CHAPTER VI

OPERATION TOPAC, 1988: REALITY OR FIGMENT

A host of writers, academicians, journalists, political and military analyst, the media and people in the Government and the Army have constantly been referring to 'Operation Topac' or the 'Kashmir Plan' or the 'Zia plan' or the 'Liberation Plan'. This is being done not only on both the sides of the border, but within the international community as well. Thus, giving credence to the existence of such a plan. Whatever be the name given to the plan. There is a plethora of clinching documentary, oral and circumstantial evidence proving Pakistan's direct complicity in the planning, preparation and initiation of militancy, terrorism and proxy war in the state of J&K. The voluntary confessions of captured militants, in the presence of international media and other neutral internal organisations and agencies, the vast stocks of captured arms, equipment other warlike stores and documents point an unwavering damning finger at Pakistan, which is the only country that has a reason, the resources and more than enough political, geographical, ideological and historical compulsions to do so.

Talking of history, has not it been proved beyond doubt that Pakistan indulged in similar subversion strategy in 1947-48 (Operation Gulmarg) and in 1965 (Operation Gibraltar) then why not an 'Operation Topac' or the 'Kashmir Plan' or the 'Zia Plan' or the 'Liberation Plan' now. Of course, the Pakistani powers that be, will vehemently deny their direct involvement in Kashmir as they have always done since partition. Even after their direct involvement was proved in 1947-48, 1965 and recently in 1999, during their Kargil misadventure (which, incidently, was also a part of 'Operation Topac').

However, here what is intended to be proved is the existence of a pre-planned operation (call it by whatever name) for instigating terrorism, militancy and unleashing of a proxy war in Kashmir by Pakistan. In doing so, we shall address ourselves more to the availability of documentary evidence in the form of admissions by leaders of terrorist groups/organisations operating in Kashmir, reports in the media by journalists correspondents and other well known media personalities on both sides of the border as well as from other countries round the world. The other kind of evidence i.e., oral and circumstantial though available in abundance is not as fool proof and clinching as documentary evidence.
First, we shall address ourselves to the documentary evidence that involves the Pakistani based sources. Amanullah Khan, the Chairman of JKLF was contacted in May 1984, by Lt. Gen. Akhtar Abdul Rehman, the then head of Pakistan’s ISI and a very close confidante and advisor of President Zia, to enlist the support of JKLF in initiating an insurgency in Indian Kashmir. The plan was finalised by 1986 and action was started in July 1988. This confirms the assumption that the Kashmiri uprising was planned and orchestrated by the Zia regime in Pakistan.¹ The involvement of Gen. Rehman in the Kashmir issue is significant, keeping in mind his considerable experience in handling the insurgency in Afghanistan during its most critical phase. His involvement provides further proof of the existence of the ‘Kashmir Plan’.

The involvement of Gen. Rehman in the Kashmir plan is vividly highlighted in the General’s Biography titled ‘Fateh’, written by Haroon Rashid, published in Pakistan in August 1990, where very revealing observations are made by the biographer regarding the Pakistani plan to destabilise Kashmir: “The plan which General Akhtar Abdul Rehman had made for Kashmiris movement for independence was to come with the struggle for liberation in Afghanistan in mind, which it was thought would be achieved by spring 1989. As against the Afghan freedom fighters who had been trained in large numbers by the ISI, an altogether different scheme was worked out in respect of Kashmir. Since it was difficult to get Kashmiris from across the border, only those leaders of the movement were trained who could thereafter train others... Gen. Akhtar was so profoundly involved in this, that he himself met with those Kashmiris who were prepared to lay down their lives for the liberation of Kashmir from the stranglehold of India and its accession with Pakistan... The Kashmir plan had to be prematurely implemented following the untimely death of Zia’s most likely successor (Gen. Akhtar) in the air crash of 17 August 1988.”²

Amanullah Khan, exactly revealed the same information in an interview to Zahid Hussain of the Karachi monthly ‘Newline’ of February 1990. To a question by the journalist “How did you mobilize the uprising? Was it a long term plan?” Amanullah Khan replied “Yes, it was... it had to be well prepared. So we actually started political planning in 1986

and continued till the end of 1987. for one and a half years we were planning our strategy and
it began in July 1988.” It is unthinkable that he (A. Khan) could have embarked on operations
such as these for some years without the knowledge, approval and assistance of the
Government of Pakistan.3

Hashim Qureshi a leading leader of the JKLF (he had also hijacked the Indian
Airlines plane to Pakistan in 1971), now settled in Amsterdam wrote a series of articles to a
Srinagar weekly “Chattan” in November 1988, which fully corroborate Amanullah Khan’s
above mentioned revelation. Excerpts translated into English were published by O.N. Dhar in
‘The Statesman’ of 19 April 1989. Qureshi revealed that the Pakistani military intelligence
had started preparing for its new phase of training and arming of Kashmiri youth as far back
as in 1984. He said “.... The military wanted to use us, i.e. the Liberation Front in the Indian
part of Kashmir for this purpose, word was sent to us during May-June 1984 for
discussions... top officials told us in clear terms that all that we (KLF) ought to concern
ourselves with, should be to get young men from across the border and hand them over to any
of our military posts. These young men, we were told, would be taken care of by the military,
trained by it and then sent back. We were asked to utilise all our influence and energy in the
task of getting such young men... a secret drive was started to fetch agents...”4

In an interview to the ‘Times’ (London) in January 1990 Amanullah Khan was much
more explicit when he said “the present uprising is the result of well-laid plans and that the
militants receive arms and training through his organisation based in Pakistan.” Dr. Farooq
Hyder, Vice Chairman of the JKLF revealed to “the Economist” (London): “We chose
Srinagar and the Kashmir valley as the first stage of our attack, what has happened so far is
the urban phase, mostly sabotage and hit and run tactics (phase one of ‘Operation Topac”).5
Arif Nizami, editor of the ‘Nation’ wrote in his newspaper that Pakistan’s ruling (Benazir’s
PPP Govt.) “credits Zia with laying the foundations of the present uprising in Kashmir.”6

3 Ibid., p.24.
4 Ibid., p.25.
5 The Economist (London), 9 June 1990, (Brackets mine).
An article called "The Kashmir Struggle" by Pakistani journalist Mir Abdul Aziz on the other hand says that the plan was 'fantastic' (as in fantasy) and nothing of the sort has been "officially" heard of in Pakistan.\(^7\) However, in the same article the author states a doubt: "Here again, some people are of the opinion that when Zia thought that the Afghan struggle was nearing completion, he thought that some other movement must be started to prolong his rule. He thought of Kashmir, which is an important issue as that of Afghanistan for the people of Pakistan."\(^8\) Jamait-i-Islami of Kashmir published a confidential booklet in Urdu called "Hizbe Islam" which was secretly circulated among militants and their sympathisers in the valley. The booklet contained guidelines of Pakistan's action plan on Kashmir, which is a rough translation of 'Operation Topac'.\(^9\)

Whatever the truth may have been, the fact is that Zia-ul-Haq was, undoubtedly, the person who revived the freedom movement, in its present form in Kashmir. It is a recorded fact that when Zia visited POK he shouted slogans about Liberation of Kashmir and 'Kashmir banega Pakistan' during his public meetings there. He also went to the extent of saying that if he joined any party, it would be the Muslim Conference of Azad Kashmir which wanted to extend the territorial frontiers of Pakistan by making Kashmir part of Pakistan. Not only this, Zia also ensured that the Kashmir issue was extensively internationalized. In the Havana NAM summit he talked of Kashmir in his address. He did the same during the New Delhi summit in 1983. He talked of Kashmir in the Organisation of Islamic Conference at Makkah Muazamah/Taif. He also mentioned it in his address to the UN General Assembly. Zia's obsessive passion for Kashmir was well known. The people of both sides of Kashmir believed that if any person could get the annexation of Kashmir to Pakistan it was him. Otherwise how can one explain the mass hysterical frenzy in the valley that followed his death in 1988. The large scale rioting carried on for more than a week taking eight lives.

The proxy war plan is vividly recounted by the biographer of Farooq Abdullah, Mr. Aditya Sinha in his book "Farooq Abdullah: Kashmir's Prodigal Son - A Biography".\(^10\)

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\(^8\) Ibid.


Farooq Abdullah, it must not be forgotten, could be one of the ‘raison de etre’ for the existing conditions in the valley. His contribution and complicity in the Kashmir embroglio is questionable, to say the least, writers like Dina Nath Raina, Pyarelal Kaul, Jagmohan, Hari Jaisingh, Omkar Razdan and a host of other journalists and media persons have labelled him the ‘Bhindrawale of Kashmir’. In his biography there is a whole chapter titled “ISI: Proxy War Strategies” which reveals to quite an extent the two level strategy of Pakistan in Kashmir and in doing so, not only exposes the gradual development of the proxy war plan in Kashmir but also provides tenability to the pre-existence of a well thought out plan for Kashmir, master-minded by Zia and his coterie. Summarising the chapter here would facilitate comprehension.

The chapter starts with the conceptualisation of the Machiavellian plan of spreading insurgency in J&K by General Abdul Akhtar Rehman Kahn, the Director General of ISI, between 1980-87, as has been illustrated earlier. The wind fall, in the form of financial and military largesse, that the Afghan crisis brought to Gen. Zia by way of America declaring Pakistan a frontline state in its proxy war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, which made Pakistan an “international master in the art of guerrilla warfare.” The biographer makes an important statement here “General Akhtar was the man in charge of the ISI from the beginning of the Afghan war. He revelled in the situation for it helped him to develop capabilities that he felt he might one day use in Kashmir... General Zia, however cautioned him that he did not want to repeat the mistakes of 1965; the next time Pakistan got itself militarily involved, it would be with the complete cooperation of the Muslims of Kashmir.”

Further proof of Gen. Zia’s plan follows next, when observations are made from an article written by Maulana Abdul Bari, the Amir of “Azad Kashmir” Jammat-e-Islami, published in ‘Jehad-e-Kashmir’ of December 1993, titled “Who launched militancy in Kashmir?” He writes that “he met Gen. Zia in 1982 with a plan to incite insurgency in Kashmir... General Zia gave him the go ahead, and with the help of Pakistan’s Intelligence Bureau, Maulana Bari convinced his counterpart in Kashmir, Maulana Saduddin, to visit Pakistan and meet General Akhtar.”

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11 Ibid., p.188.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
Akhtar in 1982, the Jammat-e-Islami began sending small batches of young Kashmiris for training to ‘Azad Kashmir’, training which had been perfected by the Pakistani’s in the Afghan war. A boost to Pakistan’s plans came in 1984, with the dismissal of Farooq from the Chief Ministership of J&K. This led to waves of young Kashmiri’s from the valley crossing over for training. Exploiting the growing popularity of the JKLF, General Akhtar facilitated the training of a large number of Kashmiri boys, in 1989 according to figures given to Farooq Abdullah by the RAW, it was around 300.

Despite the fact that such reports were constantly received by the Government serious problems were not anticipated because it was assumed that Pakistan would not cross the “threshold of tolerance” which governs international relations between neighbouring states. In fact, for long, Pakistan did not cross this threshold. Their efforts were further stymied by the attitude of JKLF because of ideological differences between them and the Pakistani authorities (Generals Zia and Akhtar). Even when Pakistan tried to force JKLF to commence subversive activities in Kashmir in 1984, Hashim Qureshi, the JKLF leader, spurned the proposal, writing about this in ‘Chattan’ an Urdu weekly Qureshi said “All four of us in the negotiation committee felt infuriated and told (General Akhtar) in no uncertain terms that we were not agents but revolutionaries.”

