

Combatting Cross-Border Terrorism: Need for a Doctrinal Approach

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The use of force or threat of use of force must flow from national policy goals and objectives. In the Indian context, for a country struggling to find its soul from centuries of foreign domination, the primary strategic objective would of necessity, remain the human development of its people, which, in turn, would require a durable peace. The national approach to conflict must, hence, aim, first and foremost, at deterrence and dissuasion to enable peace. In the event of conflict, the aim must be for early conflict resolution, with adequate conflict control mechanisms in place to reduce the risk of escalation. War capability must encompass both the capacity and the will to wage war. It would require a well-trained and equipped force to meet such national policy objectives.¹

All sovereign states pursue their perceived national interest. At the apex level, a nation's vital interests would encompass matters pertaining to territorial integrity, state sovereignty, and the security of its people. In India, all three of these stand effectively challenged today by non-state actors. While most of these non-state actors have come up on indigenous narratives, some are promoted, propped or supported by nation states inimical to India. This has given rise to internal conflict in Jammu and

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Kashmir (J&K), parts of Northeast India and in the hinterland where Maoist violence has spread to many districts. In the above internal security paradigm of India, conflict is promoted in the state of J&K by the active support given by Pakistan to various terrorist organisations such as the Lashkar-e-Tayyeba, (LeT), Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) and others. These organisations have their bases in Pakistan where they are trained, financed and equipped to carry out terror strikes not only in J&K but in other parts of the country as well. The violence which started in J&K in the late Eighties, and which continues until date, as also terror strikes across various parts of India are a result of such support.

The Threat to India

Pakistan's interference in J&K started soon after independence when it sent armed raiders to wrest the state by force. Timely action by the Indian state, through employment of the Army, threw out the raiders beyond the present Line of Control (LoC), but that has not prevented Pakistan from continuing with its efforts to seize the state by force. Pakistani politicians have consistently advocated hard line and confrontational policies against India over the Kashmir issue. This led to the second India-Pakistan War in September 1965, when Pakistan again sent armed infiltrators into J&K in an operation codenamed "Gibraltar". The infiltrators hoped to create a local uprising against the Indian state as a prelude to the Pakistan Army moving in and annexing J&K by force. The early detection and neutralisation of these infiltrators, however, put paid to such Pakistani hopes. India also retaliated by widening the conflict through offensive operations across the International Border (IB) into the Pakistani provinces of Punjab and Sindh. Perturbed at this development, Pakistan's then Foreign Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, in a fiery speech delivered at the UN Security Council, condemned India for aggression and declared his nation's intent to "fight for a thousand years".²

Gen Zia-ul-Haq, in a sinister, well thought out strategy to "bleed

India through a thousand cuts” gave form to Bhutto’s promise of a thousand-year war. The provocative statements of both Bhutto and Zia are not mere rhetoric; they comprise the core of Pakistani ideology and are the *raison d’être* for its existence. Zia’s policy took shape after he had deposed Bhutto in a coup in July 1977, assuming the office of President of Pakistan a year later on September 16, 1978.³ Realising that Pakistan could no longer wrest Kashmir from India by force after the disaster of the 1971 War which led to the break-up of Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh, he embarked on a new policy to promote terrorism within India through “a thousand cuts” in Kashmir. Cross-border terrorism started in the Eighties with Pakistan pushing in armed and well-trained groups of terrorists into India, maintaining at the same time that terrorism was the “freedom struggle” of the people of Kashmir and Pakistan had no hand in it beyond providing moral support. But the truth tumbled out when a Director-General of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) told the Pakistan National Assembly that the ISI had been sponsoring such support in Kashmir.⁴

