

Strategic Options Against State-Sponsored Terrorism

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Introduction

There is no universal definition of terrorism because by nature terrorism is difficult to define. Acts of terrorism evoke emotional responses in the victims as well as in the practitioners. The old adage, “One man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter” is still alive and well. The US has also coined the term “violent terrorism”—an exercise in semantics. There cannot be a “good” terrorist, before he actually undertakes the physical act. Is a cyber attack an act of violent terrorism or non-violent terrorism? Similarly, there is ambiguity in terming extreme radicalisation as terrorism even though children are turned into neo-drones, as in Pakistan. The August 2012 shooting at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin (USA), killing six people, was publicly described by the Attorney General as an act of terrorism motivated by hate. However, the Fort Hood massacre of November 2009, in which 13 persons were killed and 30 wounded has never been described officially as an act of terrorism even though the alleged shooter shouted “*Allahu Akbar*” or God is great, when he opened fire.

State Terrorism

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* says, “... establishment terrorism, often called state or state-sponsored terrorism, is employed by governments –

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or more often by factions within governments – against that government’s citizens, against factions within the government, or against foreign governments or groups”. As per historian Henry Commager, “Even when definitions of terrorism allow for state terrorism, state actions in this area tend to be seen through the prism of war or national self-defense, not terror”. This appears apt, especially in the context of conventional wars being replaced more and more by asymmetric

and irregular wars, as being waged by both Pakistan and China against India. The US has defined three different ways in which states can engage in the use of terror: governmental or “state” terror; state involvement in terror; and state sponsorship of terrorism. Axiomatically, applying the same in reverse can also become a counter at the strategic level. The US launched the Global War on Terror (GWOT) primarily targeting Al Qaeda but subsequently supported and armed Al Qaeda in Bosnia and Libya, and is doing so similarly in Syria and Iran.

Non-State Actors

To a large extent, the term “non-state actor” is a misnomer. A non-state actor has to reside in a state besides requiring funding, arming, administrative and other support. Even in the case of cyber attacks, technology can reveal the general area of the origin of attack. Therefore, the state can really not abrogate total responsibility. In the Afghanistan-India-Pakistan dialogues, the reference by Pakistan to non-state actors is repeatedly snubbed by Afghan officials, who claim that these so-called non-state actors are living in, and are supported by, Pakistan. The fact that these so-called non-state actors are available for hire should be clear from the example of the US using Al Qaeda in Bosnia, Libya, Syria and

Iran. Similarly, the US is preparing to hand over the bulk of Afghanistan to the Taliban post 2014. Pakistan's official support to terrorist organisations in Pakistan has been amply demonstrated on numerous occasions. Similarly, China claiming that non-state actors are launching cyber attacks from Chinese territory is laughable in view of China's vice-like grip on cyber space and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) spearheading China's cyber warfare programme.

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Causes and Drivers of Terror

The main causes of terrorism are: perceived political, social and economic injustice, no access to law and lack of opportunity for political participation; and a belief that violent means will usher in change because there is no other choice/other choices are ineffective. Terrorism aims at intimidation and coercion to further political, social, religious goals but does not always reflect objective social or economic deprivation. The cocktail of youth, illiteracy, unemployment, drugs and weapons is a readymade prescription for terrorism, particularly in the developing countries where existing terrorist organisations lure the youth on the mere promise of employment. The main drivers of terrorism are: religious fundamentalism; indoctrination since childhood; sectarian strife; ideological expansion; state sponsored asymmetric option; transition from state sponsored to indigenous; infiltrating security forces; hate crimes; Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD) clout; and ineffective counter-measures.

