

INDIA, PAKISTAN AND TERRORISM

By Dimitri DELALIEU, associate researcher for ESISC

1. Resumé

Since the partition of the former British colony in 1947, India and Pakistan have lived together for better or worse. In 2002, under pressure from the United States, President Musharraf, Washington's new ally in the fight against terrorism, announced a crackdown on Islamist organisations active in Pakistan -- although he soon proved incapable of controlling them in reality. The same promises were made in subsequent years, with the same qualified results. His latest announcement was just after the bombings of 7 July in London, and involved control measures on the thousands of madrassas in the country and the expulsion of their foreign students.

These promises (and the ensuing lack of effects) didn't stop Pakistan being accused by India, Kabul and even Moscow of offering support to the mujaheddin fighting their jihad in Kashmir, Afghanistan or Chechnya. The peace process launched by India in 2003 and supposed to bring together the warring brothers, remains fragile as a result of the tense security situation.

Kashmir, controlled by both India and Pakistan, and a part of which has been annexed by China, remains a hotbed of tension for the whole sub-continent. Beyond the regional conflict engaging those three countries, the territory has unquestionably become a sanctuary for all kinds of terrorists, who are able to take root there and grow in all tranquility.

The recent bloody attacks on Delhi at the end of October remind us that neither India or Pakistan can afford to cut corners on tighter cooperation against terrorism. As the Times of India stressed, since 1994 no country in the world has been harder hit by terrorism than India, with 50,000 dead.

2. A brief historical overview, from decolonisation to nuclear dissuasion

The independence and partition of the British Indian Empire were announced on 15 August 1947. As Maharajah Hari Singh, ruler of independent Kashmir, was on the verge of attaching his state to India, part of the Muslim population reacted violently,

and Pakistan orchestrated a Pashtun uprising. The first India-Pakistan war broke out immediately and it took the intervention of the UN in 1948 to bring it to an end. In 1949, a line of demarcation overseen by an observation force was created between the two sides. Also, a UN resolution called for the withdrawal of Pakistani troops and the organisation by India of a referendum aimed at giving Kashmir the opportunity of self-determination.

Out of a fear of seeing the Muslim majority of Kashmir swing towards Pakistan, India declined to organise the vote. Pakistan meanwhile refused to hand back occupied territories and instead created a de facto new province: Azad Kashmir¹. After obtaining a measure of autonomy in 1950, the Consultative Assembly of the state of Jammu-and-Kashmir agreed to its annexation to India in 1956, even as Pakistan maintained its occupation of the rest of Kashmiri territory. A second armed conflict struck the region in 1965, to which should be added a war in 1971 which saw the emergence of an independent Bangladesh, as well as Sino-Indian wars in 1960 and 1962, which allowed China to encroach increasingly on territory it also lays claim to.

India obtained nuclear weapons during the 1960s to face off with China, which had possessed nuclear weapons since 1964. To maintain the balance of power, Pakistan saw no option but to go down the same road towards nuclear arms. The resulting nuclear dissuasion and the balance of terror saw the players frozen into their positions, though it most likely permitted escalation to be avoided, until now.

Aside from a succession of local conflicts, it was surely the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan in 1989 which marked the turning point for the region. The defeat of Moscow by mujaheddin supported by Pakistan gave fertile ground for the planting of a major regrowth of fundamentalism. In effect, the radical Islamist separatists demarcated India and Jammu-and-Kashmir, claiming the attachment of the whole of Kashmir to Pakistan.

3. From 11 September to "suicide bombers"

After carrying out nuclear tests in 1998, the two nations again faced off in Kashmir, along the demarcation line, from May to July 1999, causing about 1,000 fatalities. In October that year, a military coup brought General Pervez Musharraf to power as the representative at that time of the hard-line wing of the army and the intelligence services, the latter being closely allied with the Islamists.

The war launched by the US and a broad coalition against the Taliban regime in October 2001 brought many pro-Taliban refugees into Pakistani Kashmir. Since that moment, the territory has once more become what it was during the Russian-Afghan war: the fallback position for Afghan militias, supporting rebel movements and giving a home to new military training camps. It is interesting to note that many Taliban supporters studied at the famous Darul Uloom madrassa at Deoband, a small Indian village in the province of Uttar Pradesh. Claiming to be adherents of the Deobandi

¹ Free Kashmir.

