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FEATURED | Gurdaspur, Pathankot, Uri – What Next?

State Terrorism and Pakistan's Proxy War in Kashmir

By Siegfried O. Wolf

Terror in Jammu & Kashmir: India-Pakistan Relations Again at the Edge

On last Sunday, September 18th, early morning, **four terrorists entered** an Indian military base in the garrison town of Uri in the Indian-administered state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). The militants, also known as **'fidayeen'**, were apparently **highly-trained, as well as heavily armed and specially equipped**. In the several hours lasting exchange of fire, at least **17 Indian soldiers killed** and **left 30 injured** out of them are 11 in critical conditions. Also the terrorists, obviously on a suicide mission, lost their lives too. This attack, near the *de facto* border between India and Pakistan, was one of the deadliest one at a security installation in the disputed area of Kashmir since militant attacks began in 1989. Though no group claimed responsibility yet, there are severe indications that the **terrorists belong** to the Pakistan-based armed group *Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM)*. There are allegations, that JeM, a militant group that has been **active in Kashmir** for more than 15 years, **"have links to elements within the Pakistani government"**. Regarding **India's Army Northern Command** and several statements of civilian authorities, the "evidence gathered at the scene indicated the attackers were foreign and their equipment bore Pakistani markings. Furthermore, there are distinct hints that the J&K by crossing the 'Line of Control' (LoC), the *de-facto* India-Pakistan border in Kashmir. In this context, one must be aware that the latest attack at Uri was not a single incident, rather a part of a long-lasting campaign of pro-Pakistani groups carrying out a proxy-war not only in J&K but also in many other Indian places too, foremost New Delhi, Mumbai, and Punjab. For example earlier this year, similar to the Uri raid, seven Pakistani militants

stormed an air base at Pathankot. In a first response, high officials stated that India is "deeply disappointed with Pakistan's continued and direct support to terrorism and terrorist groups" and that "Pakistan is a terrorist state and it should be identified and isolated as such". Subsequently, there are severe concerns, that the Uri attack is likely to **prove a decisive blow** to the already frozen tentative peace process between Islamabad and Delhi.

Contextualising the Uri Attack – Kashmir, Pakistan and State Terrorism

Often described as **'the unfinished business of Partition'**, Kashmir is the main point of contention in India-Pakistan relations. The competing territorial claims represent opposing visions of state and nationhood: for India, a Muslim-majority state of J&K symbolizes the secular nation-state, and for Pakistan, an Indian-administered Kashmir represents the incompleteness of Pakistan. The territorial dispute has its roots in the immediate aftermath of independence when the Hindu Maharajah of Kashmir failed to decide whether to join India or Pakistan. Faced with an armed uprising of local tribesman who had Pakistani backing, the Maharajah looked to India for assistance; India subsequently granted assistance on the condition that the Maharajah signed the Instrument of Accession to the Republic of India. Thus, the Kashmir dispute was born, closely followed by the first Indo-Pakistani war in 1947–48 when Pakistani forces tried to gain control over Kashmir. The war ended with the establishment of a 740-kilometer ceasefire line which, for a while, was patrolled by the **UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan**, and which has been the *de facto* border ever since. Despite the **second war in 1965**, during which Pakistan tried and failed to instigate mass uprisings in Kashmir, the ceasefire line was upheld. In 1971, **the third Indo-Pakistan war**, though not fought over Kashmir, produced the **Simla Agreement of 1972**, in which the cease-fire line was turned into the LoC, in the hope of moving towards a mutually acceptable international border. But the border remains contested as is evident from regular fights and skirmishes. The latest major armed confrontation took place in the Kargil sector of the LoC in 1999.

While armed conflict and the use of regular forces in an overt confrontation has changed little about the border, bilateral talks between the countries' leaders have also failed. In result, since 1989, Pakistan has continued to fund, arm train, and otherwise support a host of Kashmiri political organizations, specifically terrorist groups, in order to destabilize the Indian administration (Byman 2005: 155).

Pakistan's Ambiguity in Counter-Terrorism

Pakistan has gained the international reputation of being the world's foremost exporter of Jihadism. While analyzing the causes and consequences of this phenomenon, numerous observers find that there are clear indicators that the Pakistani government is involved in sponsoring terrorism. As such there is a clear discrepancy between the claims and true ambition of the Pakistani government when it comes to fighting terrorism. By having said this, one must stress that Pakistan has only acted against militant groups that developed an anti-Pakistan agenda and are considered a threat to the regime. Terrorist organizations on Pakistani soil that mostly operate abroad, especially in India, are not clearly targeted by the country's anti-terrorism campaigns. Keeping this in mind, each analysis of terror incidents in J&K and in other parts of India must consider the international dimensions of Pakistan's involvement in state-terrorism.

Final thoughts - Searching for a Rationale in Irrationality: Pakistan's Motives in Kashmir

One of Pakistan's main foreign policy goals is "cutting India down to size" (Haqqani 2005: 268) in terms of international reputation, military and political power as well as its territory. Regarding the territory, it looks to achieve control over the Indian-administered state of J&K. and to change the status quo through terrorism. Having this in mind, terrorist attacks like the once in Pathankot and Uri must be seen as an indication that Pakistan is not interested in peace. The fact that Pakistan's army and affiliated jihadi terrorists started the Kargil offensive in 1999 (Tellis et al. 2001), only a couple of months after the then Prime

Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee started the 'Lahore-Delhi-Bus-Yatra' peace initiative, further substantiates the argument of Islamabad's disinterest in reconciliation with New Delhi. Against this backdrop, Pakistan looks to achieve parity with India, especially in military terms. However, due to the tremendous asymmetries in available economic and financial resources, it was impossible for Pakistan to achieve conventional military parity with India - despite massive economic and military aid from US and China in the last decades. Furthermore, after experiencing defeat in three wars and one major armed confrontation (Kargil 1999), Pakistan identifies the use of terrorists as its best bet to balance the asymmetry in the military and economic capabilities which are clearly in favor of India. Consequently, Pakistan's aim in J&K is to deal maximum damage to Indian forces, to undermine the current administration and to bring out an upheaval among the people with the minimum use of resources and limiting consequences for Islamabad. The attacks on Indian military bases must be seen in this context. Consequently, Pakistan must be perceived as a part of the problem of cross-border terrorism, rather than a credible partner in finding a comprehensive solution to the global challenges of international Jihadism.

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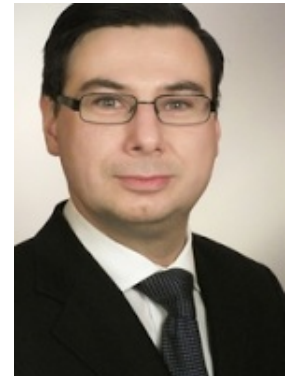
He is the co-author of 'A Political and Economic Dictionary of South Asia' (Routledge; London 2006), co-editor of 'Politics in South Asia. Culture, Rationality and Conceptual Flow' (Springer: Heidelberg , 2015). 'The Merits of Regionalisation. The Case of South Asia' (Springer: Heidelberg, 2014) and 'State and Foreign Policy in South Asia' (Sanskrit: 2010) and Deputy Editor of the 'Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics' (HPSACP). Furthermore, he has worked as a consultant for the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Germany and is a member of the external group of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Task Force, Federal Foreign Office, Germany.

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