

South Asia
Counter-terrorism Policies &
Postures after 9/11

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South Asia remains one of the most volatile regions on the globe, with the persistent threat of widespread transnational Islamist terrorism. Clearly, the response mechanisms evolved thus far have not been sufficient or effective. Indeed, a valid concern has often been voiced on whether the countries of the South Asian region have any coherent, consistent or effective policies against Islamist terror. The same question could also be extended to the conduct of US foreign policy, given its increasing role in the region in the post 9/11 era. It is critical, at the present juncture of history, to bring counter-terrorism policies in South Asia, or the lack thereof, under acute critical scrutiny, and to underline the current and overwhelmingly *ad hoc* nature of counter-terrorism initiatives, which are primarily based on short-term national interests. It is also useful to examine the *realpolitik* underpinnings of the foreign policy agendas of external players in South Asia, particularly, in view of the increasing American role in the region.

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Finally, it is necessary to document the wide hiatus between posture and intent, between commitments and action, and, within this context, to throw light on Pakistan's continuing duplicity in the war against terror.

Both India and Pakistan have used the post-9/11 'global war against terrorism' to their advantage. India has portrayed the problem in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) as purely a matter of combating 'cross-border terrorism', thus making the case that it has a right to pursue terrorists operating from Pakistan (a right it has steadfastly refused to exercise); and has strongly argued that there should be no double standards in the global fight against terrorism. Consequently, India has frequently reiterated its demand that the US categorise Pakistan as a state sponsor of terrorism.

Pakistan, at the other end, has not only used its status as a 'frontline state' and an 'ally' in America's global war against terror to secure substantial economic aid and approbation from the West, but has also augmented its margin for continuing the general policy of adventurism that seeks to bleed Indian resources in J&K. President Pervez Musharraf has maintained that he cannot take any more steps against extremist groups himself, and that the US should support his agenda or risk facing a new Islamist Government in Pakistan that could be far less accommodating of the latter's interests in the region. Prior to 9/11, Pakistan had been facing sanctions from the US and was near bankruptcy. Since 9/11, however, the US has rescheduled \$ 3 billion in Pakistan's debt, launched a five-year \$100 million aid programme and provided \$73 million in equipment and aid to secure Pakistan's border with Afghanistan.¹

Since 9/11, there has been an inordinate world focus on this region and Afghanistan. The magnitude of the September 11 attacks, and the location of Islamist forces that carried out these attacks, persuaded the US that it was necessary to engage Pakistan as an ally in its war against terror. While geographical limitations inhibit the United States in its war against the Al Qaeda-Taliban combine, it was confronted with the added

¹ "U.S. inks debt deal with Pakistan",
www.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/south/08/23/pakistan.debt.

complexity of having to maintain a delicate balance between India and Pakistan, both nuclear weapon states with a history of sustained hostility. The situation is compounded further by the fact that the US and the West are aware of Pakistan's complicity in terrorism directed against India, indeed, of the reality that virtually every major act of international Islamist terror has had its footprints passing through Pakistan. It is within this complex context that the ensemble of policies and initiatives on terrorism in the South Asian region are to be evaluated.

1. Major Planks of India's Counter-Terrorism Policy

1.1 Brand Pakistan as a state-sponsor of terror

India has been plagued by terrorism and low-intensity conflict for a long time, and a Pakistani hand has been prominent, certainly since the mid-1980s. First, it was Sikh terrorism in Punjab commencing in the early 1980s and continuing till the early years of the 1990s, with explicit Pakistani support and involvement dating to mid-1984.² Towards the end of the 1980s, Islamist terrorism began in J&K. There have also been a plethora of secessionist and low-intensity conflicts persisting in India's Northeast. Though Pakistan has aided and abetted the violence in Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir and a good part of the Northeast, India's own policies on terrorism and low-intensity conflict are, to a large extent, responsible for the persistence of the problem. Even as there is a refusal to accept the flaws in the basic policy framework, there exists a tendency to blame Pakistan and claim that the main reason for conflicts in these areas is the 'foreign hand'. For instance, in Punjab, domestic political and economic reasons were significantly responsible for the initial rise of militancy; all Pakistan did was to incite, recruit and abet the militant groups in the State. Yet the Indian response has always been that Pakistan 'created' the problem. Whether due to domestic compulsions or the lack of adequate answers, it has

² See K.P.S. Gill, "Endgame in Punjab: 1988-1993", *Faultlines: Writings on Conflict and Resolution*, vol. 1, May 1999, pp. 1-70.

always suited the Indian Governments over the years to emphasize the role of the 'foreign hand'. While it is true that Pakistan has had a significant role to play in these sub-conventional conflicts, the 'foreign hand' thesis has, evidently, been overstated.

1.2 Border Management, Deployment and Fencing

India's response to all these problems till the late 1980s was to position troops along its border with China, i.e. along the North-East, and Pakistan. These were the two borders that India was most worried about. Almost 75 per cent of India's troops were consequently stationed on these two borders – Northeast and West. In addition, where there were no disputed border issues, the borders were fenced off, and intensive patrolling sought to ensure that there was no significant infiltration. Infiltration was also deterred by harsh punishment for infiltrators who were arrested, or killing them during encounters. Various intelligence agencies, State police and para-military forces were also used to either prevent infiltration from occurring or find evidence linking Pakistan or its intelligence agencies or armed forces to these activities, and to the emerging conflicts.

1.3 Counteract moves made by Pakistan at diplomatic and other international fora

Another key input in India's counter-terrorism policy over the years has been to try and isolate Pakistan at the international level and rebut its various claims at global forums. India has constantly emphasised Pakistan's role in creating or supporting the conflicts in Punjab, Kashmir, the Northeast and other vulnerable parts of India. It has, moreover, sought to build a case against Pakistan's accusations at various international fora and to scuttle Pakistani attempts to secure support for its 'Kashmir policy'. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, for instance, while addressing the 57th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York on September 13, 2002, raised the question: "If Pakistan claims to be a crucial partner in the international coalition against terrorism, how can it continue to

use terrorism as an instrument of state policy against India? How can the international coalition condone Pakistan-directed killings of thousands of innocent civilians – women and children included – to promote a bizarre version of ‘self-determination’?”³ The primary thrust has been to prevent the international community from accepting Pakistan’s Kashmir policy and perspectives.

There is, nevertheless, an inconsistency in India’s foreign policy in this context, located in the erroneous belief that it could change Pakistan’s posture of basic hostility through negotiations and conciliation. The policy of periodically offering olive branches to Pakistan is, evidently, not rooted in ground reality. Between 1988 and 2003, in Jammu and Kashmir, 12,874 civilians and 4,909 security force personnel have been killed by Pakistan-based terrorist groups.⁴ And major terrorist incidents in the past have propelled India into adopting knee-jerk reactions, including the amassing of troops on the borders and also engaging in shrill rhetorical exchanges with Pakistan. The intent to maintain good relations through dialogue – both conventional and Track II diplomacy – is premised on the fact that Pakistan will stop its ‘anti-India’ policy and transform overnight. The inconsistency is striking with the pendulum is seen to swing between marked hostility and enmity expressed through the massing of troops on the border, and then expecting that, as soon as the tension is over, Pakistan will revert to playing fair once processes of negotiation and ‘normalisation’ are initiated.

1.4 Provocation and Knee-jerks

Amidst this Indian unpredictability, Pakistan has sought to maintain its unswerving and manifest determination of upping the ante in J&K and also widening the space for *Jehadi* violence in other parts of India. Indian ineptitude has rendered Pakistan’s task at least a wee bit easier. Reputed Pakistani columnist Altaf Gauhar remarks astutely in his series of articles “Four Wars and One Assumption” that, from the first invasion of Kashmir in 1947

³ For full text of the Premier’s speech, see South Asia Terrorism Portal; Countries; India; Documents; www.satp.org.

⁴ Source: Database of the Institute for Conflict Management, New Delhi. See South Asia Terrorism Portal; www.satp.org.

to Kargil in 1999, the unshaken Pakistani assumption was that “Indians won't fight”.⁵

During the summer of 1999, India and Pakistan fought an approximately 80-day war in the upper reaches of Kashmir at Kargil, located 120 miles from the capital city of Srinagar.⁶ The Pakistani offensive in Kargil was aimed at opening a new front for Indian troops in Kashmir and also at diverting troops from certain areas of Kashmir frequented by infiltrators who had been finding it difficult to sneak across the border. The intruders intended to occupy the deserted heights in Indian territory and later take control of the vital Srinagar-Leh highway. The fact that Indian troops had abandoned some of their posts in the Kargil sector during winter helped the Pakistan Army and infiltrators.⁷ The crisis ended with Pakistan being forced, largely under US pressure, to withdraw from the occupied heights.

