

URI ATTACK, INDIA'S RESPONSE: WHAT NEXT?

SHALINI CHAWLA

Simmering tensions of varying intensity between India-Pakistan are not new to the South Asian region. Islamabad's rather widely acknowledged support to non-state actors against India is also not new. What is different today is India's diplomatic and military posture to counter Pakistan's strategy of pursuing proxy war, which it has followed for more than six decades. Islamabad seems to be confident of its approach of following a sub-conventional war against India and shielding it with a widely proclaimed 'first use' nuclear doctrine (unwritten!) and constant denial of its acts. India's reaction to the Uri terrorist attack is a distinct departure from the strategic position it had adopted in the past. India's restrained positioning as a responsible power has been misunderstood by the Pakistani leadership as lack of political will and military capability.

THE URI ATTACK AND INDIA'S RESPONSE

On September 20, in a major terrorist operation conducted by the Jaish-e-Mohammad terrorists, 19 Indian soldiers died near the Line of Control (LoC) in a highly guarded army camp in an Indian Army Brigade Headquarters in Uri. Once again, the repeat of a familiar sequence of events was witnessed – a terrorist act conceived in, and supported from, the Pakistani soil, with the Indian government finding proof of Pakistan's complicity but the Pakistan government denying its involvement in the attack. Pakistani Prime Minister

Dr **Shalini Chawla** is Senior Fellow at the Centre for Air Power Studies, New Delhi.

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Nawaz Sharif claimed that India was behaving in an "irresponsible manner" by blaming Pakistan without any evidence. The Uri attack generated tremendous anger within India and the much expected unanimous opinion in India was that New Delhi needs to respond to Pakistan's acts of terror.

The global condemnation of the terrorist attack in Uri and the support for India rendered Pakistan's attempts to internationalise the current unrest in Kashmir ineffective. Islamabad, till now, has managed to use 'denial' somewhat successfully over the past decades. It was rather 'surprising' for the Pakistani military leadership to receive widespread international criticism for Uri. Nawaz Sharif, in his attempt to balance the adverse international reaction to the attack, said that the incident in Uri was a reaction to the unrest in Kashmir.

New Delhi acted systematically in exposing Pakistan, and launched a diplomatic offensive against it at the national, regional and global levels. India was blunt in exposing Pakistan after the Uri attack. Exercising its right of reply during the General Debate of the 71st session of the UN General Assembly on September 21, the Indian representative said:

The terrorist attack is part of a trail of a continuous flow of terrorists trained and armed by our neighbour and tasked to carry out terrorist attacks in my country.What we see in Pakistan... is a terrorist state, which channelises billions of dollars, much of it diverted from international aid, to training, financing and supporting terrorist groups as militant proxies against its neighbours.¹

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, at the UN General Assembly on September 26, called for the global isolation of Pakistan and said, "Here

1. "India UN Secretary Eenam Gambhir's reply to Nawaz Sharif's UNGA Speech". See, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tbi5XPcr9dc>. Accessed on October 1, 2016.

are nations that still speak the language of terrorism, that nurture it, peddle it, and export it. To shelter terrorists has become the calling card of these nations. We must identify these nations and hold them to account. These nations, in which UN designated terrorists roam freely, lead processions and deliver their poisonous sermons of hate with impunity, are as culpable as the very terrorists they harbour. Such countries should have no place in the comity of nations.”²

Following the Uri attacks, India has been very actively talking about the global isolation of Pakistan. The Uri attack was globally condemned and India did get the support of the international community on this front. Pakistan holds a rather contradictory position where, on one side, it does not want to believe that global isolation against it is gaining momentum, and, on the other, it portrays its victimhood, calling this an Indian conspiracy to degrade the country. Pakistan’s position is weakening as the major powers are seeking increasing engagement with India, which is not only a growing economy, but has also, over the decades, proved to be a responsible state, with strategic restraint.

Pakistan has been recipient of lavish US military and economic assistance post 9/11. However, in the recent past, on multiple occasions, Washington had warned Pakistan to alter its strategy of supporting terrorism. One of the most noticeable warnings was issued ahead of President Obama’s visit to India in January 2015, when the US asked Pakistan to ensure that there was no cross-border terror incident during the trip.³ Following the Uri attack, US National Security Adviser Susan Rice called National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and reiterated that the US expects Pakistan to “take effective action to

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2. Smt Sushma Swaraj’s speech at the 71st session of UNGA in New York: 26.09.2016. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_JVlkSPW23M. Accessed on October 3, 2016.

3. “No Terror During Obama India Trip, US Warns Pak” *The Times of India*, January 19, 2015, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/No-terror-during-Obama-India-trip-US-warns-Pak/articleshow/45935445.cms>. Accessed on January 20, 2015.

combat UN-designated terrorist entities, including LeT, JeM, and affiliates.”⁴

The statements by France, Russia, Germany and Japan condemning the attack also stood in support of India, opposing Pakistan's support to terrorism.

Russia said, “In view of the attack on the Indian air base in Pathankot in January this year, we note with concern the resurgence of terrorist attacks near the Line of Control. It is alarming and, according to New Delhi, the attack on the military unit near the town of Uri was committed from the territory of Pakistan”.⁵

France issued a statement, standing on India's side, “More than ever, we stand alongside India, France's strategic partner, to fight against this scourge.....We call for decisive actions to be taken within the respect of international law against terrorist groups targeting India and in particular, Lashkar-e-Tayebba, Jaish-e-Mohammad and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen”.⁶

Germany voiced its support for India's position on cross-border terrorism, “Germany stands firmly on the side of India in the fight against terrorism. Every country has the responsibility to take decisive action against terrorism, which emanates from its territory.”⁷

Adding to the discomfort of Pakistan was the condemnation from major players in the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) grouping: Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar and Bahrain. The OIC has been a critical group which has traditionally supported Pakistan on the Kashmir issue. The Indian media reported that all these countries issued statements in support of India, without directly naming Pakistan. Saudi Arabia, which has been Pakistan's critical partner, conveyed, “strong condemnation and denunciation of the terrorist attack”.⁸ The UAE also condemned the attack

4. “US Security Advisor Calls Ajit Doval, says ‘Expect Pakistan to Take Action Against Terror’,” *The Indian Express*, September 29, 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/uri-attack-susan-rice-ajit-doal-kashmir-3055437/>. Accessed on October 2, 2016.

