

# Endgame in Afghanistan: Debating the Kashmir Connection

Amit Singh Dabas

*America is history, Karzai is history, the Taliban are the future... Pakistan would be unwise to cut all contacts and goodwill with the future leaders of Afghanistan.*<sup>1</sup>

— Lt Gen Hamid Gul  
Former Chief of Pakistan's ISI

As the misadventure of the US and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in Afghanistan draws to a close with the promise of the withdrawal of their troops sooner rather than later, a debate gains ground on the possible implications of the US withdrawal, for the region in general and for Kashmir in particular. That there will be a vacuum post the departure of the Americans is certain. Who will fill it, and how circumstances will play out, remains a matter analysts worldwide are considering at the moment. However, given the number of global and regional players involved, their mutual distrust, scant respect for honouring agreements and preference for exploiting proxies makes the region a tangle wherein there are more questions than answers. Non-State Actors (NSA) with their proclivity for the capricious and whimsical rather than the predictable and anticipated, and the power games that have come to characterise

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Colonel **Amit Singh Dabas** is a serving defence officer.

**N.B.** The views expressed in this article are those of the author in his personal capacity and do not carry any official endorsement.

the expanse from Iran to Pakistan, make the future uncertain. Presently, what appears achievable is a consideration of influencing factors, the nature and concerns – derived from history – of the thespians involved and the circumstances sanctioned for the next few years. This will help us arrive at a pragmatic appraisal of the future of Afghanistan and the implications, if any, for Kashmir.

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### **Dramatis Personae**

The cast involves a string of major and minor actors, though every minor actor maintains the potential to grab centre-stage. Here's a snapshot of the major ones. The US is the chief actor, that is, history stands testimony, also the associate producer and principal director of this drama. The USA had an acceptable script till the stated aim was the demise of Al Qaeda. Buoyed by the seeming capitulation of the Taliban and immersed in a sense of religious calling, the aim quickly morphed into *winning the war against the Taliban*.<sup>2</sup> The aim subsequently mutated into *rescuing Afghanistan* through reconstruction and emancipation of the women by weaning them away from the *burqa, nikab, hijab* and *abaya*, all representative of oppression in the narrow prism of the West, through an infusion of democracy, education and liberal thought. Of course, the Taliban did not allow their attempt at playing *white man amongst the natives* to succeed. Currently, the Americans suffer a severe bout of 'imperial overstretch'.

The Americans missed a great opportunity, when, in 2002, having driven Al Qaeda from Afghanistan into the tribal wastelands of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan and with the Taliban reduced to scattered bands of gun-wielding men, they did not take recourse to negotiations and invite the Taliban to exercise a share in the power at Kabul. It took

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them another eight years to figure out that the war could not be won. So, belatedly, they have tried to walk this path of reconciliation and arbitration through attempted deals between the Afghan government and the Taliban,<sup>3</sup> as also initiated a contentious debate, at the behest of Pakistan, to support the ‘good’ Taliban while hunting down the ‘bad’ ones.<sup>4</sup> Taliban leaders were released from Pakistan jails as a measure of goodwill but they promptly found their way back to the battlefield.<sup>5</sup> It was a case of too little, too late. With withdrawal of the American forces round the corner and support for the Taliban amongst the Afghan population at an all-time high, there are no prizes for figuring out who is in the driver’s seat.

Pakistan, caught between a rock and a hard place, has the most at stake with the US withdrawal barely a heartbeat away. Historically, and not without reason, Pakistan has striven to have a pliant if not a client state on its western borders. Its theory of strategic depth<sup>6</sup> for conventional operations lies in tatters as it has willy-nilly provided a sanctuary for the extremist elements of the Taliban in its tribal areas and, in effect, reduced its depth further with the Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP) actively bringing the western border of turmoil closer to the eastern one. FATA and major parts of NWFP are under the influence, if not absolute control, of the Taliban, and the Pakistan Army is engaged heavily in selected provinces.<sup>7</sup>

The Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) has cemented its reputation as a hydra-headed monster, hand in glove with the Haqqani network, which, along with the Quetta Shura, targets American interests in Afghanistan. The killing of Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad has added to Pakistan’s dubious credentials, and with the ISI being held responsible for supporting the attack on the US Embassy and NATO Headquarters in Kabul,<sup>8</sup>

