India

An Indigenous Strategy on Terrorism

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The counter–terrorism strategy of the West, and especially the United States, has largely been driven by the spectacular 'global war on terror' since the catastrophic 9/11 terrorist attacks. These initially involved strikes on terrorist hideouts, sanctuaries, key global networks and kingpins in Afghanistan and other parts of the world, alongside a rigorous domestic surveillance programme on actual and potential networks. Stronger legislative and institutional frameworks to deal with terror, stricter counter-measures to secure airports and national borders, and enhanced levels of cooperation in intelligence sharing on terrorism were natural extensions of this strategy.

Most major and stable nations have built stronger counter-terrorism and anti-terrorism capacities. These, together with progress on global protocols to curb terror financing and subversive propaganda, have indeed denied significant actual and potential space to known and organised terrorist groups. Though India has avoided participation in the US-led military

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campaigns against terrorism, it has been on the forefront in combating terrorism, both domestically as well as in this region. India has used a variety of less belligerent means, while observing broader parameters of the rule of law domestically.

India's record on containing terrorism has, so far, been fairly mixed. The current government has given a strong push to whole range of anti-terrorism and counter-terrorism priorities, but these still appear inadequate, given India's vulnerability to Islamist terrorism emanating mostly from Pakistan. Radicalisation of smaller sections of the domestic population and the growing clout of trans-national organised crime networks continue to exacerbate India's vulnerabilities in this context.

The Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2020 has ranked India as the 8th most impacted (or vulnerable) state to terrorism, following Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Syria, Somalia, Yemen and Pakistan.[1] In fact, since 2002, India had been in the top five states most impacted by terrorism and, for four of these years, was at the second spot, right after Iraq, even when the war in Afghanistan had commenced.[2] In the larger geopolitical context, such a scenario is dangerous for security of both the Indian state and the Indian people. India, consequently, needs to explore strategies and capacities to deal with terrorism that are genuinely effective within the country's unique context, and that are sustainable in terms of human and material costs. This is crucial not only for India's aspirations for accelerated development and 'global power' status, but also for the larger stability of the global order, which is under stress from the rising clout of an authoritarian and belligerent China.

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1   "Global Terrorism Index 2020", *The Institute for Economics & Peace*, November, 2020, https://visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2020-web-1.pdf.

2   Ibid.

Time to Review Existing Strategies

This is the time for the world, especially democracies and particularly India, to review the efficacy of their existing strategies to deal with terrorism. While the interests of all democracies may overlap on this issue, these have never converged entirely. The West's apathy in the face of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism and organised crime through the 1980s and 1990s has been well documented. It took the unfortunate 9/11 attacks for them to realise the enormity of identity driven terrorist threats bred by Pakistan. Over the last 20 years, the world has come a long way in dealing with the radical terror and there is far more global understanding and awareness on this subject today than the past. But, a common and cohesive global approach to combat terrorism appears an improbable proposition in foreseeable future.

Despite military campaigns and sustained strikes on terrorist hide outs in Afghanistan, Pakistan has long been suspected of clandestinely supporting a host of *jihadi* groups, including Taliban, which were its own creation. Since *jihadis*, in any case, were aspiring for paradise, they often forgave the Pakistan Military's complicity in strikes that killed many in their ranks as the latter's compulsion. There are endless reports in the international media, with in *The New York Times*, stating that Pakistan's Army remained allied both to the United States and the Taliban.[3] The report goes on to quote an observation made by the former Director General (DG), of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Hamid Gul, often referred to as the father of the Taliban, way back in 2014: "When history is written…. it will be stated that the ISI defeated the Soviet Union in

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3   Mujib Mashal, et. al., "Biden's Afghan Pull Out is A Victory for Pakistan. But at What Cost?", *The New York Times*, April 15, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/15/world/asia/pakistan-afghanistan-withdrawal.html.

Afghanistan with the help of America… Then there will be another sentence… the ISI, with the help of America, defeated America."[4]

This only suggests that there was not even an iota of confusion in the minds of the top incumbents of the Pakistani deep state, whom Gul continued to represent despite his ignominious exit from ISI, that all that they needed to do was to wear the Americans down in Afghanistan. They were confident of their strengths on the ground, including their strategy of guerrilla war, as well as their global networks to sustain this war. It would be naïve to assume that such a double game by Pakistan would be unknown to the security establishment of the most powerful nation in the world.

Even at the time of 9/11 attack, it was internationally well known that Pakistan's ISI was breeding the terrorist sanctuary in Afghanistan through its proxy Taliban and its associates. Pakistan had not parted ways with the Taliban, the Haqqani Network and a host of other smaller *jIhadi* networks in that country. This was further exposed when Pakistan happily obliged the United States by bringing the Taliban to the table to negotiate a quick US withdrawal from Afghanistan. A large number of media reports suggest that Taliban leaders were visiting Doha from Pakistan only, probably after receiving instructions from ISI on their likely position on issues. Even the choice of Ankara as the venue for the next round of talks with the Taliban is yet another manifestation of Pakistani control over the so-called peace process, given the new nexus that it has built with Turkey under overall patronage of China.

Today, the United States appears fractured internally, even on issues that concern its grand strategy or larger national security objectives. It would be difficult to evaluate the real

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4   Ibid.

factors that would have sabotaged the US-led global war on terror from striking at its real epicentre – Pakistan. Pakistan has been able to sustain a world-wide terrorist network through its deeper nexus with organised crime in the region and beyond. Under these circumstances, the inability of the United States to build an internal consensus on fighting the war on terror decisively and conclusively raises many questions.

Nevertheless, over the last two decades, several organised terrorist networks have been targeted and disintegrated and consistent efforts are on to destroy many of the causes and structures that promote and facilitate terror. Security agencies all over the world, especially in stable states, are better equipped to detect and neutralise more forms of organised terrorist attacks and modules. Global counter-terrorism strategy, despite its lack of cohesion and convergence of national agendas, has continued to advance. And yet there is a perception that the world could have done much better and needs to do so even now, to combat and even eliminate terrorism. We are still nowhere close to entirely securing civilian populations from terrorism. Industry, enterprise and normal social life continue to be impacted by terrorist attacks or the apprehension of terror.