Zia’s tenure as head of state from 1977 to 1988 was a period of Islamic ferment in Pakistan brought on by the unequivocal emphasis given by him to Islamising the state. In 1987, during the latter half of the Zia years, the Dawat-ul-Irshad Markaz was established by Hafiz Saeed and Zafar Iqbal, both professors from the Engineering University at Lahore, spurred no doubt by the impact of the Zia years. The third founding father was Abdullah Azam, an Arab from the International Islamic University, Islamabad. Azam died two years later, killed in a bomb blast in Peshawar.⁵ The Dawat-ul-Irshad Markaz [since renamed Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD)] is an adherent to the principles of Sunni Wahhabism and seeks primarily to establish a universal Islamic caliphate with a special emphasis on recovering all lands that were once under Muslim rule. This explains its focus on India as the country’s achievement in becoming an economically dynamic, multi-ethnic, and secular democracy remains

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an affront to its vision of a universal Islamic caliphate. There was no dearth of volunteers, funding and state support for the Dawat-ul-Irshad and the organisation's desire to engage simultaneously in *tableegh* (preaching) and *jihad* (armed struggle) found manifestation in different ways from the moment of its founding.⁶ The LeT was formed as the armed wing of the Dawat-ul-Irshad. The latter continues to receive considerable support from its state patron Pakistan and its principal intelligence agency, the ISI Directorate. Moreover, India's growing counter-terrorism collaboration with the United States and the West in general deepened the incentives for LeT-ISI collaboration.

Besides the LeT, other formidable *jihadi* organisations, which receive support from Pakistan's ISI, are the Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) and the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), which also functions as the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) and Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ). The focus of the LeT and JeM is on India, especially on annexing Kashmir, while the SSP/LeJ/ASWJ conglomerate aims to eliminate Shiism by systematically killing Shiites. The leadership of all these organisations is based in Pakistan's Punjab province, but they have an all Pakistan presence.⁷

It is, thus, self-evident that a variety of *jihadi* organisations based in Pakistan and supported by the state have a specific anti-India agenda. The purpose of the LeT was to inspire *jihadism* among the world's Muslims. When conflict was imposed on Kashmir, Saeed focussed his nascent organisation on promoting terror in the state of J&K, and in the process, earned the support of the ISI, as also the continued support of the Saudi backers who had helped him establish the group in the first place.⁸ The fact that the state continues to support anti-India elements is evident in the fact that the Chief Minister of Pakistan's

Punjab province, soon after coming to power, in his budget for 2010-11, allotted Rs 86 million to the JuD, defying the ban on the organisation by the federal government. The JuD, it must be remembered is the very organisation that was involved in the horrific Mumbai attacks and Ajmal Kasab, the only terrorist who was caught alive was trained at Muridke.⁹ The JuD sees India's rapid growth as an impediment to its core objective of recovering the "lost Muslim lands" en route to the recreation of its Islamic caliphate. It remains a core belief among Pakistani *jihadis* that India must be destroyed, this view also receiving state patronage. It was Hafiz Saeed who declared in a 1999 interview, "*Jihad is not about Kashmir only... Today, I announce the break-up of India, Insha-Allah. We will not rest until the whole [of] India is dissolved into Pakistan.*"¹⁰ This thought process remains ingrained in the *jihadi* psyche, as evidenced by the recent utterances of Saeed. While the purpose of this article is not to trace the role of Pakistan based *jihadi* organisations in cross-border terrorism, it is important to understand that the Pakistani state treats such organisations as strategic assets and will continue to support them. Speaking at a seminar in New Delhi in October 2011, Mr UK Bansal, Secretary (Internal Security) in the Union Home Ministry stated, "*This (jihadi) brand of terrorism is primarily sponsored by our neighbouring country in the west whose... policy is to conduct war against India by all other means and bleed us through a thousand cuts. This naturally includes the targeting of anything...with a view to damaging, degrading or destroying the engines of economic growth and critical centres of power and strength of our country.*"¹¹ India needs to find suitable response mechanisms to prevent and motivate the state of Pakistan to desist from providing such support.

