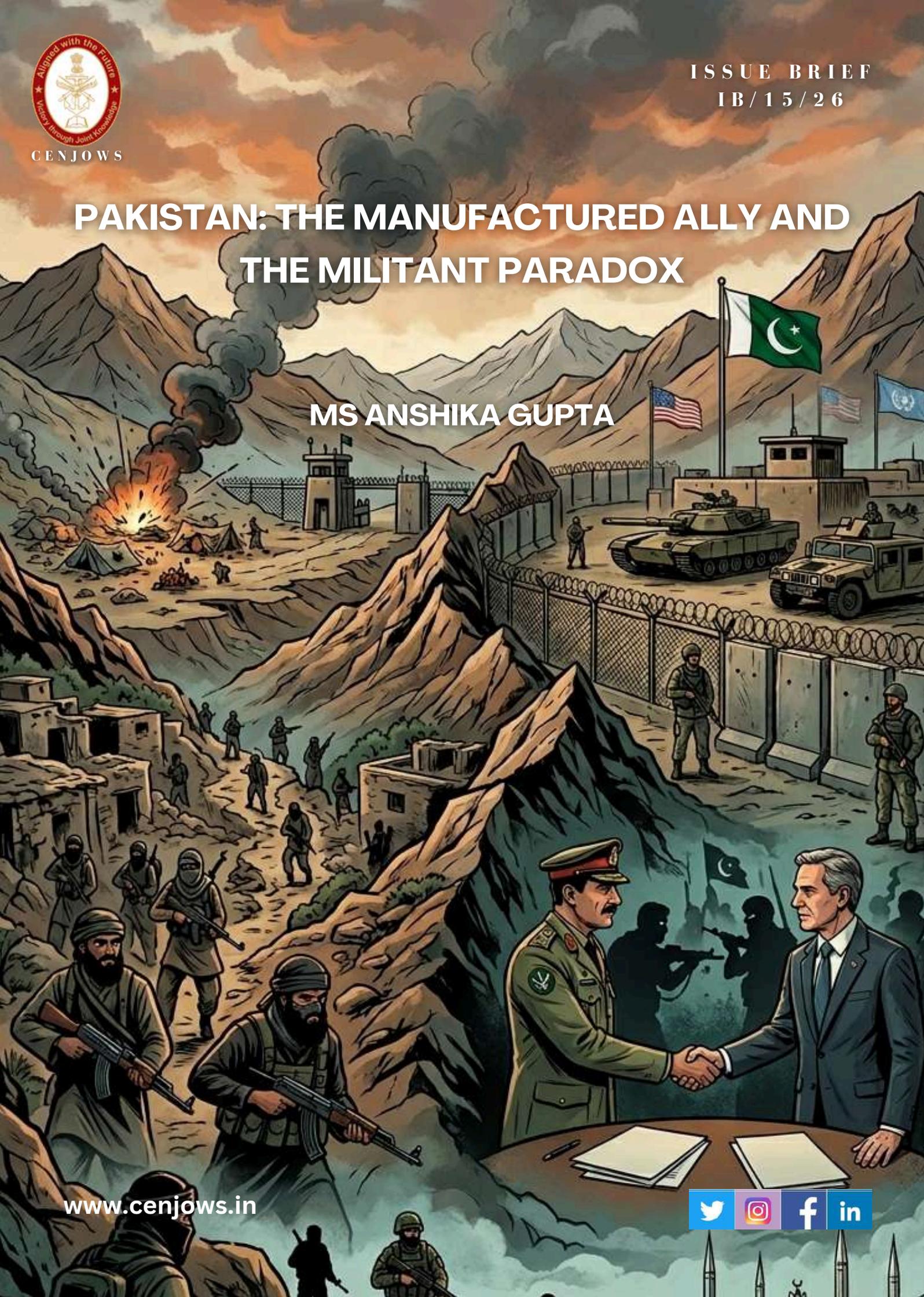
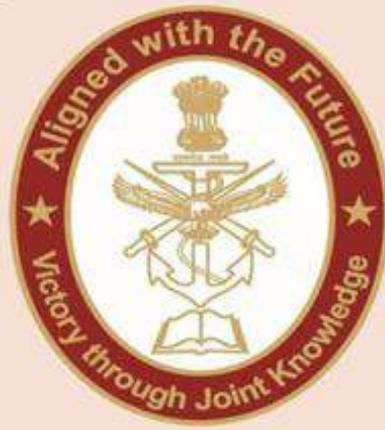