India's Neighbourhood

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the support to the Uighurs in Xinjiang. Pakistan's anti-India *jihad* has the tacit support of China. China, in conjunction with Pakistan, is actively supporting and arming insurgencies within India. The Chinese 'String of Pearls' strategy is a reality but more importantly, this is being reinforced with Islamic radicalism in conjunction with Pakistan's proxies. Chinese development projects abroad have both serving and veteran PLA personnel, including of the

Special Forces, deployed in the garb of civilian workers. Pakistan has been waging an asymmetric war against India for more than two decades. The epicentre of terrorism in the region, Pakistan has managed to create terrorist organisations like the Indian Mujahideen (IM) and Popular Front of India (PFI) that have taken to arms. The Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT), the covert arm of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), has been attending the meetings of Maoists and attempting to bring the insurgents and terrorists in India under a common umbrella. Pakistan's links with Al Qaeda-Haqqanis-Taliban are likely to achieve its cherished 'strategic depth' in post 2014 Afghanistan, which will likely aggravate India's internal security scene. With the military-ISI retaining a stranglehold on Pakistan in the foreseeable future, there is not even a remote chance of change of heart in Pakistan vis-à-vis India. On the contrary, the collusive China-Pakistan threat, both asymmetric and conventional is likely to magnify. With radicalisation on the rise in Pakistan, Gen Kayani is making no bones that he wants Indians out of Afghanistan. The terrorist attack on the Indian Consulate at Jalalabad on August 3, 2013, was the handiwork of the LeT, according to Afghan intelligence officials.

Buddhist-Muslim clashes in Myanmar have the potential to plunge the country into terrorism. Major terrorist training camps were being run in Bangladesh during the regime of Begum Khaleda Zia. The present

government has clamped down on terrorism but the capacity remains. If the Opposition returns to power in the 2014 elections, we may witness a revival of terrorism in Bangladesh, with consequential adverse effects on the region. Illegal immigration still remains a major concern. In Sri Lanka, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) is down but not out. India renewed its ban on the LTTE in 2012. The Maldives is witnessing a rise of Islamic radicalism. Al Qaeda and the LeT have grown roots with ease because of some 70,000 foreign employees and 33,000 illegal immigrants. The youth have been going for training with the LeT in Pakistan since 2005. Any of the over 1,000 uninhabited islands can become terror bases. The expanding arc of Somali piracy could also be exploited by other international terrorist organisations.

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Domestic Scene

The Maoists insurgency affecting 16 states is the biggest threat to India's internal security, which is being dealt with more by the states individually rather than centrally, as it should be. Maoist operations have already expanded to Assam and even Tripura. India has officially banned 35 terrorist organisations operating within India but the list does not include organisations like the PFI. The PFI, created by Al Qaeda and Taliban-LeT, is headquartered in Kerala and has taken up arms against the Indian state. In October 2008, the security forces killed four LeT trained PFI cadres from Kerala in Kupwara (north Kashmir) trying to exfiltrate into Pakistan. As per the Raw and Analysis Wing (R&AW), extremists from Kerala terror groups had been going to Pakistan since 1992. The threat to South India must also be viewed in conjunction with the infiltration of Al Qaeda and LeT in Maldives. Recently, Mumbai Police reported that the Girls Islamic Organisation (an offshoot of the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind

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that runs 40 high schools and two junior colleges in Maharashtra) is training girls for *jihad*. The Army has been talking of a two and a half front for some time. Without the requisite National Security Strategy and Internal Security Strategy (both yet to be defined), the possibility exists of the half front becoming a full front. With abundant youth, some 40 million illegal weapons and over 3 metric tonnes of drugs entering India annually, management of social change and good governance, plus dealing with poverty and unemployment assume great importance.

Countering Terrorism

Our strategy should be based on: *one*, treat the ‘community’ as a centre of gravity, negate its support to terrorism, providing security both physical and moral, including through systematic education, development and psychological programmes; *two*, continuous deradicalisation of communities—varied focus may be needed for select communities/regions, teachers/religious teachers, youth, girls/mothers, apprehended terrorists plus the population at large, liable to support terrorism; *three*, use force to eliminate hardcore terrorists/terrorist infrastructure through military special operations – directly or through proxy; *four*, the security sector to operate simultaneously at the moral and physical levels providing security and assistance to the population while destroying terrorists and blending development and education with combat operations; *five*, choke state support to terrorism, including states in which so-called ‘non-state actors are located; and *six*, establish an efficient intelligence system through intelligence acquisition and psychological operations. There should be periodic reevaluation of the measures effected versus the changes required.