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The Need for a Doctrine

The threat to India is self-evident, despite Pakistani protestations to the contrary. India’s response to Pakistani support to *jihadi* groups led its military to formulate its “Proactive Doctrine”, the genesis of which lay in events that occurred post the attack by Pakistan sponsored terrorists on India’s Parliament on December 13, 2001. India’s response to such a blatant attack on the very temple of democracy was to mobilise

its forces along the western border as a precursor to taking punitive action against Pakistan. The codename given to this mobilisation was “Operation Parakaram”, but the long lead-time taken to mobilise forces for conventional conflict eventually denied India the opportunity of using them. This brought home the need to reduce the lead time required to initiate hostilities, giving rise in due course to the “Proactive Doctrine” of the Indian Army, also referred to by many, though incorrectly, as the “Cold Start Doctrine”.

The “Proactive Doctrine” has been remarkably successful and Pakistan is yet to come up with an appropriate response, despite conducting a series of exercises over the last few years. This amply brings out the importance of a doctrinal approach to war-fighting. It is perhaps credible to assume that Pakistan’s approach to the use of tactical nuclear weapons in conventional conflict reflects in large measure its inability to counter the Indian doctrine. However, this has not dissuaded Pakistan from continuing to support cross-border terrorism from within its territory against India, albeit at a lower scale, at what some in the Pakistani establishment believe to be within India’s ‘threshold limits’. We, hence, need to enmesh an additional element in the existing “Proactive Doctrine” to make it expensive if not impossible for Pakistan to use terrorism for political and ideological ends.

As stated succinctly by the late Air Cmde Jasjit Singh, “*We need to ask ourselves whether we have evolved a credible doctrine to successfully counter Pakistan’s strategic doctrine of sub-conventional war (through terrorism) under the nuclear umbrella acquired by 1987.*”

As of now, we have partial capability only. Enough to deter attacks of the type on India’s Parliament and the Mumbai attacks in September 2008 but not enough to deter continued support by Pakistan to militant groups based in its territory. India’s strategy to defeat Pakistan’s proxy war remains mired in defensive actions against terrorists after they cross over into India. The construction of a fence against Pakistan was no doubt a commendable achievement that has helped impose a heavy cost on terrorists infiltrating into India. But the flow has by no means stopped, primarily because the Pakistan Army, which actively assists the *jihadis*, is not penalised for the support it provides. We need a clearly enunciated doctrine, which can inflict the requisite degree of pain to make the Pakistan military desist from providing such support.

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American and Soviet Experience

A doctrine is simply a set of principles or practices applied to a particular situation, region, or government. Clearly enunciated and backed by capacity to execute, doctrines form an effective foreign policy tool. In the US, American Presidents tend to set the foreign policy doctrine. The Monroe Doctrine enunciated in 1823, was the first major Presidential foreign policy doctrine wherein President Monroe made it clear that America would not allow European colonies to further colonise in the Americas or interfere with independent states. Four score years later, in 1904, President Roosevelt issued a corollary to the Monroe Doctrine

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that significantly altered America's foreign policy by stating that the US would not allow for European colonisation of Latin America and would act to help stabilise economic problems for struggling Latin American nations. "Big stick diplomacy" also came into play, the doctrine stating... "If a nation shows that it knows how to act with reasonable efficiency and decency in social and political matters, it need fear no interference from the United States. Chronic wrongdoing in the Western Hemisphere may force the United States

to the exercise of an international police power."¹²

Post World War II, the Truman Doctrine enunciated on March 12, 1947, led to the American policy of containment to try to stop the fall of countries to Communism and to halt the expansion of Soviet influence. The Carter Doctrine, enunciated on January 23, 1980, aimed at countering the Soviet Union's attempts to consolidate a strategic position that would pose a grave threat to the free movement of Middle East oil. The doctrine stated that... "America would see an attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region ... as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force." The Reagan Doctrine moved from simple containment to more direct assistance to those fighting against Communist governments and is widely believed to have helped in bringing about the fall of the Soviet Union. In more recent times, the Bush Doctrine was enunciated in response to the tragic events of terrorism that occurred on September 11, 2001.¹³