Islam movement², these Taliban have contributed to the spread of this Islamist movement to 15,000 madrassas (4,000 in Pakistan) across Asia and Europe.

The main consequence of this new deal was the return of terrorism (and suicide attacks) to Kashmir. Terrorism, for decades present in the region, in fact started growing before the allied intervention against the Taliban. After the failure of bilateral talks at the Agra summit in July 2001, the first major attack (38 dead) was aimed at the Parliament in Srinagar, capital of Kashmir, in October 2001. That attack was claimed by a terrorist group based in Pakistan, and was not condemned by the government in Islamabad.

In December, a suicide attack hit the federal parliament in Delhi, with 14 deaths. In response, India reinforced its forces the length of the Jammu-and-Kashmir border to prevent infiltration by Islamists. President Musharraf, under pressure from the US, used his address to the nation of January 2002 to restate his desire to fight terrorism. Two weeks later, India tested an intermediate-range (700 km) Agni I missile, which did nothing to ease tension.

Security measures taken by Delhi, including the deployment of extra troops to Jammu-and-Kashmir, unfortunately had little effect. After the Kaluchak massacre, carried out by the Lashkar-e-Taiba group (LeT)³ in May 2002 (35 people died in the attack on a civilian bus and an Indian Army camp) the terrorists showed themselves more determined than ever to pursue the path of attack.

Initially, the local Kashmiri population was reasonably welcoming to the foreign fighters. However as the number of suicide attacks grew, so did hostility toward the jihadis. And Islamic rigour, which for instance imposes the wearing of the burqa and makes women stay closed up at home, also helped provoke animosity, according to Noor Ahmed Baba of the University of Kashmir: "Their Taliban-inspired Islam has no place here," he said⁴.

In August 2003 a bloody double attack in Mumbai, blamed by the interior ministry on the SIMI⁵, showed two things. One: that Indian Islamist terrorists are still around and still active. Two: that anti-terrorist actions are starting to have some effect, as the terrorists' targets (a market and a tourist spot) were relatively easy to attack, while the bombs used appeared to be quite unsophisticated.

The war against terrorism – or more correctly the alliance between Washington and President Musharraf within the war against terrorism – first set back then reinforced the Islamist movement. Because it has to be admitted – the Pakistani regime, torn

² A movement opposed to the partition of India and the creation of a Muslim state, which calls for a return to traditional-style Islam from the time of the Prophet. The Deobandi tendency is also behind the creation of the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islami (JUI) movement active in India and Pakistan, where it defends the interests of Muslims come from India post-1947.

³ A radical Islamic fundamentalist group made up mainly of non-Kashmiri militants.

⁴ Washington Post, 13 June 2002.

⁵ The Students' Islamic Movement of India, created and then banned in Pakistan. Very active in Kashmir, it is suspected of many attacks in India.

between its various centres of power and caught in the crossfire of violence between Sunnis and Shiites, has shown itself incapable of bringing the extremists to heel.

4. The 'road map' and the 'fence'

In April 2003 India tried to normalise relations with its neighbour by proposing 12 measures to bring the two sides together. To begin with, Pakistan was hesitant to accept what was characterised as a "media manoeuvre designed to impress international opinion". On 26 November 2003, India and Pakistan signed a cease-fire along the Line of Control and announced their desire to normalise not only sporting and cultural relations but also diplomatic links. After the two leaders met at the SAARC⁶ summit of January 2004, the Pakistani and Indian authorities drew up a 'road map' (a timetable of progressive negotiations) during a three-day bilateral summit.

The influence of Washington was quite clearly behind these initiatives. After having helped defuse the 1999 crisis (at the time of the Kargali fighting) and December 2001 (the attack on the Indian parliament) the US fears the emergence of an anti-American movement in Kashmir.

At the end of 2003, a report by the Council for Foreign Relations and the Asia Society in New York explained: "Given the dangers inherent in the festering India-Pakistan rivalry, the United States should be more active in trying to help the two nuclear-armed enemies manage their differences, including the Kashmir dispute"⁷. It should be noted that to protect its own interests, the US Administration operates through think-tanks, such as the Kashmir Study Group, who are behind most peace initiatives.