The Indian reaction was dominated by a series of high level reviews and confabulations, reportedly at the highest levels, which resulted in the shifting of troops from the North-Eastern and Eastern borders, as well as from the rest of the country's peace time deployment, to J&K, Punjab and the rest of the border with Pakistan. This had just two results – it made Pakistan jittery and led to the massing of a very large number of troops by Pakistan on its border, and it rendered the Eastern and North-Eastern borders vulnerable to attacks and infiltration.

More importantly, India's policy on curbing infiltration was clearly subject to larger intelligence and tactical lapses. From a policy perspective, Kargil was an indication that India had not adopted adequate methods to neutralize Pakistan's intent to wage

⁵ Altaf Gauhar, “Four Wars and One Assumption”, *Nation*, Lahore, September 5, 1999.

⁶ The first signs of Pakistani intrusions were reported on May 3, 1999, with the movement of Pakistani troops on the ridges of the Yeldor area. On July 25, 1999, the Indian Director General of Military Operations (DGMO), Lt. Gen. N C Vij announced that the eviction of Pakistani intruders was complete. For a chronology of the Kargil war, see Ayesha Ray, “Kargil and India-Pakistan Relations: A Chronology of Events January 1999-March 2000,” in Kanti Bajpai, Afsir Karim and Amitabh Mattoo, eds., *Kargil and After: Challenges for Indian Policy*, Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 2001, pp. 421-42.

⁷ “The Kargil War 1999,” *The Hindustan Times*, Delhi, www.hindustantimes.com/news/181_263934.001300430004.htm

a low-intensity war against it, buttressed by nuclear deterrence. Such large-scale Pakistani incursions across the Line of Control and the “sheer tactical perfection”⁸ of the operation exposed the Indian limitations. Furthermore, the real failure in Kargil were the omissions at the various levels of national security management that were tasked to continuously monitor, identify shortcomings and initiate remedial measures. The Kargil Committee has, in this light, underscored the organic weaknesses of the national security management process in India.⁹

1.5 Post-9/11 *ad hocism* confronts the US-Pakistan alliance

The second shock to Indian policy planners came in the post-9/11 period with the October 1, 2001, attack on the State Legislative Assembly complex in Srinagar and the December 13, 2001, attack on the Parliament in Delhi. One of the most daring terrorist attacks in South Asia in the post 9/11 era was the *Fidayeen* (suicide squad) attack by the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) on the J&K Legislative Assembly Complex in which an explosives-laden car was rammed into the gate of the Assembly killing 36 persons and injuring many others.¹⁰ The Indian response was that this was a manifestation of “hate and terror from across the borders.”¹¹ In an attempt to draw the US to its side, against Pakistan, the Prime Minister wrote to the US President George W. Bush saying that India was running out of patience and asked him to restrain Pakistan from backing international terrorism.¹²

⁸ Gen. Ashok Mehta, “Coping with the unexpected”, www.rediff.com/news/1999/aug/30mehta.htm.

⁹ The Union Government on July 29, 1999, constituted a Committee to review the events leading up to the Pakistani aggression in Kargil and to recommend such measures as are considered necessary to safeguard national security against such armed intrusions. The Committee comprised of four members namely K. Subrahmanyam, Lt. Gen. (Retd.) K.K. Hazari, B.G. Verghese and Satish Chandra. For details, see *From Surprise to Reckoning: The Kargil Review Committee Report*, Delhi, 2000.

¹⁰ “Suicide bomber targets J&K Assembly,” *The Hindu*, Chennai, October 2, 2001.

¹¹ “India cannot accept such manifestations of hate and terror from across its border,” said a statement of the Ministry of External Affairs.

¹² “We see your problem, we have one too: Vajpayee writes to Bush,” *The Indian Express*, Delhi, October 2, 2001.

Even as the repercussions of the attack on the J&K Legislative Assembly were being assessed within and outside the country, Islamist terrorists attacked the Indian Parliament in Delhi on December 13, 2001. Five terrorists of the Jaish-e-Mohammed dressed as security guards attempted to storm Parliament and, in the ensuing encounter, nine security force personnel and a Parliament staffer were killed. All the five terrorists were also killed by the security forces and were later identified as Pakistani nationals. In a message after the attack, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said, “The attack was not on Parliament, but on the entire nation. We will see that the terrorists are unsuccessful in their attempts. We are fighting terrorism for the last two decades and the entire country is together in this crisis.”¹³

Amidst demands for what were erroneously described ‘pro-active strategy’ and ‘hot pursuit’ against terrorist camps in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK)¹⁴, a verbal *demarche* was issued asking Pakistan to: (1) Stop the activities of the *Lashkar-e-Toiba* and *Jaish-e-Mohammed*; (2) Take their leadership into custody; and (3) Freeze their financial assets and stop their access to such financial assets. Indeed, a similar *demarche* had been given after the October 1 attack on the J&K Legislative Assembly Complex in Srinagar. Even as India fixed the blame squarely on Pakistan, in this case there was also the diplomatic intent of gaining the crucial US support against Pakistan. Making a *suo moto* statement in the Lok Sabha (Lower House of the Parliament) on December 18, 2001, the Union Home Minister, L.K. Advani, said, “Last week’s attack on Parliament is undoubtedly the most audacious, and also the most alarming, act of terrorism in the nearly two-decades-long history of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in India. This time the terrorists and their mentors across the border had the temerity to try to wipe out the entire political leadership of India, as represented in our multi-party Parliament. Naturally, it is time for all of us in this august

¹³ “Battle against terrorism would be fought decisively: PM,” www.rediff.com/news/2001/dec/13parl11.htm.

¹⁴ A Cabinet Resolution adopted on December 13, 2001, said, “The nation accepts the challenge. We will liquidate the terrorists and their sponsors wherever they are, whoever they are - as our valiant security forces have done in this particular instance.”

House, and all of us in the country, to ponder why the terrorists and their backers tried to raise the stakes so high, particularly at a time when Pakistan is claiming to be a part of the international coalition against terrorism.”¹⁵

The year 2001 ended with around 3,278 incidents of violence in J&K, in which 1,067 civilians and 590 security force personnel were killed.¹⁶ India hoped that it could impress upon the US the sheer enormity of Pakistan’s duplicity in the war against terror. To this end, a number of diplomatic measures were initiated in 2001-2002. There were a number of high-level visits from the Indian as well as the American side, but to no significant avail. Though the US said that it was waging a global war against terrorism, in South Asia it continued to insist that India and Pakistan should resume their dialogue and work towards a ‘negotiated solution’.

Initially, the US did exert some pressure on Pakistan to reduce cross-border infiltration and both Secretary of State Colin Powell and Deputy Secretary Richard Armitage claimed that Musharraf had promised them that the infiltration would stop. The US administration indicated, in June 2002, that it had received assurances from President Musharraf that Pakistan would not only cease infiltration across the Line of Control but also dismantle terrorist camps. Powell claimed on June 11, 2002, that, “Two weeks ago we got assurances from President Musharraf that he would cease infiltration activity across the Line of Control... And then the Deputy Secretary, Armitage, over this past weekend got further assurances that the cessation activity would be visible and would be permanent and would be followed by other activities that had to do with the dismantling of the camps that led to the capacity to conduct these kinds of operations’.”¹⁷

Earlier in May 2002, Armitage had claimed that US assessments indicated that infiltration across the Line of Control

¹⁵ Suo moto Statement in the Lok Sabha by Union Home Minister L.K. Advani on the December 13 Terrorist Attack on Parliament House, <http://meaindia.nic.in/speech/2001/12/18spc01.htm>.

¹⁶ See South Asia Terrorism Portal; J&K; Data Sheets; Annual casualties in Terrorist Violence; www.satp.org.