Meanwhile Amanullah Khan arrived in Pakistan in 1986 after being deported from England and took over as the head of JKLF from Qureshi - of course with liberal help from Gen. Akhtar.

Hashim Qureshi, makes a convincing mention of ‘Operation Topac’, in his latest book on Kashmir. The manner in which he refers to this operation, and the part he played in it leaves the reader with no doubts that ‘Operation Topac’ was in fact a reality. He writes “In 1984, military generals in Pakistan decided to make an adventure in Kashmir. A plan called ‘Operation Topac’ was drawn... ISI made a big mistake at this point of time. It looked at me as I happened to be the Chairman of Liberation Front in Pakistan and Amanullah Khan at that time. In 1984-85 winter, the ISI was in touch with me for three months. In my delegation which used to talk to ISI were included Zubairu’l Huqq Ansaria (General Secretary), Late Rashid Hasrat (Chief Organiser), and Dr. Farooq Haider (Treasurer). I flatly refused to be a player in a game that would end up in the destruction of Kashmir and her people. Having

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14 Ibid., p.192.
come to know from ISI the full detail of their plan. I was left with no doubt in my mind that Pakistan’s military and ISI wanted to make only the Kashmiri youth the cannon fodder. After ISI had parleys with me talks were also held with the then Amir of Jamaat-e-Islami in Kashmir namely Saadu’d-Din and the General Secretary Ghulam Mohammad Butt. Later on Maulana Abdul Bari was also included in this team. Gulam Nabi Fai (of Kashmir American Centre) and Ayub Thakur (World Kashmir Movement) were called from Saudi Arabia. Ultimately the Liberation Front under the leadership of Amanullah Khan was used for the furtherance of the plan.”

The March 1987, elections in J&K was the final flame that ignited the already smouldering valley. Pakistan first backed Amanullah Khan’s JKLF to lay the seeds of proxy war in Kashmir. General Hamid Gul, the new ISI Chief who took over from General Akhtar in April 1987, appointed Brigadier Gulzar and Brigadier Barkatullah Khan of the ISI to direct the Kashmir operations. In 1989, minor dissections between JKLF and their Pakistani masters forced Shabir Ahmed Shah to state in an interview to “Kashmir Times” in February 1989 “that the ‘Azad Kashmir’ training project was premature and that the organisers had not done their homework properly. While stating that the project of imparting arms training to Kashmiri youth was cleared with the prior permission of General Zia, and that General Akhtar Rehman was one of the organisers of the plan, Shah felt that while training of youth in the handling of arms was good, taking up of arms against India at this juncture would be suicidal.” However, Pakistani trained militants, Kalashnikovs and Grenades started making increasing appearances in the valley during 1989.

Pakistan, however, was wary of JKLF and decided to patronise its own tazeems (organisations). Groups like Hizb-e-Islami (aligned with Afghan leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar), Hizbul Mujahideen (comprising of Jamaat-i-Islami cadres) and Allah Tigers - all

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15 Hashim Qureshi, Kashmir: The Unveiling of Truth (Delhi: Renaissance Publishing House, 1999), pp.202, 203. (Hashim Qureshi is one of the co-founders of the JKLF. He had hijacked an Indian Airlines Fokker to Lahore in 1971 and after having been given a hero’s welcome, was later dubbed an Indian agent. He consequently served a 10 years prison sentence in Pakistan. Since 1986 he has been living in Amsterdam from where he has been orchestrating a propaganda campaign for Kashmir’s independence).

16 Ibid., p.194.
with extreme fundamentalist ideologies made their appearance in the valley. Slowly, the movement started shifting into the hands of foreign mercenaries.

Pakistan also 'bought' the services of two famous scholars - Mohammad Ayub Thakur, originally from Kupwara now settled in London and Ghulam Nabi Fai settled in Washington. Both became the cornerstones of projecting the Pakistani viewpoint about Kashmir to the west. Both were strategically located in this regard.

Why did Pakistan cross the threshold was the question that came to the mind of all these connected with Kashmir - perhaps it was the threat of a nuclear conflict, as by now, Pakistan had started giving broad hints about its nuclear capability to the world. Zia felt that this threat coupled with the proxy war in Kashmir would deter India from launching an all out war against his country.

The above mentioned facts are fully corroborated by the highly reputed author/correspondent and an expert on South Asian relations - Mr. Selig S. Harrison: "Pakistani stimulation of the Punjab insurgency goes back to the beginnings of the Zia-ul-Haq regime in 1978. By 1984, the Pakistan Army’s Field Intelligence Unit (Part of ISI) was helping to organise the Liberation Front in the Kashmir Valley. By 1988, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Directorate in Islamabad had begun to set up training camps in Pakistan - held Azad Kashmir manned by retired Pakistani army officers. Evidence obtained in Pakistan as well as from Indian and American intelligence sources indicates that some 63 Pakistan-operated camps have been functioning at various times during the past two years. Captured agents and guerrillas have provided detailed evidence that Pakistan has trained hundreds of guerrilla leaders and has smuggled more than 600 weapons into the valley. Including rocket launchers and kalashnikov rifles from US supplied Afghan stock piles."17 Another issue that needs attention at this point is the fact that, the foregoing suggests a defined strategy of Zia pertaining to the use of force in regional conflicts - The sponsoring of insurgencies and waging of proxy wars. The type he initiated in Afghanistan, Punjab and finally in Kashmir. If this be accepted as a fact, then the existence of 'Operation Topac' initiated by Zia in Kashmir is very much in the realm of possibility. Mr. B. Raman, a former top official in the Cabinet secretariat writes in an article "In February, coinciding with the Indian Prime Minister's visit

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to Lahore, Nawabzada Nabiullah Khan of Quetta, Balochistan, a close associate of the Qazi (who was the leader of Jamaat-e-Islami, and a close confidante of Gen. Zia)... had given a detailed interview to the Balochi language monthly called “Jamhooria Islamia” on the Qazi and his hidden agenda,... From the point of view of India’s national security, the most worrying portion of his interview relates to the JI's hidden agenda regarding India. He says that, it was the Qazi who persuaded Zia to start Operation Topac.  

It is a known fact that Zia used the Qazi as well as Sardar Qayyum Khan (Chief Minister of Azad Kashmir) to act as a channel for assisting the Kashmiri extremist movement. Operation Topac, does therefore, appears to be a reality.

On the Indian side ample proof, exists about the existence of ‘Operation Topac’. In an interview with Zafar Meraj, Shabir Ahmed Shah a People’s League leader in Srinagar, openly lauded the late Gen. Zia-ul-Haq and the ISI’s role in the affair, he said “Shaheed (Martyr) Zia, late Gen. Rehman and others knew about this plan and it was with their permission that training centres were established in different parts of Pakistan.”

In India, the existence of a plan for Kashmir, scripted by Gen. Zia and Gen. Rehman remains a tangible reality, the entire spectrum of media believes in its existence, as does the entire country. It finds mention in almost all literature published on the Kashmir situation in the country, authors of which are all well known political and military analyst, thinkers and experts on Kashmir.

The above mentioned fact, therefore, do point to the existence of a pre-conceived plan by President Zia. The existence of which Pakistan will not agree for obvious reasons. Ironically, India will also not officially agree to any knowledge of such a plan because of fear of accountability, if you knew about it, then what did you do. The evidence in support is overwhelming, to say the least, call it the Zia plan, the Kashmir plan or the Liberation plan, ‘Operation Topac’ is documentarily and circumstantially a reality. The involvement of the two governmental agencies - ISI and FIU of the army stands proved, secondly, it is almost impossible for such large number of men and such sophisticated arms and equipment in such

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massive quantity to flow from across the line of control in Kashmir for more than a decade, without the existence of a plan and without open support of the Government and the Army.

Jagmohan, whose two tenures as Governor of J&K, during the most turbulent times in the history of that state combined with the fact that he had access to a repletion of classified Government information accredits him with being one of the best known Indian authority on J&K, he writes in detail about ‘Operation Topac’ in his magnus opus. He states “I have come across reports as well as newspaper stories about what was called Operation Topac. The conception of this operation was attributed to the President of Pakistan, Late General Zia-ul-Haq... The basic objective of Operation Topac was to make Kashmir a part of Pakistan. What Pakistan could not achieve through the wars of 1947-48, 1965 and 1971 had to be achieved through an amalgam of subterfuge, subversion, force and religious fundamentalism.”\(^20\) He then proceeds to delineate the three phases of the plan, ending by saying “It would be noticed that the plan was comprehensive, well thought out, and made a lot of sense, military as well as political.”\(^21\)

Dina Nath Raina, on the other hand has given out the complete plan in detail at Appendix-I of his book.\(^22\) Neelam Deo, Minister (Political, Embassy of India, Washington D.C., speaking at a symposium sponsored by the Centre for Asian Studies, University of South Carolina refers to the ‘Kashmir Plan’ which had been made by Gen. Akhtar Abdul Rehman (Former head of ISI) “was to come into effect in 1991... However, the Kashmir Plan was inaugurated in 1984.”\(^23\) The ‘Kashmir Plan’, in effect is ‘Operation Topac’ with a different name. Pyarelal Kaul writing in his book has gone through great pains in explaining ‘Operation Topac’ and how each phase of the operation has been transposed on the happenings on ground in the valley. He says “what guide lines General Zia laid in phase 1 of Operation Topac, may be taken notice of, in order to examine the similarity in the situation

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\(^21\) Ibid., p.409.
that existed in Kashmir which was apparently reflection of the plan as General Zia had envisaged.."24

Gen. K.K. Nanda (Retd.) in his book states that Gen. Zia had decided to inflict a Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) on India, his ‘think tanks’ had studied the successful conduct of operations by ‘Mukti Bahini’ in Bangladesh, they were also determined not to repeat the mistakes of ‘Operation Gibraltar’ of 1965. Accordingly ‘Operation Topac’ was conceived. The writer then proceeds to give out the details of the plan.25 D.P. Kumar writes extensively about ‘Operation Topac’ in the introductory chapter of his book as well as subsequently, in the main body, he devotes a full chapter to this operation.26 Prof. Bal Raj Modhok also makes a detailed mention of ‘Operation Topac’ in his book.27 Maj. Gen. Afsir Karim (Retd.) was himself posted in a very senior appointment in Jammu and Kashmir during the incipient stages of ‘Operation Topac’ and the proxy war. In his book he mentions about this plan.28

Manoj Joshi has also vividly accounted the ‘Liberation Plan of Gen. Rehman in his latest book, stating that Maulana Sadruddin, the Amir or leader of the Kashmir Jamaat, met Zia-ul-Haq and was asked to launch an agitation against Indian rule. Joshi further states that in an article in the Azad Kashmir Publication, ‘Jehad-e-Kashmir’ in December 1992, Maulana Abdul Bari, who became the amir of the Azad Kashmir Jamaat, declared that his outfit, with encouragement from Gen. Zia played a major role in fostering militancy in the state.29 Zia, therefore had a plan, which, he encouraged the Amirs of the Jamaat of Kashmir on both the sides of the Line of Control to implement. In another latest book by Praveen Swami, the writer says “US Patronage enabled General Zia-ul-Haq to give life to a renewed offensive in Jammu and Kashmir. By mid 1980’s, Pakistan was working on the contours of

26 D.P. Kumar, Kashmir: Pakistan’s Proxy War, (New Delhi: Har Anand Publications), pp.4-7 and 116-122.
Operation Topac, a revised version of its 1947 and 1965 enterprises."\(^{30}\) Dr. Farooq Haider one of the leaders of JKLF at Rawalpindi speaking to a correspondent said "It will be the most perfect guerrilla war in history. This is not a sporadic uprising, it is the result of years of planning... we close Srinagar and the Kashmir valley as the first stage of our attack. What has happened so far is the urban phase mostly sabotage and hit and run tactics."\(^{31}\) Here again the stress is on 'a plan', and on an 'urban phase', initially militancy was activated in Srinagar city, it thereafter spread to rural areas of the valley, Doda, Kishtwar, Poonch and Rajouri.