PAKISTAN: THE MANUFACTURED ALLY AND THE MILITANT PARADOX

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Pakistan: The Manufactured Ally and The Militant Paradox



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Abstract

Pakistan's paradoxical role as both a U.S. ally and a sponsor of terrorist groups has shaped South Asian geopolitics for decades. Despite receiving billions in military and economic aid, Pakistan's deep state anchored in its military-intelligence establishment has consistently nurtured proxy groups such as the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani network, and anti-India outfits like Lashkar-e-Taiba. The paper interrogates the contradictions of U.S.-Pakistan relations, highlighting Washington's selective blindness to Pakistan's duplicity, the empowerment of its deep state, and the limits of coercive diplomacy. From an Indian perspective, the analysis foregrounds Pakistan's proxy terror doctrine, its manoeuvring within the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), and India's resilience against asymmetrical warfare. By situating Pakistan's behaviour within the broader matrix of U.S. strategic interests, regional security imperatives, and India's counterterrorism calculus, the paper underscores the enduring challenge of managing a "manufactured ally" whose militant paradox continues to destabilise South Asia.

Keywords: Pakistan, India, Terrorism, U.S.- Pakistan relations

Introduction

The U.S.-Pakistan relationship has long been characterised by contradiction that is a partnership forged in necessity yet undermined by duplicity. Since the Cold War, Pakistan has positioned itself as a frontline ally. It was narrated first against Soviet expansion in Afghanistan and later against terrorism in the post-9/11 era. Yet, beneath this facade lies a persistent pattern of state sponsorship of terrorism, particularly through the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the military establishment. This paradox of being an ally and adversary, recipient of aid and incubator of terror forms the central theme of the paper.

The paradox, however, is not merely episodic but structural, rooted in the formative years of Pakistan. Since 1947, Pakistan has consistently leveraged its geostrategic location to extract external patronage, while simultaneously allowing its military-intelligence establishment to dominate national security policy. The contradiction is therefore institutional where external aid and strategic alliances do not simply strengthen Pakistan's capacity as a state, but disproportionately empowered the military at the expense of civilian institutions, producing an enduring civil-military imbalance that continues to shape Pakistan's security behaviour (Kux 2001, 45-52; Shah 2014, 61-67).¹

The Trump administration's suspension of military aid in 2018 epitomised Washington's frustration with Pakistan's refusal to dismantle safe havens for the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani network (Felbab-Brown 2018).² Despite repeated cycles of inducements and punishments, Pakistan's strategic calculus has remained unchanged. Aid reductions, diplomatic censure, and threats of designation as a state sponsor of terrorism have failed to sever its ties with terrorist proxies. Instead, Pakistan has leveraged its geostrategic position to control Afghan supply routes and influence over Taliban factions to resist U.S. coercion.

Pakistan's Cold War alignment was not incidental but institutionalised through U.S.-led alliance structures such as the Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO, 1954) and Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO, 1955), which were designed to contain Soviet influence through a "northern tier" of strategic states. Pakistan exploited these alliances to secure extensive military assistance, which modernised its armed forces and strengthened its self-image as a frontline security actor. Yet this

external military infusion produced long-term political consequences, enabling the military to emerge as the central institution of the state, culminating in the 1958 coup led by General Ayub Khan as an early indicator that external patronage was reinforcing authoritarian stability rather than democratic consolidation (Kux 2001, 98-103).³

From an Indian vantage point, Pakistan's paradox is not merely a matter of U.S. frustration but a direct national security threat. The proxy terror doctrine, honed through decades of cross-border operations in Kashmir and beyond, exemplifies Pakistan's reliance on non-state actors as instruments of state policy. Lashkar-e-Taiba's role in the 2008 Mumbai attacks, Jaish-e-Mohammed's involvement in the 2019 Pulwama bombing, and the continued patronage of Taliban factions underscore the depth of this doctrine. India's counterterrorism strategy must therefore grapple not only with Pakistan's terrorist infrastructure but also with the international community's inconsistent responses.