Our strategy will remain ineffective without proactive operations. The Special Forces have ample scope for employment in irregular conflict, Low Intensity Conflict (LIC), terrorism, information and asymmetric warfare. Their employment should aim at achieving strategic objectives through application of modest resources with the essential psychological component. The Special Forces should be continuously employed on high risk, high gain missions having minimum visibility, with desired effect. If we had this concept in place, we would have not been surprised in Kargil, would know what the Chinese are doing in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK)/Pakistan and would have a grip on the fault-lines of our adversaries rather than them controlling ours.

The international strategy must go beyond individual national interests, accommodating regional interests. Had the US GWOT tackled the LeT in conjunction with Al Qaeda, Pakistan's capacity to spawn terror would have been considerably eroded. Additionally, at the strategic level, a doctrine is required to attack radicalisation and recruitment for shaping the environment despite this being a very tall order. WMD terrorism is not impossible any more. There is a need to establish early warning systems, prevention (as far as possible), emergency health care, antidotes, quarantine, aftermath and response. A collective approach is required with more focus on terrorist breeding/terrorism prone regions/states/communities, improving intelligence, border management, financial investigations, law and prosecution, and linking financial assistance to de-radicalisation.

Strategic Asymmetry

The spectrum of conflict includes the nuclear, conventional, unconventional and cyber space segments. In the context of India, China and Pakistan, China has full spectrum capabilities. In terms of cyber space, both India and Pakistan have begun to acquire capabilities. But what should be of serious concern to us is that while both China and Pakistan have

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developed advanced unconventional capabilities that are being operationally exploited, India has failed to make any progress in this regard. Ironically, we refuse to recognise the strategic significance of unconventional and irregular forces over conventional and even nuclear forces. While this has emerged with greater focus in recent years, the concept is hardly new. The global superpowers have learnt their lessons the hard way. It is because of this that the US

was defeated in Vietnam, the Soviets in Afghanistan and the US has been defeated a second time in Afghanistan, no matter how the outcome is twisted. Therefore, India continues to be at great strategic disadvantage.

Over the decades, China has displayed great strategic forethought in the development of unconventional and irregular forces. This was the very basis of the creation of Red Armies/Maoists worldwide – Maoist groups in Nepal and Burma (Myanmar), New People’s Army of the Philippines, Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, Japanese Red Army, and Shining Path in Peru, etc. China’s feat in using Pakistan to raise irregular forces against India was an act of remarkable subterfuge that largely went unnoticed by India and the world in general. FS Ejazzudin’s book *From a Head, Through a Head, to a Head – The Secret Channel between US and China through Pakistan* published in Karachi in the year 2000 reveals that when Zhou-en-Lai visited Pakistan in the early 1960s, he suggested to Ayub Khan, the Pakistani President, that Pakistan should prepare for a prolonged conflict with India instead of short-term wars, advising Pakistan to raise a militia force to act behind enemy (India) lines. This is a fact that could well have been known to the US, as is apparent from the sub-title of the book. The fact that a US-China consultative committee exists even today and meets periodically to discuss how to deal with the South Asian nations, or rather shape them, is hardly a secret. For the same reason, China has been supporting the Maoists and other insurgent outfits in India.

It can, therefore, be adequately surmised that the China-Pakistan anti-India nexus, especially in terms of unconventional war, is over five decades old and the very basis of their “higher than the mountains, deeper than the ocean” relationship.