Brief references to the extracts from articles/writings of some well known Pak-India experts on 'Operation Topac' will, besides revealing some significant information about the operation also consolidate the fact about the existence of such a plan.

George Joseph, while writing for the Indian Express of 26 November, 1986 says, "About 25,000 youths from Pakistan occupied Kashmir (POK) have been imparted training in handling arms and subversive activities for possible infiltration into India as per the third phase of the 'Zia Plan' to create disturbances in Jammu and Kashmir... The third phase of the subversive plan, which was evolved by Gen. Zia-ul-Haq, the former President of Pakistan was supposed to mark the final stage of the 'Zia Plan'. Under the first phase, youth from J&K were cured to cross over to Pakistan and were imparted training in subversive activities. During the second phase called 'Operation Stage' the Pak-trained youth who had crossed back to India were expected to indulge in large scale subversive activities like bomb blasts and shoot-outs to create terror among the people and to demoralise the administration." Reference here is made to the existence of a plan by Zia, which has the format of 'Operation Topac' but is called 'Zia Plan'.

Inder Malhotra, in an editorial titled "Time Running out in Kashmir" in Times of India of 18 January, 1990 says "Though General Zia-ul-Haq is no more, Pakistan has, at no stage, deviated from his by now well known Operation Topac, aimed at wresting Kashmir from this country without repeating the mistakes or taking the risks Pakistan did in 1965."

A PTI report filed from Islamabad, in the Hindustan Times of 17 February 1990 titled 'Zia had planned to Liberate Kashmir', tries to get the reaction of Pakistani Government


officials and Journalists about the veracity of ‘Operation Topac’. It comes out with some interesting observations, like “the plan in detail had been reported in some Urdu newspapers in Pakistan” - “Although there are no official confirmation on the veracity of reports... observers here do not rule out the possibility of a sinister design behind the whole operation”. Asked to comment on these reports, a foreign office spokesman (of Pakistan) told a Pakistani journalist at a press briefing on Thursday that “I will have to look at these reports before making any comments”. The report adds - After going through the General’s plan, a political observer speaking strictly on condition of anonymity, remarked cautiously “If we put two plus two together, a new dimension emerges’. Another analyst on Pak affairs said he would not be surprised if the ISI continued to carry on with Gen. Zia’s scheme on Kashmir, despite constraints imposed by the Bhutto Government. This report does suggest, though obliquely, that ‘Operation Topac’ did exist. Officially, however, it was refuted in keeping with their stipulated policy on the issue.

Brigadier N.B. Grant, in an editorial in the Hindustan Times of 4 December 1993, titled “Problem Valley India must Retain Initiative” writes lucidly about ‘Operation Topac’ saying “As of now Operation Topac is right on schedule. Let us hope it does not end as planned by him”. The writer develops this editorial with the premise, that ‘Operation Topac” was a reality.

During the Kargil crisis of May-July 1999, references to ‘Operation Topac’ became more frequent and strident, as the operational situation on ground started to follow the sequence of events as laid out in the plan by Zia in 1988. This kind of congeniality could just not be set aside off-handedly, without establishing a justifiable link between the plan of 1988 and the happenings at Kargil in 1999. The sentence enunciated in the plan saying “Adopt and develop means to cut off the lines of communication between Jammu and Kashmir and within Kashmir and Ladakh by stealth, without recourse to force. The road over Zojila upto Kargil and the road over Khardungla should receive our special attention... Establish virtual control in those parts of the Kashmir valley where the Indian Army is not located or deployed.” An analysis of the relevant extracts of the plan will clearly reveal that the plan implemented by

Pakistan in Kargil during May-July 1999, opened out almost sequentially as planned eleven years earlier.

According to media reports the Kargil plan was blue printed during Gen. Zia’s time by Brigadier Azizuddin. This was disclosed by Karachi’s Urdu language weekly ‘Takbeer’. In 1998, Azizuddin became a Major Gen. and Chief of General Staff of Northern Command, the command responsible for operations in J&K. This disclosure strengthens the fact that the Kargil operation which was a part of ‘Operation Topac’ was hatched during Zia’s time and implemented in 1999, when Gen. Azizuddin, the brain behind the plan, was posted in a senior appointment in Pakistan’s Northern Corps. Similar views have been put forth by T.V. Rajeshwar, on the Kargil conflict in an editorial in Hindustan Times. Mention of Operation Topac in relation to the Kargil operation and the linkages between them there of, have been lucidly made in the Statesman of 16 July 1999 in the perspective column of the newspaper. The Tribune of 6 May 1999 carries a front page report on the relationship of ‘Operation Topac’ with the Kargil operation.

The media, therefore, has been convinced regarding the veracity of ‘Operation Topac’ right from the time it was launched in the valley in 1989 till the Kargil crisis in 1999. A plan, that has stood the test of time for over a decade and has displayed a plethora of irrefutable documentary and circumstantial evidence, consistently, cannot, but be a reality.

Operation Topac 1988: Reality or Figment: Evidence Circumstantial

By 1988 the situation in the valley started getting out of control as far as terrorism is concerned. The pro Pakistan elements started their campaign of terror with enhanced aggression and vehemence, as support to them increased from their mentors in Pakistan. Initially bombs and bombings were the weapons and tactics of the terrorists. Demonstrations and anti national activities came in evidence when crowds in large number turned out to hoist the Pakistani flag on Pakistan’s independence day on 14 August 1988. On India’s Independence day the crowds converged at Lal Chowk in Srinagar and hoisted black flags.

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33 Tribune (New Delhi), 16 May 1999, p.9.
34 The Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 12 May 1999, p.13.
On 16 August, as the agitation gathered momentum, police firing took place to quell the unruly crowd, killing one and wounding 50. Gen. Zia-ul-Haq’s death in a Plane crash in Pakistan in 1988, triggered off large scale rioting in Srinagar, Baramulla, Pulwama, Bhaderwah and Anantnag (All these areas subsequently became militant strong-holds). The process of bombings, demonstrations and rioting with a view to inciting the locals continued till end 1988.

From beginning 1989, the militants became more organised and started attacking police stations and other elements of Government machinery, in broad day-light, with the aim of defying and denigrating state authority. Muslim fundamentalists in the state, meanwhile, started an Islamisation campaign. The next step was cleansing the valley ethnically by systematically targeting the Kashmiri Pandits. By now, “the militants sway in the valley was complete and the ruling political parties, both Congress and the National Conference, became immobilized and just stopped functioning. New Delhi was still content to turn a blind eye to what was happening in the state, feeling, secure in their theory of “tolerable level of violence.” By 1988-89 it became clear that the movement in the valley was following a predetermined pattern and a method existed in the madness. During this period talk about “Operation Topac” gained currency and was mysteriously linked to a Pakistani plan of operation in Kashmir. Mysterious, because till date, no authentic physical proof of such an operation has been found. Documentarily, the operation may stand proved. However, the operation appears to have been accepted as a genuine entity by academicians, and the armed forces, of India and Pakistan as also the international community, as has already been brought out earlier.

Mention of ‘Operation Topac’ (OP Topac) was first found in an Indian Defence Review, research team article, titled “OP Topac: The Kashmir Imbroglio” published in July 1989. The writers have conceded that “Part fact, part fiction, the scenarios visualised have been based on the trends, which have become manifest in the subcontinent in the last few years”. What part is fact and what part is fiction has not been clarified in the article. An

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39 Ibid.
attempt to glean the truth needs to be made here, as ‘OP Topac’ in essence, enunciates the two level strategy of Pakistan in Kashmir, in a manner, no one has done till date. It can, at best be compared with Pakistan’s strategy in Afghanistan, during the Soviet invasion. Numerous similarities have been drawn up between the two by renowned experts round the world. That, the two are not only linked but are almost mirror images of each other in more ways than one is indisputable. Colonel Harjeet Singh writes aptly, “Operational Topac” may be a figment of imagination. the writing in the book “The Bear Trap”, (quoted earlier), outlining the philosophy and methodology of the Pakistani involvement in the insurgency against the Russian Army in Afghanistan as one of inflicting death by a thousand cuts could reflect more of hope than substance. However, the parallels of the thought process and the actual situation on the ground suggest that the threat and potential for aggravation of the Kashmir problem is only too obvious to discount or wish away.”

A study of the plan for ‘OP Topac’ as outlined in the article in 1989, reveals such startling resemblance to the actual happenings on ground in the valley, commencing from 1989-90 to date that the most hard boiled political and military realist will not dismiss it as mere coincidence. The analogy is uncannily lifelike and forces one to stand up and take notice.

As reported in the article - “A top level meeting has been called in President’s residential office by General Zia in April 1988. This was attended by selected corps commanders and ISI bosses. Some other names mentioned in this connection were those of a prominent Afghan Mujahid leader and two Kashmir Liberation Front leaders... The main contents from the President’s address which were leaked out probably though a mole from a third world country and became available to India’s Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) agents some time in September-October 1988, were as follows:

“Gentlemen, I have spoken on this subject at length before... Let there be no mistake however, that our aim remains quite clear and firm - the Liberation of the Kashmir valley... In the past we had opted for hamhanded military options and therefore, failed. So, as I have mentioned before we will now keep our military option for the last moment as a coup de grace, if and when necessary. Our Kashmiri bretheren in the valley, though with us in their hearts and minds are simple-minded folk and do not easily take to the type of warfare to which, say a Punjabi or an Afghan takes naturally, against foreign domination... The Kashmiris however have a few qualities which we can

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exploit... he is a master of political intrigue. If we provide him means through which he can best utilize these qualities - he will deliver the goods... Here we must adopt those methods of combat which the Kashmiri mind can grasp and cope with - in other words, a coordinated use of moral and physical means, other than military operations, which will destroy the will of the enemy, damage his political capacity and expose him to the world as an oppressor... our plan for Kashmir, which will be code named as ‘Op Topac’ will be as follows:

Phase 1

A low level insurgency against the regime... we plant our chosen men in all key positions; they will subvert the police forces, financial institutions, the communications network and other important organisations. We whip up anti-Indian feelings amongst the students and peasants, preferably on some religious issues... Organise and train subversive elements... initially to deal with paramilitary forces... Adopt and develop means to cut off lines of communications between Jammu & Kashmir and within Kashmir and Ladakh by stealth... The road over Zojila upto Kargil and the road over Khardungla should receive our special attention... In collaboration with Sikh extremists, create chaos and terror in Jammu to divert attention from the valley at a critical juncture... Establish virtual control in those parts of the Kashmir valley where Indian Army is not located or deployed...

