

India's Undeclared War Strategy after 2019: Implications for Pakistan

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Abstract

The non-conciliatory surgical strike policy of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is destabilising the region. It is regrettably accentuating antagonism between India and Pakistan. After 2019, Indian policymakers opted for direct engagement to undeclared warfare which focused on covert operations, assassinations, spying, and manipulation of ethnic, religious, or socio-economic vulnerabilities of Pakistan. Since 2019, India's spy agency RAW has re-energised its covert operations inside Pakistan with better planning and execution. Now RAW operates from the UAE, Afghanistan, and Nepal. RAW handlers manage their sleeper cells from these states and mainly rely on local criminal gangs, contract killers, ethnic or nationalist youth, and religiously motivated extremist elements to execute people linked with LeT, JeM, Sikh activists, or religious scholars. India's covert operations would have far-reaching implications for regional peace and security. It is expected that these dissident groups may launch a series of reprisal attacks on Indian soil and then the government would find an easy scapegoat in Pakistan. India with the diplomatic backing of major powers may try to carry out surgical strikes, missile strikes, drone attacks, or cross-

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border raids to soothe their public. Pakistan, on the other hand, follows a policy of quid pro quo-plus and finds it intolerable.

Keywords: India, Surgical Strikes, Extra-Judicial Killings, Undeclared Warfare, Chanakya Kautilya.

Introduction

India and Pakistan share the most volatile border in the world, which is marred by continuous rivalry, proxy wars, instability, and turmoil. Both nuclear weapon states have been at odds since their inception. They have fought wars and imposed heavy damages on each other. This paper will focus on India's undeclared war against Pakistan especially after 2019. The idea is to understand how India brought doctrinal shifts in her policy and focused more on a hybrid mode of warfare instead of all-out wars or direct engagement. Confrontation has been costly for both states and entails greater risks of escalation after the nuclearisation of South Asia. An indirect approach or hybrid warfare seriously impacted Pakistan's security and helped India to engage Pakistan internally and let India maintain her strategic dominance in the region. The paper will focus on three main elements: the impact of Chanakya Kautilya's concept of undeclared warfare on Indian strategic thinking in modern times; the change in Indian strategic thinking after 2008, and later in 2019, which led to India's policy of global assassinations; and what are the implications of this policy on Pakistan's security.

Chanakya's Kautilya's Role in Indian Strategic Thinking

Theoretical Setting

The Indian policymakers associate their strategic thinking with Chanakya Kautilya and consider him the pioneer of Indian strategic culture. A thorough investigation reveals that there is a huge influence of Kautilyan thought on modern Indian strategic thinking. India is following Kautilya's dictum of subduing the enemy with undeclared warfare.¹ Chanakya Kautilya in his book *Arthashastra* mentioned a six-fold policy that emphasised important points to subdue the enemy. Those six strategic underpinnings are Peace, War, Neutrality, Marching, Alliances, and Double Policy.² The focus of this paper is on the second approach in the

¹ Christian P Potholm, *Winning at War: Seven Keys to Military Victory Throughout History*, Ukraine: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010, 17.

² Beni Madhab Barua, *Asoka and His Inscriptions*. India: New Age Publishers, 1955, 161.

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six-fold policy i.e. the War (*Vigraha*). Kautilya talks about three types of wars. The focus of the study is on the third approach of war which is the *undeclared warfare* strategy, in which the enemy carries out covert operations, and uses spies, religion, superstitions, and women (honey trap) to maintain a strategic edge against the enemy.³ The Indian policymakers followed Chanakya's dictums consistently and employed undeclared warfare against Pakistan since 1947.

