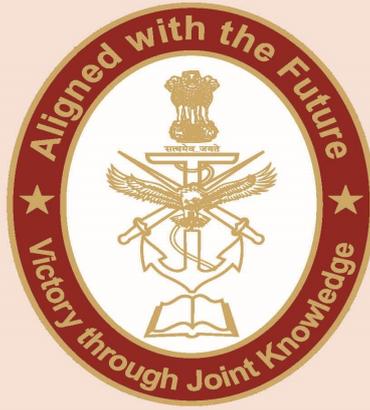


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PAK'S SPONSORED TERRORISTS ARE STATE ACTORS

BY

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The world is aware of Pakistan employing terrorist organizations as part of state policy. They even feed their public with the belief of good versus bad terrorists. The leaders of groups considered good terrorists are shielded, protected and nurtured by the Pak deep state. While they claim that terrorism has no religion, terrorists launched from Pak are motivated based on the concept of Jihad, which is the opposite and solely based on religion. Poor youth are selected, trained, indoctrinated and infiltrated as terrorists by the Pakistan army in close coordination with the ISI.

The only difference between army personnel and terrorists being that latter are not in uniform and paid much lesser than their uniformed counterparts. The leaders of these 'so-called good' terrorist groups collect donations, run madrassas to brainwash wayward youth and conduct recruitment rallies in coordination with the ISI.

The elimination of multiple Taliban leaders and Bin Laden on Pak soil, as also admitting that heads of Jaish e Mohamad (JeM) and Lashkar e Taiba (LeT) reside in the country, indicates the protection being openly provided to terrorist leaders by the Pak government. While these leaders take credit for major operations, they are evidently carried out on the planning and directions of the deep state. Terrorist leaders are only figureheads, nominated by the deep state to be the public face, protecting those acting from behind. Thus, they hide the true faces behind the terror strike, the Pak deep state.

Pak has realized that it cannot match Indian conventional military power and is at a disadvantage. By employing terrorists, it can hide against official retribution by avoiding being held responsible, politically and legally. This low-cost option can also tie down large Indian military resources as keep a disputed region in turmoil.

Major terrorist operations in Kashmir are planned and launched from Pak soil. The recent Pulwama attack needed an explosive expert, who was especially infiltrated for this task. Till the execution of the suicide attack he was protected and hidden from Indian security forces and never participated in any operation. His presence was known through multiple radio intercepts, but his whereabouts became public after the suicide attack, when his utility became zero.

No elected government in Pak has been able to compel its army to change its policies of supporting terror groups, despite any amount of international pressure. Nawaz raised his concern that the country is facing isolation due to this faulty policy. His advice was rejected, his removal ensured. His languishing in jail is solely because he attempted to take on the deep state.

All Pak's neighbours, India, Iran and Afghanistan have similar views on Pak supported terror. The three nations have been raising this issue in public, but to no avail. The world is aware, yet due to support from China, possession of nuclear weapons and its geo-strategic location, it remains secure from being declared a state sponsor of terror. Thus, terrorism and the deep state are synonymous. They have destabilized an entire region, hoping that these actions would work to their benefit.

Leaders of banned terrorist organizations are protected and provided all facilities by the Pak government. The earlier Pakistan advisor on foreign affairs, Sartaj Aziz, had stated in the US that the Taliban leadership resides in Pak and are provided facilities like medical treatment, hence Pak has some influence over them.

Multiple reports have emerged of Masood Azar being treated in Pakistan military hospitals. Whenever Hafiz Saeed or Masood Azar are taken under protective custody, it is done by the army. It is their terrorists which are pushed into Kashmir. When tensions between India and Pak are high, the army takes over their security.

India had demanded listing Masood Azar as a global terrorist, which China blocked. Had he even been listed, nothing would have changed. Hafiz Saeed entered the list in 2008, has a USD 10 Million bounty, yet roams freely,

conducts his sermons and recruit's terrorists for as low as Rs 3000 a month, whom the Pak army subsequently take over.

In the case of India, Pak trained and launched terrorists have attacked targets deep within the country, including Mumbai and the Indian Parliament. JeM and LeThad stated during the time of Operation Parakram, when both armies had mobilized, that during war, they would fight alongside the Pak army, hence are clearly an extension of the Pak army. Along the LoC, the Pakistan Border Action Teams (BAT) are a combination of Pak's serving and terrorists. The air strike on Balakote killed not only terrorists undergoing training, but also their trainers and handlers who were serving members of the ISI and Pak army.

Pak supported terrorists can under no means of imagination be termed as non-state actors as they are created, trained and employed specifically to create chaos in depth areas of India. The only difference is that when uniformed military personnel enter a foreign land and engage in conflict, it is termed as war, whereas employing non-military personnel provided the same training and expertise in weaponry is termed as militancy or terrorism. The other difference is in dealing with captured terrorists. Since they do not wear uniform, they are not treated as prisoners of war.

India has termed Pak actions in Kashmir as Hybrid war, implying a combination of irregular warfare, cyber warfare, propaganda warfare including spreading of fake news supported by conventional warfare along the LoC. Presently, there is a need to reconsider our approach.

Terrorists trained and employed by Pak should be considered as members of their armed forces, albeit not in uniform, but at par with their para-military forces, under command of the army. This implies that the ongoing Pak activities in J and K is neither hybrid war nor terrorism, but an all-out war launched by the Pak deep state. If this approach is adopted as the Indian perception of the present situation in J and K, then any retaliation can and should be on Pak soil.

In an article titled, 'Enhancing the status of non-state actors through a global war on terror?' in the Notre Dame Law School Journal in 2005, Mary Ellen O'Connell writes, 'The traditional US position is that a group using terrorist tactics should be equated with states only when sponsored by a state or in control of territory.' She adds, 'If a state were involved, terror attacks could possibly trigger the right of another state to respond in self-defence against the responsible state and thus initiate an armed conflict.'

It is with this background that Indian actions in Balakote and the earlier surgical strike in POK are clearly justified. India aimed to hit back at those

targets from where these non-uniformed military personnel (terrorists) are trained and launched. Simultaneously engaging Pak military targets (since terrorists are just an extension of the Pak army) is equally justified.

For India, Iran and Afghanistan where Pak trained and supported terrorists are employed, attacking Pak army positions is fair game. Thus, US drone strikes should no longer be aimed at Taliban and Haqqani network leaders alone, but also Pak army positions and HQs which control and coordinate the activities of their non-uniformed soldiers. Similarly, when India retaliates against Pak for terrorist strikes on Indian soil, it can legally target Pak army positions.

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