Phase 2

Exert maximum pressure on the Siachen, Kargil and Rajouri-Punch sectors to force the Indian Army to deploy reserve formations outside the main Kashmir valley. Attack and destroy base depots and headquarters (HQ) located at Srinagar, Pattan, Kupwara, Baramulla, Bandipur and Chowkiwala... some Afghan Mujahideen... will then infiltrate in selected pockets with a view to extending areas of our influence... Finally a special force under selected retired officers belonging to Azad Kashmir, with the hard core consisting of Afghans, will be ready to attack and destroy airfields, radio stations, block Banihal tunnel and Kargil-Leh highway. At a certain stage of the operations Punjab and adjacent areas of Jammu and Kashmir will be put under maximum pressure internally by our offensive posture.

Phase 3

Detailed plans for the Liberation of Kashmir Valley and establishment of an independent Islamic state in the Third Phase will follow... By the Grace of God, we have managed to accumulate large stocks of modern arms and ammunition from US consignments intended for Afghan Mujahideen. This will help our Kashmiri brethren achieve their goals... And what of our Chinese friends? They can do no more than ensure that Indian Forces deployed against them are not moved out... of course, if we are in serious
trouble, the Chinese and our other powerful friends shall come to our rescue..." 41

Interpreting and paraphrasing some essential elements of the above mentioned plan ‘Op Topac’ in the light of the actual unfolding of events in the valley from 1988 (when the plan is purported to have been conceived) to date, may perhaps, establish a relationship between fact and figment, in doing so, the possibility of the whole thing being a coincidence has been discounted on grounds of rationality and law of averages. Relevant aspects of the avowed ‘Op Topac’, as they apply to this study, are underlined and analysed with a view to determine as to how much the so called “Op Topac” revealed in 1988, has actually been translated on ground till date. This exercise may assist us in evaluating, whether there is an element of authenticity to this plan or not. Other mechanisms and ways will also be adopted to prove the reality regarding the creation of such a plan by Pakistan. This exercise is essential, as ‘Op Topac’ in reality is a fair representation of Pakistan’s two level strategy in Kashmir.

Note must, however, be made of the fact that, the actual translation of the plan into reality on ground may not have progressed sequentially in the manner presented in the plan - but then which operational plans have proceeded ditto as planned, specially, something like ‘Op Topac’ which has such a long gestation period. Modifications and mid-course changes are instruments that are inbuilt features in such operational plans, which the planners and controllers have been applying to this plan too, from time to time. However, the essence of the overall plan has remained unchanged. As, we shall proceed to see.

1. “Our aim remains the Liberation of Kashmir”: This is the most hackneyed phrase being used by Pakistanis of all hues and colours since partition. From Jinnah to Sharif this aim has maintained bullheaded persistence, through the years. It is a recorded fact of history that Jinnah had, during the last week of October 1947, planned to send regular Pakistani troops into Kashmir to liberate it. “In the middle of today’s Defence Committee, Auchinleck rang up Mountbatten from Lahore to say that he had succeeded in persuading Jinnah to cancel orders given the previous night for Pakistani troops to be moved into Kashmir.” 42 Despite this, Jinnah did order the invasion of Kashmir, both by irregular and

regular fighters sometime end of August 1947. He, (Mr. Jinnah) has been recorded to have said during a discussion with Lord Mountbatten regarding the raiders in Kashmir “we really cannot do anything about these people. They are co-religionists. How can we stop them?”

Later Jinnah contradicted his own statement, when during the meeting to a suggestion regarding withdrawal of belligerents by both sides (India and Pakistan), he said to Lord Mountbatten. “If you do this I will call the whole thing off.” 43 Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan during a broadcast on November 4 from Lahore said “The accession of Kashmir to India is a much greater threat to the security of Pakistan. we do not recognise this accession”. 44

From partition in 1947 to the Kargil crisis in May 1999. The Pakistani leadership, both, civil and military have nothing but the Kashmir agenda as the core issue in their internal and external policies. During the Kargil crisis in June 99, Nawaz Sharif said “our armed forces are adequately equipped and possesses the courage will and determination to defend very inch of the country’s sacred frontier...” He called on India for a meaningful dialogue on ending the decades old dispute over Kashmir. President Mohammad Rafiq Tarar meanwhile defended the occupation of the peaks in Kargil. He said “The issue of Kargil heights cannot be delinked from the freedom struggle in (Indian) occupied Kashmir. 45 For the Army, there has only been one goal - to annex Kashmir and complete the unfinished business of 1947-48. After the secession of Bangladesh, a second objective was added - to avenge the vivisection of Pakistan by dismembering Kashmir from India.

2. “We will keep our military option for the last moment as a coup de grace”: Having learnt their lessons during 1947-48 - “Op Gulmarg and during 1965 - Op Gibraltar and Grandslam”, Zia realized the futility of conventional war with India and therefore, this statement implies that the use of military force in a conventional warfare mode will only be resorted to during the last phase of ‘Op Topac’ when sufficient success has been gained in the valley by irregular warfare and other covert means. Till then, the 'pot will be allowed to melt' as was done in Afghanistan.

43 Ibid., p.20.
44 India’s White Paper on Jammu and Kashmir, Documents on Kashmir Problem, Govt. of India, p.93.
45 The Times of India (New Delhi), 23 June 1999, p.16.
3. “Our Kashmiri brethren in the valley... do not easily take to the type of warfare to which say a Punjabi or an Afghan takes... the Kashmiri however... is a master of political intrigue”: Here again Zia drew from the lessons of their earlier failures in Kashmir, wherein, on both occasions, the local Kashmiri people did not, at all support the Pakistani infiltrators. As a matter of fact, as has been earlier brought out, it was the local Kashmiri people who first gave information of Pak infiltrators to the Indian Army, and on numerous occasions actively participated with them in driving the raiders back. For ‘Op Topac’ therefore, Zia decided that more stress would be laid on the use of foreign mercenaries, like the Punjabi’s of Pakistan and Afghan Mujahideen’s to wage the proxy war in Kashmir this time. The local people will be used as a political weapon, they would be incited to fight the Central Government in Delhi on a political platform by strengthening the Muslim United Front (MUF), the Hurriat Conference and other such pro-Pakistani political outfits in J&K and pitting them against the other more secular regional parties i.e., the National Conference. These groups will also be used to win popular support of the locals as well as the international community.

4. “Sheer brute force is in any case not needed... in the situation obtaining in the valley”: Aftermath of the infamous 1987 “rigged” elections in J&K, the situation in the valley was already very volatile. Zia visualized that a gradual upgradation of the existing unrest in the valley starting with demonstrations, rioting to bombings and armed clashes between the militant mercenaries and the security forces through subversion would be the tactics to be followed.

5. “A coordinated use of moral and physical means, other than military operations, which will destroy the will of the enemy, damage his political capacity...”: This is the crux of the proxy war, for the sake of political convergence also called ‘Jehad’, unleashed by Pakistan in J&K, by actively abetting the insurgent movement there. It is providing manpower, training, weapons, equipment and funds either from its own resources or as a conduct from other Islamic countries such as Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Afghanistan and so on. Under the overall aegis of the ISI, a vast network of training camps, logistic bases, launch pads, command and control set up and overground and underground armed political and propaganda wings of militant organisations have been created in J&K. The locals have been instigated to rise in rebellion against the Indian state by vicious propaganda and indoctrination.
campaign with the aim of tying down our armed forces in order to degrade our conventional military superiority and offensive capability.

6. Phase 1: Important aspects of the plan were "A low level insurgency against the regime... plant our chosen men in all the key positions... whip up anti-Indian feelings amongst the students and peasant,... on some religious issues... for rioting and anti Government demonstrations. Organise and train subversive elements and armed groups... Adopt and develop means to cut off lines of communication between Jammu and Kashmir and within Kashmir and Ladakh by stealth... The Road over Zajila up to Kargil... should receive our special attention... In collaboration with Sikh extremist create chaos and terror in Jammu... establish virtual control in those parts of the Kashmir valley where the Indian army is not located or deployed."

This phase, when analysed with the advantage of hindsight of what actually transpired on ground in J&K since 1988-89, brings to the forefront an unbelievable and chilling similarity, which is hard to overlook as mere coincidence. Even the most farsighted political or military scientist or the most accomplished 'guru' of soothsaying could not have predicted the happenings in J&K as accurately as it actually happened. In the light of the foregoing an analysis of this phase of 'Op Topac' becomes essential.

"The first phase of 'Op Topac' (which envisaged rise of low level insurgency) was put into action by middle of 1988. It began with anti-India tirade all over the valley and mushrooming of a number of underground militant organisations like the JKLF and Hisb-i-Islami. The MUF members resigned their membership of the state Assembly and began to support underground activities openly."

"Prolonged strikes in Srinagar and other areas of the valley continued. Attacks on posts of para military forces increased. The sentry post outside the residence of the session Judge who had sentenced Maqbool Butt was fired upon. There were many other random firings in Srinagar and other towns of the valley. In addition a series of bomb blasts ripped through the valley. There were blasts on both sides of the Jawahar Tunnel on Jammu-Srinagar highway. A bomb was found in the Tunnel itself, but was defused before it exploded. bombs were also lobbed at certain police pickets in Srinagar and the tourist complexes in the valley... A car was blown up in Lal Chowk in Srinagar. Even Doordarshan Kendra (TV Centre) in Srinagar was not spared.

Attempts were made to destroy some bridges and generally disrupt the line of communication... By the end of 1988, the Intelligence reports indicated that a large number of militant Kashmiri youth had sneaked back into the valley after receiving training in guerrilla warfare and terrorist activities in POK (Pakistan Occupied Kashmir). Some persons arrested at Kupwara revealed that large quantities of automatic weapons with huge quantities of ammunition, hand grenades and plastic explosives had entered the valley through ‘Northern Gallies’ and had been dumped in the Jungles around Kupwara and Handwara. It was believed that Amanullah Khan, a top leader of the KLF, had addressed several meetings in various mosques in Srinagar and Anantnag. Some leaflets, clandestinely distributed in Anantnag and Kupwara, urged the Kashmiri youth to be ready for ‘Jehad’. There was persistent bazaar gossip in all big towns of the valley about training camps in several places on both sides of the LoC (Line of Control), some of which were manned by experienced Afghan Mujahids... running of these camps have been entrusted to the President of POK, Sardar Abdul Qayyum and the ISI as the Pakistan Government wanted no direct involvement... The urban population was steadily becoming defiant, and aggressive... Mob violence erupted on the slightest pretext... This added to the existing threat from Sikh militants, creating a virtual state of siege in Jammu and Kashmir... There was further qualitative change. The Sikh and Kashmiri extremist organisation which were operating abroad and supporting and funding the militancy in Punjab and J&K respectively joined hands and helped in escalating the sessionists activities... The violence erupted in Jammu region as well. There were widespread disturbances. The aim obviously was to link up the Punjab separatist movement with that of Kashmir, through Jammu, forcing the Indian security forces to disperse over large areas, thus reducing the effectiveness to meet the serious challenge of insurgency and terrorism.”

This, to a great extent sums up the linkage between phase one of ‘Op Topac’ with the actual ground situation during 1988. The similarity is indisputable. Numerous writers have highlighted these aspects which have already been covered in detail earlier in the study.

“We plant our chosen men in all key positions; they will subvert the police, financial institutions, the communications network and other important organisation.” This is exactly what happened on ground. the local administration was totally subverted. In analysing this sentence in the context of this study I shall lean heavily on Jagmohan’s “My Frozen Turbulence” simply because very few persons could have had access to classified government documents than him, very few people have such intimate ground knowledge of the affairs of Kashmir of that period and finally, very few people are so forthright, 

Conscientious and fearless about their convictions than this man, who gained the admiration of the whole state during his two tenures as the Governor.