Under these circumstances, a review of the efficacy the existing global strategy on terrorism, including the US led 'war on terror', becomes important. Many Americans have themselves argued that the war has failed to achieve its objectives and the costs have been far too high. Many attributes the economic hardship of the people at the lower echelons of society in the most powerful democracy, and the widening spaces for right-wing sentiments, to expensive military campaign against terrorism. The *Costs of War* project at Brown University estimates that, as on November 2019, the US led war on terror had cost approximately USD

6.4 trillion and nearly 801,000 human lives.[5] The collateral civilian casualties in theatres of conflict, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan, have been estimated to be around 335,000. Whereas the United States has lost nearly 15,000 soldiers and defence contractors, and allied forces have chalked up 12,000 military casualties, security and police personnel of the host countries have borne the brunt of fatalities. Moreover, the estimated number of internally displaced refugees in this 'war' has crossed 37 million.[6]

These costs do not include the additional infrastructure raised for combating terrorism, or other parameters of the indirect impact the world has borne to defend itself from radical *jihadi* terror. The overall impact of this war, is believed to have been so astounding for the United States that it has drastically altered the global geopolitical equilibrium. China now threatens to not only supplant the US as the dominant power in Asia and Africa, but has also overtaken the latter on the sheer pace of technological innovation in several key sectors, with 5G internet just one of these. This can potentially threaten the United States' position as a global leader in many critical areas. Recent assessments by certain expert entities, in the contexts of China's deft handling of the economic fallout of COVID-19, suggests that China is already on its way to overtake the US to become the world's largest economy by 2028, five years before what was assessed earlier.[7]

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5   "The cost of the global war on terror: $6.4 trillion and 801,000 lives", *Brown University*, November 13, 2019, https://www.brown.edu/news/2019-11-13/costsofwar.

6   Ibid.

7   "World Economic League Table 2020", *Centre for Economics and Business Research*, December 26, 2020, https://cebr.com/reports/world-economic-league-table-2020/; "Chinese economy to overtake US 'by 2028' due to Covid", *BBC News*, December 26, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-55454146.

According to the GTI Report 2020, the total economic losses on account of terrorism declined in the year 2019 to USD 26.4 billion from the preceding years' figure of USD 35.1 billion. The total figure of such accumulated economic losses for the years between 2014 to 2019 stood at USD 430 billion.[8] A calculation of annual economic losses from terrorism from GTI reports, from the beginning of this century, works out at approximately USD 700 billion. At current prices, this figure would go into trillions of dollars. Nevertheless, such figures can only be rough approximation as the total economic and social impact of terrorism is indeed difficult to quantify.

Terrorism must have impeded the quality of human initiatives towards economic, social and technological advancements both directly and indirectly. A huge quantum of collective energies of nations have been frittered away on often excessive security counter-measures, to avoid potential terror attacks. The impact of terrorism on overall security and well-being of people, especially in the impacted countries, has been quite formidable over the last three to four decades.

A section of American strategic thinkers maintains that the US war on terror could have been less spectacular and yet far more effective. The initial strategy of the 'war on terror' involving identification, killing, arrest, deportation, and freezing of assets of suspected terrorists by destroying capacity of actual and potential terrorists all over the world, has depleted their energies beyond sustainable levels. This situation is believed to have been quietly exploited by the communist regime of China to steadily advance its influence all over the world. Hence, the clamour for review of the existing US strategy on terror has been generating a wide range of ideas.

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8   "Global Terrorism Index 2020", op. cit. p.19.

Former US President Trump's call for withdrawal from avoidable overseas conflicts, or his demand that even NATO members must pay for the US backed security cover, generated considerable anxiety. President Biden too does not seem to be very different in his strategic objectives, even though he has appeared far more tactful and courteous to allies. The cost of the 'war on terror' seems to have genuinely depleted many of the strategic options that the United States had once enjoyed. Some members of the US strategic community have gone to the extent of advocating closure of all American overseas military bases and withdrawal of all troops from abroad for the sake of national security.[9]

While President Joe Biden's initial moves did not suggest that the United States would withdraw from its global engagement beyond a certain level, the world's most powerful democracy may expect its allies and partners to shoulder greater responsibilities towards global security. This may involve increased participation, albeit in a modified war on terror, alongside other engagements. Trump-era policies of scaling down direct US military confrontations and engagements overseas appear likely to continue, with a degree of consultation with allies, partners and associates. Though US President Biden had initially hinted at the possibility of reviewing withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan as scheduled on May 1, 2021, inviting some murmurs of resentment from the Taliban, he eventually confirmed on April 13, complete withdrawal of US combat troops from Afghanistan by September 2021. It remains to be seen whether this decision is written in stone.

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9   Andrew J. Bacevich and David Vine, "Nine ways that drawing down overseas bases will improve US security", *Responsible Statecraft*, March 9, 2021, https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2021/03/09/nine-ways-that-drawing-down-overseas-bases-will-improve-u-s-security/.

A US withdrawal from Afghanistan may be particularly worrying for India, given the Taliban's ideological inclinations and its *de-facto* control in the hands of Pakistan's ISI. It is widely believed that if such withdrawal is based only on the commitment of not undertaking any attack on the West or on Western establishments, the security situation across South Asia may deteriorate. At the moment, the so-called back-channel talks between India and Pakistan, close on the heels of a military ceasefire agreement in February 2021, may be seeking to address the possible fall out of US withdrawal from Afghanistan. But it will remain doubtful if the Pakistani deep state, with its terrorist infrastructure intact and part of its own proxies having gone out of its control, shall be able or even willing to address India's concerns on terror.

Though terrorist attacks have dwindled in India since the 1990s, the country is nowhere safe from organised terrorism. The US-led global war on terror and the exposure of Pakistani complicity in world-wide terrorist networks, as well as the resultant pressure on Pakistan's deep state, have certainly improved the ecosystem for the fight against terror. But the process has not been easy. Besides Mumbai (2008) and Pulwama (2019), several smaller Pakistan sponsored terrorist attacks have taken place on Indian soil. This is despite heightened alertness on part of Indian security agencies and ongoing cooperation on terrorism with the United States and its allies. Radical elements and organised crime networks continue to wield fairly strong clout in several pockets of the country. Newer and stricter counter-terrorism measures have denied considerable space to them, have not been able to eliminate the threat.

The Indian strategy on terror, so far, has been driven by denial of space and opportunities to terrorist groups to carry

out attacks on its soil. The primary focus has remained on checking cross border infiltration and carrying intelligence-driven operations internally, to pre-empt and thwart potential attacks. Of late, community involvement in anti-terrorism campaigns is visible, with a large number of Muslim community leaders and clerics expressing themselves vocally against terrorism. But the arrangement appears more driven by few individual initiatives rather being institutionalised. The much-publicised "surgical strikes" into Pakistani territory, too, have been used to neutralise and deter potential terrorists, but only with limited success. The overall success rate of security forces has certainly improved over the years, but these have failed to contain radicalisation and organised crime, which can still provide a strong impetus to terrorism.

Terrorist threats in the West have been evolving on a somewhat different trajectory and in a different direction than in India. Despite certain similarities, India's challenges are unique on many parameters. In the context of the spurt in lone wolf attacks in Europe or right-wing White supremacist assaults across the West, it is worth reiterating the concerns of several Western experts, over the last decade or so, on what they have described as the boomerang impact of excessive counter-terrorism measures. A much talked about research paper of the EU Institute for Security Studies, France, maintained, way back in 2010:

> Pre-emption does not help... reduce the terrorism risk, but on the very contrary leads to its increase. The argument will be taken a step further by claiming that, in fact, the war on terror increases the likelihood of catastrophic terrorism, because the risk of terrorism increases as such that terrorists might seek indiscriminate violence not shying away to use weapons of mass destruction.