In Pakistan's context the classical example of an undeclared warfare strategy was the 1971 war against East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). The Indian government capitalised on internal political fissures, ethnic divide, and socio-economic vulnerabilities of Pakistan. After the establishment of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) in 1968, the first task was to plan covert operations against Pakistan, train and nurture over 180,000 *Mukti Bahini* insurgents, and effectively capitalise on Pakistan's political, ethnic, geographic, economic, and strategic vulnerabilities.⁴

Kautilya's approach towards War (*Vigraha*) was not just confined to traditional aspects of strategic thinking or physical engagement with the enemy, but had advised the king to subdue the enemy with multifaceted strategies which are explained in the chart below. Kautilya does not limit the policy of war (*Vigraha*) to physical conflicts alone. Kautilya classifies war into four categories to subdue the enemy:

1. Diplomatic Offensive Measures (*Mantrayuddha*): The Indian government has used this method to malign and pressurise Pakistan. In recent years, the Indian Foreign Office used offensive diplomacy to create a negative image of Pakistan in the global political arena on several occasions. The Indian government reiterated that it would isolate Pakistan diplomatically at regional and global levels.⁵ Modi in

³ L. N. Rangarajan, *Kautilya: The Arthashastra*. India: Penguin Books India, 1992, 764.

⁴ Prem Bahadur Sinha, *Armed Forces of Bangladesh*. India: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 1979, 2.

⁵ Daniel S Markey, *China's Western Horizon: Beijing and the New Geopolitics of Eurasia*, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2020, 235.

2016 and 2019, echoed that India would diplomatically isolate Pakistan.⁶ Facts on the ground show that the Indian government has already been using this dictum of Chanakya conscientiously.

2. An Open War at a designated time and place (*Prakasayuddha*):

India and Pakistan fought wars in 1965 and 1971.⁷ Both wars led to large-scale destruction on both sides. Such wars are scant after the nuclearisation of South Asia.

3. A Secret War: *Kutayuddha*

In Secret War or *Kutayuddha*, it is advised to subdue the enemy by using treachery and psychological warfare. It also emphasises on deception and lethal combat.⁸ The word *Kuta* means “crookedness,” even “evil genius” and so refers to *realpolitik* strategy that assumes that “everything is free and fair in war.” The secret war or *Kutayuddha* strategy is inherently pragmatic, permitting the use of deceptive stratagems, ambushes, assassinations, biological warfare, and what we might consider today to be psychological warfare.⁹ Kautilya's *Arthashastra* also says that *Kutayuddha* might involve attacking when enemies are vulnerable, attacking when feigning retreats, and other stratagems.¹⁰ India has already imposed this type of war against Pakistan. It has used fake news, propaganda, and psychological warfare to hurt Pakistan and create a divide among people on religion

⁶ “Modi says India will work to ‘isolate’ Pakistan internationally,” *Dawn*, September 24, 2016. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1285839> and Baqir Sajjad Syed, “India vows to diplomatically isolate Pakistan,” *Dawn*, February 16, 2019. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1464142>.

⁷ Cashman, Greg. Robinson, Leonard C., “An introduction to the causes of war : patterns of interstate conflict from World War I to Iraq,” United States: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007, 205.

⁸ Roy, Kaushik, “India's Historic Battles: From Alexander the Great to Kargil,” India: Permanent Black, 2004, 33.

⁹ Morkevičius, Valerie. *Realist Ethics: Just War Traditions as Power Politics. India*: Cambridge University Press, 2018, 165.

¹⁰ Sohail H. Hashmi, Steven Lee and Steven P. Lee, *Ethics and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Religious and Secular Perspectives*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 295