¹⁷ “Musharraf has promised to dismantle terrorist camps,” *Hindu*, June 12, 2002.

had declined.¹⁸ However, gradually this interest died down and these very same leaders said that it was ‘not possible’ for the US to monitor what was happening across the border and it was left to India and Pakistan to do that and commence dialogue.¹⁹

1.6 Operation Parakram

A crucial element of the Indian response after the attack on Parliament was *Operation Parakram*, an immense forward deployment of troops on the country’s western border with Pakistan. The deployment, inherently a military mobilization, was also an exercise in coercive diplomacy. The United States, India assumed, would be unwilling to tolerate Pakistani sponsorship of terrorism directed at India if it was confronted with the possibility of a massive escalation of conflict in the region.²⁰ Moreover, India assumed that the threat of military action would give teeth to diplomatic efforts to force Pakistan to de-escalate its offensive in J&K, even as it believed that coercive diplomacy would force Pakistan to shut down terrorist training camps and terminate cross-border infiltration.²¹ Defence Minister George Fernandes while announcing the end of *Operation Parakram* on October 16, 2002, and responding to a question in the Parliament, claimed that the deployment had achieved its ‘desired objectives’ (emphasis added). *Operation Parakram*, he claimed, had exerted military pressure on Pakistan and forced President Musharraf to denounce *Jehad* in J&K in his speeches of January 12 and May 27.²² “Some of the terrorist organisations in Pakistan were banned, some terrorist camps in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir were closed, their accounts frozen and leaders arrested,” said Fernandes. Cross-border infiltration, he claimed, had “come down considerably

¹⁸ “Infiltration in Kashmir has gone down, says U.S,” *Hindu*, May 6, 2002.

¹⁹ “Another Armitage mission,” *Frontline*, Chennai, vol. 19 no. 18, August 31 - September 13, 2002.

²⁰ Praveen Swami, “A year after the attack,” *Frontline*, vol. 20 no. 1, January 18-31, 2003.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Praveen Swami, “Groping in the dark,” *Frontline*, vol. 19 no.25, December 7-22, 2002.

compared to the figures of the corresponding period of the previous year.”²³

While no official figures on the financial costs of *Operation Parakram* are available, at least Rupees 65 billion was reportedly spent.²⁴ President Musharraf had estimated that, for Pakistan, the cost of military deployment in response to *Operation Parakram* was approximately \$1.4 billion.²⁵ Strikingly, the ‘peace time’ military mobilisation also led to the death of 798 Indian soldiers.²⁶ In contrast, during the Kargil war of 1999, 527 Indian soldiers had died while reclaiming heights occupied by the Pakistani intruders.²⁷ Further, during the period of mobilisation, levels of violence in J&K were higher than in the corresponding period in year 2001. While Pakistan is widely believed to have responded to US pressure by calibrating cross-border infiltration and levels of terrorist violence in J&K, these were maintained at a level sufficient to sustain the low-intensity campaign against India. *Operation Parakram*, Praveen Swami points out, does not seem to have deterred Pakistan from actually escalating the low-intensity war.²⁸

Amidst this exercise in coercive diplomacy, the electoral process in J&K, from the date of notification on August 22, 2002, till the fourth phase on October 8, 2002, was marred by high levels of violence and intimidation by Pakistan-based terrorist formations, which organized a series of attacks against political parties contesting the elections, security forces and the electorate.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ “Parakram cost put at Rs 6,500 crore,” www.rediff.com/money/2003/jan/16defence.htm.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ “During Operation Parakram up to July 2003, a total number of 798 Army personnel suffered fatal casualties,” said Defence Minister George Fernandes in the Lok Sabha on July 31, 2003. See “Op Parakram claimed 798 soldiers,” *Times of India*, Delhi, July 31, 2003. In the initial phase of *Operation Parakram*, around 100 soldiers were killed and 250 injured during mine-laying operations. Vehicle accidents, artillery duels with Pakistan and other incidents led to further fatalities. Although the Operation had been called off in October 2002, “The government later decided, in October 2002, to strategically redeploy the troops under Operation Parakram, with the objective to respond aggressively and decisively to any emergency on the International Border,” said Fernandes.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Praveen Swami, “Groping in the dark,” *Frontline*, vol. 19 no.25, December 7-22, 2002.

In the build-up to the elections, killings of political activists reached an all-time high, with 34 political leaders and workers killed in the four weeks following the announcement of elections on August 22. There was an organised attempt to intimidate civil society ahead of the elections, and 168 civilians succumbed to terrorist attacks between the beginning of August and September 22, while another 179 were injured. Despite sustained terrorist violence accompanied by the intimidation of electorate, however, the democratic exercise was carried out successfully. The State recorded an average turnout of 42 per cent in the four-phased elections. Furthermore, such a voter turnout was registered despite the boycott by secessionist formations in the State. The successful conduct of the Legislative Assembly elections, despite large-scale terrorist violence perpetrated by Islamist terrorist groups, proved to be the most notable success in the efforts to restore civil governance in J&K. The democratic exercise was acknowledged, both in India and by the international community at large, as being fair, free and transparent.

During the mobilisation period, again, two terrorists of the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) launched an attack at the Akshardham Temple of the Swaminarayan sect of Hindus, one of the most hallowed temples in the western Indian State of Gujarat, on September 24, 2002. While they were eventually killed the next day by a crack team of National Security Guards, they had taken the lives of 32 persons, including 16 women and four children, and injured at least another 74.²⁹ The Akshardham attack also indicated the Islamist terrorists' intent to expand the space for *Jehadi* violence in India. The increasing use of tactics where Pakistan could maintain 'minimal deniability' for its involvement in terrorism was a pattern particularly manifested in attacks outside J&K. It was also becoming clear to the Indian establishment that the strategy of coercive diplomacy to restrain Pakistan from its high-gain and low-cost strategy was evidently weakening.

Meanwhile, on December 16, 2002, Defence Minister George Fernandes declared (two months after he had announced the end

²⁹ K P S Gill, "Gujarat: New Theatre of Islamist Terror," *South Asia Intelligence Review*, vol. 1 no. 11, September 30, 2002, South Asia Terrorism Portal, www.satp.org.

of *Operation Parakram*) in Parliament that many of the terrorist camps or training centres in Pakistan, which were closed or relocated to interior areas during July-August 2002, had reopened.³⁰ He also said that the ISI had resumed its assistance to terrorists. External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha also stated in Parliament that, if the US exerted sufficient pressure on Pakistan, it would desist from indulging in cross-border terrorism.³¹

Operation Parakram was based on two misleading assumptions – one that in the post-9/11 era, US and the international community had become intolerant of terrorism and thus would support India against Pakistan; and, secondly, that Pakistan could be forced by a military threat to discontinue its anti-India agenda. The intent was to raise the costs for Pakistan in pursuing terrorism as an instrument of foreign policy and also to indicate to the international community that Indian tolerance had been pushed to its limits. However, neither strategy yielded significant gains for India. Despite the process of the global delegitimisation of terror, the United States’ policy did not manifestly favour India against Pakistan. Faced with the necessity of having Pakistan as an ally in its war on terror, it advised both the nuclear weapon states to initiate a process of dialogue. All Indian attempts to secure assurances from the US on Pakistan went in vain. During his May 2003 visit to the sub-continent, Richard Armitage, while indicating that the US would not pressure India and Pakistan, said, “[It] is not the position of the U.S. government to pressure Pakistan or to pressure India. If we can be helpful in bringing about a dialogue, then that’s a good thing.”³² His position was that the US would not involve itself in determining whether or not Musharraf had delivered on his June 2002 promise to end cross-border infiltration into India, and that it was “up to India” alone to make that assessment and respond appropriately. India also had sufficient reasons to be dissatisfied when the Deputy Secretary stated, “President Musharraf gave an absolute assurance that there was nothing happening across the

³⁰ <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/timeline/index.html>

³¹ <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/timeline/index.html>

³² Transcript: Armitage says U.S. will not pressure India or Pakistan on peace,” <http://usembassy.state.gov/islamabad/www03050904.html>

Line of Control, and there were no camps in Azad Kashmir – and if there were camps, they would be gone tomorrow.”³³

In retrospect, the most important question would be to determine whether India’s coercive diplomacy achieved the primary objectives it had set forth? While the objectives were unclear to begin with, and rendered even more ambiguous as the deployment continued, speaking in Washington in January 2002, less than a month after the attack on Parliament, Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani had outlined a four-point agenda. Pakistan, he said, had to hand over the 20 most-wanted terrorists based in that country; had to issue a ‘categorical and unambiguous renunciation of terrorism’; close down training camps for terrorists, choke their finances and weapons supplies; and stop cross-border infiltration into Jammu and Kashmir.³⁴