Pakistan's cup of woes is overflowing. The relations between Pakistan and the Taliban are suspect, with the Pakistan Army having taken up cudgels against the TTP, arrested several Afghan Taliban leaders, and its inability to call a halt to the drone strikes by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The Taliban, Afghan and Pakistani, both, squarely blame the Pakistan establishment for facilitating the strikes.<sup>9</sup> The TTP has promised to take over Islamabad and ensure *Sharia* in Jinnah's Land of the Pure.<sup>10</sup>

Afghanistan, led by the vulnerable Hamid Karzai, is bracing itself for a comeback of the Taliban. This is the third superpower that Afghanistan has seen off if you count the annihilation of the British Army in the First Anglo-Afghan War in 1842.<sup>11</sup> Afghanistan goes to elections in 2014. The Taliban regard elections as the tool of the devil and so their participation is a remote possibility even though the Americans have tried to persuade them to do so. The government's writ doesn't run much beyond Kabul and the Taliban seem to have an ever-increasing fan-base. Corruption, lack of justice and being a prop of the Satanic West are only some of the allegations against the present government.

The country shares borders with five countries and each has its own agenda. The ethnicities of the areas adjacent to these countries make the areas vulnerable to interference by the respective governments. Karzai, to ensure control over areas outside of Kabul, has tinkered with the established system of tribal governance and has sought to buy the loyalties of the ministers and officials under him.<sup>12</sup> The capability and integrity of the Afghan National Army (ANA) remain suspect and an

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alarming increase in the infamous ‘Green on Blue’ incidents, claimed by the Taliban, has raised doubts of active subversion or infiltration of its ranks. The Afghan Police openly admit their incapability to handle law and order once the ISAF withdraws. The third edition of the *Layha*,<sup>13</sup> the code of conduct for its cadre, published by the Taliban in 2010, encourages defection to boost their ranks, and retribution for those supporting the Afghan government of Karzai in any capacity.

India, following in the footsteps of the West and increasingly Islamophobic, particularly where Pakistan is concerned, has used soft power to keep itself relevant in Afghanistan. Scared, lest it be pulled into a power-game as an active participant, India is doing what it does best: watch from the side lines. It has pumped in US \$2 billion worth of development projects, trained a few of the Afghan Army personnel in India, provided scholarships to students, and maintained a presence limited to its consulates and embassy in Kabul.<sup>14</sup> The Indians have been able to achieve this under the security umbrella of the ISAF. Given that Pakistan has been actively engaged in undermining the Afghan government and Karzai believes that the ISI was responsible for his father’s assassination in Quetta, his affinity for India over Pakistan is understandable.

The Indian statecraft is, however, at the mercy of the circumstances and of Pakistan, over both of which it can exert little influence. As one discerning analyst puts it, “So far, India’s plans consist largely of hand-wringing and facile hopes.”<sup>15</sup> Afghanistan, for some time, will continue to be the ground where civil and military intelligence agencies will garner their emoluments for foreign service and risk-to-life, and propagate

non-involvement of other agencies lest India courts trouble by alienating its mammoth Muslim population.

India has the option of aligning once again with Moscow and Tehran, as it did in the 1990s, to assist anti-Taliban forces and try to prevent the fall of Kabul. But that is sure to draw the ire of Pakistan with its perpetual, not unjustified, fear of encirclement by India. The US endorsed Pakistan's concerns through its Af-Pak envoy, Richard Holbrooke, who said, "*Pakistan can play a role in negotiations and I support that role. Pakistan has an influence in this area and has a legitimate security interest.*"<sup>216</sup> Consequently, Pakistan has been able to prevail over the US to deny India any security-related role, not that the Indians were particularly keen. There was a slight shift in Obama's policy towards involvement of India post the killing of Osama bin Laden but that was probably more to do with getting a belligerent and red-faced Pakistan, protesting a breach of its sovereignty, back in line. India will continue to be predictably mute on Afghanistan and concentrate its energies on deriding Pakistan's inevitable participation (to India's disadvantage) in deciding the future course of that nation. With the consensus-before-decision compulsions of coalition politics and the perceived threat of a dent in the Muslim vote-bank in the run-up to elections in 2014, India can be trusted to fiddle while Kabul burns.