and ethnicity.¹¹ Another purpose of India's psychological warfare is to create division among the masses and sow hatred and animosity towards the armed forces. Today, a critical analysis of the situation would help to understand such warfare against Pakistan. i.e., in 2020, the EU Disinformation Lab, a European think tank, unearthed hundreds of fake media houses and websites in more than 100 countries to pump fake news related to Pakistan, China, and European countries. A 72-page investigative report "*India Chronicles*" exposed the Indian propaganda and psychological warfare against Pakistan.¹² Another aspect of this dictum is a 'surprise attack on the enemy.'¹³ In this context, India has already carried out a surgical strike on Pakistan after the Pulwama attack in 2019. Though a surgical strike by India failed to achieve its stated objectives, India crossed the international border, violated Article 2/4 of the UN Charter, which bars member states from threatening or use of force against other member states, and carried out missile strikes in Balakot, Pakistan.¹⁴ In return, Pakistan launched successful surgical strikes on the strategic assets and installations of India across the LoC. Pakistan intentionally changed the direction of its missiles to avoid any physical damage but conveyed the message that Pakistan is a capable country with adequate striking capability to take out targets at a time and place of its choosing. Pakistan also shot down Indian aircraft SU-30 MKI and MIG-21. One pilot was killed and another was captured alive by Pakistan, which turned out to be an embarrassing situation for the Indian government.¹⁵ India's failure of the secret war strategy led to the fourth approach to

¹¹ Berlatsky and Noah. East Pakistan. United Kingdom: Greenhaven Press, 2012, 45.

¹² Gary Machado Alexandre Alaphilippe, Roman Adamczyk and Antoine Grégoire, "Indian Chronicles: deep dive into a 15-year operation targeting the EU and UN to serve Indian interests," *Disinfo.Eu*, December 9, 2020. <https://rb.gy/76ky8b>.

¹³ Mukhopadhyay and Amartya, *Realist Paradigm of International Relations: Power, Systems and Game Theories. India*: Taylor & Francis, 2023, 66.

¹⁴ Joanna Slater and Pamela Constable, "Pakistan captures Indian pilot after shooting down aircraft, escalating hostilities," *Washington Post*, February 27, 2019. <https://rb.gy/b9qlqc>

¹⁵ "Squadron Leaders Noman Ali Khan and Hassan Siddiqui share their experience of 27th February," *SAMA TV*, September 19, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xb6ViAsbxs0>

focus more on undeclared warfare to maintain a strategic edge against Pakistan.

- 4. An Undeclared War**, i.e., using **clandestine methods, assassinations, and secret agents (*Gudayuddha*)**. The treatise talks about breaking up confederacies and oligarchies by sowing dissension using “undeclared war.” Kautilya’s principles indicate his clarity of thought for consolidating the capture of territories and creating an enduring victory.¹⁶

India currently focuses on an *Undeclared Warfare Strategy* with pragmatism since it is risky to engage a nuclear Pakistan in an open war for obvious reasons. India also tried to deal with Pakistan with her secret war strategies through fake media, psychological warfare, proactive military operations (Cold Start Doctrine), and surgical strikes but with no concrete strategic advantage. The ultimate panacea to Pakistan's problem for India is an undeclared warfare strategy or the use of spies, proxy wars, covert operations, and assassinations through local criminal gangs. That is the focus of this study, India is employing the fourth approach with full vigour and zeal and has taken out many Sikh and *Kashmiri* activists/dissidents in Canada and Pakistan. Kautilya envisages undeclared warfare against the enemy, which entails torture, assassination, covert operations, and destruction of enemies both foreign and domestic.¹⁷ To achieve these goals, the Indian government is following the same dictum and trying to subdue its enemies through the establishment of secret cells to disrupt CPEC,¹⁸ assassinate enemies abroad, and eliminate internal dissent voices.¹⁹ Though India’s undeclared warfare strategy or hybrid war is not new

¹⁶ Vice Admiral MP Muralidharan, “Relevance of Arthashastra in the 21st Century,” *Indian Defense Review*, Issue Vol. 34.4, January 17, 2020, <https://shorturl.at/btDJP>.

¹⁷ Christian P. Potholm, *Winning at War: Seven Keys to Military Victory Throughout History*, Ukraine: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010, 23.

¹⁸ Mateen Haider, “RAW runs special cell to sabotage CPEC, says secretary defence,” *Dawn*, April 13, 2016. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1251860>

¹⁹ Justin Ling, “India Is the Latest Member of a Growing Assassination Club,” *Foreign Policy*, January 14, 2024. <https://rb.gy/uwwlbs>.

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against Pakistan, renewed hybrid warfare or undeclared warfare started after 2008.

