

INDIA'S FIGHT AGAINST PAKISTAN-BACKED TERRORISM: CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES

Dr. Poonam Chandel

Department of Political Science, Govt. College Sanjauli, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh



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ABSTRACT:

India has been one of the major victims of terrorism. The attack on India's parliament on Dec. 13, 2001 and the Legislative Assembly of Jammu & Kashmir thereafter indicate that the scope and scale of terrorist's violence is expanding. Though, terrorism has emerged as a major threat to India's security but its control is not totally within its reach. This research paper critically examines India's ongoing struggle against terrorism emanating from Pakistan-based groups. By analyzing historical contexts, major terrorist incidents, political dynamics, and the roles of non-state actors, this paper aims to foster a deep understanding of how terrorism has influenced India-Pakistan relations. The study emphasizes the importance of cooperative security frameworks and sustained diplomatic dialogue to address terrorism constructively and respectfully.

Key Words: India, Pakistan, Terrorism, Challenges, Non-state Actors,

Introduction

Terrorism has become one of the most serious non-traditional security threats for global peace. South Asia has been suffering very serious challenges in this regard. It is present in almost every South Asian state in various forms and degrees. Terrorists are involved in brutal activities in the region, including targeted killing, suicide bombings, drug trafficking, kidnapping, violence, and assassinations of key personalities in the region. South Asia has faced various challenges throughout its history. Due to increased terrorist activities, South Asian region is dealing with a crucial security threat. There are several factors which are further inflaming the circumstances, which revolves around political and social perpetration by tyrannical governments and rebel groups, and "socio-economic factors like poverty, unequal job opportunities, hunger, backwardness and unemployment." 1

Traditional rivalry between Pakistan and India has also negative impact on regional development. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation or SAARC, as it is popularly known as, was formed by eight member's states of South Asia in 1985 to promote peace, prosperity, and regional integration in the South Asian region. And it is the continuing sour relations between the two largest member states of SAARC, Pakistan and India, that prevent it from being successful like other regional associations, such as the European Union (EU), or the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Because of these regional disputes, non state actors/terrorists have become very influential in the region, who can even challenge the writ of the states. To accomplish their political objectives, these terrorists can even provoke conflict between two nuclear powers. The recent Pahalgam attack has exposed ongoing security vulnerabilities and the persistent threat of terrorism.

Over the last fifty years the nations of India and Pakistan have clashed on both political and military fronts on Kashmir issue. The long-term religious conflicts between the Hindus and Muslim people of the region have forced the countries into countless skirmishes and three brutal wars. Since the formation of the Indian and Pakistani nations in 1947, thousands of Indians and Pakistanis have died fighting in these conflicts. The tension and conflict between the religious groups within the region was prevalent before either state was an independent nation, but most of the hostilities were directed at the British government that controlled the regions until the 1940's. The first political fighting within the region was lead by the Indian nationalist movement in the attempt to remove the British Imperialist rule from the Indian sub-continent.²The conflict between India and Pakistan is not merely a territorial dispute over

Kashmir. It is also religious in nature. The creation of Pakistan was based on the idea of a separate nation for Muslims. It was established as an Islamic nation, whereas India chose to remain a secular, multi-religious country, despite Hindus forming about 75% of its population. India and Pakistan neither aims at war, but non state actors manipulate the situation through the use of terrorist activities. Terrorist attacks on Indian Parliament on December 13, 2001 resulted in military standoff in 2001-2002 and later on Mumbai attacks in November 2008 present a glimpse of a worst-case scenario. These incidents have undermined the chances for strategic stability in South Asia.

There is no doubt that the terrorist organizations have become a very serious threat to whole world. USA the most powerful nation of the world could not escape from this menace though India has been suffering from this since its independence in 1947. The September 11, 2001 attack on the world trade centre in New York has changed the nature of terrorism. Never did any analyst or war model simulator ever imagined that a passenger aircraft could be converted into an absolute precision guided lethal weapon which in one stroke not only devastated the twin tower, but also killed 2645 innocent people belonging to many countries. Estimated deaths with inured people were 3400. It has also established the fact that even the most powerful nations are not secure in the world what to talk about the small nations. After this incident the India war against terrorism became a part of global war as the most powerful country of the world declared its "War on Terrorism". They have the potential to provoke India and Pakistan into a war-like situation.