American Presidents, thus, set out foreign policy agendas through doctrines. These change as the circumstances, which necessitated them,

end, or change. The Soviet Union too, resorted to enunciating foreign policy through the doctrinal prism. In 1968, the Brezhnev Doctrine called for the use of Warsaw Pact forces to intervene in any Eastern Bloc nation, which was seen to compromise Communist rule and Soviet domination, either by trying to leave the Soviet sphere of influence or even moderate its policies. The Soviet crushing of the Prague Spring movement in Czechoslovakia was an application of the Brezhnev Doctrine.¹⁴

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A Doctrine for India

The threat to India from cross-border terrorism is real. Regardless of the political dispensation in Pakistan, this threat is unlikely to recede. If anything, given the extent to which Pakistani society has radicalised, the support being extended to terrorist groups inimical to India will only increase. There is, thus, a need for clear enunciation of foreign policy in dealing with cross-border terrorism. Like the Presidential doctrines of the US and Soviet era, India needs to express its concern as also its resolve to fight cross-border terrorism in doctrinal terms. Pakistani troops deployed along the LoC continue to host terrorists and assist them in every way possible. Recent incidents such as the killing of Indian soldiers along the LoC and the dastardly attack on an Army unit in Samba will not cease unless the cost to the Pakistani military is raised to the extent that it is forced to desist from exercising such support. This then must be set out in clear doctrinal terms.

The foreign policy doctrine with respect to cross-border terrorism must be enunciated either by the Prime Minister as the executive head of

the government or by the President of India as the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of India. In terms of doctrine, it could be spelt out as under:

Internal security of India is a vital national concern. Infiltration of armed terrorists into India from across the western borders directly impinges on India's national security concerns and will be resisted by all means available to the country to include the use of armed force. Support given by military units deployed opposite Indian territory in any form whatsoever to such terrorist groups will be considered a hostile act impinging on India's vital interests and will be responded to appropriately, to include the use of military force.

Once Indian foreign policy imperatives with respect to cross-border terrorism are enunciated in clear doctrinal terms, the responsibility devolves on the Ministry of Defence and the Indian military to create both the capacity and the capability to execute the doctrine. As stated earlier, India's current strategy is based on a defensive mindset where infiltrators are intercepted after they come into our territory and then are dealt with through force. The erection of the border fence remains a part of this defensive policy. While the terrorists crossing over into India are being addressed by the Indian Army, there is no corresponding cost to the Pakistan Army which is providing logistic and other support including suppressive fire on Indian positions to assist terrorists in the crossing. The cost to India is high while the cost to Pakistan remains minimal. This needs to be reversed by imposing a heavy cost on the adjacent Pakistani military posts that are perceived to be supporting the terrorists. A national doctrine enunciated either by the Prime Minister or the President of India would thereafter need to be supplemented by a military doctrine to implement national policy directives in pursuance of India's vital national interests.

The Military Doctrine

A heavy cost must be imposed on the Pakistan military if cross-border terrorism is to cease. The essence of the doctrine must aim at imposing such exceptionally high and unbearable cost to the point of completely annihilating those hostile military posts that are perceived or believed to have provided support to terrorists infiltrating across the Line of Control. This punishment must be delivered in near real time to have the requisite degree of impact. It would, hence, be essential to have the capacity and capability to operate against

specified targets across the Line of Control, in short duration punitive strikes. The ability to carry out such strikes consistently over time and space can give to India the punitive edge to deter Pakistan from continuing with its existing policy of ‘bleeding India with a thousand cuts’.

There is an obvious risk of escalation in this approach, but the onus for that must lie on the adversary, the doctrine advocating additional degrees of punishment for each added act of provocation. In this expression of will to defend ourselves through military capability, talks for the political resolution of conflict could proceed alongside. However, each attempt by the adversary to escalate the conflict must be met by a more severe response to maintain the credibility of the doctrine. This would require the calibrated use of force on multiple targets, both on the front line and in depth positions, in punitive strikes to achieve policy objectives without the need or the necessity to hold on to territory.

