



Terrorism & CPEC

The Unfolding of Indian Strategy

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"Terrorism & CPEC: The Unfolding Indian Strategy" was researched, compiled and written by **Zeeshan Shahid Khan**, a contributing analyst at CommandEleven.

About CommandEleven

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Military and political strategists throughout history, such as Chanakya and Machiavelli, have philosophized how tactics of terrorism and cruelty may be considered a virtue when viewed from the lens of national self-preservation. The word 'Terrorism' as such, has not been used in further explaining the methodologies in clear terms by these strategists; however, the concept of using cruelty against enemy state can further be translated into use of covert low key operations and overt terrorism, which are clearly indicated in Machiavellian thought. Machiavelli's most inclusive approval of cruelty is visible in his statement on the absolute security and defense of a state, in which he quotes, 'When it is absolutely a question of the safety of one's country, there must be no consideration of just or unjust, of merciful or cruel, or praiseworthy or disgraceful; instead, setting aside every respect, one must follow to the utmost any plan that will save her life and maintain her liberty.'

Terrorism has been used in the past as a remarkable and ruthless tool for shaping policies and public opinion, as well as achieving an extensive list of covert aims by state and non-state actors alike. Ruthless in terms of strategy and remarkable with respect to the effects achieved.

In the previous century, the philosophy of using terrorism as strategy has manifested in numerous operations carried out by military and intelligence contemporaries as well as revolutionaries and rebels alike. These can be exemplified in numerous covert and overt operations starting from 1940s, such as bombing of five ships carrying Jews fleeing to Palestine from the Holocaust in 1946 by British agencies using a fake group called "Defenders of Arab Palestine". Another example is the use of an Israeli terrorist cell in Egypt to plant explosives in numerous facilities including a US diplomatic building in 1954, implicating the Arabs. Identification of the bombers by Egyptian security agencies later proved the conspiracy. In the 50s, the CIA hired malcontent Iranians posing to be communists to stage bombings in Iran and turn public against the democratically elected prime minister. The CIA later admitted to these allegations as published by NY times in year 2000. Another instance was that of planting a radio transmitter by Mossad in Gadhafi's compound in Tripoli, Libya in 1984. The fake terrorist transmissions broadcasted were sufficient to frame Gadhafi as a terrorist supporter resulting in the US bombing of Libya immediately thereafter.

The list of such intel operations including assassination attempts, massacres and terrorist attacks for achieving strategic aims is non-exhaustive; however, incidents such as those highlighted here may indicate the veracity of using this strategy vis-à-vis the achieved effects; the murder of the Turkish Prime Minister (1960); bombings in Portugal (1966); the Piazza Fontana massacre in Italy (1969); terror attacks in turkey (1971); the Peteano bombing in Italy (1972); Shootings In Brescia, Italy and bombing on an Italian Train (1974); Shootings In Istanbul, Turkey (1977); the Atocha massacre in Madrid, Spain (1977); the abduction and murder of the Italian Prime Minister (1978); and bombing of the Bologna railway station in Italy (1980). CIA has more recently been allegedly using terrorism as a tool for shaping global opinion for war in the Middle East as well as in Afghanistan using outsourced media, intel and military experts.

In the asymmetric matrix of modern warfare, such tools as Terrorism have so far proved not only as an unflinching battle tactic, but also as a strong pivot for unveiling a wholesome

strategy against the enemy state. On the strategic plane, such machinations result in diversion of perceived threat, thereby re-aligning military aims and further controlling and redirecting national policies.

Unlike Machiavelli, more recent strategists, such as Dr. Subramaniam, apart from his nuclear doctrine, also considered a more overt doctrine of Terrorism against enemy states highlighted in early 80s. A doctrine was seldom re-visited by our counter-strategists and hence remained buried in the sands of time for over two and half decades. Suggesting a strategy of evolving a mechanism for using malcontent and religious elements from within the enemy state, Subramaniam supported the idea of using tribesmen in areas of Pakistan-Afghan borders for destabilizing Pakistan internally, resultantly redirecting military effort away from Indian borders and Kashmir. The key element of his philosophy was clearly the use of "Terrorism".