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### **Kashmir: Current Influencing Factors**

The execution of Afzal Guru came as a surprise to a Valley looking forward to another year of quiet. Even as the dispositions in Kashmir and Delhi wait with bated breath for the long-term ramifications, they can take heart from the ostensible non-indulgence from Pakistan. Yasin Malik of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) held a rally in Pakistan

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Occupied Kashmir (PoK) while the other separatist leaders, given the harsh winters and their failing health, were everywhere but in the Valley. Fearing violence, Kashmir was placed under curfew, with the cable network and web services over the cell-phone suspended. The separatists were placed under house arrest on their return to Kashmir and barring a few minor incidents, the Valley retained its composure.

The Centre has tied itself in knots with the suspect timing of the denial of a court review to Afzal Guru, his execution, and a miserable attempt at covering up the failure to inform his family of the execution. Omar Abdullah, seemingly caught unawares, is at pains to preserve his political capital and is openly issuing disparaging remarks having long-term implications<sup>17</sup> and backing the public call for Afzal Guru's mortal remains to be handed over to his family. Whether the political parties facilitate the making of another Maqbool Bhatt during their election campaign for 2014 remains to be seen and, hence, the flux and resultant inability to comment authoritatively on the immediate future in Kashmir. However, assuming that the agencies involved are able to steady the ship through the summer, the period of the past two years of relative peace is commendable.

The Armed Forces Special Powers Act 1990 remains a contentious issue and the Indian Army stands isolated in its opposition to its revocation or amendment. The Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir has repeatedly expressed his exasperation at the intransigence of the Army<sup>18</sup> and Mr P Chidambaram, the Union Finance Minister, has taken up the clarion call and labelled the previous and present Chiefs of the Army as obstinate in the face of reason.<sup>19</sup> The Inspector General Kashmir Zone has backed the

capacity of the Jammu and Kashmir Police to go it alone.<sup>20</sup> Also, the Director General of Police, Mr Ashok Prasad, is a proponent of converting “a security issue into an engineering issue” by enhancing the Anti-Infiltration Obstacle System to an all-weather fence that will withstand the vagaries of heavy snow,<sup>21</sup> implying perhaps, that if the Army concentrated on containing the influx of terrorists at the Line of Control (LoC), it would not be required in the hinterland.

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The Army is being painted as the devil and allowing itself to be portrayed as a symbol of Indian oppression. Now, any revocation or amendment is a victory over an Army with vested interests. It will be projected as a triumph of the civil population, of the state government and of the Centre. It will be the vote-harnessing issue in the run-up to the elections in 2014 and the Army will have overstayed its welcome by insisting on being part of a final conflict resolution when it has achieved what the military is meant to in cases of internal strife, that is, *bring violence down to acceptable levels so that political negotiations are held from a perspective favourable to the state*. The Army’s contention is that, come 2014, with the withdrawal of the ISAF from Afghanistan, the situation in the Valley will take a turn for the worse. How pragmatic is that argument will be debated later in the article.

The human rights and security situation index finds the state of Jammu and Kashmir favourably poised with the number of cases of unexplained disappearances and deaths in custody, amongst the lowest in India.<sup>22</sup> The tenor of the news on the air and in the papers before Afzal Guru’s execution was one of optimism and the theme generally had shifted to governance, or the lack of it, rather than security issues. Civil society, stimulated by Anna Hazare’s tryst with the Lokpal in the mainland, appears to have been activated and trying to hold the government accountable. The

security environment has never been better, with security check-points reduced to a minimum, reduced signature of the terrorists<sup>23</sup> and the locals venturing out uninhibited after dark. These are all positive signs, indicating an improved atmosphere bordering on normalcy.

