

Understanding the Motivation of Pakistan's Security and Defence Policies: Roots of Pakistan's Emergence as the Epicentre of Terrorism ¹

AK Verma*

A scholar of security issues must call a spade a spade. His appraisal must remain cold and objective. Otherwise, falsity will creep into his analyses.

The idea of Pakistan survives on the premise of enmity towards India. This premise came into existence well before Pakistan became a reality. Some in Pakistan believe that the country started incubating the moment the first Muslim stepped on the soil of the subcontinent. That belief originates from the conviction that the Islamic civilisation cannot intermingle with another civilisation because it always seeks to conquer and subjugate. That is how Islam has spread all across the world from a tiny enclave in the desert of Arabia, destroying frontiers, borders, kingdoms, empires, traditions, cultures and civilisations.

The Muslim rulers of India could not overwhelm the indigenous culture. Therefore, the Islamic and non Islamic communities lived their lives in a milieu of uneasy coexistence. The British arrived on the scene and could make no impact on the prevailing realities. The two communities, while maintaining a broad harmony, did not allow customary sociological and religious barriers to be crossed. The impetus for this mainly came from those who were the descendants of the outsiders, the Ashrafs. At the same time they were keen to resurrect the glory of the Mughal empire. Their effort in this direction has been labelled as the first war of independence in 1857. From another perspective, this mutiny was the first Islamist war in India. It was basically a military uprising against the British but it became a magnet for many Islamists to come together to bring back the Muslim rule to India. The debacle of the mutiny led subsequently to the creation of the Islamist Deoband movement and the establishment of an institution at Deoband for propagating Islamic fundamentalist interpretations. After Pakistan's creation its descendant, the Pakistani Deoband movement, became the fountainhead of jihad.

* **AK Verma** is a retired Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India. He was the chief of R&AW at the time of IPKF operations.

Jinnah's concept of Pakistan was not based on any theological attachment. He simply wanted a territory where Muslims would not be outnumbered by non Muslims who might otherwise dominate over them. Thus, a fear of the majority which had at its root a hatred for the majority, was the prime mover for Pakistan. Unfortunately the horrific carnages at the time of the partition of India in 1947 and the agony resulting from population movements magnified these visceral sentiments. Ever since, Pakistan has wallowed in its hate for India. Therefore, from day one, its leadership has been looking for ways and means to diminish India and to destroy it, if possible.

Pakistan has followed many strategies to achieve this end. The tribal incursion it engineered in 1947 in J&K was the first of the many wars it unleashed against India. It lost each one of them – in 1965, 1971 and Kargil, 1999. Each loss made it determined to do more and better next time. The thinking, of some senior generals like former chief of army staff Jehangir Karamat, that war alone could solve India-Pakistan problems has never been abandoned. The drive for parity with India remains despite growing evidence that geography and demography cannot support such ambitions. These wars disclosed the pattern in decision making: the decisions were taken by a coterie without involving the army brass, the navy, the air force, the foreign office or civilian leaders. The pros and cons, including international reactions, were never been fully assessed. Individual impulse by and large seemed to have been the trigger in each case. Inevitably, ending in failure.

This mindset resulted in Pakistan landing up in the lap of the US in the early stages of the Cold War between the Soviets and US. In 1955 Pakistan joined CENTO and SEATO, and received extensive military hardware like Patton tanks for defending itself against possible onslaughts of international communism. However, the unstated Pakistani intentions were to strengthen its military to counter India. Pakistan's 1965 war against India was undertaken on the comfort of these supplies. When the US failed to meet Pakistan's subsequent expectations Pakistan moved closer to China after the 1962 Indo-China war. In the following a years the anti communist Pakistan became China's closest ally and China its chief source of arms supplies. The common point of agreement was containment of India.