5. Shyam Balasubramanian, “Condemning Uri Terror Attack, France, Russia Score Direct Hits Against Pakistan”, *The Times of India*, September 21, 2016.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Shubajit Roy, “OIC Members Join Chorus Against Uri Attack”, *The Indian Express*, September 21, 2016.

and expressed “solidarity and support to all actions it(India) may take to confront and eradicate terrorism”.⁹

The countries in the South Asia region stood in support of India’s position and the scheduled South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Summit (2016), to be held in Islamabad, was cancelled due to the boycott by all the member nations because of the lack of a “conducive atmosphere”. Bangladesh government directly pointed at Pakistan in official communication to the SAARC chair, Nepal, and said, “The growing interference in the internal affairs of Bangladesh by one country has created an environment which is not conducive to the successful hosting of the 19th SAARC Summit in Islamabad in November 2016.”¹⁰

Afghanistan remains restive and unstable due to Pakistan’s desire to create, and sustain, strategic depth. Hitting out directly at Pakistan, the Afghan Ambassador to India, Shiada Mohd Abdali, said, “These terrorist groups, in my opinion, are all coming from the same sources but with different names, and thus, India-Afghanistan and the world community should come up with a joint strategy to fight terrorism out....It is a matter of great sadness, we condemn this strongly.”¹¹

INDIA’S MILITARY RESPONSE

On September 29, the Indian government announced that the Indian Army had conducted surgical strikes across the Line of Control (LoC) on the night of September 28/29, 2016, targeting terrorist launch pads. An official statement released by New Delhi confirmed that there were no aerial strikes and no helicopters were used during the surgical strikes. The details of the operation were not released by the Government of India due to security considerations. India’s robust response was also a cumulative build-up to

9. Ibid.

10. Smita Sharma, “SAARC Summit: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan Join India in Boycott; Pakistan Isolated”, *India Today*, September 28, 2016, at <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/saarc-bangladesh-india-pulls-out-pakistan-terrorism-islamabad/1/774981.html>. Accessed on October 5, 2016.

11. “Uri Attack: Afghan Envoy Calls for a Joint Strategy to Fight Terrorist Groups”, *Asian News International*, September 20, 2016, <http://www.aninews.in/newsdetail-MTA/MjgwMzc0-uri-attack-afghan-envoy-calls-for-joint-strategy-to-fight-terrorist-groups.html>. Accessed on September 23, 2016.

the series of terrorists attacks which have been taking place across the LoC in the recent past.

Director General Military Operations (DGMO), Lt Gen Ranbir Singh, announced on September 29, 2016:

Despite our persistent urging that Pakistan respect its commitment made in January 2004 not to allow its soil or territory under its control to be used for terrorism against India, there has been no let-up in infiltration or terrorist actions inside our territory..... Based on very credible and specific information which we received yesterday that some terrorist teams had positioned themselves at launch pads along the Line of Control with an aim to carry out infiltration and terrorist strikes in Jammu & Kashmir and in various other metros in our country, the Indian Army conducted surgical strikes last night at these launch pads.....During these counter-terrorist operations, significant casualties have been caused to the terrorists and those who are trying to support them.¹²

Pakistan denied the surgical strikes and termed it as Indian propaganda. A military statement said, "The notion of a surgical strike linked to alleged terrorists bases is an illusion being deliberately generated by India to create false effects."¹³ It went on to say, "This quest by the Indian establishment to create media hype by rebranding cross-border fire as a surgical strike is fabrication of the truth. Pakistan has made it clear that if there is a surgical strike on Pakistani soil, the same will be strongly responded."¹⁴

Islamabad had little choice but to deny India's surgical strikes. The completely unexpected response from New Delhi actually challenged Pakistan's nuclear doctrine which has very often asserted 'first use' in case of any conventional move/response by India, projecting an extremely low threshold. The Pakistani

12. "Transcript of Joint Briefing by MEA and MoD (September 29, 2016), Ministry of External Affairs, September 29, 2016, http://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/27446/Transcript_of_Joint_Briefing_by_MEA_and_MoD_September_29_2016, Accessed on September 30, 2016.

13. "Army Rubbishes Indian 'Surgical Strikes' Claim as Two Pakistani Soldiers Killed at LoC", *Dawn*, September 29, 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1286881>. Accessed on October 1, 2016.

14. Ibid.

military leadership's acceptance of India's surgical strikes would have increased pressure on the military to take action against India. Pakistan military had suffered humiliation and loss of trust within the country after the killing of Osama bin Laden in 2012. The military regained its image and prestige in the last four years with Gen Raheel Sharif coming into power. Gen Raheel Sharif had a strong anti-India agenda, which was strengthened by the fact that his uncle and brother were killed in the 1965 and 1971 Wars respectively. Sharif had projected himself as a crusader against terrorism and corruption, and was extremely proud of the anti-terror Operation Zarb-e-Azb, launched on June 15, 2014, in North Waziristan against the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). He is popular in Pakistan, enjoyed a larger-than-life status but his inflated image received a setback with India's counter-terror strikes.