Equally significant is Pakistan's manoeuvring within the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Grey-listing has imposed reputational and financial costs, yet Pakistan has repeatedly evaded blacklisting through diplomatic lobbying, often aided by China, Turkey, and other allies. For India, FATF diplomacy represents a critical arena to expose Pakistan's duplicity and constrain its financial networks. However, the resilience of Pakistan's deep state, coupled with external support, has limited the effectiveness of these measures.

The paper examines this paradox through U.S. aid dynamics, the consolidation of Pakistan's deep state, FATF diplomacy, and India's evolving security response. By weaving together U.S. policy failures, Pakistan's strategic logic, and India's counterterrorism imperatives, the paper seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of why Pakistan remains a "manufactured ally" and how India can navigate this paradox.

Section I: U.S. Military Aid and Selective Blindness

The Historical Trajectory of U.S. Aid to Pakistan

Since the Cold War, Pakistan has been one of the largest recipients of U.S. military and economic assistance. Aid surged during the 1980s as Washington sought to counter Soviet influence in Afghanistan, with Pakistan serving as the conduit for arms

and funds to the mujahideen. This period entrenched Pakistan's military-intelligence establishment as the dominant national institution, empowered by external patronage and internal legitimacy derived from its role in "defending Islam" against communism (Riedel 2011).⁴

Between 1954 and 1965 alone, Pakistan reportedly received over \$1.5 billion in U.S. military assistance, including advanced aircraft and armoured capabilities, which transformed its armed forces into one of the most modern in the developing world. This influx of military hardware did not simply enhance Pakistan's external defence posture; it entrenched the military's political autonomy, reinforcing the institutional foundations of what later evolved into the deep state. In this sense, U.S. aid did not merely subsidise Pakistan's strategic relevance but actively manufactured the military's primacy in national decision-making (Kux 2001, 112-119).⁵

After 9/11, Pakistan was once again elevated to the status of a "major non-NATO ally." Billions of dollars in Coalition Support Funds (CSF) were disbursed to Islamabad to facilitate counterterrorism operations and logistical support for U.S. forces in Afghanistan. Yet, as Vanda Felbab-Brown (2018)⁶ notes, Pakistan simultaneously provided sanctuary and direct assistance to the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani network, resulting in the deaths of U.S. soldiers and Afghan civilians. This duality of aid recipient and sponsor of terrorism has defined the paradox of U.S.-Pakistan relations.

Aid as Leverage and Pakistan's Resilience

Washington has repeatedly attempted to use aid as leverage to induce behavioural change. Aid suspensions in the 1990s over nuclear proliferation, and later reductions during the Obama and Trump administrations, were intended to signal disapproval. Between 2010 and 2017, U.S. military aid to Pakistan decreased by 60 percent, yet Pakistan's strategic calculus remained unchanged (Felbab-Brown 2018).⁷

Pakistan's resilience stems from three factors namely, Geostrategic indispensability as Pakistan controls vital supply routes into Afghanistan, both land and air. Shutting these down, as Islamabad did in 2011 after the Salala incident, severely disrupted NATO logistics. Washington's main worry about nuclear weapons has been regarding the safety and security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. People have often said that

giving money to Pakistan is a way to keep control over its nuclear command. Alternative patrons, since Pakistan has built relationships with China, Saudi Arabia, and, more recently, Russia, make the effects of U.S. aid cuts less severe.

Selective Blindness in Washington

Even though there is growing evidence that Pakistan is lying, each U.S. administration has chosen to ignore it. This is because short-term operational needs are more important than long-term strategic clarity. For instance, during the Obama administration's troop surge in Afghanistan, Pakistan's cooperation was deemed indispensable, even as its intelligence services continued to shield Taliban leaders in Quetta and Peshawar (Markey 2013).⁸

Selective blindness also reflects Washington's broader strategic anxieties like the fear of destabilising Pakistan and losing influence over its nuclear arsenal; concern that excessive pressure could push Pakistan further into China's orbit and recognition that Pakistan retains leverage over Taliban factions critical to any Afghan peace process.