Lack of governance and defence preparedness, plus an incoherent strategy has undoubtedly created asymmetries vis-à-vis China. Our border communications and infrastructure are pathetic despite the hollow declarations of improvement. These

asymmetries will not go away in a hurry and may even increase. Those who advocate that India should ‘first’ get over the asymmetry, are living in a fool’s paradise. What we need to do is to target the mind of the enemy. “The arrow shot by an archer may or may not kill a single person; but skilful intrigue, devised by wise men, may kill even those who are in the womb”, said Chanakya. China has numerous vulnerabilities that are targetable and it knows them. That is where we need to apply pressure. Handling Pakistan is much easier as it has so many vulnerabilities that one can literally pick and choose.

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Geostrategic Scenario

The emerging US doctrine is likely to allow regional crises to play out into a new regional balance – moving from military domination to subtle manipulation or controlled engagement. This matches Obama’s January 2013 speech of “a decade of war having ended and the time having come for reviving the economy”. With commencement of the US/NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) pullout, signs of aggravating violence in Afghanistan have already emerged with the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) going into a defensive mentality and massive

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desertion rates. As per US design, the Taliban will get established at least in South and East Afghanistan, which amounts to subcontracting part of Afghanistan to Pakistan. This would give Pakistan its cherished strategic depth, implications of which have been succinctly described by Robert H Kaplan in his book *The Revenge of Geography*, saying, “An Afghanistan that falls to Taliban sway threatens to create a succession of radicalized Islamic societies from the Indian-Pakistani border to Central Asia.

This would, in effect, be a greater Pakistan, giving Pakistan’s ISI the ability to create a clandestine empire composed of the likes of Jallaluddin Haqqani, Gulbuddin Hekmetyar, and the Lashkar-e-Taiba : able to confront India in the manner that Hezbollah and Hamas confront Israel”. This would give Pakistan the handle to foment more trouble in India and the region albeit this may have repercussions on Pakistan’s internal dynamics as well.

The second major development is China’s sustained effort to dominate oceanic seaboard – in the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean, the latter including through Myanmar, Pakistan and seeking naval cooperation within the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Iran, Seychelles, etc. The Taliban were created by the US through Pakistan to prevent the Soviets crossing the borders of Afghanistan and reaching the Indian Ocean. HJ Mackinder in his article “The Geographical Pivot of History” in *The Geographical Journal*, in London, way back in 1904, had warned, “The Chinese might constitute the yellow peril to the world’s freedom, just because they would add an oceanic frontage to the resources of the great continent, an advantage as yet denied to the Russian tenant of the pivot region”. Therefore, the US is unlikely to remain a spectator to the Chinese Navy firming in Gwadar in conjunction with a hostile

Iran in proximity, both dominating the IOR, particularly the Persian Gulf region. Therefore, the US is unlikely to be averse to Balochistan detaching from Pakistan, especially when US intelligence assesses that Pakistan, the top state, as failing on its own by 2030, but waiting that long may not suit US national interests. Again, Robert Kaplan recommends in his book *The Revenge of Geography*, “Pressure on land can help the United States thwart China at sea”. Therefore, you see US engagement with Nepal and Myanmar, and China arming the United States War Army (USWA) in an unprecedented fashion with mechanised vehicles, shoulder-fired missiles and armed helicopters to keep Myanmar pressurised and cater for the unlikely eventuality of US boots on the ground.

