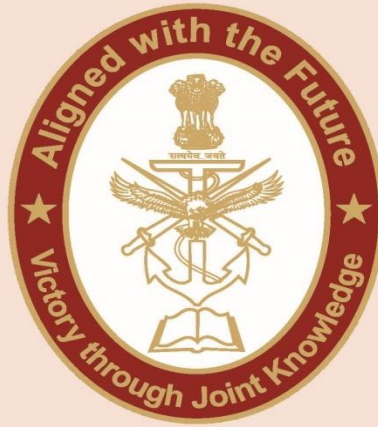


# CENTRE FOR JOINT WARFARE STUDIES



## CENJOWS

**TERRORISM THE  
CONTRASTING  
PATHWAYS OF  
PAKISTAN AND  
BANGLADESH**



**Col Siddhartha Sharma is Senior  
Fellow CEJOWS.**

### Background

The recently concluded Bangladesh – West Indies ODI series (2021) was comprehensively won by Bangladesh. Who could have thought that a cricket team considered too weak to play with a few years back, would thrash the mighty Windies. Surely and steadily the Bangladesh cricket team has risen up the ranks and have the potential to be the Giant Slayer on any day. The same has not been achieved by co-incidence. Today no one is surprised. The passion to be better across the spectrum of activities has been the hall mark of Bangladesh. Within the constraints and own nuances, the Bangladesh economy is rising steadily.

US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in 1974 made the infamous quote 'Bangladesh is a bottomless basket', has already been proved wrong. When Bangladesh achieved independence from Pakistan in 1971, many doubted the survival of the new country. But those concerns have dissipated long ago. In five years' time, Bangladesh should be a middle-income country. In 1972, Bangladesh's per capita income was 120 USD today it is estimated to

be 1,909 USD. According to the latest HSBC Global Research report. Bangladesh's economy is further set to jump; the highest by any country between 2018 and 2030. Bangladesh is now the world's second largest apparel exporter after China, and that too with imported machineries and raw materials. The country exported USD 36.6 billion worth of goods in fiscal 2017-18, in contrast to Pakistan's just USD 23 billion. Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserves is now more than double of Pakistan's less than \$15 billion, and the latter's trade deficit is almost four times that of Bangladesh. Pakistan's currency Rupee is now trading well below the value of Bangladesh's Taka: Tk 84 fetches one US dollar, whereas it costs more than Rs 140 in Pakistan. Also, Bangladesh has made considerable progress in social sectors such as poverty reduction, health, family planning, female education, women's empowerment and child mortality reduction despite some challenges like governance crisis, corruption and political instability. For example, the average life expectancy at birth has risen to 73 years in 2018 from less than 40 in 1971. The child mortality rate fell gradually from 224.6 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1968 to 32.4 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2017. The literacy rate has more than doubled since 1970. Independence for the Bangladeshi's definitely was for the better. (Hoodbhoy, n.d.)

The rise of Bangladesh in comparison to Pakistan is even more interesting and surprising. It has no geostrategic assets saleable to America, China, or Saudi Arabia. It also has no nuclear weapons, no large army and no large pool of competent professionals. Possibly the gun wielding culture, wide spread terrorism and lack of serious intent to curb terrorism can be attributed to the current status of Pakistan. When Terrorism is used as an instrument of state policy, it is just a matter of time when the monster of terrorism shall turn back and eat you as Pakistan is now experiencing.

### **Pakistan's Romance with Terrorism.**

The emergence of Pakistan as an independent state in 1947 was the culmination of decades of debate and divisions among Muslims in British India about their collective future. The concept of a Muslim-majority Pakistan rested on the notion that India's Muslims constituted a separate

nation from non-Muslim Indians. Soon after independence, Pakistan's Constituent Assembly declared in 1949 that South Asian Muslims had created Pakistan for the principal objective of "ordering their lives in accordance with the teachings and requirements of Islam. The president of the ruling Muslim League announced that Pakistan would bring all Muslim countries together into "Islamistan"—a pan-Islamic entity. In 1949, the Pakistani government also sponsored the World Muslim Conference presided over by the Grand Mufti of Palestine, Amin al-Husseini, to promote Pan-Islamism. This conference led to the formation of the Motamar al-Alam al-Islami (Muslim World Congress), which has since played a crucial role in building up the feeling of Muslim victimization that has subsequently fed the global Islamist movement. Since the creation of Pakistan, Islamist groups have been sponsored and supported by Pakistan's state machinery at different times to influence domestic politics and shore up Pakistani national identity, which is periodically threatened by sub-national ethnic challenges. The Islamists have also helped support the Pakistani military's political dominance. This political commitment to an "ideological state" gradually evolved into a strategic commitment to the jihadi ideology. Pakistan's disparate ethnic and linguistic groups through religion took on greater significance and its manifestations became more militant. Religious groups, both armed and unarmed, have become gradually more powerful as a result of this alliance between the mosque and the military. Radical and violent manifestations of Islamist ideology, which sometimes appear to threaten Pakistan's stability, are in some ways a state project gone wrong.