Rishi Islam, a strain of Sufi Islam and exclusive to the Valley, has experienced a newfound resurgence since February 2011 with the efforts of Karwan-e-Islam.<sup>24</sup> The threat of a Wahhabi invasion manifests more in theory than on the ground. The Kashmiris are largely committed to revering their saints in annual *Urs* (festivals) and proud of the relative independence that their variant of Islam offers them. As Mehbooba Mufti of the People's Democratic Party aptly sums up, "Sufism is not a religion but a way of life. The Kashmiri women did not take to the *burqa* even when militancy was at its peak."<sup>25</sup>

The separatists, swayed by public mood and convinced of the might of the state, finally seemed to have realised the futility of the armed struggle backed by Pakistan sponsored mercenaries or *jihadis*.<sup>26</sup> In various fora, the splintered leadership has sought to propagate the protests of 2010 as the model for the future of the struggle. The fibre of the Kashmiri society and their disenchantment with the separatists will ensure that any such agitation in the future, unless politically mishandled, will be short-lived. The capability of the separatists to organise mass agitations with anti-India sentiments is suspect, though they may seek to capitalise on the common public grouse of misgovernance, corruption and police high-handedness.

Public sentiment in Kashmir and Pakistan, long held hostage by the Army and political leaders of Pakistan, has broken the shackles and recognised the misery wrought by indulging in, or abetting, violence. The binding factor of a common religion still has a few takers, though the support for the Pakistani cricket team is an oft quoted but misplaced yardstick for the popular sentiment in Kashmir. Sloganeering, exhorting Pakistan, often used in protests of all hues, never mind the context, is

a favourite ploy to garner quick attention and induce a nervous twitch in the security agencies and government.

Pragmatic intelligentsia and academia appear convinced, albeit in restricted company, that existence with India is in the best interests of Kashmir. In Pakistan, there is a growing sentiment among the people that the obsession with Kashmir is the root cause of their ills and they need to douse the fire in their house before bothering about the neighbour.

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Pakistan, riddled with sectarian strife, domestic terrorism and corruption is increasingly accepted as a state on the brink. The common Pakistani is aware of the strides India has made in economic and diplomatic spheres and laments the downward spiral that Pakistan is caught in. Though there is still a considerable following of the anti-India sentiment, Kashmir was not a rallying point for the elections of 2013. Instead, the focus was on combating the scourge of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), religious extremism, separatism in Balochistan and elsewhere, sectarian violence in Karachi and cessation of the drone strikes that compromise the sovereignty of Pakistan and kill innocents.

Pakistan clearly has its hands full, the *Pakistan factor* in Kashmiri politics is on the wane, however temporarily, and there appears to be limited mileage that can be garnered by raising the bogey of Indian excesses in Kashmir. Overtly too, Pakistan has expressed an inclination to put Kashmir on the back-burner and accord priority to dealing with the violence at home.<sup>27</sup> However, there are other reasons, mentioned later, for which Kashmir will find relevance for Pakistan.

The Internet has caused a perceptible subversion of the Kashmiri mind and some sections of the youth identify with the resistance being offered by Islamists to the West's 'Global War on Terror'. Given that Kashmir

does not satisfy any of the conditions for waging *jihad*,<sup>28</sup> the comparisons with other conflict areas are, however, shallow and indefensible. The social media and cell phones are often used to propagate the ‘*Azaadi*’ sentiment and call for removal of the Indian Army by accusing it of being an agent for cultural aggression bent on weaning the Kashmiris away from Islamic virtues. Presently, only a very few subscribe to that argument. The Army must contain its exuberance and retain its secular character through non-involvement in communal affairs by abstaining from preaching communal harmony or expressing its bias for a particular strain of Islam.<sup>29</sup> These issues are easily misinterpreted and given the penchant amongst the Kashmiris for generating conspiracy theories, it’s a path fraught with the danger of appearing motivated even in harmless endeavours. However, if denied an excuse to point a finger at the Army, it is unlikely that the sentiment will make any major inroads.