In more recent times, various external covert agencies have been unfolding a well-coordinated and wholesome strategy against Pakistan including conduct of terrorist operations in the ambit of 5GW especially after 9/11. However, its impetus was thwarted by successfully handling separatists' movement in Baluchistan and neutralizing the terrorist elements in FATA for a short while. Nonetheless, the pressure has once more been heightened after Pakistan's policy shift from the west to alliance with Russo-China block. Since initiation of CPEC numerous reported and unreported acts of violence and terrorism have been unleashed throughout Pakistan.

As what can now be easily recognized in hindsight, recent events have linkages spilling over from perhaps the lack of foresight by our leadership in the past. These may be enumerated on a timeline as; inflexible strategic alliances in the cold war era of global bipolarity, ineffective post war management of Afghanistan after USSR's withdrawal, and non-support or/and non-neutrality during US/ISAF invasion of Afghanistan. The web of causality can be evidently deciphered by what is visible on ground today. However, some may include more variables while others may out rightly disagree. However, these major events clearly resulted in creation of space for Subramanian's strategy to unfold.

Moreover, the combination of strategic and economic threat posed to the US and Euro economic blocks by Russian support to CPEC and the Chinese incursion to warm waters through Pakistan is unprecedented in history. This not only entails an economic resurgence in Pakistan alone, but also points at creation of a complete strategic shift in the Indian Ocean region by increase of Chinese military presence and providing them with an alternative route for trade, if and when the other two routes were ever threatened by US bases in the east.

More so, the non-inclusion of the US strategic ally 'India' in CPEC, has also posed an indubitable duress of economic deceleration in India, in the form of probable reduction in direct foreign investment (FDI). The economic ramifications of CPEC have further convulsed the Indian rabid leadership into the abys of perplexity which is visible in their audacious and imprudent reactions to thwart development of CPEC.

If sudden reappearance of TTP for avenging death of an individual after a decade of the incident is not a sufficient indicator, one can easily link the repeated and indiscriminate

violence by Indian military in Kashmir and across the LOC prior to the resurgence of terrorist activities and bombings in Pakistan. Moreover, move of Indian armored fighting vehicles and MBTs to forward bases in battle readiness for initiating Cold Start strategy two weeks prior to terrorist bombings in Pakistan, is another link in the chain of events clearly indicating the sense of indignation in the incensed Indian mind, having been left out of the regional game and trying to re-assert its importance. However, due to clear statements by the Chinese as well as Pakistani leadership, India has not an option but to exercise restraint while being still held on the leash of its so called STRATEGIC allies.

In the long run, the only reassurance Indians hope to have is their slow infiltration in evolution of Afghan governance system including formulation of policies which has been maturing over the past decade with support by its allies. This includes partial outsourcing of training of Afghan military and para-military forces by ISAF to Indians, control of cellular phone companies, partial takeover of education reformation, and complete takeover of media and entertainment industry.

Notwithstanding creation of a non-friendly front towards our western borders which is obvious, the takeover of the non-military or soft key elements as highlighted here, form the fundamentals of a cultural realignment strategy through mental reprogramming (specially of youth), by redefining of enemies which in this case would be Pakistan, and of allies, a position which India aims to claim. The use of Afghan government and turned afghan sentiments are perhaps the only viable methodology now left with India to disturb the CPEC by using terrorist factions from Afghanistan, unless it engages Pakistan in a war which it cannot afford.