Thus, aid has functioned less as a coercive instrument and more as a stabilising subsidy, perpetuating Pakistan's deep state rather than dismantling it. This reflects a recurring historical cycle in U.S.-Pakistan relations, where aid surges are followed by frustration and sanctions, only for strategic necessity to re-trigger renewed engagement (Kux 2001, 330-335).⁹

Case Studies of Aid Suspension and Coercion

- The Pressler Amendment of 1990 stopped U.S. aid due to Pakistan's nuclear program. But Pakistan kept working on its secret projects, which led to nuclear tests in 1998.
- After the Salala Incident in 2011, Pakistan closed NATO supply routes because U.S. troops killed Pakistani soldiers in a border clash. Aid was stopped, but Pakistan used its position to reopen routes on good terms.
- The Trump Administration (2018) stopped giving military aid to Pakistan as a punishment for supporting the Haqqani network. Pakistan, on the other hand, responded by getting closer to China and Russia and still letting Taliban leaders stay in the country.

Indian Perspective: Aid as Enabler of Proxy Terror

India believes that U.S. military aid has indirectly supported Pakistan's use of terrorism as a tool of war. Money that was supposed to go towards fighting terrorism has often been used to build up the military or support terrorists. The deep state in Pakistan, which is supported by external aid, has made it easier for Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, and other anti-India groups to operate.

India has brought this up many times in diplomatic conferences, saying that the U.S. aid makes Pakistan more capable to fight an asymmetrical war. The Mumbai attacks (2008) and the Pulwama bombing (2019) exemplify the lethal consequences of Pakistan's proxy doctrine, facilitated by a state apparatus emboldened by external subsidies.

Limits of Coercion and the Manufactured Ally

The paradox of U.S. aid to Pakistan lies in its dual function that is intended as leverage but is operating as a subsidy. Aid has manufactured Pakistan as an ally, sustaining its military-intelligence establishment, while simultaneously enabling its militant paradox. Selective blindness in Washington has perpetuated this cycle, with India bearing the brunt of Pakistan's proxy terror doctrine.

Section II: Pakistan's Deep State and Proxy Terror Doctrine

The Architecture of Pakistan's Deep State

Pakistan's political system is dominated by its military-intelligence establishment, often referred to as the "deep state." The Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), in particular, has functioned as both a domestic enforcer and an external manipulator, shaping Pakistan's security policy through covert patronage of terrorist groups. Scholars argue that the deep state has consistently subordinated civilian governments, ensuring that foreign and security policy remains the prerogative of Rawalpindi rather than Islamabad (Fair 2014).¹⁰

This deep state trajectory is historically reinforced by repeated military takeovers that entrenched the army as Pakistan's ultimate political arbiter. The coups of 1958 (Ayub Khan), 1977 (Zia-ul-Haq), and 1999 (Pervez Musharraf) were not isolated disruptions

but part of a pattern where military authority was normalised through domestic instability and external patronage. Over time, Pakistan's security establishment cultivated an institutional worldview in which foreign policy, nuclear doctrine, and terrorist sponsorship were treated as non-negotiable strategic domains, beyond civilian oversight. This has produced an enduring governance paradox that Pakistan formally maintains democratic institutions, but strategic policy remains shaped by Rawalpindi's military-intelligence consensus (Shah 2014, 88-96).¹¹

The ISI's influence is rooted in its Cold War legacy. During the 1980s, it coordinated U.S. and Saudi funding for the Afghan mujahideen, embedding itself as the indispensable broker of jihadist networks. This institutional memory has persisted, with the ISI continuing to cultivate terrorist groups as instruments of strategic depth in Afghanistan and as proxies against India (Riedel 2011).¹²

Proxy War in Afghanistan

Pakistan's sponsorship of the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani network exemplifies its reliance on proxy war. Despite receiving billions in U.S. aid, Pakistan has provided intelligence, weapons, and sanctuary to these groups (Felbab-Brown 2018).¹³ The rationale is twofold, with strategic depth ensuring a pliant regime in Kabul that limits Indian influence and controlled instability were maintaining leverage over Afghanistan by supporting groups that destabilise its governance.