The 1971 war again proved that Pakistan was no match for India. The war brought a regime change in Pakistan with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto becoming the new President. Bhutto was convinced that only a nuclear arsenal could bring safety and security to Pakistan. A crash nuclear weapons development programme was launched and China readily agreed to be the source of nuclear weapon technology and other knowhow. It furnished the design of an early atom bomb to Pakistan - which it developed and China offered its Lopnor facility for testing it. China has now become the mainstay of Pakistan in various nuclear energy related programmes, with China circumventing international nuclear policy agreements to assist Pakistan. China

also put Pakistan in touch with North Korea from where it obtained advanced missile technology which has enabled it to develop delivery weapons, with nuclear tips, capable of hitting any Indian city. The Pakistan nuclear weapons programme is now focused on evolving tactical nuclear weapons, designed as an antidote to India's Cold Start strategy. It is now estimated that the Pakistani nuclear arsenal is growing at the fastest pace in the world creating anxieties for all nations that cherish non-proliferation.

The anxieties arise because Pakistan has been the biggest and the most dangerous proliferator ever since nuclear weapons were developed. Apart from providing nuclear centrifuge technology to North Korea, as a quid pro quo for advanced technology for developing long range missiles, Pakistan has considered transferring the know how to other Muslim nations like Iran, Libya and Saudi Arabia. Actually it did sell centrifuge technology to Iran and Libya. Pakistan saw its bomb not merely as a bulwark for its own defence but also as an Islamic bomb, for safeguarding Islamic interests in other parts of the world. The Islamic bomb would primarily target Israel but would could come in handy against any nation identified as an enemy of Islam.

Pakistan does not subscribe to the 'No First Use' doctrine and has at least on four occasions, considered a nuclear strike against India. The first was in mid 1980s when Pakistan apprehended a joint attack on the Kahuta enrichment plant by Israel and India. *Operation Brasstacks* in 1986-87 was the trigger for the second. The third was in April-May 1990 when Pakistan expected that the insurgency supported by it in J&K would invite retaliation by a massive IAF air strike that would target training camps in POK. The seriousness of Pakistani intentions can be judged from the fact that it sent its foreign minister, Sahabzada Yakub Khan, to convey a veiled threat to his Indian counterpart, Inder Kumar Gujral. The Americans were so alarmed by Pakistani actions that they dispatched their deputy national security advisor Robert Gates to Islamabad to read out the riot act to them. Gates thereafter, visited India also but did not disclose the reason for his mission to Pakistan. India thus remained unaware that a nuclear Armageddon had just been averted.

The Kargil war of 1999 was the fourth occasion. It was President Bill Clinton who on July 4 warned the visiting Pak PM Nawaz Sharif against his army's plans to use its nuclear arsenal against India in this war. Two conclusions are manifest from these episodes: one, the Pakistani military leadership is quick to put its finger on the nuclear trigger; and two, it takes such decisions alone. All the nuclear triggers in the National Command Control are under the control of the chief of army staff as if he is also the principal executive of the government. With a creeping jihad mentality in the Pak military, how their leadership will handle their nuclear arsenal in the event of another crisis remains an imponderable.

However, it is the asymmetric proxy war of Pakistan against India, orchestrated by the ISI, which is acquiring dangerous proportions. The objectives of the ISI are synchronous with those of the military leadership i.e. to destabilise and destroy India. The ISI has gone about it in a methodical manner. It has identified the fault lines of India and is seeking to aggravate them. The war in Afghanistan created opportunities galore for them.

The Durand Line which marks an international border through the heart of the Pakistani tribal territory had strained relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan since the latter's inception in 1947. The Pakistani Intelligence apparatus had, therefore, maintained close links with the Afghan Pashtuns. When Soviet troops entered Afghanistan, Pakistan, aided by US and Saudi Arabia, supported the Afghan Mujahidin. Thus commenced the jihad in Afghanistan with the Pakistani ISI in the lead, and exercising exclusive control on the flow of arms and finances received from US and Saudi Arabia for the Mujahidin. It has been estimated that 80000 to 90000 trainees had been imparted skills in terror warfare at these camps by the time the Soviets moved out of the country.²

The Pakistani military leadership was quick to recognise the potential of these cadres for unleashing an insurgency in Kashmir. The ISI, already in charge of the Afghan operations, was instructed to do the ground work for Kashmir. The ISI commenced training of Kashmiris in the Afghan camps from 1983. A part of funding from US and Saudi Arabia was quietly diverted to the financing of the training and upkeep of Kashmiris.