The West, with a palpable sense of Islamophobia, stemming from its Global War on Terror and its associated propaganda, has largely sided with the Indians on the Kashmir issue and endorsed it as a bilateral one between India and Pakistan.<sup>30</sup> Comparisons between Kashmir and Palestine, drawn first in Pakistan by Gen Pervez Musharraf and propagated by the Kashmir Action Committee of Pakistan (KACP), a Lahore-based organisation that comprises retired bureaucrats and Pakistan Army officers whose *raison d’être* is supporting Kashmir’s merger with Pakistan, have done the rudimentary rounds to limited effect. An overzealous Pakistan, in its endeavour to draw international attention to the dispute, has further convinced the West of it being a Muslim movement abetted by the terrorism sponsoring state of Pakistan. The forced exodus of Hindu Kashmiris, participation of foreign mercenaries and occasional statements from the Al Qaeda or Lashkar-e-Tayyeba leadership endorsing *jihad* in Kashmir have all added to the perception. The United Nations, as is widely acknowledged, does little more than parrot the opinion of the West and, therefore, generally, ratifies that outlook.

## How Real is the Threat from Af-Pak?

**Risk of a Two-fold Threat:** The influx of Afghan terrorists into Kashmir post the US withdrawal is a threat that a few in the Indian strategic community and most in the higher echelons of the Army believe in. Also feared is the import of the sentiment that is purportedly capable of swamping the current Sufi disposition and generating a wave of religious extremism determined to drive the 'Hindu Army' from Kashmir in its quest for a *Khilafa*. Possibly, it is simplistically reasoned that having got rid of the ISAF, and having nothing more to do, the Taliban, abetted by the ISI, will turn to India to spread mayhem through violence and the Wahhabi belief. So how real is this threat?

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**The Taliban's Tribal Fractures:** The Afghan Taliban of today are not the same as the Taliban who overran Kabul in 1996. The major difference is in the leadership where, though Mullah Omar remains the *Emir*, the major positions have passed on to the Durrani tribe from the Ghilzai tribe and lower leadership positions are more a factor of recruitment bases than actual capabilities.<sup>31</sup> The Durranis are the proponents of Pakhtunistan, a country that will spawn across Afghanistan and a chunk of Pakistan. Currently, the presence of the ISAF is the binding factor. With withdrawal imminent, already the Afghan Taliban are starting to fracture along tribal lines.<sup>32</sup> The most propounded fallout of the withdrawal, a descent into civil war for the coming years, seems a distinct possibility.

**The Taliban's Relationship with Pakistan:** Given the morphing that the leadership has undergone, the support from the Pakistani establishment is a tad short while the suspicions run deep. In fact, not one Durrani, despite their obvious influence amongst the Pashtuns, was placed in power when Pakistan set up the Peshawar Seven,<sup>33</sup> a coalition of militia to deal with the Soviets. Further, also suspect is Pakistan's clout with the Afghan Taliban, who have had more than half of their top leadership captured by the Pakistani security forces to rein in the independence that the likes of Mullah Berader and Mullah Mansoor Dadullah were exerting through strained relations with Mullah Omar and secret talks with Karzai.<sup>34</sup> Sections of the Afghan Taliban also hold Pakistan responsible for the volte face following 9/11 and presently for the drone attacks in Pakistan's tribal areas along its border with Afghanistan. Even when the Taliban were in power, they refused to honour Pakistan's request for regularising the Durand Line, rejected the pleas to spare the Bamiyan statues, refused to hand over Riaz Basra<sup>35</sup> or later Osama bin Laden and much of their foreign policy was independent of the dictates of Pakistan, even resuming relations with Iran despite the killing of eight Iranian diplomats and a journalist in the Taliban's takeover of Mazar-e-Sharif in 1998.<sup>36</sup>

**Afghan Taliban's Interest in Kashmir and Current Relations with India:** Despite what is popularly believed, Pashtuns from Afghanistan, by their own admission and statistically, have never fought outside of their areas of influence or interest,<sup>37</sup> which is, Afghanistan and the tribal areas of Pakistan. They appear to have no interest beyond this region. Despite the presence of Al Qaeda in their midst, after Osama bin Laden had sworn allegiance to Mullah Omar, there was not a single Afghani amongst the terrorists who attacked the USS *Cole*, the US Embassies in Africa or the hijackings of 9/11; this, when the eventual attackers stayed and trained in Afghanistan. The Taliban provided Bin Laden a sanctuary because he brought with him Saudi funding and arms which enabled the Taliban to

succeed in battle.<sup>38</sup> Later, after 9/11, because he was an accepted guest, the tenets of *Pashtunwali*, the code of the Pashtuns,<sup>39</sup> did not allow for him to be abandoned in the face of a threat of war.