India's Renewed Undeclared Warfare Strategy after 2008: Establishment of Secret Cell:

The Technical Services Division- (TSD)

India carried out covert operations on many occasions against Pakistan and sent their spies to undermine Pakistan's internal security. However, after the Mumbai attacks in 2008, India brought a huge shift in its strategic thinking and officially focused on covert operations against Pakistan. In 2008, the Indian Army established a *Secret Unit* under the command of General V.K. Singh and conducted three covert operations.²⁰

- 1. Operation Rehber-1-2** in Indian Occupied Kashmir to buy the loyalties of *Kashmiri* leaders/silence the dissent voices/ assassinate freedom fighters to maintain the oppression of the *Kashmiri* population.
- 2. Operation Seven Sister** was launched on the Naxalite insurgents in the eastern parts of India mainly in Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Chhattisgarh. The main aim of this operation was to neutralise the Naxalite movement and track and eliminate their core leadership.
- 3. Operation Deep Strike** was against Pakistan. In this operation main objectives were to eliminate the core leadership of Lashkar-I-Tayyaba (LET), mainly Hafiz Saeed and his close confidantes allegedly involved in militant attacks on India. India's covert operations under

²⁰ "Secret military intelligence unit ran 8 covert operations abroad?" *Times of India*, September 24, 2013.

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TSD gained momentum after 2008, and Pakistan saw some of the most ferocious and highly sophisticated terrorist attacks during this period.²¹ The level of sophistication, selection of targets, penetration of strategic installations, and devastation caused, suggest that these attacks were not planned by some ordinary *madrassah* graduates based in tribal areas. There has been some link of professionally trained intelligence agencies, uninterrupted supply of funds and adequate training, planning and meticulous execution which resulted in thousands of civilian and military casualties in Pakistan. The Indian signatures are found on many occasions. For example, in the Mehran Base attack, the TTP militants traveled from tribal areas and entered Karachi, and stayed there for a few weeks to plan a highly sophisticated terror attack against a fortified and protected naval installation. Militants entered the Mehran Base and located PC-3 Orion Maritime Surveillance Aircraft which had no usage against TTP militants in the FATA region. The PC-3 Orion is a Maritime Domain Awareness aircraft, meant to protect Pakistan's maritime boundaries against hostile navies. It is used to detect Indian submarines, warships, aircraft, and other vessels in *Pakistani* waters. These militants had clear-cut directions from their handlers to target and destroy PC-3 Orion aircraft which had strategic value against the Indian Navy only.²²

The TSD was disbanded due to a change in high command and inter-services altercations. Soon after the Pulwama attack in 2019, there was thinking in the intelligence circles to reestablish another cell in RAW to carry out global assassinations of anti-India elements linked with *Kashmir* independence or the independent state of *Khalistan*.

²¹ Harinder Baweja, "Army spook unit carried out covert ops in Pakistan," *Hindustan Times*, September 21, 2013, <https://goto.now/Fev2J>.

²² Rebecca Conway, "Naval base attack weakens Pakistan's counter-terror surveillance," *Reuters*, May 24, 2011. <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE74N4EO/>

Ajit Doval's Defensive-Offense Policy: *Capitalising on Vulnerabilities*

Ajit Doval, the National Security Advisor (NSA) of India since 2014, is a close confidante of the Indian prime minister and considered to be the mastermind behind an aggressive counter-terror policy towards Pakistan. On June 10, 2024, he got an extension as NSA chief under the new Modi government.²³ This means the continuation of his hawkish policies to undermine the internal security of Pakistan. In 2014, he gave a speech at a local university and outlined his strategy to tackle Pakistan. He suggested that India must adopt an aggressive policy towards Pakistan and move away from a defensive approach. Ajit Doval echoed Chanakya Kautilya's approach toward war and illustrated three levels of using force to counter the enemy;