However, contrary to India’s expectation, the military regime in Pakistan continued the country’s long-standing policy of hostility towards India. For instance, while the estimated levels of infiltration fell between January and September 2002, as compared to 2001, it was actually higher than the level recorded in March, April and May 2001.³⁵ More importantly, the level of infiltration remained adequate to replace the numbers of terrorists killed by Indian security forces.³⁶ The deployment also failed to stop high-intensity attacks like the May 14, 2002, massacre at the Kaluchak Army cantonment in Jammu, in which at least 36 persons were killed and 48 others injured in a suicide attack. And, as pointed out earlier, it also failed to deter the Islamist terrorist formations from engineering attacks and intimidation during the run up to the Legislative Assembly elections in J&K. Pakistan, on its part, flatly denied the presence of the 20 most-wanted terrorists on its soil and more importantly, despite overwhelming intelligence as well as evidence in Pakistani open source media, persevered with its low-intensity campaign against India. In effect, the pre-*Operation Parakram* scenario remained largely unchanged. Commenting on the rationale of the 10-month long

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Praveen Swami, “Beating the retreat,” *Frontline*, vol. 19 no. 22, October 26-November 8, 2002.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

mobilization, an analyst aptly opines that “Mounting a full military threat without having the political will to carry it through can only be at the cost of one’s credibility at home and abroad. India is still tallying the costs of Operation Parakram.”³⁷

Operation Parakram has, to a limited extent, also exposed the inadequacies of the Indian strategy of constantly impressing upon the West the need to rein in Pakistan, and the ‘double standards’ in the war on terror. While the excessive diplomatic reliance on the US has led to very little action *vis-à-vis* Pakistan, the disadvantages of such an exercise appear to have been lost on the leadership and the line that ‘there are double standards even in measuring terrorism’ still reverberates.

1.7 Interlocutors in Jammu and Kashmir

Evidently, the Indian state follows a three-pronged strategy to counter terrorism in J&K. Besides the military approach, there is a stress on accelerating economic development in the State and also the openness to talks with all groups eschewing violence. The 2002 Legislative Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir and the loss of power by the National Conference, a party that has dominated politics there since independence, created a spark of hope that tensions could de-escalate. Another important sign was that, for the first time, the State leadership was different from the ruling party in Delhi. The new State Government under Mufti Mohammed Sayeed vowed to ameliorate the grievances of Kashmiris by restoring peace, restraining the security forces, preventing human rights abuses, and reviving an economy devastated by conflict.

A crucial component in reaching out to the people in J&K has been the Union Government’s attempts to initiate a dialogue between the Kashmiris and Delhi. A long line of interlocutors have been appointed over the years, the last three of whom were K.C. Pant, Arun Jaitley and N.N. Vohra. Pant, the Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission, was appointed the Union Government’s interlocutor in April 2001, with a mission to

³⁷ Brahma Chellaney, “Learning from a dud,” *The Hindustan Times*, Delhi, November 22, 2002.

facilitate the evolution of a negotiated solution to the Kashmir issue. However, his agenda ran into rough weather when the secessionist front, the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), rejected the offer of talks by saying that any dialogue on the Kashmir issue should involve Pakistan and that the Union Government should accept the Hurriyat as the sole representative of the people of J&K.³⁸ The Union Government next appointed the Union Law Minister Arun Jaitley as the negotiator for talks on devolution of powers/ autonomy for J&K on July 23, 2002. His terms of reference were to talk to the State Government as well as political parties and leaders. However, he too failed³⁹ and thereafter, the former Union Home Secretary N.N. Vohra was designated as the interlocutor to hold discussions with all sections, including legislators and groups opposed to violence in J&K. The Pakistan Chapter of the APHC termed the appointment of a fresh negotiator by New Delhi as a futile exercise, pointing out that any fruitful negotiations on Kashmir would require the involvement of all the three parties — New Delhi, Islamabad, and the Kashmiris.⁴⁰

On January 13, 2004, the Union Government formally invited the APHC led by Maulana Abbas Ansari for talks with Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani on January 22, to which the outfit responded positively.⁴¹ The invitation by the Union Government to the Hurriyat said that, “pursuant to the decision of the Cabinet Committee on Security on October 22, the Deputy Prime Minister would like to meet you on January 22.” In Srinagar, accepting the invitation, Ansari said that the Hurriyat would discuss the issue at all levels - executive, working committee and general council - to firm up the strategy and the composition of its delegation for talks with Advani.

APHC leaders and the Deputy Premier L.K. Advani met in New Delhi on January 22, 2004, and agreed to find an

³⁸ “Pant slams Hurriyat claim of being ‘sole representatives’”, *Indian Express*, June 6, 2001.

³⁹ K P S Gill, “J&K: The Opportunities of Another Peace Process,” *South Asia Intelligence Review*, vol. 1 no. 34, March 10, 2003, South Asia Terrorism Portal, www.satp.org.

⁴⁰ Romeet K Watt, “Vohra in, Jethmalani (get) out,” www.kashmiritelegraph.com/vohra.htm.

⁴¹ “Centre invites Hurriyat for talks on January 22,” *Hindu*, January 14, 2004.

“honourable and durable solution” to the Kashmir problem through dialogue, hoping that all forms of violence at all levels would end.⁴² After the two-and-a-half-hour session between Advani and the Hurriyat delegation, led by its chairman, Maulana Abbas Ansari, and comprising Abdul Ghani Bhat, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Bilal Ghani Lone and Fazal-ul-Haq Qureshi, the two sides expressed satisfaction that a “good beginning” had been made. Later, a joint statement was read out by Bhat, which stated that the discussions were “amicable, free, frank and fruitful.” The joint statement said that the delegation was committed to enlarging the dialogue process to cover all regions of J&K and addressing the concerns of all communities.

1.8 The Hand of Friendship

On April 18, 2003, while addressing a public meeting at the Sher-i-Kashmir Stadium in Srinagar, Prime Minister Vajpayee said that the Kashmir issue cannot be solved through the barrel of the gun. While accusing Pakistan of not responding to India’s peace initiatives, he added, “We again extend the hand of friendship. But it has to be both ways. Both sides should commit that they will live in peace and harmony.”⁴³ Since then, India and Pakistan have announced a series of confidence-building measures, including a cease-fire along the Line of Control, restoration of rail, road and air links, increase in staff strength at the respective High Commissions, etc.

At the end of the South Asia Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) Summit meeting in Islamabad on January 6, 2004, India and Pakistan issued a joint statement that underlined the latest peace process. According to the statement, “to carry the process of normalisation forward, the President of Pakistan and the Prime Minister of India agreed to commence the process of the composite dialogue in February 2004. The two leaders are confident that the resumption of the composite dialogue will lead to peaceful settlement of all bilateral issues, including Jammu and Kashmir, to the satisfaction of both sides.” While it is too early to

⁴² “Hurriyat - Advani talks begin on promising note,” *Daily Excelsior*, Jammu, January 23, 2004.

⁴³ *Daily Excelsior*, April 19, 2003.

assess the impact of the current peace initiatives, the most significant element in this process, as noted by an analyst, “is not any possible set of ‘solutions’ that may be defined, but essentially the passage of time and the possible de-escalation of violence in the region while the two countries engage in ‘confidence building measures’.”⁴⁴

Since the April 18-initiative, 535 civilians and 310 security force personnel have been killed in J&K (till February 10, 2004). The continuation of *Jehadi* violence in J&K suggests that the current *détente* may well be one more tactical phase in Pakistan’s proxy war against India. There has been no Pakistani assurance of a turn around vis-à-vis the terrorist infrastructure on its soil. Nor has Pakistan renounced its use of terrorism as a strategic weapon against India.

1.9 Assessing India’s policy

Initially, India appeared to have invested a great deal in the gamble that 9/11 and the subsequent attack on Parliament would lead the world to condemn Pakistan as a state-sponsor of terrorism and help India in its fight against terror. The strategy has had very limited success, as classical models of ‘interests of state’ have reasserted themselves in global politics and the ‘moral clarity’ that appeared to have crystallized in the days and weeks after 9/11 has been steadily diluted thereafter. *Operation Parakram* was, moreover, an indication that coercion did not succeed where diplomacy had failed.