Regarding the subversion of local administration Jagmohan writes “Here, the ‘Operation Topac’ succeeded even beyond the imagination of its formulators. The entire government apparatus was systematically subverted,... it was the writ of the subversionists that ran in all important departments of the government. This subversion was facilitated - rather abetted - by the sympathetic and permissive elements in the political and administrative structure. Some of these elements were openly pro-Pakistan; some clandestinely so; some were indifferent and some were playing the role similar to that of double agents... seeds of subversion had been planted over the years and their roots were deep.”48 The rot had set in the entire administrative and political set up of the state. The police, the general services, the hospital administration, the press, the Bar and the Bench had all been infiltrated. During the course of a press interview, Syed Mir Qasim was asked if he thought the government had failed in curbing terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir he replied “There is no government at all and what to talk of failures or success.”49

The police force of J&K was most effectively infiltrated and subverted, it is because of their total ineffectiveness, during the critical years of the promotion of insurgency in the state, that the situation got out of control and reached the present peak. About this aspect Jagmohan says “The local police had been so infiltrated that quite a part of it had become a hindrance and a drag. There was hardly any doubt that IB officials killed during the period were betrayed by the infiltrators in the local police... even the police driver of my own pilot car had deep links with the subversives... No wonder there was once an explosion in this jeep... The Batmaloo area of Srinagar was badly infested with terrorists... The dead bodies of the former Independent MLA, Mir Mustafa and HMT General Manager, H.L. Khera, were found in this locality. Later on, it was found that a middle-level officer of this area was hand in glove with the terrorists... The driver of the SSP, Srinagar was in league with the subversives.”50

Pyarelal Kaul writes “Terrorism penetrated in the police force also in a large scale so much so that their Hindu colleagues were in many cases killed by their Muslim colleagues or tortured and done to death with their connivance or independently on their own, by the militants.”\(^{51}\) He thereafter goes on to cite five cases where subverted police personnel killed their own colleagues because they were either Hindus or refused to get subverted.

The most diabolical plan of the militants to subvert the police was put into effect on 22 January 1990, to incite them to revolt. A false rumour was spread that the CRPF had killed four J&K police personnel, some policemen themselves were involved in spreading this canard, so deep was the conspiracy. The incited angry policemen (some with arms) immediately took to the streets shouting, “Hum Kya Chahte Hain - Azadi” and “Indian dogs get out”. The situation was controlled after two days of difficult negotiations. A similar revolt under almost similar circumstances occurred in April 1993; which ended with the Army having to disarm the J&K Police in Srinagar. It was not the Police force alone that was being systematically subverted, the bureaucracy was also being severely effected, so much so, senior IAS officers got compromised. In May 1990, the state government employees went on an indefinite strike, led by senior civil servants of the IAS cadre. This strike which was primarily against the Governor of the State, continued for 2½ months giving a big boost to subversive elements in the state. This attitude of the police and government employees made it clear that the secessionist battle in the state was being fought at several levels. On the streets and inside the Government machinery as well.

A large number of other local government services like the state electricity department, school/college teachers hospitals, the law machinery, media etc., were similarly getting involved. Highlighting this, Jagmohan states: “A inspector in the State electricity department Pulwama functioned as an area commander of Hizbul Mujahideen... Ahmed Afzal Sheikh, a teacher, while remaining in service, went to Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. After he returned a bag containing pistols and loaded magazines was sent to him... Irshad Hussain, while remaining on the pay roll of the state government as Junior Engineer, acted as a motivator. He sent two groups of youth for training to Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. He also caused a number of explosions, including those in the Kashmir Club and Srinagar Zero

Bridge... Another employee, Mohammad Akram, remained in touch with terrorists such as Yasin Malik... They had direct approach to Ministers and other political elements in the power structure."

Supplementing this aspect Pyarelal Kaul adds; "The confidential intelligence reports submitted by the IGP (CID) to the Chief Minister revealed that as many as his six ministers were directly or through their sons involved in militancy... The militants enjoyed the patronage of the state government... many of the militants sought after by the police, were often found in the houses of these ministers.. whenever the police would arrest such militants, the Chief Minister would get them released."

This encouraged not only the militants, but other youngmen in the valley to keep perpetrating acts of terrorism with renewed vigour, knowing that the government would be tough towards only those hindering their activities.

The involvement of the administration and the State Government in support of militancy was so strong that between July-December 1989, 70 hardcore terrorists were released. On March 27, 1990, 12 dangerous detenus were made to escape from Srinagar Central Jail. Those who were responsible for the custody of these prisoners themselves made their escape possible "The conspiracies were deep-rooted; they were extensively spread. There was hardly any link in the chain which could not be made to do the assigned job. Fear of authority was non existent. One could enjoy the salary and perks and also act as a hero for the 'Liberation Struggle'. The bread for them was buttered on both sides. No wonder, the tempo accentuated and the pace of subversion accelerated."

Doctors, hospitals and the Medical College in Srinagar - institutes and profession synonymous with non-violence, peace and neutralism, surprisingly also got into the act. They started supporting the militants cause, became their hideouts and caches for weapons. Some doctors joined the ranks of militants, while others became passive supporters. Hospitals became their headquarters for planning operations (terrorist). Jagmohan writes - "Some influential doctors in the valley constituted a powerful caucus for anti-national work.... The hospital in Srinagar, particularly SKMI, SMS and Lal Ded, became, in course of time, centres

of collusive and conspiratorial activities. Practically all the facilities of these hospitals were available to the terrorist.\textsuperscript{55}

Media, specially the vernacular press, became the prime propaganda vehicle of the movement. It was so completely subverted, that it virtually abetted, incited and glorified militants and militancy in the valley. It became the main mouthpiece of the subversives.\textsuperscript{56} The planners knew that Proxy War primarily is the war of minds, success comes to the one who wins this war of minds. This was also one of the lessons learnt from the failed ‘Op Gibraltar’ of 1965, by Pakistan. The propaganda war was unleashed at multi levels from lectures, to writing articles, specifically in three main weekly magazines of the subversives which were - ‘Sada-i-Haq’, ‘Sadai Hurriyat’ and ‘Sada-i-Kashmir’, a pamphlet/posters blitz was also launched. The use of electronic media like television, radio and video cassettes was extensively used. Media persons were successfully subverted by fear or bribe. The tone and tenure of the propaganda offensive was primarily anti-Indian, pro-Pakistan and pro-Islam. The last aspect was strongly harped upon. Mosques were made centres of revolution and used as instruments of information collection and dissemination, coordination, crowd collection and importantly for indoctrination and motivation.

This is how Pakistan according to the plan, was able to plant its chosen men in key positions with a view to subverting the police forces, communications network and other local governmental and administrative departments and organisation.

“We whip up anti-Indian feelings amongst the students and peasants, preferably on some religious issues…” For rioting and anti-government demonstration”: This part of the plan is best explained by quoting from Jagmohan, he says “The youth, the element which actually takes part in violence, is either illiterate and easily exploitable by the communal and fundamentalist leaders, or educated but frustrated on account of the unjust system which affords him limited opportunities for employment… Frustrations and fanaticism, mediaevalism and ‘monkism’, exist side by side. And this keeps the pot boiling. It spills over the edges whenever any outside stimulus is provided or extra heat is generated locally... The Kashmiri youth is getting the worst of both the worlds.”\textsuperscript{57} Zia was well aware of the


\textsuperscript{56} This aspect has been extensively highlighted in Jagmohan’s book, Op.cit., pp.387-401.

conditions existing in the valley and was conversant with the strength of “youth or student power” in fermenting trouble in a democracy like India. Also, having learnt lessons, from the 1947-48 and 1965 experiences, he rightly felt the need to generate trouble indigenously and internally. How the youth in the valley was instigated becomes evident from the following extract from a cover story written by Inderjit Badhwar for India Today “Shoaib Mohammad, 19, an unemployed undergraduate visits the house of a friend and tells his mother, Fatima, that her worries are over. Guns have arrived from ‘Paar’ (across the border, as they refer to Pakistan) and the youth will fight back... I crossed over at midnight from the Uri border says Afzal... It was easy. I paid a Gujjar tribesman Rs.500 to show me the way. It was a long walk, through the forest”... why did he cross? “They don’t want democracy to survive here. So I have to support the Kashmir Liberation Front (KLF)... Today, anywhere between 500 to 1,000 youths from Srinagar, Badgam, Kupwara, Baramulla and Anantnag have received training.”

Many of the captured Pakistan trained militants have made no secret of Pakistan’s hand in instigating, brainwashing and forcing Kashmiri Muslim youth to militancy. Substantiating ‘Op Topac’. These captured militants have said “the actual commands are given by the Pakistani officials, the militants or the activists of the militant outfits in Kashmir work only as the executors of the commands... Pakistan has planned the whole proxy war very carefully. Militant leaders use brainwashing technique on innocent youths in the name of religion and ‘Jehad’ and then involve them in some crimes.”

“Rioting and anti-government demonstration”, commenced immediately, soon after the death of Gen. Zia, on August 17, 1988, in almost the entire valley. The Government was forced to impose curfew and the police had to open fire killing five rioters. At the same time, educated youth in the valley started widespread protests and demonstrations against Salman Rushdie’s controversial book ‘Satanic Verses’ which was purported to be blasphemous from the Islamic point of view. Coincidentally, during this year i.e. February 11, 1988 “Maqbool Butt Day” also called “Matyrs Day” was observed amidst extensive trouble in the valley. Bomb blasts and violent rioting took place and a complete ‘bandh’ was observed in Srinagar

58 India Today (New Delhi), May 31, 1989, pp.68-70.
59 The Hindustan Times (New Delhi), May 13, 1991.
and other major towns. A Maruti Van was blown up at Lal Chowk in the heart of the city: A Hindustan Machine Tools staff coach was torched during a ‘bandh’ organised to protest against Kashmir’s accession to India, synchronizing with the day, years ago, on October 27, 1947. CRPF posts and some tourists were attacked by militants.

Pakistan took full advantage of the situation, and its agents and militants incited and encouraged discontent and sponsored further terrorism, as per the planned strategy. By 1989, the situation in the valley could only be described as completely anarchic. Jagmohan, the then Governor of the State was forced to record the following “The youth is sullen and angry. It is taking refuge under religion whose appeal helps it to gain sympathy and support of the common folk.”60 This was what Zia had exactly enunciated in ‘Op Topac’. The Governor further wrote two letters in April and May 1989 to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, inviting his attention to the critical conditions. His letter of 8 April, 1989 reads - “Dear Prime Minister, The situation is fast deteriorating. It has almost reached a point of no return for the last five days there have been large-scale violence, arson, firing, hartals, casualties and what not... Yesterday it was ‘Maqbool Butt’; today it is ‘Satanic Verses’; tomorrow it will be ‘repression day’ and the day after it will be something else. The situation calls for effective intervention. Today may be timely, tomorrow may be too late.”61

The sentence “Preferably on some religious issue”, supposed to be used by Zia in ‘Op Topac’ is not only relevently meaningful but also compliments the happenings on ground in the valley. Though Islam was the religion of the majority of Kashmiries. Its hues were a mixture of Sufism and Rishism. Within Islam, Sufism has been one of the most significant and progressive spiritual movements, it preaches Islam in its most sublime and ‘unfundamentalist’ vein. Since, the inhabitants of the valley are all converts from Hindu Brahmans, the virtues of Kashmiri Islam are contemplation, asceticism, renunciation, abstinence, simplicity, co-existence, etc. which are actually also the vital ingredients of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. It is because of this that ‘there were never ever any communal riots in the valley, even during partition in 1947. All this harmony lasted till the

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advent of fanatic Islamic fundamentalism brought in by the Jamaat-i-Islami from across the border, specifically during Gen. Zia’s regime.