Pakistan Jihadi and terrorist culture was primarily shaped by three school of thoughts. Firstly, Maududi's ideology gave rise to 'Jamaat-e-Islami'. The organization was instrumental in promoting politization of Islam and making Pakistan into an Islamic State. Their first foray into military jihad came in 1971, when its cadres sided with the Pakistan army in opposing independence for Bangladesh. Jamaat-e-Islami members were organized in two militant groups, *Al-Badr* and *Al-Shams*, and were trained by the Pakistani army to carry out operations against Bangladesh nationalists seeking separation from Pakistan. Post 1989, Jamaat-e – Islami participated actively in Kashmir with backing of ISI.

Next was the Deobandi school of thought which promoted a more traditional and austere religious way of life and were particularly against the western culture. They preached through establishing Madrasas. The Deobandis gained considerable strength during the anti-Soviet Afghan Jihad. General Zia ul Haq encouraged the establishment of madrasas for Afghan refugees as well as Pakistanis. The movement's influence reached its peak when the Taliban, themselves students of Deobandi madrasas in Pakistan, assumed power in Afghanistan. Groups such as the Harkatul-Jihad-al-Islami were born during the Afghan war. Once terrorism was introduced in Kashmir, several Deobandi militant groups appeared on the scene with initial assistance from Pakistani intelligence. These included Harkat-ul-Ansar, which changed its name to Harkat-ul-Mujahideen after being a declared terrorist group by the United States for its involvement in kidnapping of western tourists in Kashmir. Maulana Masood Azhar, upon his release Azhar formed the Jaish-e-Muhammad.

Third was the Wahhabi thought originating from Saudi Arabia which promoted customs and traditions in a specific way. Their thoughts were interpreted by jihadis to be a religious obligation for all muslims to fight even if they did not like it. The most significant jihadi group of Wahhabi persuasion is Lashkar-e-Taiba founded in 1989 by Hafiz Muhammad Saeed. Backed by Saudi money and protected by Pakistani intelligence services, Lashkar-e-Taiba became the military wing of Markaz al-Dawa wal-Irshad. When Lashkar-e-Taiba's assets were called to be banned, Saeed changed his organization's name in Pakistan to Jamaat-ul-Dawa. (Haqqani, n.d.).

The 'footprint' of every major act of international Islamist terrorism invariably passes through Pakistan, right from 9/11 – where virtually all the participants had trained, resided or met in, coordinated with, or received funding from or through Pakistan – to major acts of terrorism across South Asia and South East Asia, as well as major networks of terror that have been discovered in Europe. The terrorism in Pakistan became out of control based on two significant events. (Gill, 2004)

Firstly, The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. Pakistan emerged as a major player in the game and the principal channel through which assistance was provided to the Afghan mujahedeen. Through state machinery, terrorism was encouraged. Mujahids / Taliban / other terrorist organisations received training, funding and weapons from Pakistan. They were considered as heroes and motivated thousands of poverty-stricken youths from all over the world to join their ranks. Alas the dice was cast. By the time Russia withdrew, these terrorist groups were well established and not in control of any state. They now could self-fund through drugs, extortion etc. Pakistan however failed to understand the monster they were creating. The fixation towards India forced them to keep these terrorist organization alive and divert them towards India. When Soviets withdrew in late eighties, these groups moved towards Kashmir. Aid from sympathizers, nuclear blackmail and geo-strategic location of Pakistan kept the funds coming. However, with the disintegration of Soviet Union, US interest diminished in the area. Indian state too persevered through a well-balanced counter terrorism operation. The terrorist organisations kept on growing and India centric approach of Pakistan state forced them to keep spending huge amounts of funds to sustain their operation. With no viable industry, extreme poverty, lack of education and rampant corruption in the society, terrorist kept on finding more recruits to be fed as cannon fodder. Youth joined them as there was no other way to earn bread and also their brainwash in Madrassas set initially for the Afghani mujahedeen by the Pakistani state itself. As the steady downfall of Pakistan continued, the second major event occurred.

