

Pakistan & Terrorism

What is the issue?

- The recent terrorist encounter at Handwara (Kashmir) has once again brought to the fore the terrorist threat emanating from Pakistan.
- Analysts of terrorism are well aware of the irony that Pakistan is both possibly the leading perpetrator and a major victim of terrorism.

What is the warfare that Pakistan has with its neighbours?

- **Strategy** - This contradiction can be traced to the deliberate policy of the Pakistani state to create and foster terrorist groups in order to engage in low intensity warfare with its neighbours.
- Pakistan first operationalized this strategy about Afghanistan following the overthrow of Zahir Shah by his cousin Daud Khan in 1973.
- It intensified this strategy with the cooperation of the U.S. and Saudi Arabia after the Marxist coup of 1978.
- **Asset** - The Soviet withdrawal in 1989 left the Pakistani military with a large surplus of Islamist fighters that it had trained and armed.
- Islamabad decided to use this “asset” to intensify the insurgency in the Kashmir Valley.
- Decade-long Afghan “jihad” had also radicalised a substantial segment of the Pakistani population as well as augmented sectarian divisions only between Sunnis and Shias and also among various Sunni sects.
- In the process, a number of homegrown terrorist groups emerged that the Pakistan Army co-opted for its use in Kashmir and the rest of India.

How did Pakistan’s strategy affect itself?

- Some of Pakistan’s terrorist groups turned against it especially after the Musharraf government.
- Musharraf’s government, under American pressure, decided to collaborate with the latter in the overthrow of Afghan Taliban regime.
- But not all terrorist groups acted in this way.

What are the actions of LeT?

- Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), the group involved in the Handwara encounter, is a classic example of a “**loyalist**” terrorist organisation.

- LeT has played by the rules set by the Pakistani military.
- It only launches attacks on targets outside Pakistan, primarily in India.
- Inter-Services Intelligence provides LeT with intelligence and logistical support in addition to identifying specific targets.
- This is why the LeT and its front organisations have continued to receive the military's patronage and support.
- Thus, Hafiz Saeed, its leader was provided protection by the Pakistani state despite being designated as an international terrorist by the UN.
- A Pakistani anti-terrorism court finally [sentenced Saeed](#) to 11 years in prison in February, 2020 for terror financing activities.
- It sentenced him to stave off the global anti-terror watchdog, Financial Action Task Force (FATF), blacklisting Pakistan as terror financing state.

What is the difference between LeT and JeM?

- Both the LeT and the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) have been engaged in attacks on Indian targets identified by Pakistan's ISI.
- The JeM has not hesitated to launch terrorist attacks on targets within Pakistan as well, especially against the Shias and Sufi shrines.
- The difference between LeT and JeM is that the LeT is more pragmatic and less ideological but the JeM is highly ideological and sectarian.
- **JeM** - JeM draws its ideological inspiration from extreme form of Deobandi Puritanism.
- Deobandi Puritanism considers all those who do not believe in its philosophy beyond the pale of Islam.
- Therefore, legitimate targets of attack for JeM include not only Shias and Barelvis but also the Pakistani state and the Pakistani military.
- **LeT** - It does not consider Muslims of different theological orientations as non-believers.
- This relatively "liberal" interpretation is due to the fact that LeT draws its ideological inspiration from a minority sect called Ahl-e-Hadis.
- [Ahl-e-Hadis composes only a small proportion of Pakistan's Muslim population and cannot afford to engage in sectarian conflict.]
- Moreover, it draws its membership from different Muslim sects.
- Both these factors drive LeT toward greater tolerance in sectarian terms and to avoid intra-Islamic theological battles.
- Its primary goals are political and driving India out of Kashmir.
- This jells well with the objectives of the Pakistani military and makes LeT and Hafiz Saeed, favourites of the Pakistani establishment.

What does this narrative clarify?

- Many of the terrorist groups were deliberately created by the Pakistani state

to serve its purposes.

- However, its ability to control the various terrorist outfits is uneven and some of them have turned against their creator.
- It establishes the fact that using terrorist outfits for state objectives can have very negative consequences for the stability of the state itself.

Source: The Hindu