Today Islam in Kashmir rejects secularism and Hinduism or any other religious belief. It denounces anything Indian and talks of union with Pakistan. Today Jamaat-i-Islami is so strong that it forbids Kashmiri Muslims from smoking, drinking, watching movies, women have to wear burqas. All other Indian dresses and customs are banned. To propagate its views, the Jamaat is running 548 libraries, 386 reading rooms, 240 study circles, 266 nursery schools, 344 part time ‘maktabas’ or elementary schools, 36 junior high schools and 23 colleges... It controls over 700 mosques, and from these mosques its leaders address congregations every Friday. The Jamaat has also published 491 books in Urdu, 77 in Hindi and 78 in English on the Quran and various facets of its ideology. 62 The Jamaat, in its effort to motivate the young and the old in Kashmir has been very successful. Besides its operations at the social educational and cultural levels, it stepped into the political arena also and fought elections as a constituent of the Muslim United Front from 1972 till date.

Edward W. Desmond in an article titled “Pakistan’s Hidden Hand” written for the ‘Time’ magazine says “...Jamaat-e-Islami, a small but highly influential Islamic party... encouraged the ISI to promote the most fervent Islamic groups in the Afghan war, and is following the same policy in Kashmir, convinced that the only legitimate uprising for Muslims is Jihad... That perspective was until recently alien to Kashmiris, who by and large do not lean towards fundamentalist Islamic thinking... But in the past year the lure of arms in exchange for ideological compliance has won over militants... Many younger fighters, however, have converted to the Islamic ideology, impressed by the examples of Palestinian guerrillas and Afghan Mujaheedin... The youths probably do not reflect Kashmiri sentiments as a whole, but their Zeal and powerful Pakistani backing - have earned them fearful respect.”63

The use of religion as a political weapon in Kashmir had always been done since the accession of the state and even before it. Instances of inciting people against the policies of the Maharaja from mosques have been reported even during the British Raj. but the examples


of the most virulent form of misuse of mosques, a'La Golden Temple by Bhindranwale in Punjab, resorted to by the militants to incite communal trouble in Srinagar during the contemporary period was done in the 'Hazratbal' and 'Charare Sharief' episodes.

The Hazratbal incident was perhaps sparked by the requirement of the dreaded pro-Pakistan Hizbul Mujahideen to stamp their supremacy and establish a popular base in the valley. It began at about 6.30 p.m. on 5 October 1993, when several insurgents stormed the mosque and broke into the inner sanctum which enshrined the religiously famous hair of prophet Mohammad called the 'Moh-e-maqaddas', (which, incidently was previously stolen in 1963, fortunately, it was soon recovered then, but not before a serious law and order situation had occurred in the valley). For a whole week Radio Pakistan and stray pro-Pakistan elements in Srinagar had a field day, calling for 'Jehad' against the Hindu rulers of India who had outraged Islam. Perhaps, the Pakistani controllers expected the same reaction this time too.

The 32 days of stand off between the security forces and the militants were full of tension and high drama. In Srinagar and the rest of the valley, it began with daily demonstrations and violent confrontations between the police and the people and culminated in the Bijbehara massacre, when on 22 October 1993, the para military forces were forced to open fire on a violent mob killing 37 people and injuring 73 others. Salman Khurshid writes: "It was a day of great depression throughout India International opprobrium was heaped upon the government... Things looked bad for the government, held to ransom by a bunch of terrorists, who were found to be in touch with Pakistan... On, 29 October 1993, a functionary of USA's State Department in Washington told correspondents in a background briefing that the USA did not recognise the instrument of accession as meaning that Kashmir is forever a part of India. There were many other issues at play in that time frame as we all here know."64

This statement obviously had far reaching legal, political and diplomatic implications.

Terrorism in the valley and Pakistan, the main trouble creator, got a big boost. Pakistan, while increasing the intensity of proxy war, started a diplomatic campaign of maligning India's human rights record and its secular image in the international community. In the end, however the State and the Centre combined to achieve the surrender of the

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militants on 16 November, 1993. the storm was over, but not without giving an added filip to militancy in the valley.

The other incident concerning the tactics of 'Mosque Militancy' occurred at the 'Charar-e-Sharief shrine of the fourteenth century Muslim cleric and Sufi saint Sheikh Noorudin Noorani, near Srinagar. In early February 1995, a self styled "Major" Mast Gul, a veteran Afghan terrorist occupied the shrine along with a large number of militants (some estimate put them between 50 to 100). They fortified the shrine, much like Bhindrawale did to the Golden Temple, and even wired it for demolition. The security forces surrounded the shrine and a phase of psychological war ensued between the two, which continued for over two months, with occasional exchange of fire. On May 8, the militants suddenly set fire to some houses around the shrine, presumably to escape. In the ensuing blaze the shrine caught fire and was burnt to cinder. Mast Gul made good his escape, appearing in Pakistan to a hero's welcome which was televised live around the world.

The burning of the shrine expectedly adduced violent reaction from the people of the valley, that forced the Government at the Centre to postpone the forthcoming election to the State Assembly slated for June of the same year, giving a severe setback to the Centre's strategy of defeating militancy by wearing out the militants. This perhaps was the aim, by proxy, of Pakistan, who, it was later confirmed remained in constant touch with Mast Gul and his gang throughout the nearly two months of confrontation, with the help of powerful VHF (Very High Frequency) radio sets. The Government later asserted that the shrine was burnt according to a "well thought out plan at the behest of their Pakistani mentors." In one of the radio intercepts picked up by security forces, Gul was reported to have told his mentors "Hum wohi karenge jo Markaz kahega (we will do as the headquarters says).

The Pakistani tactics of 'Mosque Militancy' that they had experimented and perfected in Punjab, during the militarization and occupation of the Golden temple, was primarily aimed at inducing mass public support and a general uprising and internationalising a separatist cause. This tactic was again employed very effectively in Kashmir by instigating the 'Hazratbal' and 'Charar-e-Sharief' crisis. In doing so they achieved: (a) higher levels of

65 *India Today* (New Delhi), May 31, 1995, p.61.
66 Ibid., p.66.
violence, public outcry and breaking of law and order aftermath both the episodes. A six month run of a curfew free period of peace was broken by the ‘Charar’ crisis. (b) Pakistan, as expected went to town with cries of ‘Jehad’ in Kashmir and increased the intensity of proxy war. (c) Hopes of establishing some semblance of political stability in the state vanished with the postponement of elections to the State Assembly, after the ‘Charar’ incident. This was what Pakistan wanted. (d) The Kashmir issue again came up into international spot light. (e) Fundamentalist forces led by the extremist Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, Harkat Ul Ansar and Jamaat-e-Islami upstaged and swamped the more secular, Sufi and the ‘Kashmiriyat’ ideology of the people of the valley. (f) The security forces, including the army, once again stood discredited in the eyes of the common man.

“Temple Terrorism”: Simultaneously with mosque militancy the abominable phenomenon of temple terrorism was being resorted to by the militants. This was being done primarily by desecrating, damaging and sometimes destroying a number of Hindu religions shrines in the valley, with the aim of (a) terrorising Kashmiri Hindus (b) inciting a Hindu backlash in the valley or the entire country, which, could be used to their advantage within Kashmir as well as internationally (c) project it as an epitome of Muslim superiority over the Hindus and thereby become an extension, if only symbolically, of the superiority of Pakistan over India.

“On 26th January 1989”, says ML Kaul a noted Kashmiri writer and academician “the minority community of Kashmiri Pandits were held in a total grip of fear and panic when a thousand strong mob of Muslims wielding weapons desecrated and damaged the Dewan Shiva Temple.”67 The temple was located at Fateh Kadal in Srinagar town, holy idols were hurled into a nearby gutter. “The Hanuman Temple at Hari Singh street Srinagar.. The latest brand of violence inflicted on the temple was when the Muslims and the Sikhs forging an alliance at the behest of two secessionist leaders, one from Punjab and the other from Kashmir, organised a massive procession... It ran amok and desecrated, looted and plundered the Hanuman Temple.”68

In its editorial dated 20th November, 1987 ‘the Martand’ a local newspaper records “... when we had to suffer the burning of... a temple at Barbarshah on Tuesday, the 17th of

68 Ibid.
November". The writer in the same book lists out 70 Hindu temples destroyed, semi destroyed and all desecrated by violent acts of terrorism since 1990 onwards.

"Organise and train subversive elements and armed groups with capabilities, initially, to deal with paramilitary forces": This paragraph, most effectively underlines the essence of Pakistan’s proxy war in Kashmir which is being waged within the overall ambit of its two level strategy. This also differentiates the earlier Pakistani strategy of irregular/guerrilla war, as envisaged and implemented by them during 1947-48 and 1965, operations in the valley, from the current conflict. The lesson’s learnt from the failures of their earlier operations and Gen. Zia’s clear directions that the mistakes of 1965 will not be replicated this time, perhaps, led to these tactics where the watchword were - (a) subversion and guerrilla conflict will be an indigenous operation, waged by the local populace (b) Political, diplomatic, moral and military support and sponsorship will be provided by Pakistan as was done during the Afghan conflict. (c) Initially, the militants will target paramilitary forces and other such soft targets and as they grow in confidence and experience, graduate to hitting at other hard targets, like the Army and other government institutions and facilities.

An attempt to trace the growth of proxy war in the valley has already been comprehensively done in Chapter V. However, it felt that some salient and relevant aspects of Pak sponsored militancy in Kashmir require to be mentioned here, even at the cost of repetition.

‘Death by a thousand cuts’ the old Mao Tse Tung proverb, so effectively employed in Afghanistan, by the Pak-American combine is being applied to the Kashmir issue by Pakistan in its most virulent form. The fact that Pakistan is not only organising, arming and training numerous militant groups in its territory and infiltrating them into J&K, it makes no bones about openly supporting them politically, economically, morally and diplomatically. Pakistan’s aim is clear it wants to (a) bleed India, militarily, economically, politically and morale-wise without getting involved in an expensive all out war; (b) Neutralize India’s conventional military superiority by keeping a bulk of its forces engaged in countering militancy and thereby inflicting damage to men, material and morale, thus causing strategic

69 Ibid., p.293.
70 Ibid., pp.300-314. I have myself been involved in trying to save an ancient Hindu Temple at Mendhar, in Rajauri district of J&K in 1991, when it was bombed by terrorists.
fatigue; (c) keep the Kashmir issue alive in the eyes of the international community; (d) Keep the attention of the people of Pakistan diverted from their own internal problems; (e) Justify and garner support for the ruling entity (civilian or military) from the fundamentalist and extremist class by playing the ‘Jehad’ card in Kashmir, and finally, (f) to provide, forward strategic depth and early warning of any impending Indian attack, to Pakistan which geographically, lacks strategic depth.

“Adopt and develop means to cut off lines of communication between Jammu and Kashmir and within Kashmir and Ladakh... The road over Zojila upto Kargil and the road over Khandungla should receive our special attention”. This very important ingredient of ‘Op Topac’ seems to have been derived from the tenets of warfare, where-in the aim of the aggressor is it to cut off the important lines of communication leading to the conflict zone with the aim of (a) Isolating the conflict area so that neither re-inforcement nor logistics reach the critical battle zone; (b) leading to the degradation of the defenders fighting potential and morale; (c) thereafter defeating the defender piece meal in the ground and manner of own choosing; (d) at the military strategic level it may lead to turning of a flank of the defender or even making his defensive position untenable.