An odd Pashto speaker making his way to Kashmir, even when the Taliban held sway in Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001, is more an exception to prove the rule. Mostly, *jihadis* from Pakistan Punjab, Chitral, Pakistan Occupied Kashmir and tribal areas, killed in encounters, were loosely labelled *Afghanis* or even *Taliban* by the Army, possibly to add to the sense of achievement.<sup>40</sup> Some of these were also Pashto speakers. Foreign fighters, from other than Pakistan, did visit the Valley on what was called “vacation *jihad*”<sup>41</sup> But with the global state of turmoil that sees more areas being added to the list of those under conflict, Kashmir does not appear to be the preferred destination for the Islamists keen on *jihad* for a long time to come. Post 2014, the Afghan Taliban will continue to focus their energies within Afghanistan and Kashmir will not form part of their agenda.

Also, will the Kashmiris, who have suffered over two decades of avoidable violence, support a renewed emphasis by Pakistan? Dr Syed Nazir Gilani, Secretary General of Jammu and Kashmir Council for Human Rights (JKCHR), a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) in Special Consultative Status with the United Nations, argues this eloquently in the *Kashmir Observer* dated January 07, 2013, wherein in an article titled “Who will host the Afghan Taliban in Kashmir?”, he writes, “*If one were to believe the Taliban claim (espoused by Mirwaiz on return from Pakistan) as a reality, the question remains, who will host the Afghan Taliban in Kashmir? We have yet to come to terms with the after effects of the Kashmir militancy of the 1990s and Mirwaiz has informed us about a general feeling in Pakistan of the Taliban coming into Kashmir. The Taliban would not be air-dropped and would, of course, need a safe crossover, shelter, guns, bullets, food and medicine. Would the people who have been selling Musharraf’s 4-point formula since 2006 and gradually turning*

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*their backs on militants, intervene and help the Taliban? The answer is no.*” The Kashmiris have determined that letting others hijack their agenda yields nothing. Hurriyat Chairman, Syed Geelani and United Jihad Council Chairman Syed Salauddin, have repeatedly condemned the methods of the Taliban.<sup>42</sup>

*American interest in Afghanistan* does not cease post 2014. Afghanistan sits on US \$1 trillion worth of resources, as gauged by American experts.<sup>43</sup> A lawless expanse could

once again be used to plan and launch attacks against American interests and a fall of the government at Kabul will be viewed as an utter failure of the US’ prolonged engagement in Afghanistan. US-Pakistan relations will hinge on the last factor. If in pursuance of its security interests, Pakistan tramples on the interests of the superpower, it will continue to be friendless and distrusted amongst the international community. That, while nudging the US closer to India.

### **Threat Emanating from Pakistan**

There has been a paradigm shift in the Pakistan Army’s doctrine in recognising domestic terrorism (even if it is of its own making) and not India as the biggest threat facing the nation. However, Pakistan being Pakistan, Kashmir cannot be wished away. There are several factors which will ensure that the fixation with Kashmir will continue. The recent clash at the Line of Control and the Pakistani demand for a probe by the Military UN Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) and later the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC),<sup>44</sup> perhaps has its genesis in (apart from the Indian Army action previously) drawing the attention of the UN to the Kashmir issue at a time when Pakistan was the President of the UN Security Council.<sup>45</sup> Further, Pakistan, sensing that the going

might get even more tough after the US withdrawal in 2014 and that India may just get exclusive access to the driver's seat insofar as bilateral relations are concerned, may want to exert pressure on the US to prod India into showing some movement on the Kashmir front. The only way that would happen under the present circumstances was if, in the run-up to 2014, Pakistan could offer a viable reason to go slow on its part of the deal in operating against the Haqqani network or Quetta Shura. And that reason has to be a threat from India which would require Pakistan to threaten to move its troops away from its western borders to the Line of Control in the east. The US, looking for an honourable exit, doesn't want to rock the boat, especially because it expects Pakistan to play the principal role post its departure. Also, Pakistan hasn't completely recovered from the loss of face from Operation Geronimo which eliminated Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad and is keen to seek out opportunities to regain its credentials as the saviour of Pakistan.