The short-term effect of the Indo-Afghan nexus is visible in the form of recent wave of terrorist activities in Pakistan by Terrorist offshoots from Afghani soil as the primary effort with the aim of destabilizing CPEC, shortly after the preparatory phase of creating instability on eastern borders by Indian firing and forward posturing of its Armored forces i.e. the Kings of Battle in the south. However, the secondary aim of the terrorist attacks was to pull Pakistani military and paramilitary forces from the east including Kashmir and embroil them in internal security thereby shifting military concentrations away from the eastern borders. This would create space for short and quick border incursions based on Cold Start strategy as and when the go ahead is given to India. This, however, may be unlikely given the balance of forces (including regional players) and reactionary strategy in place, notwithstanding Nuclear deterrence. Nevertheless, one can see a clear reflection of Subramanian's Terrorism strategy unfolding to some extent.

The use of offensive posturing followed by a wave of terrorist activities is being termed as unveiling of Operation Black Swan by certain contemporaries. This is not something the Pakistani strategists were unexpectant of. Notwithstanding the internal political exaggerations added to the operational matrix of Black Swan; the powerful regional nexus and grand scale of CPEC alone vis-à-vis its global effect, were understood as sufficient factors to act as a magnet to attract a barrage of terrorist activities aiming to derail the mega project.

The overt and covert support to India against CPEC is also likely to continue by numerous regional and global players, each for its own interest. The NATO block has their interest

against Chinese strategic expansion, whereas UAE and Iran's interests are based on economic rivalry posed by another highly developed port city at Gwadar.

In short, terrorist factions are likely to continue to be used against Pakistan through Afghanistan until the Indian friendly effect and supporting elements are rooted out from Afghan governance system. Moreover, Indian firing along LOC and across the border is also likely to continue with the aim of escalating security situation in hope of scaring away international businesses and investments if not to completely derail CPEC, which is obviously unlikely.

Pakistan must continue to practice comparative restraint with selective response against Indian aggression in the east, while carrying out limited strikes with drones against confirmed anti Pakistan terrorist elements in Afghanistan upon ground intel confirmation. Moreover, Pakistan must not further antagonize the Afghan Taliban by indiscriminately targeting their positions, who by their resilience have been continuously gaining ground in Afghanistan in the recent past. These men have a strong probability to be the most likely contenders for forming next Afghan government, whether supported by western puppeteers of the present regime or not. Prudence would be in supporting dialogue with them with third party support of the Chinese as key player in the future of the region.

Proper surgical strikes or use of artillery against targets in Afghanistan would have two predictable outcomes, neither of which will favor Pakistan in the long run. Firstly, it will give Afghanistan legitimacy to retaliate by fire in a conventional way against Pakistani forces under false pretense of alleged Afghan Taliban hideouts, or use TTP for physical attacks on our border posts. Moreover, surgical strikes after having been legitimized by our actions in Afghanistan, will further give impetus and legitimacy to Indians to do the same across our borders on imaginary Terrorist camps with international political support from its allies. This may result in escalation of hostilities between Pakistan and India which may impact development speed and security of the CPEC project adversely and therefore cannot be permitted.

CPEC is a strategic game changer not just regionally but also in the global arena. This may be the only viable survival strategy for Pakistan in the long run and therefore must continue to be developed at the fastest possible pace for ensuring security and stability of the country. The add-ons with CPEC i.e. developing of ties with Russia and central Asian countries must also be carefully nurtured by re-aligning non-military and military collaborations with the Russo-China block and further studying the possibility of redirecting Pakistan's monetary and banking interests towards our new strategic allies so as to free Pakistan from the clutches of western monetary and banking cartels including IMF and World Bank.

About the Author:

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Zeeshan Shahid Khan has been affiliated with numerous National and International security organizations over the past 20 year prior to joining CommandEleven. He holds three Masters Degrees and an MS/MPhil in various disciplines including Arts and Sciences of Warfare and Global Business Management from Australia. Apart from being certified as a Nuclear Security Professional from WINS Academy at Vienna, he has also pursued formal education in Uloom ud Deen from International Islamic University with special interest in Islamic History of Warfare. He has worked as Director of South Asian Strategic Stability Institute University in recent years and continues to write on issues of National and International security and strategy.

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