1. **Offensive-Offense:** All-out war, open war, as envisaged by Chanakya. Ajit Doval said that offensive-offense in a nuclear environment is risky and entails far-reaching implications. Nuclear powers avoid wars because of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD).
2. **Defensive-Defensive:** Ajit says, "India's response to Pakistani terror has been defensive, 'like *chowkidars*,' just preventive."²⁴ He believed that such an approach would not deter the terrorist groups. He advocated for changing India's approach from defensive to offensive.
3. **Defensive-Offense:** This approach works under the framework that India must go to the areas of origin and eliminate the threat right there before it hits India. Kautilya gave this strategic thought in his book *Undeclared War*, in which he advised the king "to use spies, occult practices, covert operations, women, religion, or superstitions to subdue the enemy."²⁵ Ajit further explained this approach: "Unlike a purely *chowkidar*-like response to engaging with the enemy, and even

²³ Manjeet Negi, "Ajit Doval to continue as National Security Adviser," *India Today*, June 13, 2024, <https://goto.now/AyTFN>

²⁴ Vicky, "What is Doval's offensive defense and double squeeze policy for Pakistan," *One India*, September 22, 2017, <https://rb.gy/si8yt8>

²⁵ Kautilya. *The Arthashastra*. India: Penguin Books India, 1992, 533.

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unlike an all-out offensive response - where nuclear war becomes a possibility - defensive offense is when you go and attack the place where the offense is coming from. There is no nuclear war involved in that. There is no engagement of troops. They know the tricks; we know the tricks better.²⁶

Ajit further elaborated on his defensive-offense approach and said,

“Pakistan's vulnerability is many times higher than (that of) India ('s). Once they know India has shifted to a defensive offense, they will find it is unaffordable for them. You can do one Mumbai, you may lose Balochistan.”²⁷ He said, “Don't buy Pakistan's argument that Pakistanis are well-wishers, they are not. They will continue to bleed us with thousand cuts...”²⁸

The Indian NSA chief with such an aggressive mindset is no doubt a threat to Pakistan's security. Since 2014, Pakistan has faced serious challenges to its internal security. The method was simple, to create instability in Pakistan, and capitalise on vulnerabilities in Balochistan or ex-FATA region. Kulbushan Yadav was also operating from Chabahar during that period and was nabbed by Pakistan in 2016.²⁹ India's high-ranking RAW operative, Kulbushan Sudhir Yadav, was arrested in Mashakhel area of Balochistan. According to reports, Yadav joined the TSD probably in 2010 or 2012³⁰ and was deployed in Chabahar, Iran, with a fake identity of a businessman as Mubarak Hussain Patel. According to his confession and investigation report, he was tasked to achieve the following objectives:

²⁶ Amitav Acharya, Daniel A. Bell, Rajeev Bhargava and Xuotong Yan, *Bridging Two Worlds: Comparing Classical Political Thought and Statecraft in India and China*. United States: University of California Press, 2023, 235.

²⁷ Amitav Acharya, Daniel...

²⁸ “When NSA Ajit Doval outlined India's new Pak strategy- defensive offense – perfectly,” *Times of India*, October 4, 2016.

²⁹ “Transcript of RAW agent Kulbushan's confessional statement,” *Dawn*, March 30, 2016. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1248786>.

³⁰ “When Kulbushan Yadav wanted to be a spy, but was turned down by RAW,” *Financial Times*, April 12, 2017, <https://goto.now/DQZCo>.

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- Attacks on Chinese Citizens/Workers in Pakistan.
- Attacks on Pakistan's Civil/Military installations in Balochistan.
- Disrupt economic activity in Karachi through instability, turmoil, and target killing.
- Fund, nurture, and provide intelligence support to terrorist organisations mainly based in Balochistan.
- Maritime attacks on Pakistan-bound cargo ships/oil tankers and merchant ships to fail Gwadar port.
- Disrupt and Delay China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).³¹

Apart from Balochistan and Karachi, Ajit also focused on Afghanistan and the ex-FATA regions. India's aggressive posture intensified after the withdrawal of the US from Afghanistan in 2021. India reopened her consulate in Afghanistan after a deal with the Afghan Taliban. Since then, terrorist attacks by BLA, TTP, and ISKP against Pakistan have intensified to record levels, and India effectively exploited Pakistan's strategic, socio-economic, ethno-nationalist, and religious vulnerabilities.