While they await a final outcome to the Kashmir problem, and taking advantage of the cease-fire, the Indian authorities in 2004 stepped up the construction of a fence which, like the Israeli wall, aims to prevent infiltration by terrorists. Standing 3.5 metres high and wide, the electrified and razor-wired barrier runs the length of the 740 km border and is only broken when the topography requires it. Besides its security aspect, it allows Delhi to draw its international frontier along the line of the cease-fire, as explained by Indian Kashmir political leader Umar Farooq: the fence, he said, is a means for India to "sort of legitimize their claim day by day" on Kashmir⁸. There has been little opposition from the international community, or even from Pakistan, for whom the barrier is also an aid in controlling terrorist groups, but the plan presents the inhabitants of Indian Kashmir with a number of problems, such as the isolation of traditional pastures.

⁶ South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

⁷ Cited by Syed Saleem Shahzad, 'Keeping the peace initiative on track', *in* Asia Times Online, 16 February 2004.

⁸ Amy Waldman, Good Fences Make Good Neighbours, *in* New York Times, 4 July 2004.

5. Better Indian-Pakistani relations and the effect on terrorism

By signing up for the war on terrorism and by describing the peace process between their two countries as "irreversible" at a historic summit on 17 April this year, President Musharraf and the Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh both seemed set on carrying on with the rapprochement launched two years ago.

The thawing of relations is not to the liking, needless to say, of either Pakistani or Indian extremists, as one of its main aims is to pull the rug out from under their feet. These movements, their terrorist actions and their propaganda have all helped over the years to foster a climate of religious hatred.

After six months of relative calm, the attack in Srinagar on 11 May is a sign of the infiltration by terrorists and raises once more the problem of training camps for separatists supported by Pakistan. In July, the attack on the Ayodhya religious site cast a shadow over the peace process and revived community tensions. The Indian prime minister condemned the attack and claimed, "There is no doubt that terror networks are on the whole intact," while being careful not to point the finger at Pakistan.

As far as the 'road map' is concerned, in September the two countries went ahead with a exchange of prisoners in Punjab, with 371 being released by Pakistan and 33 by India. Several days later, as Pervez Musharraf and Manmohan Singh met at the millennium summit of the United Nations in New York, the Pakistani army increased its raids and searches on terrorist circles.

In Waziristan (north-west Pakistan) terrorists claiming to be Talibans tried not only to take administrative control of the region but also to impose "their" Islam by force or by terror on the population, and especially on the local tribal chiefs. Since February 2004, tribal chiefs as well as journalists have been targeted. In spite of the 8 October earthquake, Pakistani forces have kept up their sweep of the region at the demand of the US, and this in a region where anyone who helps the US or the Pakistani government is considered by the Islamists as deserving of death.

On the fight against terrorism, we should note how India shares its know-how with American troops. A group of American officers and soldiers recently finished training at the CIJWS (Counter Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School), the renowned military academy. As we mentioned in the Introduction above, no country has been more hit by terrorism than India. In that respect, the country has an enormous counter-terrorism expertise, as an American commander explained: "Their troops are as well-trained, as motivated and as fast as the best American troops"⁹. According to the school's director General Rakesh Sharma, mixed training allows the Americans to gain the experience of fighting terrorism, and Indian soldiers to perfect their handling of M4, M16 and M107 assault rifles, night-vision equipment and laser sights.

While advances in counter-terrorism have started producing tentative effects, it is not forgotten that Indian and Pakistan have both, until recent times, put the blame on each other and refused for years to grasp the true nature of the terrorist threat. While

⁹ Jaideep Mazumdar, 'GIs training in the jungle' in Outlookindia.com, October 2005.

President Musharraf pledged his country in 2002 to stop at nothing in the war against terrorism, it took an assassination attempt by the Inquilab¹⁰ group the next year, and another by Al Qaeda in 2004 on the president and his prime minister before the Pakistani authorities took the problem seriously.

6. Shedding some light on the latest attacks in Delhi

At the moment when Kashmir, like Pakistan and to a lesser extent India, all affected by the earthquake of 8 October which killed more than 73,000 people and left hundreds of thousands homeless, was trying to bring aid to the victims, Delhi was hit to its core by a triple bombing on 29 October.

Two of the three explosions destroyed popular markets, near the train station and in the south of the city, while the third hit a bus in the Okhla industrial estate in the south of the capital.

The attacks – which killed 62 and injured more than 200 -- were claimed by the Islamist group Islamic Inquilabi Mahaz (IIM), a barely-active group known for its role in the hijacking of an Indian Airlines flight in 1999 and its attempt to assassinate the Pakistani president in 2001.