The Uri attack received widespread global condemnation and, much to Islamabad's surprise, world opinion seemed to be altered against Pakistan. Islamabad, at this point of time, would not have liked to escalate tensions when it was globally recognised as the centre of extremism. Recognition of the surgical strikes would also counter Pakistan's consistent denial of the presence of terrorist launch pads in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK). Therefore, the logical choice for the Pakistani leadership was to deny India's reaction.

India's reaction and successful surgical strikes have multiple connotations:

- For the first time, it raised the cost for Pakistan for pursuing terrorism as a foreign policy tool against India.
- It challenged a rather historic notion and belief (within Pakistan) that India lacks the political will to react to Pakistan's acts of terror.
- It was crucial in uplifting the morale and confidence of the people and armed forces in India.
- Pakistan has been in constant denial of the terror acts and has also maintained a stance that it has little control over the terror outfits. Hence, India was left with no choice but to act towards the anti-India groups based on the Pakistani soil.
- The Indian military response challenged Pakistan's repeated posturing of irrational and unpredictable behaviour, especially its nuclear positioning which projects a low threshold.

Pakistan has struggled with its insecurities from the time of its creation. Its deep identity crisis and the dominant military lobby never allowed the perceived threat perceptions to settle down and for it to function as a normal state.

PAKISTAN'S INDIA STRATEGY

Reaction to the Uri incident was unexpected for Pakistan, and India has managed to raise the cost for Pakistan's strategy of using terrorism as a policy tool. But the deeper question is: will India's reaction to the Uri attack alter Pakistan's grand strategy? Will Pakistan alter its strategic calculus which it has pursued for decades now? What would be Pakistan's behaviour in the near future? It would be useful to analyse Pakistan's strategy against India to be able to understand Pakistan's future behaviour.

Pakistan has struggled with its insecurities from the time of its creation. Its deep identity crisis and the dominant military lobby never allowed the perceived threat perceptions to settle down and for it to function as a normal state. The threat of Indian domination was propounded and maintained from the very beginning. Pakistan's prime objective as a state has been to achieve parity with India. Since it has been unable to do so, 'undermining' India's growth became the focus of Pakistan's national strategy.

For a comprehensive understanding of the Pakistani strategy against India, it would be useful to look into all three dimensions of the strategy which have a direct correlation.

Pakistan has opted for a three-dimensional approach in its strategy towards India:

- **Conventional Level:** Pakistan has tried hard to attain parity with India in terms of its military build-up. The military leadership in Pakistan has focussed primarily on defence build-up and modernisation, highlighting the strategic threats in the region. *Kashmir* has eventually become more an excuse than the real cause, and the military in Pakistan has boosted the issue within the country, adding to the insecurity of the nation and building a legitimate basis for weapons modernisation. Pakistan has maintained a high defence budget, at an average rate of 5.5 per cent of

the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which, according to a retired Air Marshal of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF), did not include major weapon systems.¹⁵

This insecurity has been further deepened by the fragmentation of the Pakistani society as the frequently changing regimes in Pakistan and fragile democratic structure have failed to generate a sense of nationalism in the country. Islamic extremism and *jihadi* terrorism have continued to prosper in the country, creating a deep armament culture in the country.

The basic objectives shaping the arms acquisitions of Pakistan are as follows:

- From the time of its creation, Pakistan has been highly suspicious of India and the adversarial relationship with India has played a major role in the formation of its threat perceptions. The commonly accepted notion is that India, with its hegemonic ambitions, would dominate the South Asian region. The dominant military lobby in Pakistan has aggressively propagated the Indian threat within Pakistan to legitimise the country's high defence spending, and, on the international front, to support the acquisition of high technology weaponry. This also interacts with, and promotes, the military's special and dominant role in Pakistan's power structure.
- Pakistan has been constantly engaged in the battle of matching Indian conventional military superiority. The strategic aims, as brought out in the Pakistani writings, are: "to strengthen national power; to prevent open aggression by India; to induce India to modify its goals, strategies, tactics and operations; to attain a position of security or, if possible, dominance,

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15. Air Mshl A. Rashid Shaikh, PAF (Retd) "Security and Development: Hobson's Choice", *Defence Journal*, vol. XXI, May-June 1996, p.13, as cited in Jasjit Singh, "Trends in Defence Expenditure", *Asian Strategic Review 1998-99* (New Delhi, Knowledge World, 1999). p. 75.

which would enhance the role of other (non-military) means of conflict; to promote and capitalise on advances in technology in order to reach parity or superiority in military power;”¹⁶

- Pakistan has relied more on high technology weapons to seek competitive military advantage. The desire to acquire high technology weapons has been very strong in the Pakistan military and the alliance with the United States has provided it with opportunities to acquire high technology weapons.
- Pakistan has believed in offensive aggressive strategies and has had a deep-rooted belief that by going on the offensive, smaller size forces in history have won wars against bigger enemies. All the four wars which Pakistan has fought with India (in 1947-48, 1965, 1971 and 1999), have been initiated by Pakistan. The war in 1971 was caused by Pakistan's internal instability. But the actual war was initiated by Pakistan with a preemptive air strike against Indian Air Force (IAF) bases on December 3. In addition, it adopted the offensive route for its covert war through terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) since 1988 (besides that in Punjab in 1983-93).

The Military Build-up in Pakistan

The defence build-up in Pakistan has been facilitated by mainly three factors:

- Its military's alliance with the United States
- Pakistan's consistently growing relationship with China
- Financial autonomy of the military within Pakistan

American Alliance and Pakistan's Military Modernisation

During the early decades, Pakistan acquired arms mainly from the United States of America (for high-technology systems) and China (for low cost but efficient systems), although a certain proportion was contributed by France. In fact, the massive US arms aid to Pakistan in the late 1950s provided it with both the incentive to initiate the 1965 War as well as

16. Ross Masood Husain, "Threat Perception and Military Planning in Pakistan; The Impact of Technology, Doctrine and Arms Control", in Eric Arnett, ed., *Threat Perception in Pakistan* (SIPRI Publications), p.130.

demonstrated the philosophy of high-technology weapons providing a competitive advantage against India which, in any case, was saddled at that time with obsolete systems being employed after the war in 1962. The classic case was the shooting down of the first four Vampire vintage aircraft by a combination of F-104 Starfighters and F-86 Sabres on the opening day of the war, forcing India to withdraw these and older fighters from combat, thus, reducing the numerical advantage that India was supposed to enjoy.