The war on terror therewith turns into a risk paradox – carrying consequences which, arguably, are even more risky than the original risk itself.[10]

Over the last few years, almost all of Europe has witnessed an unprecedented rise in right wing sentiments, threatening internal cohesion of its societies. These in turn have been creating space for home grown smaller terrorist modules or lone wolf attacks. Clandestine radicalising networks have been exploiting the so-called discrimination against immigrants and they have succeeded in using the web and darknet for radicalisation and recruitment. These have put additional pressure on law enforcement and security agencies, who have been compelled to overlook many other issues, which has had an adverse impact on the health of these societies.

Terrorist threats to India stem substantially from its sheer geography, historical legacies of the communal Partition of the subcontinent, and the fragility of some of its institutions. India's vulnerability to terrorist attacks remains high due to emotive campaigns of viscera hatred against non-Muslims, and especially Hindus, that the Pakistani ruling syndicate has entrenched over the years. Widespread radicalisation of Pakistan's domestic population in the context of an extensive terrorist infrastructure and strategic assets like the Taliban, the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) and a host of others, as well as its world-wide linkages with organised crime and other terrorist networks, enhance the threat to India.

India also needs to be careful about sustained radicalisation of sections of its own population. A democratic India cannot

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10 Carolin Goerzig, "The Boomerang Effect of the War on Terror", *EU Institute for Security Studies*, January, 2010, pp-163-171, https://webcache. googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:qQ1Y8FWPjpIJ:https://dialnet. unirioja.es/descarga/articulo/3671366.pdf+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=in.

afford blanket oppression of its minorities, either morally or even strategically. These minorities, in any cases, are far more integrated into the national mainstream than most such minorities anywhere else. An oppressive state like China can brutalise its entire Muslim population, which is largely confined to just one region, Xinjiang, in order to destroy any alleged or possible breeding ground for terrorism, and yet buy the silence of all Muslim nations on the issue. This would, quite simply, be an impossible proposition for India. India must, consequently, devise a far more innovative and effective strategy to deal with radicalisation at home and the externally sponsored proxy war through terrorism.

The Terrorist Challenges for India

The world-wide decline in the incidence of organised terrorist attacks[11] since 2014-15 has not eliminated the terrorist threat to people anywhere in the world. Terrorist organisations and terrorism itself continue to mutate into newer forms. They are reaching out to newer areas and posing different forms of threats, which demand more innovative responses from both state and society.

The *South Asia Terrorism Portal* (SATP) observes that the year 2019 witnessed the lowest daily average of terrorism/insurgency linked fatalities - at 1.44 – in India since 1986.[12] The data provided by same portal indicates that the intensity of terrorist attacks in India was at its peak between the year 2000 to 2010. Throughout the first decade of 21st Century, India remained in the list of the five states most impacted by terrorism, even according to the GTI 2020, prepared by the Institute of Economics and Peace.

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11 "Global Terrorism Index 2020", op. cit.
12 "India: Assessment-2020", *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, https://www.satp.org/terrorism-assessment/india.

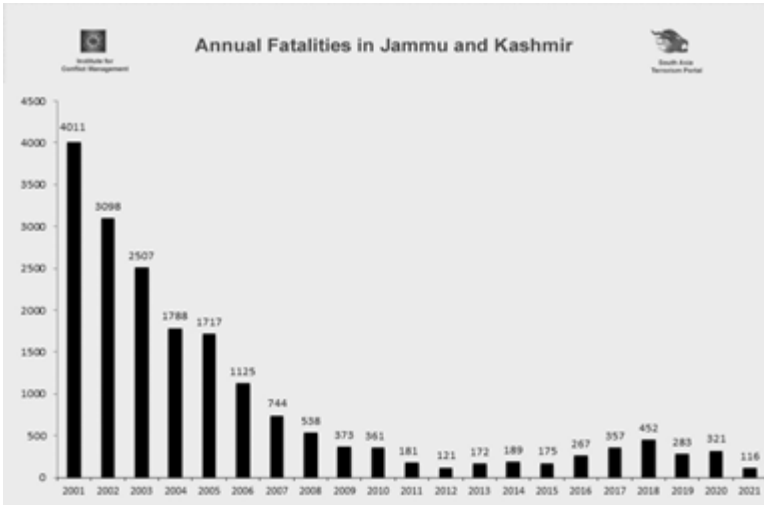| COUNTRY | 20 02 | 20 03 | 20 04 | 20 05 | 20 06 | 20 07 | 20 08 | 20 09 | 20 10 | 20 11 | 20 12 | 20 13 | 20 14 | 20 15 | 20 16 | 20 17 | 20 18 | 20 19 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan | 16 | 13 | 11 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Iraq | 29 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Nigeria | 35 | 25 | 26 | 32 | 12 | 13 | 17 | 11 | 11 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Syria | 107 | 105 | 55 | 63 | 49 | 57 | 39 | 46 | 56 | 14 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Somalia | 43 | 38 | 42 | 36 | 30 | 9 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 5 |
| Yemen | 44 | 31 | 39 | 39 | 36 | 30 | 22 | 20 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 6 |
| Pakistan | 12 | 10 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 7 |
| India | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| DRC | 25 | 20 | 24 | 25 | 25 | 20 | 12 | 5 | 8 | 11 | 13 | 17 | 18 | 17 | 13 | 11 | 10 | 9 |
| Philippines | 13 | 8 | 10 | 12 | 14 | 12 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 10 | 9 | 10 |

Ten countries most impacted by terrorism as per GTI[13]

According to SATP data too, from 2011 onwards, there has been a general decline in both total number of major lethal terror attacks and casualty of security personnel, with occasional incidents such as Pulwama being an exception. The general decline in such intensity of terrorism in India can be attributed to the success of Indian security forces in retrieving the situation from the precarious 1990s in Jammu and Kashmir, to fairly stable and improving levels by 2007-2008. It has been assessed by security experts that a soft target like Mumbai was chosen by LeT-ISI for the 2008 attacks only because it had become extremely difficult for them to operate in the Kashmir Valley. Again, from 2016, the Kashmir Valley has seen a moderate spike in terrorist violence, which can be attributed to propaganda and incitement against the Hindu nationalist identity of the current Government. The total casualty of security personnel in the Valley has been higher in the second half of the previous decade (2016-2020), as compared to the first (2011-15). These trends also reconfirm
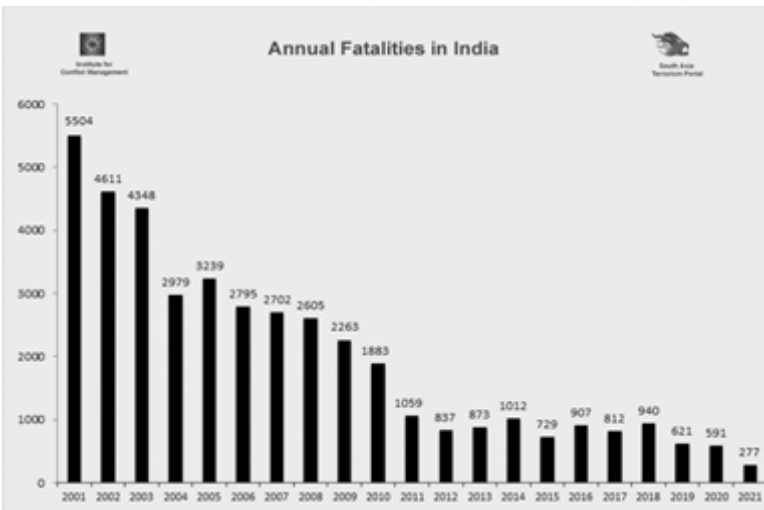
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13 "Global Terrorism Index 2020", op. cit.

the assertion that the security forces in the Valley have avoided collateral damage for the civilian population even at the cost of their own lives.