The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), led by Hekimullah Mehsud, has expressed its desire to establish the *Shariah* in Pakistan<sup>46</sup> and is actively combating the Pakistan Army in the tribal regions and occasionally around the military cantonments and bases. Its attacks are getting bolder by the day and despite calls by the Pakistani population to go for the jugular, the Pakistan Army seems unwilling or incapable of suppressing the threat. The TTP has also expressed its desire to establish the *Shariah* in Delhi, though that path will invariably pass through Islamabad and may be dismissed as mere rhetoric at the moment.<sup>47</sup> With the Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM), led by Altaf Hussain, calling for the virtues of Jinnah and not the *Shariah* taking centre-stage through a referendum in Karachi, the TTP and MQM are at loggerheads and Karachi may be expected to get bloodier.<sup>48</sup> There is talk of the Army stepping in to resolve Karachi once and for all. If the Pakistan Army enters into a deal with the TTP, as it has with Mullah Nazir and Hafiz Gul Bahadur,<sup>49</sup> it will be labelled a sell-

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out by the population and the credibility of the Army will dip further. Also, the situation in Pakistan's tribal areas will continue to be tumultuous with the US drones expected to be active in the defence of Kabul. That might just be in Pakistan's interest as it will tie down the TTP and restrict their operations to the tribal region. Pakistan, as now, will continue to use US air assets to gain operational success

against the TTP. The TTP is unlikely to find the operational space to set eyes on Kashmir though its terrorists may, on their own or at the behest of elements in the Pakistani establishment, target Indian assets in Afghanistan.

Punjabi terrorist organisations like the Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Tayyeba are the keenest on Kashmir, though it is not expected that with the nature of Indian deployment at the Line of Control and the sentiment of the population, they can make a game-changing impact in the hinterland. As discussed earlier, abetting violence in Kashmir through foreign elements may not be the best policy for Pakistan any longer. The public sentiment in Pakistan and Kashmir is against violence and the US will keep a tight leash on the goings-on in Pakistan and Afghanistan. With the coalition forces out of the way, the US might not have to be tripped too hard to employ sanctions and other punitive measures against Pakistan. While Kashmir may not experience a remarkable surge in numbers, these organisations, aided by the Inter-Services Intelligence will try to cause unrest in other parts of India. Pakistan, as is its wont, will try to give these acts a domestic flavour by involving Indian citizens. Combine that with a predictable, below-the-threshold Indian reaction of sabre-rattling in the run-up to the 2014 elections and not much will have changed in the past two decades.

## Conclusion

Pakistan may seek to exploit Kashmir, being a currency that still has some purchasing power, with its usual methods of subversion, incitement and propaganda. Any attempt by Pakistan to foment trouble in Kashmir through *jihadi* elements from Pakistani Punjab will not only weaken its Kashmir argument but is sure to backfire given its own state of internal turmoil and dismal international reputation. Will India have the stomach for a fight? Militarily yes, because the violence levels are not expected to rise to the erstwhile intensity with the fence at the Line of Control and the disillusionment of the Kashmiris with the gun. Pakistan is fighting hard to counter its isolation in the diplomatic community and the paranoia over Kashmir may just have lost its prized place in the priorities before Pakistan. Pakistan has tried to bring the Kashmir issue back into focus by raising the bogey of 2014, but it remains just that, a bogey. In Afghanistan, the West tends to agree with the security concerns of Pakistan vis-à-vis India and that will be the new battleground of wits. India's assets will be at the mercy of the Taliban and the TTP, though the Taliban, for reasons mentioned earlier, are not expected to add to the Kashmir imbroglio. The Taliban will take centre-stage once the US withdraws, while pacifist India, with a non-existent policy for Afghanistan, will let go of the only credible bargaining chip with Pakistan and play the predictable victim-of-terrorism-from-Pakistan card. And that will be business as usual.