The flip side of the above is that India should expect zero assistance from the US with reference to Pakistani and Chinese proxy wars, aside from odd rhetorical statements and the façade of joint counter-terrorism exercises. It is not without reason that Ashley Tellis of the Carnegie Foundation says, “India being continuously subjected to terror actually suits many ... India is a sponge that absorbs global terror.” The China-Pakistan mutual dependency (embedding on to the Indian Ocean in the case of China and establishing Gilgit-Baltistan as a pivot to further operations) will remain critical vis-à-vis India in strategic terms unless a major event occurs that alters that equation. Agha H Amin, defence analyst and former Pakistan Army officer says, “Utopians in India are jubilant that Pakistan has made peace with India. Nothing in reality can be farther from the truth. The real picture of the true intentions of the Pakistani military will emerge when the US withdraws from Afghanistan. This will be the time when the Russians, Iranians and Indians will have no choice but to support the Northern Alliance against the Pakistan sponsored Taliban who regard all Shias, Ismailis, non-Pashtuns, moderate Pashtuns as infidels who deserve to be massacred... There is no doubt that Pakistan will be a semi-autonomous Chinese province by 2030 or so... Pakistani Balochistan by 2030 would be a completely Chinese

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run show...” But equally ironic is the fact that in order to hinder the PLA Navy from embedding on to Gwadar and Chabahar, while the US will not be averse to generate instability in Afghanistan and an independent Balochistan, it would continue to support the Pakistani military and let China-Pakistan plunder the mountainous regions of India as long as it can extract India’s support in the Asia pivot on the high seas of the Indo-Pacific.

The geostrategic scenario playing out in the Middle East is also engaging global attention, especially US designs on Iran. It is not without reason that Gen Wesley Clark, former Supreme Allied Commander, NATO, had disclosed in March 2007 that while bombing of Afghanistan had commenced as a prelude to the US invasion, “the US had already decided to take out seven countries, starting with Iraq, and then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and, finishing off, Iran.” What has happened over the years in these countries is significant. Dr Subhash Kapila, in his article, “US Strategic Blunders in Southwest Asia”, South Asia Analysis Group (March 18, 2013) writes, “Strategically, the US cannot expect to sustain a long-term and effective presence in South-West Asia by a constant and vicious demonization of Iran..... Iran commands the Shia Crescent extending from Lebanon, through Syria and to the borders of Afghanistan..... the current de-stabilization of Syria through a US-Saudi Arabia contrived war is more targeted at Iran than Syria.” A soft war in Iran would impact Iran’s nuclear programme and adversely affect China’s advance to the Indian Ocean but it certainly is not in India’s economic and strategic interests.

Peace Prospects with China and Pakistan

China's ancient strategist Sun Tzu had said, "To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill." That is what China is applying to India, including applying physical pressure along the Line of Actual Control through periodic intrusions and expanding claim lines. But Chanakya too had said that if the end could be achieved by non-military methods, even by methods of intrigue, duplicity and fraud, he would not advocate an armed conflict. In fact, in the 6th century BC, Chanakya wrote, "As soon as fear approaches near, attack and destroy it". He recommended the use of 'silent war', including the use of secret agents, sowing discord amongst the enemy and use of disinformation, all of which are manifestations of unconventional war and use of irregular forces. Ironically, it is China and Pakistan that have been following Chanakya's teachings while we have forgotten them. Our illusions of peace hinder us from ignoring the deceit and belligerence of these two countries that respect only power. Significantly, Chanakya had also strategised, "Your neighbour is your natural enemy state. The neighbour of your neighbour is your friend." However, he did not, by any logic, preach that one must go for outright war against the neighbour. Instead, he detailed an entire spectrum of statecraft to handle the neighbours on the premise that a neighbour could be an enemy or potential enemy. Therefore, his teachings contained a five-fold approach: conciliation; gift and bribery; dissension; deceit and pretence; and open attack or war.