A mutual defence assistance agreement signed on May 19, 1954, between the US and Pakistan was the first formal bilateral security commitment between the two countries which also provided a legal basis to the US military assistance.¹⁷

American sanctions after the 1965 War suspended the US arms supply, but the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan in December 1979 led the Americans to review their South Asian policy and, consequently, Pakistan entered into a new engagement with the US. Pakistan was declared as a “frontline state” and, in return, received massive military aid.¹⁸ Gen Zia-ul-Haq managed to negotiate an elaborate military and security-related aid package of \$3.2 billion. The US military assistance programme included the sale of 40 F-16 Falcon multi-role combat aircraft, one of the most advanced military aircraft in the world at that time. Pakistan also received the Harpoon anti-ship missiles, upgraded M-48 tanks, tank recovery vehicles, towed and self-propelled field artillery, attack helicopters, and second-hand destroyers.¹⁹ The second US package worth \$4.02 billion commenced in 1987 but was suspended after the US arms embargo imposed in 1990 due to Pakistan crossing the “red line” to acquire nuclear weapons capability.

17. Dennis Kux, *The United States and Pakistan, 1947-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 67.

18. Immediately after this development, President Carter unveiled his doctrine, which included, “assembly of a Rapid Deployment Force (RDF), increase of naval presence on Indian Ocean, a collective security framework in the region and a commitment to the defence of Pakistan by transfer of significant amount of weapons and dollars.” *The New York Times*, January 25, 1980, as cited by Hamid Hussain, “Tale of a Love Affair That Never Was: United States-Pakistan Defence Relations”, at <http://www.defencejournal.com/2002/june/loveaffair.htm>

19. Rodney W. Jones, “The Military and Security in Pakistan”, in Craig Baxter ed., *Zia’s Pakistan, Politics and Stability in a Frontline State*, (Lahore: Vanguard, 1985), p.83.

After the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, Pakistan came under strong pressure to cooperate with the United States in its war against the Taliban and Al Qaeda in neighbouring Afghanistan. Pakistan's alliance with America post 9/11 lifted its economy out of the doldrums, provided the opportunity to grow, and again opened the long desired supplies of defence equipment from the United States. The US designated Pakistan as a "major non-NATO ally" in March 2004, giving Pakistan a distinct advantage in terms of obtaining greater military and security assistance. Pakistan received approximately \$ 33 billion from Washington post 9/11, with a significant portion of the aid dedicated to fulfilling Pakistan's security requirements.²⁰

Chinese Assistance in the Military Build-up of Pakistan

The China-Pakistan alliance is said to be higher than the mountains and deeper than the seas. Pakistan's relationship with China, which formalised with a major step by the two countries in 1963 with the signing of the Shaksgam Valley agreement, has continued to grow consistently, given Beijing's strategic interests in the region and its strong desire to neutralise India's growth. For Pakistan, Beijing served the purpose of not only fulfilling its defence requirements but also providing Islamabad diplomatic support against India and the United States on various occasions.

Pakistan and China share a strong strategic partnership and friendship. There is a growing consensus within Pakistan, not only amongst the ruling elite but also the masses, that their relationship with China is indispensable because of sustained Chinese military, strategic and economic assistance and also their belief that Pakistan and China share common strategic interests. Over the years, China has provided Pakistan a wide range of conventional weapon systems, and Pakistan's nuclear and missile build-up has primarily been with Chinese assistance. Pakistan turned towards Beijing as a trusted 'all weather friend' in dealing with India; China, on the other hand, found a feasible option in Pakistan to contain India and also the expansion of the US'

20. For details, see "Direct Overt U.S Aid Appropriations for the Military Reimbursements to Pakistan", FY2002-FY2017, Prepared by the Congressional Research Service, February 24, 2016, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/pakaid.pdf>. Accessed on March 30, 2016.

dominance in the region. The two nations have served each other's strategic interests well, and over the past six decades, the alliance has grown in multiple dimensions.

Chinese Nuclear and Missile Assistance to Pakistan

Chinese support to Pakistan has been on three critical fronts: one of the most important outcomes of the China-Pakistan strategic nexus is China's extensive support to Pakistan in building up its nuclear capabilities. Nuclear proliferation analyst Gary Milhollin, was not wrong when he argued, "If you subtract Chinese help, there wouldn't be a Pakistani program."²¹

China, allegedly, provided direct assistance to Pakistan's nuclear weapon programme in the past, which included the supply of warhead designs, Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) and a variety of nuclear products and services. Pakistan's missile development programme has been carried out with Chinese assistance and, to some extent, help from North Korea, after the United States imposed sanctions on China. The Chinese missile assistance to Pakistan ranges from providing equipment and training to transferring the complete missiles. The Chinese M series of Short Range Ballistic Missiles (SRBMs) commenced development in the early 1980s and the three versions are known as the M-9, M-11 and M-18. Pakistan acquired a series of missiles – the Hatf-I, Hatf-II, Hatf-III, Hatf-IV, Hatf-V and Hatf-VI – which are reportedly variants of the Chinese M-11 and M-18.

Chinese Supply of Conventional Weapons to Pakistan

China began arms aid to Pakistan in 1965 after the US embargo on it, when the leadership in Islamabad felt the need of diversifying the sources of

China is today Pakistan's largest defence supplier. Pakistan has not only imported the maximum types and numbers of defence equipment from China but managed to build up significant indigenous defence capability with the Chinese assistance.