This strategy has produced devastating consequences. Afghan civilians, U.S. soldiers, and Afghan security forces have borne the brunt of Taliban offensives enabled by Pakistani patronage. Yet, Pakistan has calculated that the costs of international censure are outweighed by the strategic benefits of retaining influence in Afghanistan.

Proxy Terror Doctrine Against India

While Afghanistan represents Pakistan's western front, India remains the primary target of its proxy terror doctrine. The ISI has cultivated groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) to wage proxy war in Kashmir and beyond.

- **Lashkar-e-Taiba:** Responsible for the 2008 Mumbai attacks, LeT demonstrated Pakistan's willingness to employ transnational terrorism as a tool of state policy. Despite international condemnation, LeT continues to operate openly in Pakistan under the guise of charitable organisations (Tankel 2013).¹⁴
- **Jaish-e-Mohammed:** The 2019 Pulwama suicide bombing, which killed 40 Indian paramilitary personnel, underscored JeM's enduring capacity and Pakistan's reluctance to dismantle its infrastructure.

These groups exemplify Pakistan's doctrine of "bleeding India through a thousand cuts", a strategy designed to exhaust India economically and psychologically without triggering full-scale war. This doctrine was reinforced by the belief that proxy war could internationalise Kashmir while keeping conflict below the threshold of conventional escalation (Fair 2014, 119-124).¹⁵

The persistence of such groups also demonstrates how Pakistan's proxy doctrine has been sustained through selective targeting. While Islamabad has periodically acted against terrorist factions that threaten internal stability, groups useful for external strategic leverage have often remained insulated. This selective approach produced severe blowback, most visibly through the rise of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which evolved into a major insurgent threat and culminated in high-profile attacks such as the 2014 Peshawar school massacre. The blowback dynamic underscores the internal contradictions of terrorist patronage where networks cultivated for external influence frequently mutate into domestic security liabilities (Haqqani 2013, 312-318).¹⁶

The Logic of Proxy Terror

Pakistan's reliance on proxies is driven by mainly three strategic calculations of cost-effectiveness as terrorists provide a low-cost means of challenging India's conventional superiority. The second being plausible deniability as Pakistan can deny direct involvement, complicating India's diplomatic efforts to mobilise international censure. The final one being domestic legitimacy as patronage of "jihadi" groups reinforces the military's narrative as the defender of Islam and Kashmir. This logic has

entrenched terrorism as a permanent feature of Pakistan's security doctrine, even as it destabilises regional peace.

Indian Resilience Against Proxy War

India has developed a multi-pronged strategy to counter Pakistan's proxy terror doctrine by focusing on military preparedness, diplomatic isolation, drawing Red Lines and the resilience narrative. This depicts India's forward planning as investments in counterterrorism capabilities, intelligence, and border management have enhanced India's ability to respond to cross-border terrorism. India has consistently highlighted Pakistan's duplicity in international forums, leveraging U.S. frustration and FATF processes to constrain Pakistan's manoeuvrability. By demonstrating willingness to escalate military response, India has signalled that proxy attacks will not go unanswered. Also, by calling terrorism as a challenge to India's democratic fabric, New Delhi has cultivated domestic resilience against Pakistan's strategy of psychological attrition. For India, the paradox translates into a persistent security dilemma where a neighbour subsidised by external aid is yet committed to proxy war.