The significant of this type of maneuver, in the context of J&K assumes enhanced militancy significance where-in the only two existing feeder roads - one from Jammu to the valley and the other from the valley to Leh/Siachen if properly and effectively interdicted would isolate the valley on one hand and Leh/Kargil on the other - with extremely serious strategic consequences to India. Militants in Kashmir have attempted to interdict and dislocate the Jammu-Srinagar highway innumerable times during the decade old militancy, specifically at the Banihal Tunnel which is the most vulnerable spot on the highway. “One tube of Banihal Tunnel was blocked for more than twenty four hours when a truck blew up half way. It seemed the driver of the truck had stopped the vehicle and walked away on the pretext that it was defective.”71 The militants also started interdicting this vital road with attacks on civil and military vehicle convoys carrying essential supplies and other commodities to the valley. “Towards the end of September (1988), there were mob attacks on civil trucks carrying military stores, when they were passing through some crowded areas of

Srinagar and Sopore. Military convoys were fired upon... Gradually paramilitary forces and some reserve army formations were getting tied down with the ever increasing static guard duties at vulnerable points and important bridges and culverts on the highways. The army now started providing armed escorts to convoys... Normal maintenance and advance stocking schedules (for winter months when the road closes due to snow) could not be kept".72

Because of this threat to the lines of communication to and within the valley the Army was forced to employ more troops on protection and guarding of important bridges and culverts and also to resort to the tedious and troop intensive tactics of sending Road Opening Patrols (ROP's) to verify the security and clearance of the Lines of Communication before opening them to traffic, each day. By resorting to these tactics the militants were able to not only hinder the free movement of troops and essential supplies into the valley, but also to prompt the local population into agitation, as most essential commodities for the civilian population are also brought into the valley through these roads. Shortage or lack of these, could elicit violent reaction from the people which could be used to their advantage by the militants.

Similarly, attempts to interdict the Srinagar-Leh highway were also made, however the most glaring interdiction attempt of this highway can be best exemplified by the recent Kargil incursion (May 1999) by the Mujahideen-Pak Army combine. This road, which remains closed for six months during winters due to snow, is the only viable feeder road from Srinagar to Leh/Siachen. Indian Army troops, including those located at Siachen and the entire civilian population of this area is dependent for survival on the unhindered trafficability of this road during the summer months (May-October) for stocking up for the long harsh winter. This road is called National Highway (NH). 1A. Pakistan commenced effective interdiction of this road by heavy artillery barrages sometime during the summer of 1997. However, it was for the first time since 1971, that it resorted to armed intrusions across the LoC into areas overlooking the road in the Dras, Kargil and Batalik sectors. The Pakistani force was composed of Pak army regulars (from its Northern Light Infantry Units), Mujahideens and Afghan war veterans all well equipped and trained to sustain and fight at very high altitude areas. All this notwithstanding the Shimla agreement. These intruders were

72 Ibid., p.43, (Brackets mine).
effectively able to interdict NH1A, thereby jeopardizing the tenability and the security of our Northern border including Saichen. Though, the Kargil crisis is being dealt with in detail subsequently, at this stage, suffice it to say, that the intrusion was evicted by a combination of some fine action by the Indian army and airforce and international pressure brought on Pakistan because of our effective diplomacy.

From the above analysis it is obvious that this part of ‘Op Topac‘ as visualised by Late Gen. Zia had gone reasonably according to plan. Though there may have been a wide gap between the timings of interdiction of NH1A at the two designated place i.e., “between Jammu and Srinagar” and “the road over Zojila upto Kargil”. but then no plan proceeds exactly as visualised, changes brought about by a multitude of factors have to be taken into account. Also, no plan can guarantee hundred per cent success.

“In collaboration with Sikh extremists, create chaos and terror in Jammu to divert attention from the valley at a critical juncture and discredit the regime even in the Hindu mind”. The Punjab militancy came as a boon to Zia’s Pakistan more by chance than by design. Pakistan just took advantage of the situation and fueled the fire, to keep, the ‘pot boiling’ for its own narrow selfish ends. Militancy in Punjab is closely linked with politics, specifically the differences between the national and regional political agendas. The ‘cause celebre’ to the latest round of militancy in Punjab was due to political turmoil in the state following the fall of Prakash Singh Badal’s government and the defeat of the Akali Party in the ensuing elections in 1980. The Centre led by the Congress imposed emergency, which was vehemently opposed by the Sikhs. The frustrated Akali leadership became bitter and moved towards extremism. Meanwhile, in an effort to weaken the Akali Party, the Congress under Indira Gandhi and Zail Singh projected Bhindranwale and his followers against the Jat Sikh dominated Akali Party. However, events took a turn when Bhindrawale, smarting under the humiliation of his followers getting killed in a clash with Nirankaris in 1978, and the Akali leadership humiliated by their defeat in 1980 elections, became natural allies.

The story of terrorism began in Punjab with Bhindranwale at the forefront of the crusade. The call for ‘Khalistan’ went up. It eventually reached its peak with the infamous ‘Operation Blue Star’ in 1984. Chand Joshi, while writing on Bhindranwale wrote of a Pakistani plan that was also referred to as the ‘K2 Plan’ which envisaged a joint operation in Punjab and J&K. He wrote “it was more on the basis of intelligence reports which were
pointing to a plan for mass insurgency to be timed for June-July to coincide with a Pakistani attack from occupied Jammu and Kashmir sector. The Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) counterparts in former Soviet Union passed a message to New Delhi which confirmed that Pakistan had concentrated 300,000 troops in Pakistan occupied Kashmir mainly in the Poonch-Rajouri sector in Jammu, as well as the Kargil sector in Ladakh.73 This also reveals Pakistan’s two level strategy involving the fermentation of insurgency in Punjab and simultaneously planning to use external force in Jammu and Kashmir.

This aspect adds a new dimension to Pakistan’s strategy on Kashmir. Commenting on this in Farooq Abdullah’s biography Aditya Sinha writes: “while laying the groundwork for his Kashmir plan, General Akhtar found the growing separatist movement in Punjab intriguing. Besides the destabilising effect it would have on India, he saw that from a strategic point of view, the encouragement of the Khalistan movement would make the Indian defence of Kashmir difficult. So Pakistan gave shelter and logistical support to Sikh separatists.”74 This was done in keeping with its two level strategy with the aim of; (a) promoting communal divide between Hindu’s and Sikhs; (b) establishing a Sikh dominated ‘Pro-Pakistan’ belt in this strategic border state, which would stand them in good stead in case of any future Indo-Pak conflict. At this stage it would be correct to insert an assertion stating that Pakistan, in all likelihood, would not outrightly support an ‘independent pre-dominant Sikh state on its borders because of fear of the traditional Sikh-Muslim animosity and the possibility of a likely demand for greater ‘Khalistan’ incorporating areas of Pakistani Punjab; (c) discredit India’s secular credentials; (d) keep a large part of security forces tied down in this area; (e) disrupt or threaten lines of communication with a view to isolate the state of J&K in time of need.

In this connection some extracts from a report by task force on terrorism and unconventional warfare prepared in USA would be pertinent. “Sponsoring international terrorism and separatist subversion and insurgency is not new to Pakistan. Since the 1970s, Islamabad had been training Sikh and other Indian separatist movements as part of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto’s strategy of “forward strategic depth’, and also as a part of his effort to gain

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revenge for India’s support of an independent Bangladesh. Thus, when in the early 1980’s the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC), a Sikh terrorist group, began to establish tight control over the Sikh economy in the Indian Punjab, and also began efforts to enforce the imperatives of Sikh traditionalism and conservatism on Punjab society, Pakistan was quick to exploit the opportunity... Islamabad was intrigued by more than just the destabilizing effect of the struggle for Khalistan. From a strategic point of view, Pakistan has not yet given up its claim to Kashmir and may be tempted to encourage the creation of a Sikh state of Khalistan in the Indian Punjab in order to make the Indian defence of Kashmir difficult.”

According to Selig Harrison of the Carnegie Foundation “Pakistani stimulation of the Punjab insurgency goes back to the beginning of the Zia Ul Haq regime in 1978. By 1984, the Pakistan army’s Field Intelligence Unit was helping to organize the Liberation Front in the Indian-held Kashmir valley. by 1988, the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) Directorate in Islamabad had begun to set up training camps in Pakistan held Azad Kashmir manned by retired Pakistan Army Officers.” (The sequence of events and the dates, all correspond to earlier observations on the subject in the paper). Steve Coll reporting in ‘International Herald Tribune’ writes “... In the Indian State of Punjab, radical Sikh separatists continue to wreak havoc with weapons obtained in Pakistan. But the level of assistance to the guerrillas from Pakistan’s Government appears to be lower than that in Kashmir.”

The Indian media has also been alive to this diabolic plan of Zia. The magazine ‘Link’ reports “Of late, religious fundamentalism has been forged by imperialism as a major instrument of destabilisation of ancient societies. Forces of reaction and subversion have been conjuring up a scenario of convergence between Sikh and Muslim communalism with a view to cutting off Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir from the rest of the country. The political task in Jammu and Kashmir is to defeat this conspiracy and frustrate these plans.” Brig. N.B. Grant (Retd.) in an editorial for Indian Express wrote: “It must be realised that this is not

75 House Republican Research Committe, USA, ‘Task force on terrorism and unconventional warfare’, February 1, 1993 (As produced in a booklet at USI Library No.322.42 INV C-6054).


77 International Herald Tribune, (USA), December 10, 1990.

78 Link (New Delhi), July 15, 1984.
merely a Punjab like situation, but something much more. A special kind of war has been initiated in Kashmir of which Punjab terrorism is only an adjunct.\textsuperscript{79}

Consequent to the foregoing, most analyst mark the year 1986, as the beginning of organised terrorism and a turn around by Pakistan in supporting the Sikh militants with sustained aid and modern weapons and training. After Bluestar, around 700 youths are reported to have crossed into Pakistan, where they were received by the Pakistani Rangers, and then set to camps near Lahore and Sialkot. Here intelligence grouped them according to usefulness, and trained them accordingly. The Akali Federation was based in Lahore, the Babbar Khalsa in Sialkot and the International Sikh Youth Federation at Narowal.\textsuperscript{80} However, documented proof of Joint Sikh-Kashmiri militant action is contained in Lt. Gen. (Retd.) K.K. Nanda’s book; “Dr. Farooq Abdullah ignored the nexus which was developing at the instance of ISI between the Sikh activists of Punjab and the Kashmiri militants. He also paid no heed to the apprehensions of the Central Government, conveyed to him personally by the Union Home Minister a number of times, which resulted in violence and enhanced subversive activities by the Sikh and the Muslim militants in a coordinated manner. In May and June 1984 the two groups of militants took out processions in Srinagar, attacked the Army and BSF vehicles, burnt shops and houses and generally went on rampage.... ISI stepped in to make full use of this alienation (between the Hindu’s and Sikh’s) and decided to give a hard push to the militancy in Kashmir, in coordination with the operations of the Sikh activists in Punjab and Liberate Kashmir."\textsuperscript{81}

In keeping with this plan, Simranjit Singh Mann an Akali militant leader during his visit to Kashmir in January 1990 declared that Indian security forces should be withdrawn from Kashmir. And that Pakistan was not supporting Khalistan terrorists - All this was done while the Indian Government was warning Pakistani Foreign Minister Sahibzada Yakub Khan, who was present in Delhi for talks not to interfere in Punjab and Kashmir.\textsuperscript{82} In so

\textsuperscript{79} Indian Express (New Delhi), February 12, 1990.
\textsuperscript{80} Tara Kartha, “Tools of Terror; Light Weapons and India’s Security”, Knowledge World, (New Delhi, 1999), p.178.
\textsuperscript{82} India Today (New Delhi), February 15, 1990, p.93.
doing he, besides supporting Kashmiri separatism gave a clean chit to Pakistan’s involvement in Punjab.