21. Gordon Corera interview with Gary Malhollin, Washington, D.C., December 14, 2005, as cited in Gordon Corera, *Shopping for Bombs* (New Delhi: Foundation Books, 2006), p. 45.

The CPEC carries immense potential to upgrade and revive Pakistan's infrastructure and also cater to Islamabad's energy crisis. The corridor which involves building of highways, railway lines and oil and gas pipelines, will connect Pakistan's Gwadar port to China's autonomous region of Xinjiang.

weapon supply. Undoubtedly, China is today Pakistan's largest defence supplier. Pakistan has not only imported the maximum types and numbers of defence equipment from China but managed to build up significant indigenous defence capability with the Chinese assistance. Chinese equipment turned out to be much cheaper compared to equipment from the West, and the Chinese sales were further facilitated by availability of credit from China on relaxed repayment terms. In the 1960s, and later in the 1970s, Pakistan received interest free economic aid and also a significant amount of free weapons

from China, and became the only non-Communist Third World country to receive generous assistance from it. Chinese military assistance came in not only in the form of arms but also development of infrastructure for repair and overhaul. The Chinese supplies included: F-6s, T-59 Main Battle Tanks (MBTs), T-60 light tanks and T-63 light tanks and Type 531 Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs).

Sino-Pakistan defence collaboration further flourished under the shadow of the US sanctions in the 1990s and, in the process, the two nations entered into deals for the co-development of a fourth generation fighter aircraft, the JF-17 (earlier called the FC-1); the K-8 jet trainer had earlier been jointly produced. Pakistan also signed the deal for the purchase of two squadrons of the Chinese J-10. Pakistan will be the first buyer for the J-10 which was initially set to be sold to Iran. Pakistan's former Chief of the Air Staff, Mahmood Ahmed, in an interview to *Jane's Defence Weekly*, said that the J-10, along with the JF 17, would form the backbone of the PAF.²² Pakistan has also managed to acquire the Chinese Airborne Warning and Control System

22. Interview, Air Chief Mahmood Ahmed, Pakistan's Chief of the Air Staff, *Janes's Defence Weekly*, April 4, 2007, p.34.

(AWACS) (ZDK-03). On the naval front, the significant acquisitions include the C-802/CSS-N-8 anti-ship missiles and 4 Jiangwei II class frigates.

China's Support to Pakistan's Arms Industry

The 1980s and 1990s saw a wide expansion of defence production activities within Pakistan and a large number of varied projects were undertaken in this period. China has been the main support in the establishment of defence production units in Pakistan, often provided free of cost. Some of the major defence production units established with the Chinese assistance are: Heavy Industries Taxila (HIT), F-6 Rebuild Factory (F-6 RF) and Heavy Mechanical Complex (HMC) Ltd.

Gwadar port has been developed with Chinese assistance and the primary project has been the construction of a deep sea port, expanding its maritime role, to allow trade to and from the landlocked Central Asia. Gwadar offers the geoeconomic and geostrategic pivot to China and Pakistan. It is strategically located on the southwestern coast of Pakistan between three increasingly important regions of the world: South Asia, Central Asia and oil-rich Middle East. Gwadar, which overlooks the Gulf of Oman and the entrance to the Persian Gulf region, is just 180 nautical miles (nm) from the Strait of Hormuz. Thus, Gwadar would eventually emerge as the key shipping hub, providing mass trade to the Central Asian Republics (CARs) through Pakistan and China, and an important naval base.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which involves an investment of over \$45 billion, was inaugurated in August 2013, and is viewed as a game-changer which will substantively benefit both Pakistan and China. The CPEC carries immense potential to upgrade and revive Pakistan's infrastructure and also cater to Islamabad's energy crisis. The corridor which involves building of highways, railway lines and oil and gas pipelines, will connect Pakistan's Gwadar port to China's autonomous region of Xinjiang.

Military's Financial Autonomy

The military has managed to maintain a financially autonomous structure for itself and has complete control over the national policies relating to defence

spending. This has certainly facilitated Pakistan's defence modernisation over other national objectives. Pakistan had maintained defence spending at the rate of 6 per cent of the GDP till the late 1990s, even when the GDP growth was extremely low and Pakistan was being termed a "failing state". Defence requirements and allocations got precedence in the national spending of Pakistan from the beginning by every successive regime, regardless of it being civilian or military. The defence planners in Pakistan have constantly justified the high defence allocation by highlighting the perception of threat from India. Since the inception of Pakistan, 'fear of India' has been generated in the minds of the masses which has helped to justify the maximum share for defence allocations from the national income. Successive regimes in Pakistan, whether political or military, have focussed on issues like Kashmir to gain public support in order to further their respective political goals. Not only on the national front, but also at the international level, the perception of threat has always been used as an argument to convince foreign aid donors for financial and military assistance and also to prevent any cut in the defence expenditure.

Sub-Conventional Level: Pakistan began its covert war operations as early as 1947, by launching its first aggression in the name of a tribal revolt. It exercised the covert option in the 1965 War and also during Kargil in 1999. It has relied on the strategy of terrorism for more than six decades. Pakistan military has pursued a covert war strategy with remarkable persistence over the last six decades, although the tactics of the covert war have been modified and evolved.

Pakistan opted for covert war in 1947 when the Pakistan Army, with the approval of the political leadership, decided to exploit a local uprising which had broken out in the *jagir* of Poonch, taking the initial step of covert warfare. It then accelerated its infiltration activities and in order to carry out guerrilla warfare operations, sent a large number of Pathan tribesmen, Punjabis and other Pakistani nationals to defeat the State Forces.