Peace prospects with China are only possible if it is made to realise that a Sino-Indian partnership vis-à-vis a China-Pakistan partnership can suit Chinese national interests far better, strategically and economically; that unconventional war is a double-edged weapon; and that China's terror nexus with Pakistan can prove to be detrimental, in aggravating China's internal vulnerabilities. In the case of Pakistan, peace appears an infinite distance away because of the stranglehold that the military has over Pakistan. Ayesha Siddiqi has brought out in her book *Military Inc*

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that the worth of the Pakistan military-corporate-business complex was estimated at US \$20.7 billion in the year 2007. There is no way that the military would let democracy grow roots in Pakistan and risk being returned to the barracks. Therefore, it will continue to want hostility against India and Afghanistan – something that India’s hierarchy fails to acknowledge. A recent South Asian Inter-Scholastic Association (SAISA) study titled “Pakistan: Dynamics of a Failing State Theory” describes the radicalisation of the Pakistan Army, the “common recruitment areas for the Army and LeT”, the tilt in balance from the military to the *jihadis*, and expresses the fear that the situation can

become “disastrous in a three to seven years time window should Pakistan find another Zia-ul-Haq in the Army. What is obviously overlooked is the fact that this increased radicalisation within the Army is happening under the very nose of Gen Kayani. Sensing victory in Afghanistan and buoyed by Chinese and US support, the Pakistani military has already upped the ante against India through cross-border raids, infiltration, ceasefire violations, rhetoric of mobilisation and talk of shifting more forces from the Afghan border to the Indian border. Nawaz Sharif and his administration are puppets dancing to the military and *jihadi* tunes. The recent call by Nawaz Sharif of “starting afresh” is as hollow as those of all his predecessors. However, should Pakistan be balkanised and lose its seaboard, perhaps a landlocked Pakistan would be amenable to friendly relations with India and Afghanistan.

Strategic Options

In an environment of asymmetric war and dealing with irregular forces (state sponsored or otherwise), there cannot be one straight solution. Even in the case of the US that has strong military power, conventional power has not been a wholly effective solution, more so because selective targeting of terrorist organisations is hardly a solution in an environment of globally linked non-state actors, even though mainland US may have been saved from terrorist attacks for the time being. However, this too may alter with the head of Al Qaeda in the US already a US citizen. Conceptually, there is little dispute concerning the right to exercise the doctrine of self-defence. The difficulty lies in the determination of those conditions which justify the use of military power. In the case of the USA, full military power, including the use of air, artillery and tanks, has been resorted to for prolonged periods on the whims of the US since the fighting has been away from mainland US. The nuclear capability of Pakistan has given it the arrogance of exporting terrorism with impunity. The global fears of a nuclear exchange have given Pakistan the handle to optimise its nuclear brinkmanship. In the above backdrop, India needs to weigh the strategic options as discussed below which ideally should be employed in combination with the evolving strategic environment.

Calibrated air attacks are an option by using air power, including armed drones, albeit this requires specific actionable intelligence. The targets must be well defined but there would be a problem where terrorist camps have been merged with the military establishments. Such punitive action may have limited effect on the overall terror industry in Pakistan as in the case of US drone attacks. However, such deterrence is better than doing nothing. A one-time air attack in retaliation to a major terrorist action is mandated even if it initiates limited aerial conflict, given the Indian Air Force's (IAF's) air superiority over the Pakistan Air Force (PAF). At the same time, we should be prepared to respond to a missile attack by Pakistan.

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Limited war is another option ensuring much greater costs of the war on Pakistan to assist its implosion. However, the objectives will need to be chosen in a deliberate fashion keeping in mind the brief window, international pressure, nuclear factor and Chinese presence in POK. This will require a prior diplomatic offensive launched globally, particularly with the US and China. It may not end sponsoring of

terror by Pakistan altogether but would certainly impose much caution.

Optimising strategic partnerships is yet another option that should be focussed on countries sponsoring terrorism. This would involve capitalising on existing strategic partnerships and developing new partnerships with countries threatened by China and Pakistan. International cooperation to counter terrorism, as discussed earlier, requires focus, including building partnership capabilities. Increased Chinese belligerence may force India to enlarge its cooperation with the US to enhance its own strategic capabilities. Diplomacy requires managing the strategic partnership with the US to restrain Pakistan vis-à-vis the Indian role in the Asia pivot, without losing strategic autonomy, and the US building our strategic capabilities. Exploiting such strategic partnerships is likely to be a deterrent to state sponsors of terrorism.