Source: South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), data till July 8, 2021

Source: South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), data till July 8, 2021

India's North-East also appears quite stable for the first time after Independence. Along side intensified security initiatives, denial of support and sanctuary in neighbouring Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar have also helped in this direction. Greater political and social integration of the region with the mainstream is far more visible today than at any time in the past.

However, the Indian state continues to grapple with extremely complex security-governance challenges in the form of the Maoist insurgency in the Chhattisgarh-Andhra-Telangana-Maharashtra tribal belt. Insurgents have been significantly tamed over the past few years, but this terrorism/insurgency threat appears unlikely to fade out in the immediate future.

The Maoists continue to inflict significant casualties on security personnel at regular intervals through their unique ambush and hit-and-run attacks. The latest attack on April 4, 2021, which killed 22, and injured 30, personnel of a team combining the elite CoBRA (Commando Battalion for Resolute Action), other Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel, and the state's armed Police and District Reserve Guards, was a stark reminder of the Maoists' formidable capacity for deceptive violence. The local terrain and some degree of local support, obtained through both coercion and persuasion, works to their advantage. The Indian state has to handle this problem with care, using a combination of security, governance and social initiatives. Even if a security-centric approach succeeds, which appears difficult given the sheer challenge of terrain, such groups can mutate into a different kind of terrorism or organised crime networks and build possible linkages with others in the region.

Interestingly, the major component of the terrorist threat to India stems from the cross-border proxy war waged by Pakistan through a combination of means. SATP has mentioned a list of 79 terrorist groups proscribed in India. Over 50 of these groups are driven by Islamic radicalism or separate Islamic identity.[14] Moreover, nearly half-a-dozen proscribed Sikh extremist groups are also known for the support, succour and sanctuary they receive from Pakistan's ISI, both on Pakistani soil and through the latter's world-wide networks.

Barring Left Wing Extremism (LWE), nearly all major active terrorist groups in India have always shared clandestine linkages with Pakistan at one or the other point of time, whereas a few in the North East were known to have secured the backing of Chinese intelligence services. Hence, the cross-border dimension of terrorism and Islamic radicalism remains a significant component of the terrorist threat confronting India.

With the second largest overall Muslim population, and the largest living as a minority anywhere in the world, Indian Muslims have remained substantially immune to radical religious propaganda. Their representation in the top echelons of the corporate sector, defence forces, civil services, politics and the media, is probably higher than most other major ethno-religious minorities anywhere in the world. Nearly all members of the community in leadership roles identify with India's composite nationalism and virtually each one of them has been vocal against the identity driven extremism stoked by Pakistan.

Nevertheless, the entire community, especially those at the lower rungs of the population, cannot entirely escape the impact of sustained radical propaganda. A so-called

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14   "India-Terrorist, insurgent and extremist groups", *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, https://satp.org/terrorist-groups/india.

majoritarian hard-line social media and political campaigns provide further fodder for radical propaganda in the name of Islam. These enhance vulnerability of the members of the community, especially at the lower rungs, to recruitment to crime, terrorism and other subversive activities. A report in *India Today* magazine, in early 2021 quoted National Crime Records Bureau to highlight the disproportionately higher number of Muslims, along with Tribals and Dalits, in Indian prisons.[15] Right-wing groups have been propagating, over the past several decades, that the overall percentage of certain sections of Indian Muslims has been disproportionately high in various shades of crime and illicit activities. Sociologists and socio-psychologists have attributed the phenomenon to the relative backwardness of the community on parameters of education and employment.

India has made significant strides towards providing universal and equitable access to education and employment, ever since the famous Sachar Committee report of 2006 highlighted the relative backwardness of the Muslim community. In the absence of stronger and credible mechanisms of the rule of law, sufficiently strong state intervention to facilitate universal access to education and employment, as well as credible and effective deterrents against crime and terrorism, vulnerabilities of sections of India's poor Muslim to radical propaganda and recruitment to subversive networks, persist. Simultaneously, identity based political mobilisation and right-wing Hindu nationalist propaganda, especially in the context of the eroding credibility of the criminal-justice system, create wider spaces for both organised crime and radicalism.

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15 Kai Friese, "Silenced Minority?", *India Today*, January 30, 2021, https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/nation/story/20210208-silenced-minority-1763812-2021-01-30.

Organised Crime and Terror

A fairly large number of reliable research studies and investigations have established the symbiotic nexus between organised crime and terrorism. Security and strategic observers have maintained for long that no insurgency or organised movement of terrorism can ever be sustained with 'clean money'. Hence, organised terror groups or insurgents and organised crime networks have always shared the kind of bonhomie that policy-makers often ignore. A 2017 RAND Corporation paper provides graphic details about involvement of the Islamic State in the illicit drug trade.[16] The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) at one point of time was believed to be generating a significant amount of funds through the illicit trade in Narcotics.[17] The Taliban's drug trade and the ISI's involvement in all shades of organised crime have also been well documented. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) annual reports routinely highlight the nexus between organised crime and terrorism, as well as insurgency.

But the manner in which organised crime and terrorism have converged and coalesced in India would have few parallels anywhere else in the world. The phenomenon of the "D-Company" and its complicity in the Mumbai terrorist attacks of 1993, and its subsequent extension of logistical facilities to the LeT during the 26/11 (2008) Mumbai attacks, have been

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16 Colin P. Clarke, "ISIS Is So Desperate It's Turning to the Drug Trade", *RAND Corporation*, July 25, 2017, https://www.rand.org/blog/2017/07/isis-is-so-desperate-its-turning-to-the-drug-trade.html.

17 Joe Miller, "Junk for Jihad: Prohibition Empowers Terrorists and Violent Insurgents", *The Rutherford Institute*, July 29, 2004, https://www.rutherford.org/publications_resources/oldspeak/junk_for_jihad_prohibition_empowers_terrorists_and_violent_insurgents.

well established and well documented.[18] But in reality, there would be several less talked about networks or aggregators of crime cartels, who are available to carry out subversive and/or terrorist operations at the best of external entities.