Section III: FATF Diplomacy and International Pressure

Pakistan and the FATF Grey List

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), established in 1989, is the premier intergovernmental body for combating money laundering and terrorist financing. Pakistan's relationship with FATF has been fraught, reflecting its deep entanglement with terrorist financing networks. Since 2008, Pakistan has faced repeated scrutiny, culminating in its placement on the FATF grey list in 2012 and in 2018, wherein it remained there until 2022 (Khan 2022).¹⁷

Pakistan's FATF trajectory reflects a repeated cycle of scrutiny rather than a singular compliance crisis. It was first placed under FATF monitoring in 2008, flagged for persistent deficiencies in curbing terror-linked financing channels. Grey-listing again in 2012 and 2018 reinforced the perception that Pakistan's compliance was often reactive and politically driven rather than structural. Although Pakistan introduced legal reforms and enforcement measures, concerns remained that terrorist-linked charities

continued to rebrand and operate through alternative financial channels, including informal hawala systems, thereby sustaining terrorist financing ecosystems even under formal restrictions (Fair 2014, 206-210).¹⁸

Grey-listing imposed reputational costs, restricted access to international financial markets, and increased scrutiny of Pakistan's banking sector. Yet, despite these pressures, Pakistan managed to avoid blacklisting as a designation that would have severely curtailed its financial flows and foreign investment. This avoidance underscores Pakistan's skilful diplomatic manoeuvring, leveraging allies such as China, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia to shield itself from harsher sanctions (Singh 2021).¹⁹

Diplomatic Manoeuvring and Strategic Lobbying

Pakistan's ability to navigate FATF scrutiny reflects its broader diplomatic strategy of leveraging China's support; cultivating Gulf allies and partial compliance. China, a strategic partner of Pakistan and a member of the FATF, has continuously defended Islamabad by characterising FATF scrutiny as politically driven. Due to the diplomatic cover provided by Saudi Arabia and Turkey, a consensus for blacklisting Pakistan was never reached. Pakistan has allowed terrorist groups to change their names while enacting superficial reforms like freezing the assets of designated groups. Pakistan has been able to project compliance through this manoeuvring without destroying the infrastructure of organisations such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed.

India's Role in FATF Diplomacy

In an effort to limit Pakistan's financial networks and reveal its deceit, India has taken an active role in FATF diplomacy. New Delhi has continuously demonstrated Pakistan's inability to stop the funding of terrorism by pointing out the persistence of terrorist front organisations and charities.

Pakistan's grey listing has been upheld owing to India's lobbying, which made sure Islamabad was under constant pressure. India has presented Pakistan's financing of terrorism as a global risk rather than just a bilateral one, by siding with the U.S. and its European allies. This has enhanced India's credibility and positioned it as a

responsible stakeholder in global counterterrorism governance (Pant and Joshi 2020).²⁰

Limits of Financial Counterterrorism

Despite FATF's scrutiny, the effectiveness of financial counterterrorism remains limited. This is explained by a number of elements, including state complicity, terrorist organisations' adaptability, and geopolitical shielding. Funding for groups like LeT and JeM comes from a variety of sources, including diaspora contributions, hawala systems, and informal networks. The deep state in Pakistan has made it easier for terrorist charities to change their names and carry on with their activities. The strategic value of Pakistan's nuclear weapons, Afghanistan's influence, and Chinese support have kept FATF's actions within reasonable bounds.

Indian Focus: FATF as a Diplomatic Arena

FATF is a vital diplomatic platform for India to reveal Pakistan's duplicity. India has attempted to limit financial networks and undermine the legitimacy of terrorist proxies by maintaining Pakistan's grey-list status. However, India is also aware of the limitations of FATF diplomacy. Pakistan can evade sanctions if the major powers do not consent.

Thus, India's approach blends FATF lobbying with more extensive diplomatic initiatives by drawing attention to the funding of terrorism in multilateral forums like the UN Security Council. In order to maintain pressure and mobilise broader support, India aligned with U.S. over frustration for Pakistan's duplicity and framed it as a global threat.

The paradox of the manufactured ally is best illustrated by Pakistan's ability to evade FATF scrutiny. Pakistan has managed to evade blacklisting through selective compliance and geopolitical shielding, despite several indications of financing terrorism. This conundrum highlights the limitations of global counterterrorism governance for India. Pakistan's deep state and proxy terror doctrine cannot be destroyed by FATF diplomacy, but it can impose costs.