Analysis of India's Undeclared Warfare Strategy after 2019

In 2019, India shifted her strategic thinking after failure in direct engagement- (Balakot surgical strike) with Pakistan. After 2019, Indian policymakers realised that instead of direct engagement, it is time to go for an indirect approach or undeclared warfare strategy. In the post-2019 scenario, Pakistan has witnessed numerous target killings in which India's sleeper cells managed to kill more than 20 alleged members of banned organisations JeM, LeT, and Khalistan movement.³² "After Pulwama, the approach changed to target the elements outside the country before they can launch an attack or create any disturbance," said one Indian intelligence operator. "We could not stop the attacks because ultimately

³¹ "Commander Kulbushan Sudhir Jadhav's Second Confessional Video," *ISPR YouTube Channel*, June 23, 2017, <https://goto.now/xgIIK>.

³² Cherylann Mollan, "India and Pakistan trade barbs over targeted killings," *BBC*, April 08, 2024, <https://goto.now/ubPdL>.

their safe havens were in Pakistan, so we had to get to the source.”³³ On January 3, 2022, a key commander of the banned terror outfit JeM, Saleem Rehmani was killed in Pakistan. Initially, it was reported that it was a robbery incident, which led to a shootout.³⁴ Later investigations suggested he was killed by the Indian intelligence and part of their killing spree strategy in Pakistan. Such killings in Pakistan would outrage the terrorist outfits and they may launch a series of attacks against India in occupied Kashmir or other parts of the world. This strategy of India may backfire and start a vicious cycle of reprisal attacks which may destabilise the region.

On March 9, 2022, Indian sleeper cells orchestrated the killing of Zahid Akhund *alias* Mistry Zahoor Ibrahim. It is alleged that he was one of the hijackers of Indian Airlines flight IC-814, which was hijacked in 1999, and in exchange of hostages the Indian authorities had to release top militant leaders including Maulana Masood Azhar Alvi, Syed Omar Sheikh and Mushtaq Ahmad Zargar. According to reports, Zahid Akhund was killed by two motorcycle shooters.³⁵ Coincidentally, the negotiations and transfer of hostages and militants was overseen by Ajit Doval. He, at that time, was a special director at the Intelligence Bureau.³⁶ Ajit Doval has a vast experience in espionage in enemy territory (especially Pakistan),³⁷ and he is also a vocal supporter of cross-border raids, surgical strikes, assassinations, and covert operations inside Pakistan. According to media reports, RAW handlers paid millions of rupees to Afghan nationals to carry out this assassination and later they fled to Afghanistan but their accomplices were caught in Pakistan. RAW planned Zahid Akhund's

³³ Abdullah Momand, “Indian network of extra-territorial killings ‘Global phenomenon’ needs coordinated response: FO,” *Dawn*, April 5, 2024, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1825866>.

³⁴ “Mart owner, robber die in Nawabshah armed clash,” *Dawn*, January 3, 2022, <https://shorturl.at/4NaMx>.

³⁵ “IC-814 hijacker Mistry Zahoor Ibrahim shot dead in Karachi: Reports,” *Economic Times*, March 9, 2022, <https://shorturl.at/ehxme>

³⁶ “Indian Airlines plane hijacker Mistry Zahoor Ibrahim shot dead in Karachi,” *Deccan Herald*, March 9, 2022, <https://shorturl.at/JWYKw>

³⁷ “Who is spymaster Ajit Doval who got third term as NSA in Modi government?,” *Times of India*, June 13, 2024, <https://goto.now/5pfoO>