A research paper on "Organised Crime and Terrorism" by Sam Mullins and James K. Wither of the George C. Marshall European Centre for Security Studies, has particularly examined the transition of D-Company from a pure mercenary crime group to a reliable terrorist affiliate of Pakistan's ISI.[19] The paper quotes other researchers, including Clarke and Lee,[20] as well as others, to demonstrate that, from 1976 onwards, when this group was noticed for the first time, it had remained a powerful crime syndicate until the ISI exploited a host of factors to co-opt it into its radical terrorist agenda. However, "D-Company" and its associates have not given up their clandestine transnational crime operations. Its kingpins continue to evade global security agencies, in sanctuaries either in Pakistan or other safe havens, but the manner in which the group has enhanced the strategic strengths and capacities of ISI to wage clandestine war is evident in many assessments.

The larger dynamics of collaboration or interface between terrorism and organised crime, their mutual appropriation and assimilation, and transformation of the one into the other, multiply the challenges for counter-terrorism strategists. India needs to be particularly careful with regard to the expanding

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18 Sam Mullins and James K Wither, "Terrorism and Organised Crime", *Connections: The Quarterly Journal*, Volume 15, Number 3, 2016, p. 75; Nafiu Ahmed, "Transnational Organised Crime in India: A Framework of Analysis", *European Journal of Social Sciences Studies*, Volume 2, Issue 5, 2017, pp. 33-49.

19 Ibid.

20 Ryan Clarke and Stuart Lee, "The PIRA, D-Company, and the Crime-Terror Nexus", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Volume 20, Issue 3, 2008, pp. 385 and 390.

influence of organised crime on its territory. This is especially in the context of its sluggish criminal justice system and absence of requisite levels of institutional professionalism among some of its law enforcement agencies. Subversion of some sections of these institutions has been a longstanding reality, notwithstanding some of the most brilliant professionals and security leaders that India has produced.

It is an open secret in India's strategic and security community that, despite an outward ban, "D-Company" is able to operate with impunity on Indian soil. It is believed to have built a series of smaller networks and close allies in both the political and police establishments. There is a strong possibility that externally sponsored organised crime networks may have subverted sections of state institutions, about whom very little information may otherwise be available in the open domain. A 2019 write up in the famous Lima Charlie Journal, that vouches for its credibility and integrity, has noted:

> …there is a deep and strong interlink between the Pakistani Army, organised crime (especially D-Company) and Islamic terrorist groups operating out of Pakistan on behalf of the military's irregular war against its neighbours in India and Afghanistan. Dawood Ibrahim still controls one of the most comprehensive organized crime networks in Mumbai with deep collusive roots among elements of Maharashtra's political leadership. Meanwhile, D-Company has become a major Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) asset and a continuous collaborator with the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and other Pakistan-backed terrorist groups, facilitating the movement of arms and explosives, as well as of finances across international boundaries. It is useful in this context to briefly examine the sheer

multiplicity of sources of finance for Islamist terrorist groups operating in India, and the near impossibility of effectively targeting these networks.[21]

Pakistan has often ramped up propaganda to project itself as a victim of terrorism and sought to draw parity with India. Some Pakistani leaders and activists have gone to the extent of accusing India of inflicting terrorism on Pakistani soil. India needs to be wary of this and so do other democracies. In a bid to treat India and Pakistan on the same level, many Western statesmen in the past have been hoodwinked by Pakistani propaganda, to let Rawalpindi off the hook, allowing the ISI to expand its crime-terrorism domain. The kind of clandestine infrastructure for terrorism that the Pakistani deep state has assiduously built, is simply not viable in the Indian context. India has its own challenges, but its institutions have simply no wherewithal, capacity or freedom to pursue a radical terrorist agenda. The so-called terrorism in Pakistan is nothing more than the 'blowback' or 'boomerang' effect of patronising and nurturing terrorism and its infrastructure on its own territory.

The UN's World Drug Report 2020 maintained that, over the preceding five years, Afghanistan accounted for nearly 84 per cent of the world's total opium production, and the Taliban is believed to be generating nearly USD 1.5 billion in drug revenues annually.[22] There is no way such a large volume of drug trade could be carried out without reliable world-wide networks that would require continuous efforts and state support to maintain. It is Pakistan's ISI alone that has enabled

21 Gary K. Busch, "Organised Crime in Asia – An [In]convenient Relationship: Part 2", February 24, 2019, https://www.newscabal.co.uk/organised-crime-in-asia-an-inconvenient-relationship-part-2/.

22 "Afghanistan's drug disorder: UN World Drug Report", *South Asia Monitor*, July 17, 2020, https://southasiamonitor.org/un-watch/afghanistans-drug-disorder-un-world-drug-report.

these networks and this trade. Further, such Pakistani or Pakistan linked networks, are not confined to the production and processing of drugs alone. A significant component of the proceeds of illicit drug and crime money would be finding its ways into the legal economy. This is something, which has been confirmed by a UNODC report in mid-2020, especially in the context of the outbreak of COVID-19.[23]

There is a strong possibility that a large number of resource rich and influential entities in different parts of the world are connected through such networks. Once their financial stakes in the formal economy increase, they may become averse to random and reckless use of terrorism. But it is also possible that such entities may be supplanted by others in due course, or at least that some of them use terrorism in a selective way to advance their own agendas. With the onset of globalisation, a large variety of crime-cartels have emerged, aggregating and subsuming each other with an element of collaboration and competition. Though UNODC has routinely assessed the total volume of transnational crime, the figures on these parameters can only be a rough approximation.

The Pakistani deep state is also believed to have built a well-oiled clandestine global network of fairly influential entities, who have been receptive to its concerns. This is notwithstanding serious deprivations with which ordinary people in that country may be living. While such networks may not remain cohesive and united under all circumstances, as internal rivalries or conflicts are inevitable, these have been fairly effective in extricating Pakistan from difficult situations.

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23 United Nations, "Organized crime groups are infiltrating the legal economy following COVID-19 crisis, says latest UNODC Research Brief", July 13, 2020, https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2020/July/organized-crime-groups-are-infiltrating-the-legal-economy-following-covid-19-crisis--says-latest-unodc-research-brief.html.

Despite being discredited as a rogue state following exposure of its direct involvement in abetting, sponsoring and patronising terrorism, they seem to have sufficient capacity to get around influential entities across most divides. While all such support may not be the outcome of underhand deals, but the volume of easily deployable resources that Pakistan has at its disposal for focussed lobbying, cannot be matched by most states. This is what explains, among others, the failure of Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to blacklist Pakistan despite its sustained transgressions. Even the United States failed to go beyond a point, despite discovering Osama Bin Laden within Pakistan's territory.

India's overall institutional capacity to deal with subversive networks – especially organised crime and radical propaganda – has appeared inadequate in face of the enormity of challenges in this direction. While there is no credible data on the exact volume of revenue generated through organised crime, such as money laundering, hawala, political kickbacks, bribery/corruption, extortion, betting networks, circulation of fake currency, human trafficking/illegal immigration, and street crimes, etc., in India, their widespread prevalence has been well established.[24] These would continue to augment India's vulnerabilities to terrorism, subversion and other forms of internal and external security threats.