It is significant that India has not, despite the continuous mischief Pakistan has played against it, sought to implement a tit for tat policy of covert operations against a deeply and increasingly unstable Pakistan. Nor, indeed, even at the height of tensions during *Operation Parakram*, or the Kargil war, did India explore the possibility of crossing the border or the Line of Control and smashing terrorist camps in Pakistan occupied Kashmir. Nor, indeed, has the ‘dirty tricks’ option been employed in Nepal or Bangladesh, both of which have, for different reasons

⁴⁴ K P S Gill, “Another Peace Gambit,” *South Asia Intelligence Review*, vol. 2 no. 26, January 12, 2004, South Asia Terrorism Portal, www.satp.org.

and in different ways, emerged as staging areas for the Pakistan-backed terrorist networks against India.

A net assessment of India's counter-terrorism policy would be forced to the conclusion that it is *ad hoc* in nature, innocent in belief and hope and totally ineffective in practice.

2. Key strands of Pakistan's policy

"Pakistan has a firm position of principle in the international battle against terrorism. We reject terrorism in all its forms and manifestations anywhere in the world."

[President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan, following his meeting with President Bush in Washington, February 13, 2002]⁴⁵

2.1 The Kashmir Agenda

The view of the Pakistani policy makers and especially the military establishment, which has ruled the country for most of its fifty odd years of independence, is that "Kashmir has been swallowed up and is now a part of the Indian Union. We are told to lay off, bow our heads, give up our support for the Kashmiris, forget about the plebiscite and the Kashmiris' right of self-determination enshrined in umpteen Security Council Resolutions, forget all the promises made to them by the Indian leadership and accept Indian usurpation of Kashmir as a fait accompli."⁴⁶

A brief look at President Musharraf's speeches at various international fora in the post-9/11 period would place the contemporary Pakistani views in perspective. In his address to the nation on January 12, 2002, he declared that terrorism in all its forms would not be permitted from Pakistani soil. During the televised address, he announced the proscription of five terrorist groups, taking the number of outlawed groups to seven. He banned two groups active in J&K, the Jaish-e-Mohammed and

⁴⁵ "Bush praises Pakistani leader after meeting," www.cnn.com/2002/US/02/13/bush.musharraf.

⁴⁶ Roedad Khan, "Kashmir: then and now," *Dawn*, Islamabad, June 11, 2002.

Lashkar-e-Toiba. Sectarian terrorist groups, Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, Tehreek-e-Jaferia Pakistan and Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi were also proscribed. He also announced that the Sunni Tehrik had been placed under observation.⁴⁷ Two sectarian outfits, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Sipah-e-Mohammed Pakistan, had earlier been proscribed on August 14, 2001.⁴⁸ In the immediate aftermath, security agencies detained over 1,975 persons linked to such groups, but most of them were released after a brief incarceration for ‘lack of evidence’, or on personal bonds.⁴⁹ Subsequent reportage has indicated that the outlawed groups regrouped – some under a changed nomenclature– after brief periods of self-imposed hibernation. The JeM and Harkat-ul-Ansar renamed themselves Khuddam-ul-Islam and Jamait-ul-Ansaar, respectively, and resumed work to restore all their former provincial and district units. The LeT began functioning under the appellation Jamaat-ud-Dawa.⁵⁰ More than 40 *Jehadi* publications reportedly mushroomed in Pakistan, including a magazine called *Allah's Army* and a daily called *Islam*, allegedly the second largest selling paper in the country. The mobilization of funds by *Jehadi* groups through public contributions once again commenced openly.⁵¹

In his address to the nation on May 27, 2002, President Musharraf said, “... we have exercised restraint and adopted a wise and sane policy. But this should never be construed as

⁴⁷ For a full text of the address, see South Asia Terrorism Portal; Pakistan; Documents; www.satp.org.

⁴⁸ See “Pakistan Assessment 2003”, South Asia Terrorism Portal, www.satp.org.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ On November 15, 2003, the Government proscribed Islami Tehreek-e-Pakistan (formerly known as Tehreek-e-Jaferia Pakistan [TJP]), Millat-e-Islamia Pakistan (formerly known as Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan [SSP]) and Khuddam-ul-Islam (formerly known as Jaish-e-Mohammed [JeM]). The Federal Government proscribed three more terrorist groups under the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 on November 20, 2003, namely, Jamiat-ul-Ansar, Hizb-ut-Tehreer and Jamaat-ul-Furqan. These six groups had reportedly flouted the law by changing their names, as under the Act an organization banned once for extremism cannot function under another name. Jamaat-ul-Furqan is a breakaway faction of the JeM, which is led by Maulana Masood Azhar. Jamiat-ul-Ansar is the renamed outfit of the outlawed Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, which is led by Fazlur Rehman Khaleel. Hizb-ut-Tehreer is a London-based Islamist outfit, which advocates the establishment of Islamic law worldwide.

⁵¹ “Pakistan Assessment 2003”, South Asia Terrorism Portal, www.satp.org.

weakness... Pakistan is a responsible state. I had said in my January 12 address that Pakistani soil would not be allowed to be used for terrorism against anybody. I repeat we will not allow this. I also want to tell the world and give the assurance that no infiltration is taking place across the Line of Control. But I want to make one thing quite clear. A liberation movement is going on in Occupied Kashmir and Pakistan cannot be held responsible for any action against the Indian tyranny and repression... Let me also assure the world community that Pakistan is doing nothing across the Line of Control and Pakistan will never allow the export of terrorism anywhere in the world from within Pakistan. Let me also say that Pakistan has taken very bold steps and initiatives since my speech on 12th January but unfortunately we have not seen any positive response from the Indian side.”⁵²

Thus, even as Pakistan forcefully projects its status as a ‘frontline state’ in the war against terrorism, the agenda *vis-à-vis* India has remained largely unchanged: keep the conflict simmering – through infiltration into J&K and an expansion of *Jehad* across India. Pakistan has a vested interest in fomenting violence and conflicts in India – firstly, for emotional reasons, as Kashmir is regarded as the ‘unfinished job of the Partition’ or as President Musharraf said during his January 12 address “Kashmir runs in our blood. No Pakistani can afford to sever links with Kashmir. The entire Pakistan and the world knows this.”⁵³ Secondly, because it has lost three wars (and the ‘limited war’ in Kargil) to India, and thirdly, because a low-intensity conflict is a low-cost and high-returns strategy.

After the Kargil conflict, the military establishment in Pakistan realized that covert measures could succeed amidst policy vacillation and ad hocism in India. Suicide terror or *Fidayeen* attacks in J&K and other parts of India were one such strategy that Pakistan adopted in the post-Kargil phase. In mid-1999, army units were moved from the Kashmir valley to Kargil sector for duties under *Operation Vijay*. Taking advantage of the momentary disruption in the counter-insurgency grid, as also the

⁵² For a full text of the address, see South Asia Terrorism Portal; Pakistan; Documents; www.satp.org.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

resulting gaps in deployment, terrorist groups began sneak attacks on security force formations.

Pakistan faced an initial setback after 9/11 but soon realized that the US needed allies in South Asia and as close to Afghanistan as possible. And the 'frontline state' secured for Pakistan legitimacy, substantial economic aid and approbation. However, it was made abundantly clear that the turn-around was to be strictly restricted to the Afghan campaign and there were to be no amendments to Pakistan's *duty* of "providing moral, political and diplomatic support to the cause of Kashmir." Indeed, President Musharraf declared in his speech of September 19, 2001, that "In my view there are four critical concerns: First, ensuring the country's security and stability from external threat. The second priority is our economy... the third priority is our strategic assets: nuclear and missiles. And the fourth priority is the Kashmir cause."⁵⁴

2.2 Jihad

According to Jessica Stern, Pakistan has two reasons to support the *Mujahideen*. Firstly, the Pakistani military is determined to pay India back for allegedly fomenting separatism in what was once East Pakistan and in 1971 became Bangladesh. Secondly, since India dwarfs Pakistan in population, economic strength, and military might, a cheap way to keep the Indian troops tied down is by using irregulars.⁵⁵ In his September 19, 2001, address to the nation, President Musharraf sought to justify his country's alliance with the US by rationalizing that it was the only way to prevent India from isolating Pakistan. Musharraf claimed that India was trying to isolate Pakistan and have it declared a terrorist state and the only way to prevent it was to support the US and its allies.