The aggression of 1947-48, formed the basic guideline for Pakistan's future military strategy against India. The war established the pattern of Pakistan's

covert war strategy as an important component of its grand strategy.²³ The salient aspects of this strategy in the 1947-48 War may be summed up as follows:

- Employment of irregular armed fighters composed of army personnel on leave, demobilised/retired soldiers/local and tribal individuals/groups.
- Weapons and logistics support provided by the Pakistan government under the overall guidance of the Pakistan Army.
- The irregular fighters were reinforced with regular Pakistan Army units and formations to avoid their defeat by the Indian military forces defending their territory.
- Pursuit of a covert war, including with regular military forces, with plausible deniability of direct involvement.
- Political ideological formulations to provide justification for the war as an indigenous uprising, freedom struggle, etc. to which Pakistan provided “political and moral support”.

The Pakistan Army leadership learnt many lessons to improve its strategy. While the Pakistani covert operations in the 1950s and then the early 1960s became far more organised, they actually yielded fewer results because the people did not support them.

The lack of success in the covert operations in Kashmir Valley were adding to frustration and impatience in Pakistan. In 1964, Pakistan developed a strategy around Operation Gibraltar as the covert component and Grand Slam as the overt armoured and artillery thrust into J&K. The tactical aims of Operation Gibraltar differed from the war in 1947. The Indian Army responded robustly and was soon able to cut off the militants’ infiltration routes and supply lines. The irregular fighters had to face the Indian troops, and those who survived, were tracked down with the help of the local political activists.²⁴ Operation Gibraltar was followed by Operation Grand Slam, as planned, in which the Pakistan Army launched a major armour-cum-

23. For details on Pakistan’s covert war, see Shalini Chawla, *Pakistan’s Military and its Strategy* (New Delhi: Knowledge World, 2009).

24. Praveen Swami, *India, Pakistan and the Secret Jihad: The Covert War in Kashmir: 1947-2004*, (London: Routledge, 2007), p.62.

artillery offensive in the Chhamb sector to capture Akhnur. On September 23, the fighting stopped, with both India and Pakistan claiming victory. India actually had reason to celebrate as it managed to achieve the objective of defending Kashmir against the Pakistani invasions, both covert and overt.

In the 1970s, Pakistan moved towards increasing Islamisation and the religious ideology, initially promoted by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was followed by the aggressive fundamentalist policies of Gen Zia-ul-Haq. The loss of East Pakistan and the rise of insurgency in Baluchistan led the military and political leadership in Pakistan to intensify the religious ideology to counter any further division of Pakistan and also to motivate the nation for an aggressive posture against India.

In the 1980s, religious resurgence, coupled with the increasing alienation of the youth for diverse reasons started to grow in Kashmir, and Pakistan's strategy began to concretise. What was happening in Afghanistan and also simultaneously in the Khalistan movement obviously had a direct impact in the Valley. Thus, in the mid-1980s, disturbances in Kashmir were growing with an unusual amount of Jamaat activity, processions and resentment against the Hindus, and the communal divide had started to be a major disturbing factor. In the late 1980s and 1990s, Pakistan became much more active in sponsoring terrorism in J&K. The Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) initially trained the secular groups in Kashmir and eventually shifted to training of the groups linked to Pakistan's own Islamic parties.²⁵ These Kashmiris drew inspiration from the Muslim brotherhood, regarded the struggle in Kashmir as an Islamic war on national liberation and were extreme in their hatred for India.²⁶ The period after 1988 witnessed shifts in the nature of the covert war in terms of the weapons and strategy used by the Pakistani policy-makers.

In the late 1980s and 1990s, the targets in Kashmir were the security forces, specifically the Indian Army and the Border Security Force (BSF), with Rocket Propelled Grenade-7 (RPG-7) rockets. The terrorists in Kashmir seem to be imitating the Mujahideen tactics in attacking the security forces. The weapons used by the terrorist had undergone a change as Pakistan

25. Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos* (London: Penguin Group, 2008), p. 111.

26. Ibid.

had acquired modern arms in the 1980s to equip the covert fighters in Afghanistan. Although the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) supplied arms for the Afghan fighters, around 60 per cent were retained by the Pakistan Army. But the most important factor for escalating the covert war in Punjab and J&K was the acquisition of nuclear weapon capability by Pakistan which it perceived as a security guarantee against a robust Indian military response. In the 1990s, the terrorists were much better equipped owing to the following factors:²⁷

- There was significant expansion in the smuggling of high technology weapons from Pakistan into Kashmir and a corresponding change in the tactics used by the terrorists.
- The terrorists in the 1990s were using sophisticated communications systems, including small radios and collapsible solar-panels for reload systems, as well as frequency scanning devices to track the communications systems used by the Indian security forces in the Valley. The modern communication system used by the terrorists is of US/NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) origin which was initially being used by the Mujahideen in Afghanistan.
- Massive expansion of small arms was experienced, including all types of specialised equipment which was used for the assassination projects.

Thus, the weapons and technology transferred by the United States during the Afghan War in the 1980s became a major asset for the Islamic militants in Kashmir who were also trained in the use of these weapons.

The insurgency in Kashmir became much more organised after 1988. The militants gained experience in Afghanistan and were more professional in carrying out covert warfare. Highly trained Mujahideen, many of them professional Special Forces, and terrorists, joined the fighting in Kashmir. Acts of sabotage increased not only in number but also intensity. The militant acts were responded to violently by the Indian security forces and, consequently, innocent civilians in the Valley suffered.

27. Congressional Record, "Pakistan Supports Terrorist Rebels in Kashmir" by Youssed Bodansky and V Aughn S. Forrest, Extension of Remarks June 1994), at http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/1994_cr/h940622-terror-pak.htm

The Afghan *jihad* strengthened the belief in Pakistan that fighting through irregulars “defeated” the Soviet Union, a superpower. Hence, India could be defeated in Kashmir.