Section IV: Indian Security Calculus

India's Strategic Dilemma

The paradox of facing a neighbour who is both devoted to terrorism and supported by foreign aid shapes India's security calculations in relation to Pakistan. Pakistan's deep state-maintained proxy terror doctrine has created a recurring problem: how to prevent cross-border terrorism from turning into a full-scale conflict? India has been forced by this paradox to create a multifaceted strategy that combines societal resilience, diplomatic isolation, and military readiness.

Military Preparedness and Counterterrorism Doctrine

Credible deterrence and calibrated response are the cornerstones of India's military preparedness against Pakistan's proxies. New Delhi has made significant investments in border control, intelligence networks, and counterinsurgency capabilities after realising that Pakistan uses terrorist organisations to oppose India's traditional dominance.

The Indian Army and paramilitary groups have developed intelligence-driven strategies to counteract infiltration and destroy terrorist networks during counterterrorism operations in Kashmir. Pakistan's strategy of prolonged attrition has been undermined by these operations, which have reduced the lifespan of terrorist recruits.

In 2016, India carried out cross-border attacks against militant launch pads in Pakistan-administered Kashmir in response to the Uri attack. This signalled a change in doctrine, indicating that proxy attacks would be met with well-timed military retribution.

In the 2019 Balakot airstrikes, India attacked Jaish-e-Mohammed training camps located deep within Pakistan as a reaction to the Pulwama bombing. This escalation challenged Pakistan's presumption of plausible deniability and showed India's determination to cross conventional boundaries. These actions highlight India's changing stance that it will not accept proxy terror and will use measured escalation to impose costs on Pakistan.

Operation Sindoor: A Doctrinal Leap

The most recent doctrinal milestone was Operation Sindoor (May 7-10, 2025), launched in response to the Pahalgam terror attack (April 2025), where Pakistan-backed terrorists killed 26 civilians. Unlike earlier retaliatory strikes, Sindoor was conceived as a limited air campaign designed to degrade Pakistan's terror infrastructure while maintaining escalation control.

According to military assessments (Fontanellaz 2025)²¹, India achieved decisive air superiority, neutralising Pakistan's drone bases, command centres, and forward operating posts. Within 88 hours, Pakistan was compelled to agree to a ceasefire, marking one of the rare instances where India dictated escalation matrix.

Sindoor demonstrated three critical doctrinal advances:

- **Escalation Dominance:** India showed it could escalate beyond surgical strikes and Balakot, employing air power to impose costs without breaching nuclear thresholds.
- **Strategic Clarity:** The operation was framed as a counterterrorist campaign, targeting perpetrators and planners of the Pahalgam attack rather than Pakistan's conventional military assets.
- **Diplomatic Legitimacy:** At the UN Security Council, India described the operation as "measured, non-escalatory, and responsible," reinforcing its legitimacy while exposing Pakistan's duplicity (UNSC Debate 2026).²²

Sindoor thus represents the maturing of India's doctrine: calibrated escalation, backed by technological superiority and diplomatic clarity, can neutralise Pakistan's proxy terror doctrine without spiralling into full-scale war.

Diplomatic Strategies: Isolating Pakistan

India has used diplomatic tactics to isolate Pakistan internationally in addition to its military preparedness. India has attempted to expose Pakistan's duplicity in multilateral forums after realising that the country benefits from external favour and selective blindness in Washington.

India has continuously brought up Pakistan's financing of terrorism in UN discussions, presenting it as a global threat rather than a bilateral conflict. This narrative was strengthened by Operation Sindoor, in which India emphasised its own restraint while rejecting Pakistan's "false and self-serving account."

India has been instrumental in maintaining Pakistan's grey-listing and limiting its financial networks through FATF lobbying. By highlighting Pakistan's ongoing reliance on proxies, Sindoor strengthened India's argument. Leveraging US Frustration, India has allied with U.S. concerns about Pakistan's duplicity, increasing Washington's suspicion and maintaining pressure.