Gradually, Pakistan also began to forcefully use its strategic alliance with the United States to bolster its exercise in 'credible deniability'. The change was evident in Musharraf's rejection of Indian allegations of cross-border terrorism when he said, "There

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Jessica Stern, "Pakistan's Jihad Culture," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2000.

is nothing happening on the Line of Control. Let us not be blackmailed on this issue by India... Whatever is happening is indigenous.”⁵⁶ He also assured the US during his June 2003 visit that he would make a ‘hundred per cent effort’ to end cross-border terrorism directed against India.

The ‘frontline state’ status notwithstanding, there is enough evidence that Pakistan continues to be the ‘epicentre’ of Islamist fundamentalism and terrorism, and the source and sponsor of the terrorist campaign in the Indian State of J&K. In the post-9/11 phase, Pakistan sought to maintain ‘minimal deniability’ on its involvement in terrorism through a widening of the sphere of terrorism in India, and an escalation in intensity.⁵⁷ There has also been an increase in terrorist activity on Pakistani soil alongside further radicalisation of extremist groups.⁵⁸ According to media reportage, recruitment to terrorist training camps in Pakistan rose to record levels with one report in the London-based *Sunday Times* putting the number of *Jehadis* at more than 200,000– their ranks apparently bolstered by the war in Iraq.⁵⁹

Year 2002 and early 2003 witnessed a series of arrests and incidents in Pakistan, involving Al Qaeda and Taliban operatives – like Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, one of the prime planners of the 9/11 attacks;⁶⁰ and Abu Zubaida, a close aide of Osama bin Laden. Pakistan also handed over 9/11 suspect and key Al Qaeda terrorist, Ramzi Binalshibh and four others, to US custody. Over 450 suspected Al Qaeda operatives were handed over by Pakistan to the US authorities. However, an unspecified number of Taliban and Al Qaeda operatives are still scattered across the country and an increasing number of Pakistanis have been arrested for links to the Al Qaeda or Taliban. What is also evident is that the Taliban and Al Qaeda are returning to Afghanistan to stir up militancy and have been orchestrating deadly attacks in parts of

⁵⁶ “Pakistan curbing terrorism: Musharraf tells Blair nothing happening along LoC,” *The Dawn*, Islamabad, June 18, 2003.

⁵⁷ K P S Gill, “Gujarat: New Theatre of Islamist Terror,” *South Asia Intelligence Review*, vol. 1 no. 11, September 30, 2002, South Asia Terrorism Portal, www.satp.org.

⁵⁸ See “Pakistan Assessment 2003”, South Asia Terrorism Portal, www.satp.org.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Facts mentioned in this paragraph are based on “Pakistan Assessment 2003” as cited above.

Afghanistan from their safe havens across the border in Pakistan. Daniel McNeill, the American General heading the US-led campaign in Afghanistan said, in August 2002, that “hundreds, maybe even a thousand” Al Qaeda operatives were in Pakistan.

Even US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was eventually forced to concede that he had “seen indications that there are Al Qaeda operating near the [UN] Line of Control.”⁶¹ The increasing presence of Al Qaeda and other Islamist terrorists on Pakistani soil was also evident from the fact that there had been a rise in the number of Al Qaeda and Taliban operatives being arrested, in many cases, analysts suggest, under irresistible pressure from the US, in various cities of Pakistan, especially from Karachi and Rawalpindi. Reportage since the US military campaign began in Afghanistan has indicated that Taliban and Al Qaeda fugitives were present, not only in the tribal areas bordering Pakistan, but also in Pakistan occupied Kashmir and the Sindh province. Groups of Al Qaeda members and Taliban were also crossing regularly from Afghanistan into Pakistan, especially in the ‘semi-autonomous’ tribal region along the Afghan border, where their sympathizers are numerous, and where Pakistani authorities claim ‘very little control’.⁶²

A look at the extremist views of the enormously influential Jamaat-e-Islami is one way to assess the ideas or views of the militant groups that share its ideology. According to the JeI, Pakistan as a country came into being in the name of Islam; is the last refuge of Muslims the world over; and is the vanguard of the movement to save the Muslim Ummah. Some of its important recommendations are that Pakistan should follow an independent foreign policy, continue with its nuclear policy and force India to return Kashmir to the Muslim Ummah; the only way to do all these, moreover, is for Pakistan to come out of the clutches of the opportunistic West.⁶³

⁶¹ “Al-Qaida active close to Indian border, says Rumsfeld,” *The Guardian*, London, June 13, 2002.

⁶² “Pakistan’s Taliban links prove difficult to unravel,” *Financial Times*, London, November 28, 2002.

⁶³ Khurshid Ahmad, *Pakistan: Crises and the Way Out*, Tarjuman al-Quran, October 2000.

Similarly, the views of the Lashkar-e-Toiba, which has masterminded and executed several suicide bombings in J&K as a 'socio-religious political tool' against the 'Indian occupation', a similarly radical perspective emerges. According to its former chief, Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, the US-Israel-India triangle should be opposed because the "U.S. is a monster that would like to devour all the weak nations, particularly the Muslim countries, in order to establish its hegemony... the only solution for global peace - *jihad!*"⁶⁴

2.3 Sustaining the Military Mullah alliance in Pakistani politics

The 2002 elections in Pakistan saw something new for the first time in the country's history: an alliance of six major religious parties – the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) – won power in two provinces, as well as a very significant representation in the federal legislature on a political campaign that vowed to Islamise the state and society through Taliban-like policies. This happened in an election that was widely acknowledged to have been rigged by the Army, and that the European Union's Group of Observers described as "The holding of a general election does not in itself guarantee the establishment of a democracy... the Pakistan authorities engaged in actions which resulted in serious flaws in the electoral process."⁶⁵ The military regime's reasons for this stratagem are located securely in Pakistan's chequered history. Right since the days of Ayub Khan and Zia-ul-Haq, the military has used the *mullahs* both to stay in power and to show the rest of the world that the only way to prevent the transformation of Pakistan into an Islamic theocracy is the military. The *mullahs'* usefulness for the military, however, goes beyond domestic politics. The perpetual threat of war with India over Kashmir, a conflict coloured in religious hues, is another thing that makes for an alliance of interests between the *mullahs* of the MMA and the military. The more Musharraf searches for domestic legitimacy, the more he plays up

⁶⁴ "In defence of jihad," *Frontline*, vol. 20 no. 9, April 26-May 9, 2003.

⁶⁵ Ajai Sahni, "Dictator's Democracy," *South Asia Intelligence Review* vol. 1 no. 13, October 14, 2002, South Asia Terrorism Portal, www.satp.org.

the Indian threat. In this context, the *mullahs* have always been willing to support the military's policies on sustaining terrorism in Kashmir.⁶⁶

2.4 Internationalising the Kashmir issue

Over the years, Pakistan's has manoeuvred to internationalise the Kashmir issue by urging the international community to play a more forceful role in the resolution of what it projects as the 'core issue' of the conflict in South Asia. Since the nuclearisation of the region, Pakistan's endeavour has been to secure an outcome in its favour by raising the bogey of Kashmir as a potential 'nuclear flashpoint'. President Musharraf asserts that state terrorism (in Indian J&K) is a reality and this was the most deadly form of terrorism being practiced in the world today. Pakistan's policy in this context has been consistent in prescribing that India should be forced by the United Nations to allow a plebiscite in Kashmir in order to prevent its violent suppression of the Kashmiri people.