Attacks carried out near a significant date:

- Two days from the Hindu festival of Diwali
- The day following the Day of Al-Qods (the last Friday of Ramadan and celebrated to oppose the Israeli occupation of the Al-Qods mosque in Jerusalem)
- The same day as a Delhi court was due to give its verdict in the trial of alleged members of LeT charged with being involved in the attack on the Lal Quila (Red Fort) in Delhi in January 2000
- One year to the day after the last televised message of Osama bin Laden.

Finally, it is interesting to note that the Mumbai attacks of 1993 were planned for the Day of Al-Qods, but brought forward by a week after the arrest of one of the terrorists.

The latest attacks in Delhi aimed of course to spread terror and torpedo the peace process, as the spokesman of the IIM group said: "Such attacks will continue until India withdraws its troops from Kashmir and stop its inhuman activities there"¹¹. On the other hand, they came the day after Al Qaeda threats against India following the prime minister's visit to the US, and the signing of a strategic partnership between the two countries. The aim of the attacks could be to remind the Indian population and the jihadi militants that neither the aims nor the capacity for action of the Islamist groups have been changed by recent anti-terrorist operations.

Within days, the Indian prime minister met President Musharraf and shared his concern at "indications that the terrorist groups responsible for the bomb attacks of

¹⁰ 'Revolution'.

¹¹ AFP, Delhi, 30 October 2005.

29 October have links with abroad"¹². Menmohan Singh also "diplomatically" raised the issue of a possible implication of Pakistan, and reminded President Musharraf of his promise of January 2004 to wipe out terrorism on the frontier. From their side, the Pakistani authorities rejected the Indian prime minister's comments and called on him to share any proof he might have. Analysis by forensic scientists is still under way, though investigators have pointed to traces of the military explosive RDX, leaving little doubt of the involvement of separatist militants, and in particular the Lashkar-e-Taiba group (LeT) based in Pakistan. The former director of the Indian intelligence service considers that LeT probably used IIM as an intermediary to cover up its involvement.

Four days after the Delhi attacks, a suicide car-bomb exploded in Srinagar killing six people and injuring 16 others. In order to calm worries and head off American anger, Pakistan's security agencies announced next day they had killed a presumed member of Al Qaeda and arrested two others. One of them, a senior government official said, could be the Syrian Mustafa Setmariam Nasar, accused of involvement in the Madrid bombs, and whose name is also linked to the July bombings in London this year. The US put a price on his head of \$5 million in 2004.

While the attacks do not really call the peace process into question, they do come at a time when India and Pakistan are busy finalising the opening of border posts on the line of demarcation in order to bring aid to people affected by the earthquake. India is determined to choke off the flow of refugee-terrorists onto its territory, and finally decided on 5 November – ostensibly for reasons of uncompleted works – to open only one border post, at Ponch-Rawlakot, instead of the five initially planned. On the one hand, India's reversal is a blow to those hit by the disaster who are desperately awaiting aid, but on the other hand it underlines the fragility of a peace process which White House spokesman Scott McClellan described as "still insufficient"¹³.

7. Conclusion

If the attacks carried out in India and Kashmir are not all attributable to groups sheltered in or having other links with Pakistan, the fact remains that LeT, JeM (the Jaish-e-Mohamed, an affiliate of Al Qaeda) and the HM (Hizbul Mujahideen), all members of the International Islamist Front, still have serious backing in certain quarters in Islamabad.

In Indian Kashmir, Muslims have for the most part kept their distance from terrorist actions. Elsewhere, the dialogue India has started with the All Party Hurriyat (a coalition of Kashmiri regional and secessionist parties) should serve to isolate extremist organisations even further, and cut them off from popular support.

On the Pakistani side, Indian and American pressure on Islamabad is likely to increase, in order for the fight against terrorism to carry on, and for the Islamists' financial support network to be dismantled. Because Waziristan remains a sanctuary for Al Qaeda, and a threat to Delhi as well as to US troops in Afghanistan. If India's

¹² AFP, Delhi, 31 October 2005.

¹³ The Indian Express, 1 November 2005.

reserve over recent days has been a cause for congratulation, we have to hope that another attack of some dimension, and of Pakistani origin, does not take place, because this time it really would risk torpedoing a peace process that so far has not had an easy ride.