It must be noted that operations in Kashmir were perceived as another jihad, distinct from the one already in underway in Afghanistan, but one that was part of a global Islamic jihad which incorporated in it other agendas as well. The concept of a global Islamic jihad had been articulated by the Palestinian ideologue Abdullah Yusuf Mustapha Azzam who had set up an institution in Peshawar and had become the mentor of Osama bin Laden after the latter moved there from Sudan in 1996. Azzam's pan islamic approach drew Muslims from diverse countries to Afghanistan to join in the struggle against the Soviets. Azzam also became the inspiration for establishing the Markaz-ud-Dawa-wal-Irshad, MDI, in Muridke, for transferring training, management, propaganda and indoctrination techniques, gleaned from Afghanistan to the J&K theatre. The ISI had a direct role in all this and was soon training MDI volunteers in its camps. A military wing Lashkar-e-Taiba, (LeT) was also added to MDI.³ Azzam's call for a pan islamic struggle was instrumental in the Pak military leadership later promoting the view that they could be in the vanguard of any such movement. Many terrorists, being trained in ISI camps, were, therefore, encouraged to operate in various other trouble spots such as Chechen, Dagestan, Bosnia, Xinjian, and peaceful areas such as Bali, Spain, UK etc.

With the Soviets quitting Afghanistan, the tempo of terror operations in Afghanistan slackened but picked up in J&K. The LeT had been setting up camps with ISI support at a furious pace. Several thousands got trained in these camps in the succeeding years. As a result the number of incidents of violence in J&K soared from 390 in 1988 to 2100 in 1989 to close to 4000 in 1990. It was evident that Pakistani aims of stirring up trouble in J&K were succeeding. This was the time (December 1989) when Pakistan chose to mount the military exercise Zarb-e-Momeen, with 200,000 troops and almost its entire air fleet and also sent Sahabzada Yakub Khan, its foreign minister, to intimidate India and demonstrate its single mindedness regarding a Kashmiri adventure.⁴ A US intervention in the shape of Robert Gates mission to Pakistan averted the worst case scenario.

After 12 years of hard fighting the Mujahidin were able to capture Kabul in 1992. Now started another season of scheming for the Pakistani ringmasters to get the Afghan Pashtuns re-establish themselves as the supreme power in Kabul and Afghanistan. The Pakistanis strategic aims were to instal a surrogate power for better depth on its western side and to prevent re-emergence of India as a significant presence there. The ISI became the designated medium and the Afghan Taliban its preferred instrument.

Following the Taliban's success in carving out a new government in Afghanistan under Mullah Omar who chose Kandahar as his new capital, the ISI brought Omar and Osama bin Laden together, hoping they would join hands for operations in Kashmir. What emerged was a blueprint for a global Islamic jihad, in keeping with the dreams of Abdullah Azzam. Among the many schemes formulated by Bin Laden from Kandahar was the hijack of IC 814 in association with the ISI who arranged arms for the hijackers at Kathmandu and providing guidance through satellite telephony from Rawalpindi. Pakistan, Bin Laden and Omar were now in a new partnership, each infused with a pan Islamic idealism, Pakistan hoping to become the political leader of this pan Islam aim, Omar wanting to be its spiritual Emir-ul-Momineen, and Bin Laden aspiring to be the new pan Islamic ideologue.

September 11 which was a monumental Islamic terror strike snapped this alignment and Osama and Omar becoming the hunted. To protect its nuclear arsenal from possible damage and to forestall India upstaging it in Afghanistan, Pakistan broke ranks with Taliban under American pressure but the ISI kept a backdoor linkage. In Pakistani assessment the Taliban were destined to return to governing Afghanistan. Through this low grade duplicity it wanted to keep the relationship warm for that day. The ISI Taliban relationship strengthened after US attention got diverted to Iraq from Afghanistan in 2003. At the same time the ISI tried to convince the US about its bonafides by getting some Al Qaeda operatives like Khalid Sheikh Mohd and Abu Zubaida arrested in Pakistan.