As Ayaz Amir has very rightly said, “Whether any or most of these fighters acquired their combat skills in Afghanistan is a matter of detail. What is important is that their spiritual outlook has been shaped by the Afghan experience which they, and a goodly part of the religious and military establishment in Pakistan, consider to have been a true *jihad*. It was the spirit of *jihad* which drove the Soviet Army from Afghanistan. It is the spirit of *jihad* which can drive the Indian Army from

Kashmir. The various schools who subscribe to this thinking consider it an article of faith that the seeds of the break-up of the Soviet Union were sown in Afghanistan. Might not the same happen in Kashmir with similar consequences for India?”²⁸

The Afghan *jihad* strengthened the belief in Pakistan that fighting through irregulars “defeated” the Soviet Union, a superpower. Hence, India could be defeated in Kashmir. Pakistan had been following the strategy of covert war earlier also, but the Afghan War further enhanced the army/ISI capability to wage it.

The Pakistan military has continued to follow the sub-conventional approach through terrorism with consistency. The state has nurtured anti-India groups like the Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and continues to support them for its strategic objectives. Post 9/11, when the military was compelled to crack down on the terror groups within Pakistan, the anti-India organisations remained unaffected due to the military's selective approach in targeting the militants. Despite international condemnation and pressure to ban these organisations, these militant groups continue to flourish on the Pakistani soil. Hafiz Saeed, the founder of the LeT, with a \$10 million bounty on his head, not only continues to operate in Pakistan but is also looked upon as a hero by the society. Although there have been some signs of the state losing its tolerance with Hafiz Saeed, Pakistan continues to fund

28. Ayaz Amir, *Dawn*, June 11, 1999, at <http://www.dawn.com/weekly/ayaz/990611.htm>. Accessed on January 15, 2008.

and train these outfits to operate in the Indian territory. Pakistan's capability to support these outfits has been strengthened with continued support from China which has never questioned Pakistan's strategy of terrorism against India. On the contrary, China has opposed any Indian move that demands action against Pakistan on account of terrorism.

China has never questioned Pakistan's strategy of terrorism against India. On the contrary, China has opposed any Indian move that demands action against Pakistan on account of terrorism.

Nuclear Level: Pakistan has been an overt nuclear state for 18 years now and its arsenal has grown considerably in size. Pakistan's expansion of its nuclear arsenal, development of the delivery systems, and adoption of "full spectrum deterrence" does indicate its rather *excessive reliance* on nuclear weapons for its security. Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is on its way to becoming the third largest after that of the US and Russia. Pakistan's induction of Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNWs) (Hatf-9) signals a dangerous strategy. TNWs not only inject complexities into the existing instability in South Asia, but also, by their nature, these weapons exacerbate enormous command and control challenges. The weapons are vulnerable to falling into the hands of non-state actors after they are deployed, or even, while they are being transported to the battlefield. Pakistan has been very proud of making 'tiny bombs', not realising that these weapons could actually backfire on Pakistan given the nature of the volatility of the state and the rising extremism in the Pakistani society. There have been numerous attacks in the past on the nuclear installations/air bases in Pakistan. The leadership in Pakistan very proudly announces the progress of TNWs with great confidence. TNWs, according to the Pakistani leadership, comprise the biggest deterrent they have against the Indian military forces. Talking about Pakistan's sense of accomplishments in the nuclear programme, Gen Khalid Kidwai said:

It's a comprehensive satisfaction of having taken the Pakistani capability which has been proven by scientists, at a scientific level,and having taken these devices, which were scientific experiments, into an area of

complete operationalisation, into a vision which has consolidated Pakistan's nuclear capability in a manner that it today possesses a variety of nuclear weapons. In different categories. At the strategic level, at the operational level, and the tactical level.²⁹

The central assumption on which Pakistan has progressed and built up its nuclear arsenal is that a credible nuclear deterrent would compensate for the inferiority of its defence forces. The basic rationale for Pakistan acquiring nuclear weapons has been to neutralise India's perceived conventional military superiority and the way it was employed by it in the 1971 War.

In this respect, Pakistan adopted a doctrine and strategy not very different from that pursued by NATO against the former USSR. Pakistan visualised nuclear weapons as the sole guarantor of its national pride and national survival, and, thus, started to seek Chinese assistance for its nuclear weapon programme in the late 1960s in the aftermath of the US sanctions. Nuclear weapons for Pakistan were seen as a means to neutralise the Indian conventional military superiority, and also a projection of its scientific and technological capabilities.

Pakistan has subsequently endeavoured to use nuclear weapons to carry on, and intensify, its proxy war in Kashmir, claiming the Valley to be the "nuclear flashpoint". Pakistan has managed to pursue its grand strategy to "bleed India through a thousand cuts" under the nuclear umbrella.

Pakistan has tried to project its nuclear assets as an instrument of blackmail. The acquisition of the nuclear capability enhanced Pakistan's capability to wage and escalate the covert war in Kashmir. Pakistan's non-adherence to no first use was believed to serve the objective to deter India from responding with conventional military retaliation. Policy-makers in Pakistan seem to be convinced that they will be able to carry on, or rather accelerate, their activities in Kashmir under the broader threat of using nuclear weapons, if required, and this would constrain India's strategic moves. Although, this

29. Peter Lavoy, "A Conversation with Gen Khalid Kidwai," Pakistan's Command Authority Monitor 360, Carnegie International Nuclear Policy Conference 2015, March 23, 2015, p.6. Accessed on January 1, 2016.

has been the Pakistani thinking for long, it has strengthened tremendously with Pakistan's acquisition of nuclear weapons and announcement of the first use policy.