The framing of such a doctrine is outside the purview of this paper, but the Indian armed forces and more specifically the Indian Army, must

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be provided with the requisite wherewithal in terms of military capability to exact unacceptably high costs on the adversary and force it to desist from providing such support. A review of existing organisational structures would need to be undertaken, to fulfil both the Army's requirement for conventional conflict as well as provide it teeth to carry out swift offensive actions against any act of terrorism emanating from foreign soil. The essence of the strategy is imposing costs on the handlers and supporters of terrorists, especially those

deployed along the LoC, till such time as they realise that providing such support is no longer in their interest to do so.

What then are the capabilities required by the Indian Army? We are essentially looking at enhancing capability in battlefield transparency, firepower and manoeuvrability. These capabilities would need to be boosted manifold to ensure real time surveillance over the border and delivery of firepower at the target in the quantity desired. While the hostile military post supporting the terrorists would need to be completely destroyed to convey the message of deterrence, the Army would need to be prepared for hostile retaliatory action. This, in turn, would need to be countered by swift attacks on multiple targets, till escalation control is achieved.

In terms of organisation, the Army would need to be equipped with drones, attack and utility helicopters, precision guided munitions, missiles and greater quantum of field artillery. National capabilities with respect to border surveillance would need to be enmeshed into the structure to ensure real time battlefield surveillance. The 22 Apache attack helicopters along with the 145 M-777 ultra-light howitzers being purchased by India

from the US could be usefully employed along the LoC to achieve this capability. These guns will give a much-needed fillip to the Indian Army's firepower capability, by making up the voids as also giving the Army a qualitative edge. The manoeuvre element in terms of attack and utility helicopters will also greatly enhance capability, once these platforms are integrated into the Indian Army's organisational structure at the corps level, along with armed and unarmed Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs). Speed is an essential component of modern warfare

and quick decision-making and force cohesiveness is a vital component of that process. Legacy attitudes, which have inhibited the integration of attack and utility helicopters into the Indian Army, must be shed, else we lose a decisive and potent edge in fighting across the spectrum of conflict.

The psychological value of targeting only those hostile posts that support cross-border terrorism cannot be overemphasised. Once the policy gets implemented, there would be a natural reluctance on the part of hostile elements to provide support to terrorists as it could lead to their own annihilation. Even if support were provided, it would be with increasing reluctance. Implementation of the doctrine would hence require very high capability in intelligence gathering and in surveillance capability to target only those that provide such support.

Conclusion

The importance of doctrine cannot be overstated. The Proactive Doctrine of the Indian Army achieved deterrence at a particular level and has contributed to maintaining peace. However, a new doctrine is required now to counter cross-border terrorism. In the present vitiated state of relations between India

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and Pakistan, where the latter is bent on promoting cross-border terrorism in India as part of state ideology, a doctrinal statement of intent at the highest political level would need to be stated to defeat Pakistan's nefarious designs. It would then be left to the military to formulate its own doctrine to give teeth and intent to the national doctrine. It is well to remember that at times, the surest path to peace comes from capability to extract a heavy price from those intent on waging war.

Notes

1. Extracted from an article written by the author for the CLAWS web titled "Looking Beyond the Proactive Doctrine" available at <http://www.claws.in/Looking-beyond-the-Proactive-Docctrine-Dhruv-Katoch.html>
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10. Tellis, n. 6.
11. See article available at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2011-10-11/news/30266840_1_pakistan-targets-thousand-cuts
12. See article available at http://americanhistory.about.com/od/warsanddiplomacy/tp/foreign_policy_doctrines.htm
13. Ibid.
14. See article available at <http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/glossary/g/glbrezhnevdoct.htm>