While Sindoor demonstrated India's readiness to take strong action against terrorist threats, regional diplomacy has been India forge alliances with Afghanistan, Iran, and Gulf nations to offset Pakistan's influence. India has used these tactics in an effort to undermine Pakistan's proxy doctrine and rally global support for counter-terrorism.

Resilience Against Proxy War

New Delhi has fostered national unity and resilience by portraying terrorism as an assault on India's democratic fabric, demonstrating the country's democratic resilience. As evidenced by its economic resilience, India's expanding economy has absorbed the shocks of terrorism, undercutting Pakistan's attrition strategy.

India's ability to identify and eliminate threats has improved due to investments in intelligence, cyber defence, and monitoring. Operation Sindoor demonstrated the benefits of these expenditures, notably in drone war and air defence, underscoring India's technological prowess. By exposing Pakistan's hypocrisy, India has rebutted Pakistan's propaganda and strengthened the idea that it is a terrorist sponsor and fabricated ally. By revealing Pakistan's dependence on proxies and susceptibility to controlled escalation, Sindoor strengthened this narrative and demonstrated India's narrative resilience.

Strategic Implications for India

The long-term challenge for India lies in sustaining pressure without being drawn into Pakistan's preferred cycle of provocation and crisis management. In the past, Pakistan's deep state has proven to be institutionally resilient, withstanding diplomatic isolation, sanctions, and shifting alliance patterns. India's plan must therefore be viewed as a long-term containment strategy that raises the costs of proxy war while denying Pakistan strategic gains, rather than as an attempt to bring about an abrupt behavioural shift in Islamabad.

This suggests that the three pillars of technological and operational superiority, diplomatic tenacity, and social resilience against psychological attrition, must continue to support India's counterterrorism strategy. The Indian security calculus is best understood in this perspective as a systematic response to a structural adversary rather than as a response to isolated attacks. How successfully India can influence the escalation ladder and the global narrative in reaction is now the question, not whether Pakistan will keep using proxies. This strategic reality serves as the basis for evaluating Pakistan's dual role as a terrorist sponsor and a manufactured ally, as well as for comprehending why resolving this conflict is still essential to India's long-term security situation.

Conclusion

The paradox that Pakistan is both a supporter of terrorism and an ally of the United States is a persistent structural aspect of Pakistani statecraft rather than an anomaly of policy. This duality's continued existence is a reflection of Pakistan's military-intelligence establishment's solidification as the primary decision-making body, shielded from democratic accountability and maintained by a strategic culture that considers terrorist proxies as tools of foreign policy. As a result, Pakistan's involvement in regional instability stems from an institutionalised approach that combines irregular warfare and conventional deterrence rather than from single instances of deceit.

From India's perspective, this manufactured ally paradox carries direct and enduring consequences. Pakistan's proxy doctrine continues to function as a calibrated strategy of attrition which is designed not to defeat India militarily but to impose sustained psychological, political, and economic costs. While international mechanisms such as

FATF have imposed reputational and financial pressure, they have not altered Pakistan's underlying strategic intent. This reinforces a central lesson for Indian security planning that external pressure on Pakistan is often temporary, reversible, and constrained by geopolitical bargaining.

India's goal in this situation should be to steadily increase the costs of proxy war while denying Islamabad the strategic benefits of terrorism, not to try and get Pakistan's behaviour right at once. India can only successfully negotiate the structural realities of facing a neighbour whose official policy is still inextricably linked to proxy war by implementing such a long-term plan. India should continue to maintain its technological supremacy by funding air defence, drone warfare, and surveillance as demonstrated during Operation Sindoor. To highlight the matter further, India should keep presenting proof of financing terrorism and urging cooperation from its allies in global forums such as the FATF and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) against Pakistan. Terrorism must be presented as an assault on democracy and unity to strengthen societal resilience against Pakistan's attrition strategy. We ought to create a distinct government agency tasked with managing and avoiding "false narratives" or "disinformation" about India and its position. India's narrative warfare might be revolutionised by prompt press releases and coverage of our "Plan of Action."

DISCLAIMER

The paper is the author's individual scholastic articulation and does not necessarily reflect the views of CENJOWS, the Defence forces, or the Government of India. 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.

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