In recent terror attack in Pahalgam on April 22, 2025, 26 innocent civilians lost their lives. This attack was very dreadful and completely ethnic in nature as the victims were asked to recite 'Kalma', a declaration of faith that forms the core beliefs of Muslims before being slaughtered. In retaliation, India launched its military response, 'Operation Sindoor' on May 7, targeting nine sites belonging to terrorist groups Lashkar-e-Taiba (LET) and Jaish-e-Muhammad (JEM). After that Pakistan Military chose to fire back on India. This went on for four days and on 10th May India hit eight air bases and made it nonoperational which compelled the Pakistan Military to stop firing and finally cease fire agreement was announced on the very same day. Operation Sindoor clearly indicates that any terror attack on its territory will be treated as an act of war and would be responded militarily. India's response demonstrates a strategic breakthrough - a much more assertive Indian State in response to the terrorist activities of Pakistan-sponsored, or at least -tolerated, non-state actors. It not only confirms and shows India's zero-tolerance to terrorism and a firm determination to root out terrorism from its soil, but also the intent to take smart cross-border operations if the need arises.

The aftermath of Pahalgam is certainly unusual in many ways. First, innocent civilians have been killed unlike in Uri in 2016 and Pulwama in 2019, when soldiers lost their lives. India responded to Uri attack by conducting "surgical strikes" across the Line of Control and to Pulwama by sending missiles deep into Pakistan territory to strike at terror camps in Balakot. Second, all previous wars between India and Pakistan including the conflict at Kargil, have been fought –and won – by India, even though India never started the fire.³ India is urging the United Nations to designate The Resistance Front (TRF) a Lashkar-e-Toiba offshoot believed to be behind the Pahalgam attack, as a terrorist group under the UN Security Council 1267 sanctions regime. Pakistan, a non- permanent member of the UNSC has been protecting TRF at the council with support from China. It is frustrating for India that global institutions like the United Nations do not hold Pakistan accountable for its support to terrorism. The 1267 Sanctions committee was established under a UNSC resolution 1999. The committee decides on sanctions and travel bans for individuals and entities associated with these terror organizations and ensures the enforcement of these measures under UNSC 1267(1999), 1989(2011), and 2253(2015).⁴

But when it come to national interest every country thinks about their own interest first not about the problem other nations are facing. This is the reason that we are not able to combat the menace of terrorism. The crisis between the two nuclear-armed countries indicates how rapidly tensions can escalate to dangerous levels. The intensity of the conflict exceeded that of past episodes, with several rounds of retaliation that undermined strategic stability in South Asia. India and Pakistan have now engaged in drone warfare in their rivalry, indicating a new era of technological conflict in the region. The conflict underscores the need for heightened international attention to South Asia more broadly—not only during a crisis, as tensions over the Line of Control (LOC) occur even during relative peacetime. While the ceasefire continues to hold, the region should not reactively develop off-ramps only when tensions reach critical levels. The upcoming dialogues between India and Pakistan, as part of the ceasefire agreement, provide an opportunity for both countries to explore off-ramps and engage in confidence-building measures (CBMs).⁵ The ultimate responsibilities lie with the two neighbors themselves. Only a new effort at cooperation will rid the region of this scourge. India should not try to address the problem through military means only, as these can be counter-productive, but through more democratic and effective diplomacy

Combating Terrorism is a complex challenge that requires a multifaceted and coordinated approach. Experts on international terrorism, A Behm and M. Palmer put forward five basic elements as part of the strategy to combat terrorism.

- i) Comprehensive and co-ordinated prevention and response capabilities.
- ii) A firm negotiating policy of no concessions on substantive terrorist demands.
- iii) A negotiating and operational policy aimed at maximising uncertainty for the terrorists.
- iv) The maintenance of effective national criminal provisions where terrorism is always treated as a crime.
- v) The maintenance of effective international instruments that ensure the prosecution of terrorists without exception, and no safe havens. ⁶

Important element in combating terrorism would be to ensure that the terrorists do not get any support from outside-be it in terms of arms, money, training or even moral support. Terrorist groups who operate at local level cannot create as much damage to the society as those who receive external aid. However, one reality with regard to terrorist groups is their complex and wide network all over the world. An effective, coherent policy at the national, bilateral and multilateral levels is highly recommended to tackle this big menace of terrorism. Terrorism has to be fought in accordance with the rule of law and it needs to be dealt legally.

Conclusion

As we witness that terrorism today poses a grave security threat not only to India and Pakistan but to entire world therefore, the policies have to be formulated in a rational and coordinated manner. There is a need for rethinking as far as state response to terrorism is concerned, both at the national and international level. The role of law with in a nation-state as well as in the wider world is an essential pre-requisite to peace and happiness. There is also need to strengthen our international institution: United Nations, which was established to promote world peace. Educative measures will also play a crucial role in combating terrorism by promoting tolerance, critical thinking, and a culture of peace. To conclude we can say that terrorism is a common threat to entire world and it needs to be addressed with the

construction of a comprehensive counter-terrorism approach. Any kind of conflict can lead to nuclear war at regional level or at world level.

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