Global Terror

All known terrorism monitoring entities have observed a sustained decline in the incidence of organised terrorist attacks and resultant casualties since the peak of 2014, but have cautioned against newer forms of emerging terrorist threats. The Global Terrorism Index, 2020, thus maintains,

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24   Nafiu Ahmed, op. cit.

Deaths from terrorism fell for the fifth consecutive year in 2019 to 13,826… representing a 15 per cent decrease from the prior year… Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Russia and Eurasia, South America and South Asia regions all recorded falls in deaths from terrorism of at least 20 per cent…[25] the decrease in the impact of terrorism was spread across many countries, with many more improving than deteriorating. In 2019, 103 countries improved their score, compared only 35 that deteriorated and 25 that recorded no change. The GTI assesses more than just the total number of deaths and incidents. It measures the full impact of terrorism, which takes into account a weighted average of all terrorist activity over a five-year period. Although the number of deaths from terrorism is now at its lowest level since 2012, terrorism is still a major global threat. Deaths remain substantially higher than a decade ago, and are still nearly twice as high as the number recorded in 2001.[26]

The sustenance of the terrorist threats, despite the global decline in organised terrorist violence and spectacular terror attacks, stems from the emotive appeal of identity driven violence, the mutation of terrorist groups, and the transformation of their essential character. Many newer and smaller terrorist groups have emerged in different parts of the world, even as several offshoots of existing groups have been relocating to deficiently governed or fragile states. With their increasing linkages with crime groups, down to informal street gangs, and a stronger capacity to influence psychologically unstable youth, terrorist groups continue to threaten most open societies and states. The possibility of resurrection of organised

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25 "Global Terror Index 2020", op. cit.
26 Ibid.

terrorism, at least in a limited or newer form, remains a reality. Clandestine support, patronisation and utilisation of such groups by certain known state actors and entities for limited tactical or strategic objectives, further enhance the challenges for counter-terrorism institutions in democracies.

The GTI Report 2020 goes on to identify the Afghan Taliban as the deadliest terrorist group, which has gained an element of legitimacy following a peace deal with the United States. There is serious apprehension that the scheduled US withdrawal from Afghanistan – now by September 2021 – can make the dreaded terrorist formation the de-facto ruler of Afghanistan. Given Pakistani influence – if not control – over this group and the financial muscle enjoyed by it through illicit commerce, the ISI can use it as the most powerful aggregator of all major terrorist outfits in the region. The Taliban has continued to target police and security personnel even after the deal with the US in Doha in February 2020, in violation of the peace agreement. Growing rapprochement between Iran and Pakistan, with Turkish support and ostensible covert backing by China, becomes particularly worrying for India in this context.

While the very nature of such organisations and their structures breed internal and external rivalries and conflict, the backing of a state like Pakistan and indirect support of China throws up newer possibilities. There is a strong potential that the Taliban, or some offshoot, can emerge as a unique and disciplined mercenary army that can be utilised for terrorism- and subversion-driven covert wars in targeted countries. It can do this either on its own or in collaboration with smaller affiliates or existing localised networks, or with the support of powerful states, who are not hesitant in using any amount of force to secure the suppression of any external rival or domestic dissidence. Even if such organisations and arrangements breed

their own contradictions in due course, the situation in South Asia is likely to deteriorate quite seriously.

GTI and other terrorism watchers have also recorded the growing stature of Boko Haram as an organised terrorist and insurgent group. Boko Haram controls large swathes of territory in Africa, especially in Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger. With easier access to disgruntled and even radicalised young recruits and funds generated from resource rich pockets in the region, this group has built its own sustainability and power. It is suspected that some state and non-state actors, having commercial stakes in the region, depend on this group for the security of their establishments and operations. At this pace, the influence and reach of this group can enhance globally and it can find newer allies.

Similarly, the Islamic State, despite the debacle in Iraq and Syria, has not entirely been wiped out. This group has split into multiple smaller modules, some of which may be merging with localised groups in South Asia and Africa. Its continued push in newer regions and ability to inspire lone wolf or even spectacular attacks, like the one on Sri Lankan churches and luxury hotels in 2019, or even in Indonesia in March 2021, has been a stark reminder of the group's residual capacity and prowess to cause serious damage. GTI-2020 has recorded the Islamic State's presence in 27 countries, other than Iraq and Syria, in 2019, and its involvement in 141 attacks involving 687 fatalities.[27] A section of Islamic State has continued to push towards sub-Saharan Africa in search of newer territory and sanctuary to flourish. A December 2020 report of the Africa Centre for Strategic Studies has highlighted growing influence of the Islamic State of Greater Sahara (ISG) in the region.[28]

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27 "Global Terrorism Index 2020", op. cit., p. 17.
28 Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, "Islamic State in the Greater Sahara Expanding Its Threat and Reach in the Sahel", December 18, 2020, https://

Most of the Al Qaeda remnants and variants have mutated into newer groups and joined various localised terrorist groups, but their ideology and some of their splintered modules continue to threaten security of several regions, including South Asia. The Bureau of Counter Terrorism of the US State Department, in its Country Report on Terrorism for the year 2019 (published 2020) claimed that in the year 2019, the US and its partners pursued Al Qaeda around the world, inflicting significant setbacks, yet the group and its associates remained resilient enough to pose a threat in Africa, the Middle East, and elsewhere. [29]

Simultaneously, the ideologies of both Al Qaeda and the Islamic State continue to inspire large sections of psychologically vulnerable Muslim youth, including neo-converts, across many national divides. A spurt in lone wolf attacks in different parts of the world – from the West to the far East – have been claimed by one or other such 'inspired' group. Shockingly, the December 2019 shooting attack at US Naval Air Station Pensacola in Florida, which killed three people and wounded eight, was carried out by a Royal Saudi Air Force officer, who had gone there for a training exchange programme. The State Department Country Report on Terrorism 2019 observes, "…before the shooting, the gunman had coordinated with al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), which claimed credit for the attack."[30] That such a level of radical motivation on the part of a serving defence officer, who had been cleared to undergo a defence exchange programme, could not be detected either by the Saudi or even the US military or civilian intelligence, is certainly disturbing.

africacenter.org/spotlight/islamic-state-in-the-greater-sahara-expanding-its-threat-and-reach-in-the-sahel/.

29   "Global Terrorism Index 2020", op. cit. pp.17-18.

30   Ibid.

Lone wolf attacks, by their very nature, pose a serious challenge to intelligence agencies. Since attackers have no organisation and they don't need to coordinate with anyone, unless they are using high quality explosives. As a result, even the high-quality tech-int infrastructure of intelligence agencies cannot detect them. Prevention of such attacks calls for newer and yet cost-effective methods and strategies, going beyond the policing and security dimensions.

It is worrying that all major terrorist groups, including Al Qaeda and Islamic State, despite the disintegration of their networks in West Asia and the Middle East, are regrouping and seeking to operate from fragile states and poorly governed territories. The US State Department report suggests that Al Qaeda networks continue to survive and exploit under-governed spaces, conflict zones, and global security gaps to recruit, fundraise, and plot attacks. There is a strong possibility that a host of terrorist groups and organised crime networks may converge and coalesce in some of these territories and run clandestine global networks, threatening the security of people and states through more innovative and novel methods.