In his address to the UN General Assembly in 2002, Musharraf, consequently, claimed that, while all forms of terror must be condemned, prevented and fought against, one should not lose sight of the fact that the people who are involved in such incidents are demanding certain rights and have certain aspirations since they are being subjected to 'state terrorism'. According to him, "When a people's right to self-determination and freedom are brutally suppressed by foreign occupation, they be driven to put up resistance by all means. Terrorist attacks must be condemned. But acts of terrorism by individuals or groups cannot be the justification to outlaw the just struggle of a people for self-determination and liberation from colonial or foreign occupation. Nor can it justify state terrorism."⁶⁷

With the post-9/11 period witnessing a more focal US engagement in South Asia, Pakistan has striven to exploit the dangers of a 'nuclear flashpoint' in the subcontinent in its favour. The core agenda of the military regime is to alter the US perspective that there can be no change in the *status quo* between

⁶⁶ <http://www.flonnet.com/fl2009/stories/20030509002704200.htm>

⁶⁷ For a full text of the speech, see South Asia Terrorism Portal, Pakistan; Documents; www.satp.org.

nuclear-armed India and Pakistan. Effectively, Pakistan has sought to rally world opinion behind its view that the source of nuclear proliferation in South Asia is the Kashmir issue and “if the 56-year-old Kashmir conflict is settled with fairness and justice to all parties, then the possession of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan will be dramatically less worrisome.”⁶⁸ Irrespective of the perceived US shift on the issue towards India, the military regime persists with the thesis that the fears of a ‘nuclear flashpoint’ could be used to influence USA to pressurise India to negotiate on Kashmir. However, the US has made it known that any India-Pakistan dialogue on Kashmir would only follow rather than precede an end to cross-border terrorism. Even during the current period of détente between the two countries, Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri told a seminar on ‘Conflict resolution and regional cooperation in South Asia’ at the Islamabad Policy Research Institute that, with the introduction of nuclear weapons in the region, Kashmir had become the most dangerous flashpoint in the world.⁶⁹

2.5 Using the Arab-OIC alliance against India

Part of Pakistan’s campaign to internationalise the Kashmir issue is to use the idea of religious identity to secure the support of the other members of Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Arab League. This has been relatively easy, despite India’s hectic and persistent diplomatic lobbying and notwithstanding the fact that India has more Muslims than Pakistan does. It also helps Pakistan that a good number of these countries are in the group of fundamentalist Muslim parties/leaders who make common cause with Pakistan in such fora.⁷⁰ India’s strongly pro-Palestine posture over the decades did not help it secure any support at these fora, and its current attempts to improve ties with Israel can only narrow down the

⁶⁸ Ghulam Nabi Fai, “Kashmir: A Nuclear Flashpoint,” Presentation at the Kashmir Conference organized by International Council of Human Rights, Brussels, Belgium, October 8, 2003.

⁶⁹ “No compromise on Kashmir stance: Jamali,” *New Indian Express*, December 10, 2003.

⁷⁰ http://www.pakboi.gov.pk/html/pakistan_organization_of_the.html

possibility of support from this direction to a minimum. The 'Arab world' is currently strongly condemning the 'new alliance' between India and Israel, forgetting that they steadfastly refused to apply any pressure on Pakistan in return for all the years of India's support.

Pakistan has always actively participated in the activities and programmes of the OIC. The OIC has continued to extend valuable support to Pakistan on issues of vital importance, including Kashmir.⁷¹ Almost every meeting of the OIC has at least one item on its agenda regarding J&K and another on human rights in India. In 2002, Musharraf invited the All Parties Hurriyat Conference to hold talks with Kashmiri groups in his country and also have talks with the OIC Secretary-General. The OIC Secretary-General apparently thanked the members of the Kashmiri delegation for 'updating him about an issue that concerned not only the Ummah but also the whole world owing to its impact on international peace and security' – the 'disputed question' of Kashmir.⁷²

2.6 Manipulating US Support

USA has always been friendly to Pakistan and involved it from the earliest days in military and regional alliances like CENTO. Pakistan was also the cat's paw in the US strategy in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation, and was liberally supported in its quest for 'strategic extension' in that country, as well as in its creation of the Taliban. Pakistan has also long been part of the US game plan in America's Central and South Asia strategy.⁷³

Despite its increasing disgrace and manifest role in the support of international terrorism, Pakistan has succeeded in exploiting this historical relationship and, through a succession of calculated tactical concession, managed to extract an enormous

⁷¹ <http://www.pakistan-embassy.com/home.asp?target=511,201,101,501,411,66,23,121,99,501,801,111,08>

⁷² <http://www.dawn.com/2002/09/15/top4.htm>.

⁷³ <http://www.pakistan-embassy.com/home.asp?target=511,201,101,501,411,66,23,121,99,501,801,111,08>

price for its supposed ‘cooperation’ with the US in the ‘global war against terrorism.’ At the same time, it has repeatedly projected the idea that it will ‘implode’ if it is not given substantial financial concessions, and if any strong efforts are employed to bring the Islamist extremist lobby within the country to book. Essentially, the message projected by Musharraf, and apparently bought by the West, is that Pakistan is plagued by a powerful force of *mullahs* and *jihadis*, and he stands as the only ‘secular’ bulwark against the takeover of the country by these elements. Despite repeated exposures of Pakistan’s continuous duplicity and, more recently, its central role in the network of illegal nuclear proliferation, these tactics appear to have worked, and have contained US pressures on Pakistan within manageable bounds, and limited US support to India’s position on Kashmir and Pakistan’s sponsorship of cross border terrorism, even as they have ensured the uninterrupted flow of adequate financial concessions and aid to a beleaguered Pakistani economy.

3. The American ‘Tilt’

3.1 An Imperfect Balance

Pakistan, once described by John Foster Dulles, former US Secretary of State, as “the bulwark of freedom in Asia,”⁷⁴ has in the post 9/11 phase succeeded in re-establishing itself as a ‘key ally’ of the US, after its progressive marginalisation through the latter half of the 1990s. The US also sees the Pakistan Army as “the greatest single stabilizing force in the country.”⁷⁵ While the status of ‘frontline state’ has enabled Pakistan to secure a fair amount of economic leverage and approbation, the geographical necessity of the ongoing Afghan campaign has forced the US administration to balance its relations within the sub-continent. While emphasising the need for India and Pakistan to resolve their disputes, the US has pointed out that strong bilateral

⁷⁴ Asad Ismi, “A U.S.-Financed Military Dictatorship,” www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/articles/article333.html

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

relations had been built with both India and Pakistan, and these had given America leverage to play a 'constructive role' when tensions in the region became acute.

America has, despite overwhelming intelligence, sought to sustain the pretence of its 'satisfaction' with regard to Pakistan's activities in the war against terrorism. Thus, Assistant Secretary of State Christina Rocca's observed, "(Our) relationships with South Asian states have been central to our successful prosecution of the war on terrorism. All have been fully supportive, and their support in this war has been, and will continue to be, absolutely crucial."⁷⁶ Secretary of State Colin Powell has also repeatedly thanked General Musharraf for his 'efforts' in this direction, and given repeated assurances of continued US support to Pakistan's military regime.

The National Security Strategy of the United States of America has pointed out that it would help nations that need assistance in combating terror.⁷⁷ According to the year 2001 Patterns of Global Terrorism Report, South Asia was a central point for terrorism directed against the United States and its friends and allies around the world. A lot of importance was given to Musharraf's speeches, and gratitude expressed to Pakistan for rendering unprecedented levels of co-operation to support the war on terrorism. The Report pointed out that Pakistan not only broke its previously close ties with the Taliban regime but also allowed the US military to use bases within the country for military operations in Afghanistan. Also that Musharraf took important steps against domestic extremists, detaining more than 2,000 including Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Maulana Masood Azhar. The Report also mentioned Musharraf's proposal to bring Pakistan's religious schools – some of which have served as breeding grounds for extremists – into the mainstream educational system. It also noted that Pakistan had announced sweeping police reforms, upgraded its immigration control system, and begun

⁷⁶ Assistant Secretary of State Christina Rocca during a Congressional testimony, July 18, 2002, www.state.gov/documents/organization/20111.pdf

⁷⁷ www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html.

work on new anti-terrorist finance laws and that Musharraf cracked down on ‘anti-Pakistan’ extremists. India was, however, acknowledged as a target of terrorism throughout the year, but one that endorsed the US military response to the September 11 attack and that offered to provide the US with logistic support and staging areas.⁷⁸ The report also emphasized that the Government of Pakistan had arrested and deported to US nearly 500 suspected Al Qaeda and Taliban operatives, detained hundreds of extremists, and banned five extremist organizations: Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LT), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM), Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Tehrik-i-Jafria Pakistan (TJP), and Tehrik-i-Nifaz-i-Shariat-i Mohammadi (TNSM).⁷⁹

Despite the inherent optimism of the Report, there were obvious areas of doubt in the US strategic and policy community. The erstwhile US Ambassador to India, Robert Blackwill, acknowledged the fact of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in J&K, and asserted that the “fight against international terrorism will not be won until terrorism against India ends permanently.”⁸⁰ According to him, “There can be no other legitimate stance by the United States, no American compromise whatever on this elemental geopolitical and moral truth. The United States, India and all civilised nations must have zero tolerance for terrorism. Otherwise, we sink into a swamp of moral relativism and strategic myopia.”⁸¹ He also asserted that “We will win the war on terrorism, and the United States and India will win it together – because we represent good, and terrorists are evil incarnate.”⁸²

⁷⁸ <http://www.usis.usemb.se/terror/>.

