir and change its strategic posture by dropping its India centrality.

The Pakistan security establishment's double game in dealing with the Taliban is undermining the whole Af-Pak strategy of the US. After the exit of the US forces, Pakistan hopes to secure its western flank through militant proxies and resume its low-intensity conflict against India. Pakistan's major interest lies in influencing Afghan politics to neutralise India's diplomatic presence there by manipulating Taliban's political hierarchy.

A hasty US withdrawal from Afghanistan would mean the real victory of the Pakistani military and the ISI. Once Pakistan's military-ISI combine to make Afghanistan a Taliban-dominated client state, it would be difficult for India to gain strategic primacy in the region. At present, the ISI-Taliban nexus presents more of a pressing challenge to the US military effort on the ground to bring peace in Afghanistan, as it does to New Delhi's policy in the region.

Conclusion

The relationship between the militants and the ISI led to the evolution of extremism in Pakistan. Extremism was initially directed towards Afghanistan and subsequently Kashmir. The Pakistani jihadis sponsored by its military fostered a culture of intolerance in Kashmir. "Kashmir has become both a symbol and battleground of competing ideologies".⁴⁷ The Pakistani strategy was to create a social and communal disorder and thereby weaken the secular base in India. The only way, therefore, to counter the ugly face of Islamic fundamentalism or jihadi ideology is to revive the glory of Kashmiriyat and Sufism.

The other aspect of this militant-military nexus is the Pakistan army's compulsive obsession with the non-existent Indian threat which clearly characterises a close-minded approach to any improvement in India-Pakistan relations. It is not Kashmir alone but Pakistan's use of terrorism as an instrument of state policy that is causing rift between India and Pakistan. Therefore, resolving India-Pakistan tensions over Kashmir and other bilateral issues would help assuage Islamabad's sense of insecurity and deprive the ISI of its rationale for supporting the militants in Kashmir and Afghanistan. Overplaying Pakistan's sensitivity towards Kabul and ignoring India's security concerns may not help the US in its mission in Afghanistan. India's interests lie in a stable Afghanistan and New Delhi has carved out a strategic foothold there with its development diplomacy. The US, therefore, has to move away from its Pakistan-centric approach in dealing with the situation in the region, while acknowledging India's role in the evolving security dynamic in Afghanistan. Also, the US must not ignore China's growing interest in Pakistan and Afghanistan. As is apparent, in spite of deteriorating US-Pakistan relations, the reason for Islamabad's haughty behaviour is its growing friendship with Beijing.

The Pakistani army and the ISI have a long record of relying on non-state actors to achieve their strategic interests in Kashmir and Kabul. These groups are not strictly non-state actors, but rather extensions of the state intelligence apparatus. By using these non-state actors, the Pakistani military has been able to escape international accountability for its covert actions. ISI's pre-eminence in Pakistan's India policy is a fact. The military-intelligence-militant complex has started hurting Pakistan both internally and externally. It is, therefore, time to purge the Islamist sympathisers or militant-friendly elements from within the army and

the ISI. It is also imperative to “civilianise and incrementally exert civilian control over the military and its intelligence agencies”⁴⁸ without destabilising the fragile civilian government.

It is true that India-Pakistan peace initiative is moving forward, even if at a slow pace. After 26/11, there have been some signs of forward movement, especially in terms of trade. Recent indicators have been relatively more positive. This positive change in Indo-Pak relations does not mean that the India-focused jihadi machinery, most specifically, the LeT and JeM is being scaled down organisationally. The dismantling of the terrorist infrastructure on Pakistani soil is possible only if the rational elements of the army and the ISI, in alliance with democratic forces, take on this radicalised segment within the state structure and in the society. Sacrificing its centrality in Pakistani state structure, for the greater cause of peace, is not the priority for the military. As long as the military’s twisted logic of insecurity vis-à-vis India dominates its thinking, it would not allow the civilian regime to further the cause of bilateral peace. Anti-Indianism exists in certain circles in Pakistan post-9/11 but it is the anti-American sentiment which has overtaken anti-Indianism.

In the post-9/11 period, civil-military relations in Pakistan are slowly being rebalanced under the praise-and-pressure tactics of the US. This rebalancing should aim at wresting away the military’s control of relations with India. The civilian government, the army-ISI duo, the jihadis, all appear to be participants in the Pakistani power structure. Post-Abbottabad, it is desirable that the US applies discernible pressure on Pakistan to make a decisive break with terrorists and stop using terrorism as a state policy. “We must aim at raising the costs for Pakistan’s sponsorship of terrorism”,⁴⁹ rather than simply waging a purely defensive battle on our own territory against Pakistan’s asymmetric adventurism. On the other hand, Pakistan in the interest of its own national security, must abandon the institutionalisation of terrorism as a tool of external power projection.



Notes:

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