Double jeopardy or in simpler terms, an ‘eye for an eye’ is another viable strategic option. It implies protecting own fault-lines and taking control of fault-lines of states sponsoring terrorism in India. Concurrently, we must deploy own comprehensive national power in terms of DIME (Diplomacy, Information Operations, Military, Economy) in furtherance of the above objective. This is being done consistently by both China and Pakistan to the great disadvantage of India – they have both developed advanced unconventional capabilities while India lags woefully behind. We urgently need to develop publicised overt capabilities and deniable covert

capabilities as deterrents against irregular war thrust against us. MK Dhar, former Joint Director, Intelligence Bureau (IB), wrote in his book *Open Secrets – India’s Intelligence Unveiled*, “The Pakistani establishment is a geopolitical bully. The best response to blunt such a bully is to take the war inside his home. India has allowed itself to be blackmailed by Pakistan even before it went nuclear. The sabre rattling of ‘coercive diplomacy’, which is nothing but sterile military power, cannot convince the Islamist Pakistani Establishment that India can take the border skirmishes inside their homes and hit at the very roots of the jaundiced Islamist groups.”

Exploiting the geostrategic environment in cooperation with friendly countries should be concurrent to bringing our adversaries to a stage where they see merit in having good relations with India and stop the proxy wars to mutual advantage. The West, particularly the US, certainly does not want China to firm in on to the Indian Ocean seaboard, in which Pakistan has been assisting China. Then, Pakistan has been assuring both the US and China that the terrorists being spawned and supported by its proxies including Al Qaeda, the Haqqanis, Taliban, LeT and what have you, will spare mainland US and China – inadvertently holding them to ransom. But rules and regulations are impossible in ‘dirty wars’, and friends and foes interchange as per convenience. So, the chickens have already come home to roost in Pakistan—the Boston bombings may be the start point for the US and in June 2013, the newly established Junood ul-Hifsa of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) attacked and killed nine foreign tourists, including three Chinese at the Nanga Parbat base camp. What is even more important for China to realise is the fact that radical Islamist forces are all interlinked and their concept of *jihad* is global, where national boundaries do not matter. Terrorists don’t care whether China’s comprehensive national power is equal to the US or not. The LeT, raised to target India, has turned to global *jihad*. There is no reason why such terrorist organisations will not link up with outfits like the 600-strong special unit of the East Turkistan Islamic Movement

(ETIM) sheltered inside Pakistan and target the Chinese clamping down on the Uighurs in Xinjiang province or for that matter, target more Chinese nationals in Pakistan and POK.

Conclusion

The recent years have witnessed a paradigm shift in the nature of conflict, with irregular and asymmetric forces having emerged with greater strategic value over conventional and even nuclear forces, and geographical boundaries rendered irrelevant. Sub-conventional conflicts, characterised by intra-state strife, have gained ascendancy over traditional conflicts, which used to be mostly conventional inter-state wars. The trans-national nature of these threats and the increasing involvement of state actors in sub-conventional conflicts have increased their complexity. Non-state actors have added a new dimension to low intensity conflicts and they are increasingly acquiring conventional capabilities that were earlier the exclusive preserve of nation-states. Technology empowers the terrorists to cause severe damage through cyber, financial and kinetic attacks. The likelihood of them acquiring WMDs is a major concern. The spectrum of conflicts could, therefore, range from conflicts between states to conflict with non-state actors and proxies. Conventional conflicts could either be preceded by, in conjunction with, or succeeded by, a period of irregular conflict, which would require low intensity conflict and stabilisation operations. The proxy wars being waged on India are real and cannot be just wished away. We need to become proactive. It is reiterated that the above strategic options are unlikely to be adequate individually and it would be prudent to pursue them in tandem. We also need to synergise our national efforts and employ diplomatic, information operations, military and economic measures across the borders.