⁷⁹ <http://www.usis.usemb.se/terror/>.

⁸⁰ “Fight against terror won’t be won until terrorism against India ends: Blackwill,” *Hindu*, April 22, 2003.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² “Blackwill condemns terrorism against India,” www.rediff.com/news/2003/jul/29black.htm.

3.2 Inherent Contradictions

There are visible flaws in the US policy on South Asia. Enormous emphasis has been placed on the efficacy of aid to Pakistan, particularly in the 'reform' of education and the *madrasahs*, to prevent it from becoming a failed state and from 'imploding', as also to help it on the road to the restoration of a 'true democracy'. It is, however, doubtful whether the military regime has the intent or the will to set Pakistani society on a sustainable course that would lead to the political pluralism and religious tolerance of US imaginings. Indeed, international acceptance of the military regime's domestic manoeuvres, in exchange for qualified support in the war on terrorism, risks the consolidation of extremist forces in the country, and future destabilization that may prove even more difficult to contain. The military regime, moreover, has systematically eroded the limited integrity and power of the surviving democratic and constitutional structures within the country, making any future transition to real democracy a doomed project. Wavering by important international actors, especially the U.S., not only increases extremist threats within Pakistan, but will eventually undermine global security and stability as well.

The fact that US-Pakistan interests do not coincide in totality is visible in the divergence on Kashmir and Pakistan's continued rendezvous with the Taliban/Al Qaeda combine. The Independent US Task Force, in its report on the US policy towards India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, observes that "U.S. interests in pursuing the war on terrorism conflict with Pakistan's continued support for Islamist terrorists engaged in '*jihad*' against India in the disputed territory of Kashmir (Pakistan considers many of these militants to be 'freedom fighters') and Pakistan's failure to prevent pro-Taliban elements from using the Pashtun tribal areas as a base to attack Afghanistan."⁸³

⁸³ "New Priorities in South Asia: U.S. Policy Toward India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan," Chairmen's Report of an Independent Task Force

At the October 10, 2001, Press Conference with President Bush, Gen. Musharraf proclaimed that Pakistan had decided “to be a part of the coalition, to be with the United States, to fight terrorism in all its forms wherever it exists.”⁸⁴ Retrospectively, what he was proposing was a tactical alliance directed towards negating the loss of Taliban in Afghanistan. In a more nuanced view projected to domestic audiences, Musharraf referred to the predicament Pakistan was facing in choosing between confrontation and alignment with the USA. Invoking Islamic laws, he drew parallels between his predicament and the momentary cease-fires that Muslim leaders had signed with the ‘non-believers’ in the early stages of Muslim history (the Treaty of Hudaibiya). The conclusion of such an arrangement with the United States was, likewise, intended to ensure that the interests of Islam would be protected, Musharraf explained.⁸⁵

In the evolving scenario in South Asia, both Pakistan and the United States have essentially worked to safeguard their core national interests. While the latter’s campaign in Afghanistan has necessitated, at least geographically, an alliance with the Musharraf regime, Pakistan has been able to continue its strategy of ‘Kashmir is the core issue’ despite the turnaround it was forced to craft with regard to its erstwhile protégé, the Taliban. While the loss of ‘strategic depth’ in Afghanistan has been temporarily accepted by the Pakistani leadership, Pakistan has managed to sustain its hostile posture against India, and continues to project the dispute over J&K as the core issue, not only of conflict in the region, but of its own national identity. This continues to be the case despite continuous tactical manoeuvres in the post-911 era. There is also growing evidence that Pakistan has also initiated

Cosponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations and the Asia Society, New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2003, p. 4.

⁸⁴ U.S. Department of State, “President of Pakistan Reaffirms Commitment to Fight Terrorism,” November 10, 2001, www.gov/p/sa/rt/index.cfm?docid=6056.

⁸⁵ Leon T. Hadar, “Pakistan in America’s war against Terrorism: Strategic Ally or Unreliable Client?,” *Policy Analysis*, no. 436 May 8, 2002, Cato Institute.

measures that could eventually restore its 'strategic depth' by re-establishing its proxies in Kabul, albeit in a radically altered form.

4. Conclusion

It is evident that the 'global war against terrorism' has, both within the South Asian context and in the wider theatre of international terrorism, failed to deal with Pakistan's persistent duplicity. A co-ordinated response from the countries within South Asia, and those with significant interests and interventions in the region, remains elusive, as each country defines its policies within the context of narrow perceptions of its own 'interests of state.'

In India, there has also been a failure to evolve a consistent counter-terrorism policy, and the response to every terrorist attack has been to blame it on a foreign entity. Though foreign powers have, without an iota of doubt, aided and abetted terrorist activity in many parts of India, the 'foreign hand' thesis has been overstated. Indeed, India, which has lost over 70,000 lives in terrorist and insurgent violence in different parts of the country over the past decade, is yet to produce a document that clearly enumerates the parameters of its response to terrorism. It has also failed to evolve durable structures of governance in troubled regions, including the Northeast, Punjab and J&K. There is, moreover, a tendency to indulge in excesses of rhetoric, often neutralizing whatever initiatives and goodwill it has earned. India has also been unable to coerce Pakistan – diplomatically or militarily – to end cross-border terrorism.

There has, further, been excessive reliance on the shifting American policy agenda to change the dynamics of the internal situation both in Pakistan and in J&K, though the risks of this strategy are not unknown to Delhi. It has become increasingly apparent that, while international co-operation is necessary and useful in combating international terrorism, it cannot be a substitute for a more pragmatic and consistent internal endeavour.

Pakistan practices an adroit *realpolitik* and has been able to convince the US that it is, if not a trustworthy ally, certainly one that is indispensable, and a frontline state in the war on terror, despite evidence to the contrary. Its dexterous manoeuvres, and the reinvention of the constituents of its 'national identity', have allowed Pakistan to transform itself from a 'client state' of the US, to a 'frontline state' in the America's global war against terrorism.

Pragmatism has dominated the US agenda in South Asia. Pakistan continues to be recognized as a necessity in the current ensemble of circumstances, and the US administration remains willing to ignore its duplicity within certain parameters. India's democratic ethos and its large and increasingly dynamic economy are increasingly perceived as significant points of convergence, but the US is not yet willing to let go of Pakistan. As one analyst expressed it, "In Afghanistan, Washington found itself falling into the trap of permitting the Pakistani 'tail' to wag the American 'dog'."⁸⁶ Essential, here, is the fact that the US has a higher threshold of tolerance for domestic terrorism in other countries, than it has for international terrorism, or terrorism directed against US targets.

Both India and Pakistan have sought to exploit 9/11 to secure greater US support, and a large part of the policies pursued by both has been influenced by this motive. In response, while it has deepened relations with India, US policy on Pakistan has focused on the maintenance of stability and an effort to push Pakistan towards democracy. In Pakistan, regrettably, its various initiatives and efforts have only led to the further consolidations of militaristic and religious elements.

Pakistan's policy reflects substantial strategic and tactical coherence, though it is essentially negative and counter-productive in nature. Fortunately (for India) it has never fully succeeded. Despite a succession of 'peace initiatives' and repeated commitments to end terrorism from Pakistani soil, there

⁸⁶ Ibid.

is no evidence of strategic transformation in Pakistan – the only changes have been tactical and coerced. With increasing American preoccupation in Iraq, there is significant evidence of perceptible changes in Pakistan's posture of retreat from its quest for strategic depth, and of growing interventions in Afghanistan's internal affairs.

India, on the other hand, has always operated within a reactive, rather than proactive, context, with no strategic consistency, and little tactical coherence in its counter-terrorism policies.

America's strategic vision has, since 9/11, been very clearly articulated; in practice, however, it has been diluted by a classical 'interests of state' orientation, and it has been unable to correctly assess or contain Pakistan's continuing mischief.

In the final analysis, it is evident that none of the three major actors in the contemporary South Asian theatre are pursuing a principled policy committed to a shared objective of rooting out the last vestiges of terrorism and establishing peace and stability to the region, with short term interests and calculations taking precedence.