Pakistan does not have an officially announced doctrine, but statements made by responsible policy-makers in Pakistan have clearly outlined basic elements in its nuclear doctrine. There is an unofficial code adopted by the Pakistani leadership, based on *Indo-centricity*, *credible minimum deterrence* (now *full spectrum deterrence*), *strategic restraint* and *first use*. Very interestingly, and rather ironically, the code asserts on the principles of a peaceful programme revolving more around maintaining a balance against the Indian force build-up, but it includes making a first strike in response to not only a conventional attack by India but also to a threat posed by India. Pakistan has been talking rather often about TNWs which it is confident would deter India from a conventional military response.

IS PAKISTAN READY TO ALTER ITS STRATEGIC CALCULUS?

Pakistan has been most confident of the 'sub-conventional approach' which, in its thinking, is shielded by its nuclear weapons and its excessive reliance on the 'first use' doctrine. Although, Pakistan has been very confident of its nuclear card, it is aware that a covert war could rapidly escalate to an overt war. Thus, the covert war strategy seems to have been constrained below a level that could provoke an Indian military response. India refrained from military action after the Mumbai attacks in 2008 which reaffirmed the popular Pakistani perception of 'lack of will and capability' on India's part. For more than two decades, covert war has been calibrated by the *bleeding through a thousand cuts* philosophy, so as not to excite a major military response and punitive action. Support from the US and China also strengthened Pakistan's psychological capability to conduct proxy war against India.

Six decades of Pakistan's reliance on the centrality of the covert war strategy is unlikely to change in the coming years, although the tactics, intensity and areas of operations may undergo changes. The support to the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan and continuing terrorist violence in J&K and

Pakistan has relied on nuclear weapons and terrorism as a state policy tool and is likely to continue to do so as it has failed to build other strengths or overcome its fundamental challenges.

selected places in India, along with support to Islamic fundamentalism in Bangladesh, which impacts the northeast states of India, are obvious examples of Pakistan's continuance of the covert war strategy.

Pakistan has relied on nuclear weapons and terrorism as a state policy tool and is likely to continue to do so as it has failed to build other strengths or overcome its fundamental challenges. Being crippled with the inherent problems of extremism, unemployment and low growth, Pakistan significantly lags behind India on most of the parameters of national security. Its reliance on terrorism (and nuclear weapons) to wield its power emerges from its internal weaknesses. The youth in Pakistan seem to be trapped in the culture of violence, terrorism, unemployment and, very importantly, an identity crisis.

Despite the inherent weaknesses of the state, the policy-makers in Islamabad seem to be convinced that they can continue their acts of terrorism without fear of Indian retaliation. This notion has been challenged post Uri. The critical question is: what is the strategy Pakistan is likely to adopt now? Will it alter its strategic calculus and rethink its India strategy?

Given the past experience and current scenario in Pakistan, some inferences could be drawn regarding Islamabad's likely behaviour:

- Pakistan will try to escalate covert operations through terrorism with varying intensity. It will to maintain its posture of deniability and continue to support anti-India groups.
- Islamabad's reliance on nuclear weapons is likely to go up with the increasing tensions between India and Pakistan. Projection of irrationality, with a low nuclear threshold, would continue, with 'excessive' reliance on tactical nuclear weapons.
- Pakistan's conventional military capability has gone up significantly in the last two decades and its focus on military modernisation is likely to continue, with consistent Chinese support.

- Although Pakistan would not opt to fight a conventional war with India, given the global scenario, build-up of its conventional capability would boost its psychological will to conduct covert operations.

New Delhi is far ahead of Pakistan in terms of its resources, growth, capability and, more importantly, credibility as a responsible state at the global level.

INDIA'S OPTIONS

India's strategy option would be to exploit the strategic space above terrorism but below the nuclear threshold. India's profile has grown significantly on the global platform and it has the support of major states. New Delhi is far ahead of Pakistan in terms of its resources, growth, capability and, more importantly, credibility as a responsible state at the global level. India, with more than 7 percent growth, is on its way to become an economic giant and certainly does not desire to engage in a conventional war with Pakistan. But this does not in any way signal India's inability to respond militarily. New Delhi has far more at stake as compared to Pakistan, which relies on undermining India's achievements to uplift its image amongst its own people and on the global platform. Pakistan has tried hard to internationalise the Kashmir issue, accusing India of human rights violations, while it has been engaged in a full-fledged insurgency in Baluchistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas since the 1940s. The suppression of minorities within the Pakistani state did not change even after the dismemberment of the nation in 1971. Pakistan surely is not ready for any change and is not likely to alter its strategic calculus towards New Delhi.

Sustained actions to strengthen India's response to Pakistan's acts of terror could be the following:

- Any form of India's engagement with Pakistan has to be strictly conditional. The message has to be loud and clear to Pakistan that any economic or diplomatic engagement is not possible as long as the cross-border terrorism sponsored by Pakistan continues.

- Islamabad's posture of deniability cannot be accepted by India and the international community. Pakistan needs to take the responsibility for the terror acts conducted from its soil.
- A diplomatic *blitzkrieg* needs to be maintained against Pakistan to isolate it at both regional and global levels.
- India needs to raise the cost of Pakistan's acts of terror through its diplomatic and military responses.
- Pakistan's all weather friend and ally, China, needs to be persuaded to convince Pakistan to alter its strategic calculus. Beijing has so far maintained silence on Pakistan's acts of terror and has, in fact, opposed any Indian move that demands action against Pakistan on account of terrorism. Last year, in 2015, Beijing blocked India's move at the UN to seek action against Pakistan for releasing Zaki-ur-Rahman Lakhvi, the mastermind of the 26/11 Mumbai attacks. China also blocked India's attempt at the UN to ban Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar. China's all-out support to Pakistan has strengthened Pakistan's will to conduct terrorism against India.
- India's conventional military capability build-up and modernisation has to be kept up to deter Pakistan.