The State Departments report identifies, "Al Shabaab in the Horn of Africa, Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin in the Sahel, and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham/Al-Nusrah Front in Syria," as some of the most active and dangerous terrorist groups.[31] Al Shabaab, an erstwhile affiliate of Al Qaeda with a Sunni Salafist orientation, in pursuit of an Islamic state as its objective, has retained a strong influence in Somalia. It has carried out sustained attacks in Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda, demonstrating its capacities across the region.

The US based Foreign Policy Research Institute's assessment of prospects of terrorism in 2021 indicates that

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31   Ibid.

the impending withdrawal of US forces from the Middle East, South Asia, and throughout Africa, could give a new push to increase in the incidence of terrorism in certain parts of the world. The Institute asserts, further,

> Al Qaeda, the Islamic State (ISIS), and their respective affiliates could make a renewed push to capture new territory and destabilize countries and regions. Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Nigeria are home to jihadist groups linked to al Qaeda and ISIS.[32]

The report assesses that these groups can even withstand losses of their top leaders, such as the ailing Ayman al-Zawahiri or even Al Qaeda veteran Muhammad al-Masri, who was killed in Iran in 2020. Their organisational dynamics are no longer dependent on charismatic leaders. The report goes on to warn of prospects of a spurt in the appearance of non-state actors, the increasing use of newer technologies, including unmanned aerial and drone attacks – as already manifesting in many parts of the world – and the impact of varying forms of newer ideologies, inspiring terrorism and identity driven conflicts.

OUTLINES OF AN EFFECTIVE STRATEGY

India has to be prepared to face newer and more advanced forms of terrorist threats, without eroding its long-term developmental and social objectives. A detailed assessment and projections of these is not possible in this paper. What is important at this stage is to explore an effective and viable strategy to contain emerging threats at a level from where they do not impact on the normal life and liberties of people, or on their long-term capacities and aspirations.

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32 Colin P Clarke, "Trends in Terrorism: What's On the Horizon in 2021?", *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, January 5, 2021, https://www.fpri.org/article/2021/01/trends-in-terrorism-whats-on-the-horizon-in-2021/.

Sustained, direct or indirect, state support to some of the terrorist groups in the region will further complicate India's challenges. Nevertheless, India has also built sufficiently credible anti-terrorism and counter-terrorism capacities since the early 1990s, and it must utilise the anti-terrorism sentiments mounting in many West Asian and even Asian States, to evolve a robust strategy of its own. India's advances in counter-terrorism and anti-terrorism capacities appear to have been driven largely by individual leadership initiatives in some of the agencies and institutions. It is certainly time for stronger specialised institutional capacity, involving the social and governance ecosystem as well.

The UN Office of Counter-Terrorism, created in 2017 with a separate Under Secretary General, has adopted UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/60/288 of 2006,[33] both as plan of action and a strategy, consisting of the following 'four pillars':

1. Addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.

2. Measures to prevent and combat terrorism.

3. Measures to build states' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in that regard.

4. Measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis for the fight against terrorism.[34]

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN General Assembly had to postpone the seventh biennial review of the 'four pillars' strategy, which was scheduled for

33 Security Council Report, "A/RES/60/288", September 8, 2006, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/document/terr-ares60288.php.

34 United Nations, "UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy", https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/un-global-counter-terrorism-strategy.

May 2020, to its seventy-fifth session slated in 2021. A final plenary meeting of the Assembly is scheduled on 28-29 June 2021, for the review of the strategy and consideration of the adoption of a resolution.

While the role of the UN has helped build better conditions for global cooperation, underlining the significance of the subject, real cooperation on terrorism has largely taken place at bilateral levels. Different states have devised their own respective strategies, developed capacities and worked out their collaboration with like-minded states. Interestingly, since the turn of this century, India's interest on this subject has increasingly converged with Western democratic nations. Hence, the 'four pillars' identified by the UN, probably after considerable deliberation, may provide at least a broad guideline for India to continuously refine and sharpen its strategic capacities. But details in this direction need to be geared to address specific challenges, priorities and requirements in India's own unique context.

In particular, at least the following must be included as major critical ingredients of India's strategy to deal with terror:

1. Appreciation of Complexity of Terrorism in Indian Context

Since the genesis and sustenance of Islamist terror in the Indian context can be traced back to the violent Partition of the subcontinent in the name of Islam, and the subsequent use of terrorism by the Pakistani deep state as an instrument of proxy war, India has to appreciate the issue and devise its response accordingly. The threat of terrorism faced by India, for all practical purposes, has been a form of highly complex war, where the adversary has been seeking to exploit both liberal, and at times even lax, institutions, alongside emotions attached to the identity of the Muslim population. It has built a large and covert infrastructure for such war, some of which may

no longer be under its control. Terrorist violence is the most direct aspect of such war, which must be thwarted, but this war has to be fought in totality, with optimal use of all round resources, to defend the long-term security of India. None of the existing institutions of the Indian state – whether police, military, intelligence or diplomacy – are trained to fight such a complex war on their own.

The adversary has, so far, enjoyed the advantage by retaining the initiative to strike and push this war largely into our territory. Pakistan and its people have been facing only the boomerang impact of a war they have initiated and substantially control. It is, however, possible that some of the real masterminds of this war may be hiding in secure locales of some of the most advanced nations. For them, this war may have a strong commercial and other dimension that could be giving them huge international clout. It is also important to appreciate that, given the nature of Pakistani state, the adversary may not be the entire population of Pakistan, most of whom have only been used as fodder for this war.

This war has built its own momentum and even killing terrorists and disintegrating terrorist networks may fail to bring terrorism to an end in the foreseeable future. India may have to simultaneously build stronger conditions, where such a war and its infrastructure become unsustainable. A system of political governance in this region that is institutionally and practically unconstrained in its capacity to demolish the terrorism-crime-radicalisation infrastructure should eventually be the goal of all counter-terrorism strategies in this region.

2. Clarity, Focus and Precision in Approach

India's focus must remain on winning this complex war in the shortest possible time, through optimal use of energies, and not merely fighting it efficiently. The indefinite prolongation

of this war has already had seriously negative consequences on the overall health of the Indian state and society, undermining their optimal evolution. There should be clear identification and precise targeting of multiple variables that have helped sustain terror on Indian territory.

A comprehensive approach must be guided by the objective of securing our social spaces not merely from specific acts of violence, but also from their associated consequences. The strategy must incorporate not merely thwarting each and every possible terrorist attack, or the disintegration of hostile terrorist networks, or paralysing their capacity, but also the destruction of conditions that can allow them to resurface.

Finally, a major and comprehensive overhaul of institutions must be the long run objective. However, a series of swift, viable and leadership-driven innovations must be encouraged, keeping the larger strategic objective in mind.