## Notes

1. Lt Gen Hamid Gul, in an interview with Lyse Doucet, BBC's Newshour programme, commenting on the relationship between Pakistan's ISI and the Afghan Taliban.
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21. In a meeting with this author at the office of the Superintendent of Police, Pulwama; Ashok Prasad was on the verge of taking over as Director General Police (DGP) when the meeting took place. Later, he made the same proposal during the visit of the Union Home Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde in October 2012 which was appreciated by the Minister. In the words of the DGP, "Zero infiltration will get you zero militancy."
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25. Asit Jolly, "The Wahabi Invasion," *India Today*, December 23, 2011.
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27. Rezaul H Laskar, "Homegrown Militants Biggest Threat," *Greater Kashmir*, January 4, 2013.
28. An interview with Haider Farooq Mawdudi, noted Pakistani Islamic scholar and son of the late Maulana Sayed-ul-Ala Mawdudi, founder of the Jamaat-e-Islami (JEI). He refutes 'jihad' in Kashmir on the grounds that it's against the tenets of the Quran as Islam does not permit a covert war. In this connection, quoting his father's stand on the issue, he points out the double standards in Pakistani policy of pursuing diplomatic relations with India while waging a 'jihad' against it through covert means. He also castigated the JEI leadership of Pakistan for spending huge amounts on waging 'jihad' in Kashmir and sacrificing the lives of thousands of innocent and poor people; for more see, <http://www.jammu-kashmir.com/insights/insight9811c.html>; also, several Islamic scholars lay down prohibition on practising and propagation of Islam as the prime prerequisite for waging *jihad*, a condition not satisfied, and so acknowledged, in Kashmir.
29. Randeep Singh Nandal, "Centre Wades into Barelvi-Wahhabi Duel in Kashmir?," *The Times of India*, April 25, 2012, available at [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-04-25/india/31398556\\_1\\_shrine-hazratbal-barelvi-sect](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-04-25/india/31398556_1_shrine-hazratbal-barelvi-sect). Nandal further writes, "And the Army that prides itself on being secular, appears to have been convinced to throw their lot to push this sectarian caravan. Army units are keeping a close watch on the construction of new mosques in their operational areas with orders to observe the Wahhabis. Some officers are uncomfortable with such involvement of the forces. Nobody here has ever accused us of being a Hindu Army or of sectarian bias. This tarnishes us. We are also influencing our officers and men subconsciously."
30. "Obama's Kashmir Comments," *The International News*, July 17, 2012, available at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-8-120895-Obamas-Kashmir-comments>
31. "The Quetta Shura," *Tribal Analysis Centre, Virginia*, 2009.
32. Anand Gopal, "Serious Leadership Rifts Emerge in Afghan Taliban," Counter Terrorism Centre, November 28, 2012, available at <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/serious-leadership-rifts-emerge-in-afghan-taliban>
33. The Islamic Unity of Afghanistan Mujahideen (also known as the Seven Party Mujahideen

- Alliance or Peshawar Seven) was an Afghan organisation formed in May 1985 by the seven Afghan Mujahideen parties fighting against the Soviet and Democratic Republic of Afghanistan forces in the Soviet-Afghan War. All of the groups were Sunni Muslims, and all were majority Pashtun except the Jamiat-i-Islami, which was Tajik. Also, Peter Tomsen, *The Wars of Afghanistan: Messianic Terrorism, Tribal Conflicts, and the Failures of Great Powers* previewed on Google Books, p. 305. Listed therein is the composition of the leadership of the Peshawar Seven reflecting also their tribal ethnicity.
34. Doucet, n. 16.
  35. "Taliban Refuse to Hand Over Wanted Men," *Afghanistan News Centre*, April 2001, <http://www.afghanistannewscenter.com/news/2001/april/apr24h2001.html>
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  37. Inamul Rehman, "Will Taliban Trickle Over to Kashmir?" *Kashmir Times*, December 21, 2012.
  38. Ali H Soufan, *The Black Banners: The Inside Story of 9/11 and the War Against Al-Qaeda* (W.W. Norton & Company, September 2011).
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  41. Soufan, n. 38.
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  44. "Pak Wants OIC to Probe LoC Violations," *The Indian Express*, February 10, 2013.
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