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killing in Dubai, which is one of the bases for India to handle their covert operations in Pakistan. Indian intelligence agencies established their sleeper cells to execute this operation which entailed tactical planning and recruitment of professional shooters. Most of these assassinations were carried out by underprivileged locals or professional target killers for money. Most of the payments were transferred via the UAE. It is reported that RAW handlers who managed and planned these assassinations also met in Maldives, Nepal, and Mauritius to avoid detection.³⁸

The year 2023 was the bloodiest year for Kashmir-based dissidents and Sikh activists in Pakistan. More than six key members of Kashmir-focused organisations were killed. On February 20, 2023, RAW managed to kill another key commander of the proscribed organisation Hizb-ul-Mujahedeen in Rawalpindi. Bashir Ahmed Peer also known as Imtiaz Alam was on India's most wanted list. The modus operandi in his murder was the same, shooters came on motorcycles, shot the target at point-blank range, and left unscratched.³⁹

Nearly three months later, the murder of a Sikh activist took place on May 7, 2023. The Indian intelligence agencies orchestrated the killing of Khalistan Commando Force- (KCF) chief Paramjit Singh Panjwar in Lahore. Singh was wanted in India for terrorist attacks and was a key figure in the Khalistan movement. India's cross-border covert operations after 2020 intensified and mainly Sikh activists were targeted.⁴⁰ It is the violation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, adopted by General Assembly resolution 55/25 of November 15, 2000. India is a signatory to the Convention.

³⁸ Hannah Ellis-Petersen, Aakash Hassan and Shah Meer Baloch, "Indian government ordered killings in Pakistan, intelligence officials claim," *The Guardian*, April 14, 2024, <https://shorturl.at/OkIzB>

³⁹ Nazir Masoodi, "Terrorist Shot Dead in Pak, His Property in Jammu and Kashmir Attached," *NDTV*, March 04, 2023.

⁴⁰ "Wanted Khalistan Commando Force chief Paramjit Singh Panjwar shot dead in Pakistan's Lahore," *Tribune India*, May 6, 2023, <https://shorturl.at/mq6Eg>

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On October 2, 2023, another member of the banned outfit LeT, Mufti Qaiser Farooq was shot dead in Karachi. It has been observed by the locals that the killers of Mufti knew the area and could be natives of Karachi.⁴¹ Indian intelligence is hiring local gangs to carry out these extra-judicial killings.

Poverty, illiteracy, socio-economic deprivation, political instability, inflation, unemployment, ultra-nationalist tendencies, and religious extremism are a few factors that allow external powers in Pakistan provide enough fodder for intrusive activities by its enemies. Due to these factors, raising sleeper cells in major cities and hiring contract killers is not at all a difficult job for a professional intelligence agency. The same strategy was advocated by Ajit Doval a few years ago. In one of his lectures, he emphasised that India must capitalise on Pakistan's political, socio-economic, and ethno-nationalist vulnerabilities.⁴²

On October 11, 2023, RAW managed to eliminate Shahid Latif. He was killed by three shooters in Sialkot. Shahid was among the most-wanted list in India, and it is suspected that the Indian death squad was involved in his murder. India claimed that Shahid was involved in many terrorist attacks inside India, especially the Pathankot attack.⁴³

India is also targeting religious figures to ignite religious/sectarian violence in Karachi. On September 6, 2023, a cleric Qari Khurram Shahzad was killed by gunmen on a motorcycle. Karachi police arrested a man allegedly having links with RAW and his local facilitator in a slum area of Lyari.⁴⁴

⁴¹ "Lashkar-e-Taiba operative Mufti Qaiser Farooq shot in Karachi in yet another mystery killing," *Times of India*, October 2, 2023, <https://shorturl.at/rvcNJ>

⁴² "Ajit Doval warns Pakistan 'You do one more Mumbai, you lose Balochistan'," January 08, 2015, *thefearlessindian/YouTube Channel*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7ESR5RU3X4>

⁴³ "2016 Pathankot attack handler Shahid Latif gunned down in Pakistan mosque," *Times of India*, October 12, 2023, <https://shorturl.at/F4T0b>

⁴⁴ Imtiaz Ali, "Preliminary probe points to RAW's involvement in cleric's murder in Karachi's Gulistan-i-Jauhar: police," *Dawn*, September 13, 2023. <https://rb.gy/5ybaru>

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In 2023, the target killings increased, and Pakistan also witnessed many terrorist attacks associated with TTP, BLA, and ISKP. India established her network in Afghanistan in 2021.