Pakistan decision to join war on terror post 9/11. This changed the dynamics of the already fragile ISI - terrorist nexus. These organisations brainwashed on radical fundamentalistic ways now viewed their creators as their opponents and turned-on Pakistan itself. Slowly terrorism, lawlessness and the lack of state will to counter the radical and terrorist organization started to pull into an abyss from where rise was very difficult. Pakistan came very close to be called a failed state. The monster started to eat the creator. The state machinery still refused to acknowledge, until the horrific APS massacre in Dec 2014. Though certain actions were taken against these terrorists, by now terrorism had become a full-scale industry in

Pakistan. Today Pakistan grapples to fight terrorism on Afghan border, Baluchistan, Northern States and its heartland. The U.S. Country Reports on Terrorism describes Pakistan as a "Terrorist safe haven" where terrorists are able to organize, plan, raise funds, communicate, recruit, train, transit, and operate in relative security because of inadequate governance capacity, political will. Despite the facts, there is little reason to believe that Pakistan would abandon use of terrorism as an instrument of state policy. Today Pakistan is already called as a Chinese Province and is drifting into the Chinese Debt trap. It is very difficult for the state to come out of the current situation. Its closeness to China did prevent Pakistan from being put into the Black list of Financial Aid Task Force for now. The future looks bleak. As per the South Asian Terrorism Portal Pakistan today has 81 Proscribed Terrorist groups, 45 Active terrorist groups and 36 inactive terrorist groups and since 2000 15,362 acts of killing have been recorded in which about 28000 civilians and security forces and 33000 terrorists have been killed. (SATP, 2020)

Today, Pakistan is yet to come to terms with its own ideology. With regard to India, it is ultra-Islamic. When it comes to drinking scotch, it is less Islamic. While confronted with the debate on the 'burqa', it is clearly anti-Islam or anti-Taliban.

### **Bangladesh has Terrorists Too, But !!!!**

An extremely densely populated country tackling the radicalization of Islamic youth, corruption, widespread unemployment & poverty made Bangladesh extremely susceptible to terrorism. Bangladesh's history with violent extremism dates back to the 1990s, when veterans of the anti-Soviet fight in Afghanistan returned to Bangladesh. Initial waves of violence in the country involved two groups, Harkat-ul Jihad al-Islami Bangladesh (HuJI) and Jamaatul Mujahidin Bangladesh (JMB), who engaged in coordinated attacks throughout the late '90s and early 2000s. The legacy of military dominating the politics was inherited too. These Islamic terrorist groups continued to be patronized by the military and political parties, however, there was never any intent to use them as a major partner of state policy. The most notable terrorist claimed attack in Bangladesh is the violent siege at Holey Artisan

Bakery restaurant in Dhaka. The attack involved five assailants armed with guns, machetes, and explosives, and resulted in a 12-hour siege that killed two police officer and 20 foreigners, including three students from U.S. universities. The response of the government was genuine. 80 suspected militants were killed and over 300 arrested. In 2019 the court passed death sentence to 7 who were directly involved with the attack. Subsequently another 900 were arrested in a series of government crackdown on terrorists. Despite political games of accusation and counter accusations, the people of Bangladesh rejected Bangladesh National Party which is deemed to be more patronizing to radical organisations like Jamaat e Islami. Bangladesh is an Islamic country and it would be some time till effect of radical organisations can be completely ignored by any political party however it is progressing with correct intent. As per SATP, Bangladesh has 9 Proscribed terrorist groups, 5 active terrorist groups and and 7 inactive groups. Since 2000, Bangladesh has faced 1532 acts of killing in which about 850 civilians and security personnel have died and 1400 terrorists have been killed.(SATP, 2020)

## **Conclusion**

In a nutshell, Bangladesh and Pakistan are different countries today because they perceive their national interest very differently. Bangladesh sees its future in human development and economic growth. Goal posts are set at increasing exports, reducing unemployment, improving health, reducing dependence upon loans and aid, and further extending micro credit. Bangladesh is conflicted by internal rifts. Still, being more multicultural and liberal, its civil society and activist intelligentsia have stopped armed groups from grabbing the reins of power.

For Pakistan, human development comes a distant second. The bulk of national energies remain focused upon check-mating India. Relations with Afghanistan and Iran are also troubled. But the most expensive consequence of the security state mindset was the nurturing of extra state actors in the 1990s.

It appears that Bangladesh is much better off than Pakistan today as the country in comparison with Pakistan is terrorist free.

## **References**

Gill, k.(2004). *Islamic Extremism and Terrorism in South Asia*.

Haqqani, H.(n.d.) *The Ideologies of South Asian Jihadi Groups*. Retrieved February 21, 2021, from <https://www.hudson.org/research/9867-the-ideologies-of-south-asian-jihadi-groups>

Hoodbhoy, P. (n.d.). *Why Bangladesh overtook Pakistan - Pakistan*. Retrieved February 21, 2021, from <https://www.dawn.com/news/1462757>

SATP. (2020). *Terrorism Assessment, Bangladesh*. South Asia Terrorism Portal. <https://www.satp.org/terrorism-assessment/bangladesh>

## **CERTIFICATE**

The paper is author's individual scholastic articulation. The author certifies that the article is original in content, unpublished and it has not been submitted for publication / web upload elsewhere and that the facts and figures quoted are duly referenced, as needed and are believed to be correct. The paper does not necessarily represent the views of the CENJOWS.

**Disclaimer:** Views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of CENJOWS.