The attack on the Indian Parliament on Dec 13, 2001 marked a major milestone in Pakistani terror campaign against India. The two countries could have lurched into a war but international diplomacy saved the day. The Pakistani government was compelled to ban the LeT and the JeM, the two principal terror organisations but it was just an eyewash. The ISI support to them continued without the slightest break since both these organisations had become constituents of an ISI controlled complex terror conglomerate for waging the proxy war against India. The LeT resurfaced under a new banner as the Jamat-Ud-Dawa and worked feverishly to expand its camps and train volunteers. By 2008 it counted nearly 150,000 as its functional members. It also enjoyed the active support of Al Qaeda, which multiplying its reach.⁵

Pakistan's duplicitous conduct towards the US vis-à-vis the Taliban also became more brazen. With an eye on the future the Taliban were elevated to an asset class, never to be forsaken. The ISI got into the business of reviving the Taliban, supporting their expeditions, training their cadres extensively in their camps, and protecting and harbouring the Afghan Taliban Shura, in Quetta.

This combine consisting of the Taliban, Al Qaeda and Pakistani terror groups, and the clandestine support from Pakistani military and intelligence infrastructure, has given a new impetus to Islamic jihad. No single individual, but a common ideology and a common enemy list are their sources of inspiration. Their common ideology is derived from the puritanical Wahabi Salafi Islam. Their common enemies are the Christians, the Jews and the Hindus. Their theatre of operations is not just limited to the subcontinent. The ideology has spread far beyond its frontiers.

One consequence, not anticipated in Pakistan, is that Pakistani society has itself got infected by this virus and the nation is no longer under the complete control of its executive. Vast sections of the Pashtun population and the Punjabi heartland have come under its influence. Members of the terror syndicates and the military and intelligence services have their recruiting areas in the same territories. The virus, therefore, is well entrenched in these bureaucracies, giving rise to a jihadi ethos. There have been numerous attacks on Pakistani establishments, including military and civil, in which the insiders, so affected, have had a role. Suicide bombers have been used. Pashtun belts in NWFP and FATA have openly displayed Taliban tendencies, compelling military action by Pakistan. A situation of a civil war now exists there. Nearly 25000 Pakistanis have lost their lives in such violence as compared to 8800 in Afghanistan.

The chicken has come home to roost. The terror monster the Pakistani agencies created is now threatening the state of Pakistan itself. The number of jihadi terrorists present in the Pashtun belt has been estimated at around 50,000. A poll

in June 2010 found that jihad in Kashmir remains a popular objective with a 56 per cent approval rating.⁶

By staging the many targeted strikes on Mumbai in November 2008, the LeT has demonstrated that it is now a player on the international terror stage. The strikes were carefully planned and executed with the assistance of ISI which gave the terrorists specialised training in naval commando warfare and provided a boat to them. The LeT has directed its terror attacks against India in Afghanistan also. Sometimes it has not spared the NATO forces as well. The troubling scenario of it getting access to a nuclear bomb has been haunting the Indian and Western intelligence services for long.

Pakistan has truly become now the epicentre of international terror which is another face of international Islamic jihad. If the Pakistani state turns jihadi the Al Qaeda's wildest dreams would have been fulfilled. Dire consequences for its neighbourhood and distant lands alike such as China, Central Asian Republics, Europe and US will follow from this. There are already radical Islamist groups active in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and these will get more virulent. Similarly, Islamism is posing problems in Russia, China and countries further afield like, Thailand, Indonesia and Philippines and these will grow worse. The frightening scenario is also causing anxieties in Pakistan but so far there is no credible evidence yet to suggest that it has had any second thoughts regarding its policy towards India. Apparently, support to groups like LeT, Afghan Taliban and Quetta Shura is considered to be strategically more important than countervailing disadvantages. The Indian options should, therefore, not be limited to just dialogue. They should be determined on the basis of the possibility of a worst case scenario coming to pass. Already, terror has become indigenous in India. If the trend continues the suicide bomber can be expected to make its appearance in India.



Notes:

- 1 This article is based on published information and author's insight into security and Pakistani affairs. The absolute figures quoted therein have been culled out from Bruce Riedel, *Deadly Embrace: Pakistan, America and the Future of the Global Jihad*, New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers India, 2011. Bruce Riedel was a former CIA analyst and US Presidential Adviser, and presently a senior Fellow at the Brookings Institute.
- 2 Bruce Riedel, *Deadly Embrace*, Op Cit, p. 12.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 The poll showing 56 per cent of people in Pakistan favoured a jihad in Kashmir was conducted by Pak Institute of Peace Studies in June 2010.