In 2023, six people were killed in similar target-killing attacks. Pakistan's Foreign Office in January 2023, stated that Pakistan possesses credible evidence of India's involvement in the murder of two *Pakistani* citizens. Foreign Secretary Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi told the press that Indian intelligence operatives killed Muhammad Riaz and Shahid Latif in Rawalakot and Sialkot, respectively. He said, "These are killings-for-hire cases involving a sophisticated international set-up spread over multiple jurisdictions."⁴⁵

India's strategy of global assassinations have now spread to Canada and the United States. India had to face diplomatic setbacks from the Canadian and American governments for carrying out assassinations of Sikh activities residing in those states.

On June 19, 2024, a former Brigadier of the Pakistan army was killed by shooters on motorcycles. The Indian media linked Brigadier ret'd Amir Hamza with an attack on the Indian Army's Sunjawan Camp in Indian-occupied Kashmir.⁴⁶

Earlier, another Pakistani, Amir Sarfraz Tamba, was brutally murdered in Lahore. He was also accused of killing Indian prisoner Sarabjit Singh in jail with rods and bricks. He is also closely linked with LeT.⁴⁷

Pakistan needs to revamp its overall intelligence apparatus, bring political stability, put its own house in order, and launch a massive crackdown on

⁴⁵ Abid Hussain, "Is India behind targeted killings in Pakistan? What we know," *Aljazeera*, April 05, 2024, <https://shorturl.at/KBUHf>.

⁴⁶ "Retired Pakistan brigadier behind 2018 J&K attack killed," *Times of India*, June 19, 2024, <https://shorturl.at/RBNJQ>

⁴⁷ "Sarabjit Singh's Killer Shot Dead by Bike-Borne Gunmen in Lahore: Report," NDTV, April 14, 2024, <https://shorturl.at/zWOEM>

the sleeper cells of RAW operating in the country. India's strategy of cross-border assassinations is dangerous and entails far-reaching implications. Eliminating terrorist figures never hurt the terrorist organisation, they replace the leaders quickly. The solution to this problem lies in the early resolution of the Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan. The reason and motivation for these militants will end with the resolution of the Kashmir issue. Unfortunately, India's brutal oppression of *Kashmiris* would augment terrorist activities. India needs to revisit such flawed policies that can contribute to terrorism and extremism in the region, and in India, particularly.

Conclusion

The violent partition of the sub-continent in 1947 sparked the bloodiest human migration in the region. Almost 12.5 million people were displaced with an estimated loss of one million people consequently leaving behind corrosive thought process on both sides of the border. This resulted in protracted enmity between the two nations.

A series of overt and covert, conventional and non-conventional wars remained a permanent feature of the relationship. The first war fought between the two countries in 1948, was on Kashmir. The war officially ended by the establishment of a ceasefire line by the installation of UN Peacekeeping forces with a recommendation that a referendum needs to be held in the disputed area of Kashmir to ascertain the will of the people.

The second war in 1965 started with the skirmishes on the border. It saw the engagement of armoured vehicles and largest tank battle after World War II. East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) became the reason for the third war between India and Pakistan in 1971, which saw the breakup of Pakistan. However, after the Pokhran detonation of five nuclear devices by India in 1998, facing a similar response by Pakistan, the course of conflict changed its characteristics by the application of terrorist attacks and the role of non-state actors.

Dr. Masood Ur Rehman Khattak

India's undeclared strategy of surgical strikes and trans-border targeting is against International Law. Narendra Modi's third tenure is continuing with Kautilya's approach of undeclared warfare, which is disrupting peace and security in South Asia and beyond. It may have far-reaching implications. ■