3. Evolving Suitable and Dynamic Defensive and Offensive Capacities & Strategies

While reactions and responses are critical for self-defence, no war can ever be won by a defensive strategy alone. Offensive strategies again need to focus more on outcome rather than garnering wider attention as a public spectacle. As part of a defensive strategy, the Indian state's response has to be measured and must not fracture its internal cohesion. Neither should radical forces be allowed to exploit democratic freedoms to carry out subversive propaganda, nor should an identity-driven counter response be encouraged. While external bases and support structures need to be destroyed, as part of an offensive strategy, internal cohesion must be protected through a credible and speedy mechanisms of rule of law with a special focus on terrorism.
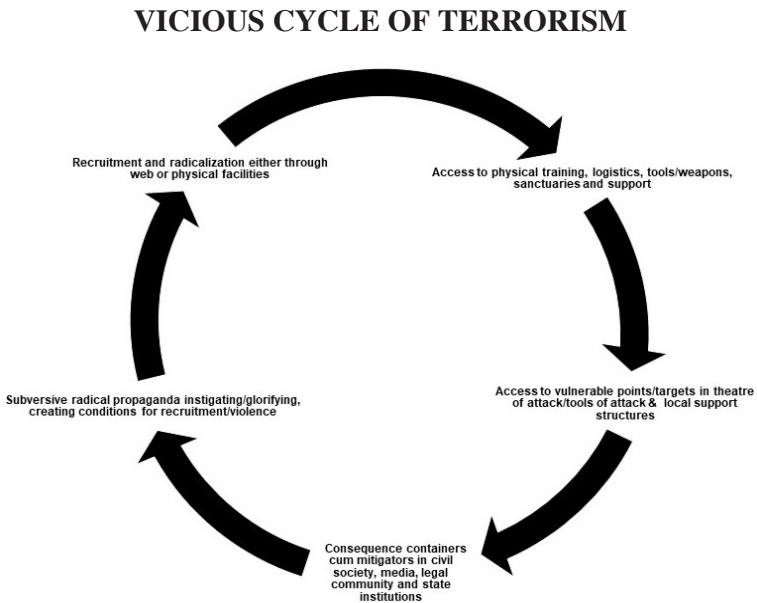
External offensive strategies must not be spectacular attacks on foreign soil alone, though these, in certain contexts, could be an inescapable necessity. Building bridges with friendly and even neutral entities should be extended beyond intelligence sharing mechanisms to help fragile or deficiently governed states build adequate capacity to deny space to terrorism and organised crime on their own territory.

Pakistani capacity to perpetrate terror, insurgency and propaganda emanates from a well-oiled cash-rich effective machinery to wage a covert war. Various entities, from United States to China to a host of others, including many in the Islamic world, have found utility in such capacity. Simultaneously, some have found such association with Pakistan as double-edged weapon that is potentially dangerous for their own security. India has to go beyond formal international regulatory and other institutions to build suitable security-military-intelligence capacities, and create a conducive domestic and international ambience to decimate such clandestine Pakistan linked terror-crime networks, with collaboration of all like-minded forces, globally. Clandestine association with Pakistani terrorist or crime syndicates must become increasingly unsustainable for all major state and non-State entities.

Concurrently, India must exploit all avenues and opportunities at its disposal to push for de-radicalisation, rule of law and defence of human rights within Pakistan, without any significant cost to itself. These have been crushed by the Pakistani deep state by citing the threat from India, or by raising the bogey of Kashmir, in a bid to retain its grip over the Pakistani state apparatus. India must think innovatively to contain the Pakistani deep state internally and paralyse its ability to operate globally.

4. An integrated and comprehensive approach, with optimal use of existing assets and instruments of governance

A successful and sustainable indigenous strategy must target every link in the chain of the vicious cycle of terrorism – which includes subversive and radical propaganda, funding, recruitment, radicalisation/training, access to logistics/bases/ sanctuaries, weapons, tools of destruction, availability of support structures in the media, civil society or crime groups, etc. The following chart roughly depicts this vicious cycle.

VICIOUS CYCLE OF TERRORISM

Recruitment and radicalization either through web or physical facilities

Access to physical training, logistics, tools/weapons, sanctuaries and support

Access to vulnerable points/targets in theatre of attack/tools of attack & local support structures

Consequence containers cum mitigators in civil society, media, legal community and state institutions

Subversive radical propaganda instigating/glorifying, creating conditions for recruitment/violence

A viable strategy must identify each of the above or similar ingredients of the terrorism cycle, and target them at each level, involving all institutions of both the state and society. Since it is far easier to breed and spread terrorism, and many more

times difficult to contain and eliminate it, the Indian strategy must involve simultaneous refinement of all institutions and synergise their role with each other. In their normal capacity, institutions of governance should aspire not only to disintegrate this vicious cycle and deny space to terrorism, but also to build such a political, administrative, economic and social order, which would offer no space to terrorist violence.

5. Sufficient Focus on the Psychological Dimension

Given the significance of the psychological dimension of identity-driven terrorism and its emotive appeal, the state must encourage and protect all such community leaders, clerics and Ulema who can build a larger genuine campaign against radicalism. All actual, potential and credible role models, who advocate harmony and coexistence with others, need to be encouraged. These must not be confined to mere speeches but should result in follow up action by the state, providing access to secular education, economic security and integration in the wider society.

6. A Proactive Strategy as Part of a Larger Vision of Governance

The overall Indian strategy on terrorism must not only be based on the strengths and requirements of counter-terrorism alone, but should also be part of the overall governance-security edifice. This need to continuously and seamlessly evolve with the passage of time, as terrorism and similar threats also keep mutating. The strength of the strategy would depend on its ability to retain the initiative through a proactive approach on larger issues of governance and security as well.

As the largest plural democracy, with strong civilisational linkages with nearly all of Asia, and the largest Muslim population as minority, India has to re-envision its role in the region. Containing and curbing terrorism, has to be part

of this larger role. The effective management of terrorism as well as emerging forms of covert and deceptive wars, will bolster India's great power aspirations and add to the larger stability and security of this region. A more proactive global role, based on its own unique strengths, rather than models provided by the United States or China, is critical for creating a more conducive internal and external ecosystem to contain and prevent terrorism.

India's experience over the past two decades has shown that neither persuasion or appeals, nor even military pressures, can effectively combat and contain terrorism. Pre-emption of terrorist attacks, through security and intelligence instruments, including selective decimation of known targets, is an indispensable tactical necessity. But its accumulated costs, which has already started hitting nearly all open societies, could soon become unsustainable for the larger pursuit of other national security objectives. Hence, the strategic focus, and simultaneous efforts, must remain on building appropriate and viable societal and governance instruments that complement each other to deny space for terror.

This would call for major innovations in our approach not merely to terrorism but larger issues of security and governance. India may have to go well beyond the limited Western ideas of 'counter & anti-terrorism' strategies, to evolve appropriate and sustainable capacities for its own unique context. Besides stronger domestic cohesion, India also needs a mutually empowering and healthy equilibrium with other democracies in the region. The overall advancement towards resilient and effective institutional capacities of governance and security, with a judicious mix of persuasion and coercion, are critical for this purpose.