The last order of Phase 1 of ‘Op Topac’ reads “establish virtual control in those parts of the Kashmir valley where the Indian Army is not located or deployed. The Southern Kashmir valley may be one such region.” This was meant to be a joint operation to be launched by militants and regular Pakistani troops in a well planned and coordinated manner and had two important connotations; (a) Some areas that are unoccupied or lightly held on the Indian side of LoC e.g., areas in Kargil, Drass and Batalik captured and occupied by Pak military cum militant combine; (b) Rugged mountaineous areas that are not normally held by the Army e.g. Doda, Kishtawar and Bhadarwah which are located in the south of Kashmir, be infused and inundated with militancy. Pragmatically analysed, this part of ‘Op Topac’, which actually has since been implemented, contains some very sound tactical and strategic logic the portents of which bode great ill for India. It also typifies the two level strategy of Pakistan on Kashmir. Some noteworthy ramification of this part of ‘Op Topac’ are:

a) Apply pressure, by the use of force, externally and internally from the two extremities of the valley (from the north along the Line of Control and in the south bordering Himachal Pradesh). This would serve the twin purposes of capturing territory on the Indian side of the LoC without fighting for it, on the one hand, and on the other, spreading militancy to areas outside the valley, thereby, gaining more political mileage and putting additional strain on the armed forces.

b) Both the above objectives would bring international focus to bear on the Kashmir dispute, which is one of Pakistan’s avowed aims of its Kashmir strategy.

c) These actions would result in synchronization of Pakistan’s military and political objectives in Kashmir, which is not normally easy to achieve.

d) Exploit the ethno-sectarian and religious differences. The population inhabiting the areas along the LoC in Drass, Kargil and Batalik as also in areas of Doda and Kishtawar where multiple massacres of Hindu’s was indulged in by the militants (the demographic distribution in this area is 55% Muslims and 45% Hindus).
e) Alter the status of the LoC in the north of Kashmir while cutting off the strategic National Highway’s IA (Srinagar-Leh) and 1B (Batote-Doda) respectively.

f) The cumulative effect of all the above actions would inevitably give a boost to insurgency and the ongoing separatist movement in Kashmir.

In implementing this plan the Pakistani controllers executed two operations, the first one was the spread of militancy in Doda-Kishtawar sectors which commenced sometime during 1991, and the second one was the intrusion into Kargil during May 1999. Both these aspects are proposed to be discussed in detail subsequently.

**Phase 2 : “Exert maximum pressure on the Siachen, Kargil and Rajauri, Punch sectors to force the Indian Army to deploy reserves formations outside the main Kashmir Valley”**: The aim of this part of the operation was to enlarge the area of conflict, both through conventional and unconventional (militancy and terrorism) military operations, outside the valley, so as to tie down Indian Army’s reserve formations in new areas of conflict. This would automatically lead to reduction of pressure on militants in the valley. Dissipation of India’s military and non-military resources being one of Pakistan’s aims. They appear to have evolved a plan, which forms part of ‘Op Topac’, according to which Pakistan intends to tie down our resources in a three ringed tier of militancy - we may give it the name of ‘concentric crescent of militancy’. Wherein, it intends to fire up the outer tier consisting of areas starting from Siachen to Drass, the middle tier consisting of areas of Punch, Rajauri, Naushera-Jammu-Doda and Kishtawar and the inner ring, of course, consisting of the valley which would be a common centre of focus. A Detailed study of this concept is undertaken subsequently in the paper.

This part of ‘Op Topac’, though implemented at different time intervals also proceeded, on ground, as planned. A study of conflict and Pak ‘modus operandi’, areas wise, as visualized in ‘Op Topac’ will need to be taken for substantiation purposes.

(a) **Siachen Glacier**: Before attempting a brief analysis of the fact, as to how, the Siachen dispute gets entwined in the body politic of the overall Kashmir embroglio, it would be in order to first place on record the contribution of Gen. Zia ul Haq to the Siachen question and how he perceived it in his overall game plan on Kashmir - after all the Siachen dispute arose only during his tenure. Zia-ul-Haq’s ultimate objective was the full annexation of the
Northern Areas, including the Siachen Glacier, into Pakistan. As Robert G. Wirsing observes “some hint of this intention was already apparent even in the promulgation of martial law itself in July 1977. Departing from past practice, the Zia government formally extended martial law for the first time in Pakistan’s history to the Northern Areas, Gilgit and Baltistan, which were included in Martial Law Zone E.”

Wirsing further writes “An additional step seemingly in the direction of the political integration of the Northern Areas occurred in April 1982, when the government of Zia-ul-Haq gave three men from there (but none from Azad Kashmir) observer states in Federal Advisory Council (Majlis-i-Shura)... Yet another step in the same direction occurred in November 1983, when President Zia hosted a dinner in Gilgit the principal town and administrative hub of the Northern Areas, to which over forty foreign envoys based in Islamabad had been invited. Not surprisingly, the Indian government protested both gestures as a departure from Pakistan’s traditional stand and as a transparent strategy to alter the status of the Northern Areas.”

In November 1983, Gen. Zia told members of the visiting Indian press that “the Northern Areas including Baltistan (Glacier area) were not disputed areas but part of Pakistan.”

This, therefore was Zia’s thinking, if at that time, not the plan, about the Northern Areas including the Siachen Glacier. India’s occupation of Siachen in April 1984, incidently turned out to be a pre-emptive action, as will be evident from the subsequent analysis.

Siachen is the largest glacier in the world outside the polar region. It is located at the Northern extremity of Kashmir, lying on the great Karakoram Ranges that divide China and India and the proximity of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Russia (the Central Asian Republics to it, lend it considerable strategic importance. “The Siachen war - known by India as operation ‘Meghdoot’ and by Pakistan as operation ‘Ababeel’ began in April 1984. However, the roots of the conflict go back to the armed conflict over the State of J&K between India and Pakistan in 1947 and in 1971, aftermath of which, during the process of delineation of the cease fire line (CFL) and the Line of Control (LoC) respectively, the joint commission

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85 The Times of India (New Delhi), November 10, 1983.
delineated the border as per the joint survey upto map grid NJ9842 at Thang (inclusive to India) “thence eastwards joining the glaciers”.

This vagueness of the border in this region led the Pakistani’s to believe that the glacier falls within their side and therefore they started sending mountaineering and trekking expeditions including foreign one’s to these areas sometime in 1972. India discovered this sometime in 1982, when “Pakistan had replaced its mountaineering expeditions by special forces and infantry units which began encroaching on Siachen”\textsuperscript{86} quoting another Indian writer in the same article Robert Wirsing says “New Delhi first became suspicious in 1983 when an American map showed the Siachen glacier in places like (Lyogme and Logonma) as part of Pakistan. Subsequently, the Indian army came to know that a Japanese mountaineering expedition team was seeking Islamabad’s permission to scale certain mountains in the area. The Indian Embassy in Tokyo told the team that it was New Delhi which had to give the permission.”\textsuperscript{87} All these activities by Pakistan, perhaps initiated and instigated by Zia, in order to garner international acceptance to the issue of Siachen being a part of Pakistani territory, alarmed India and prompted a pre-emptive action. Herein lay the reason for war. India taking the initiative occupied three fourths of the glacier in April 1984.

Robert G. Wirsing wrote a series of three articles in a Pakistani defence journal on the Siachen dispute between 1986 to 1988. These articles, besides being authentic are extremely unbiased. He states in one of them “The Siachen dispute was the most severe armed conflict between these two traditional rivals since the Bangladesh war of 1971. It was linked directly to that long-smouldering Kashmir dispute, which had triggered two earlier wars between them. Precisely why it had erupted was not fully apparent. Its outcome, however, could very well affect the long term strategic interests not only of India and Pakistan but of other powerful states in the neighbourhood, namely the Soviet Union and China.”\textsuperscript{88}

There is little doubt in India, Pakistan and within the international community that the Siachen dispute has a generic relationship with the Kashmir dispute as a whole, in as far as India and Pakistan are concerned particularly, and the international community generally.


\textsuperscript{87} Strategic Studies, Op.cit.

\textsuperscript{88} Strategic Studies, Op.cit., p.49.
However, domestic politics which is the main reason for antagonism between the two protagonists, impacts on them in different ways in as far as Kashmir is concerned.

Pakistan views it as a symbol of Pakistani or to be precise, Jinnah’s one nation theory’s success or failure. For Pakistani Kashmir has become obsessively a wanton act of injustice, as the accession of Kashmir to India, in their collective psyche, has not only been illegal but it is as if something rightfully belonging to them has been snatched forcefully by India. Failure to annex Kashmir to Pakistan would mean the failure of the very ideology for the creation of the State of Pakistan. Over the years the dispute has acquired such a monumental political religious and military proportion that no one dare even whisper any form of compromise on Kashmir be it the politicians, the military, the religious sect or even the ISI. India’s occupation of the glacier therefore, considerably undermines Pakistani rulers credibility among the people as guardians of the country’s claim to all of J&K state. By failing to defend Siachen, Pakistan’s military not only laid bare its weakness vis-a-vis India but also exposed the danger implicit in the profound ambiguity of the status of Azad Kashmir or Pak Occupied Kashmir as we would call it, and the Northern Areas. Pakistan politicians and the military is thus in considerable pressure to reassure the people about its capabilities of not only defending Kashmir but of ensuring its unification. The recent Kargil misadventure, perhaps was a step in this direction but it backfired, enhancing Siachen’s importance further - politically and militarily.

For India on the other hand, Kashmir stands as an edifice of secular ideology. Any change in the status quo of Kashmir along with the fact that communalism and separatism as potent and inter twined political forces within the State of J&K and given its sensitive border location any communal equation within the State can have serious implications on the secularity of rest of India. The fact that the Kashmiris harbour a deep rooted sense of alienation from the rest of India does not help matters any more. By undertaking operation ‘Meghdoot’ India perhaps hoped to send a message, both to the Indian Kashmiris, and to Pakistan stating - you are an integral and inseparable part of India, to the former and - do not meddle in our internal affairs (meaning in Kashmir and Punjab) to the latter. In any case, by doing so, India has in any event given Pakistan a forceful reminder of its determination to defend its claim on Kashmir. The same message was intended to be conveyed by India during
Pakistan's treacherous occupation and subsequent vacation of the Kargil heights in May 1999.

(b) **Kargil**: Kargil has always been in focus in almost all Kashmir related issues between India and Pakistan. In the 1947-48 Indo-Pak war Pakistani raiders and army had captured Zojila, Dras and Kargil. The recapture of these areas by the Indian Army, with the assistance of tanks (belonging to 7 Cavalry) is history now. This was the first time in the history of the world that tanks were employed at this altitude in the mountains. In the 1965 war, Pakistan had launched 'Tariq Force' comprising of a mixture of regular army and infiltrators, for the capture of Kargil. However, the Indian army not only neutralized this force, it went on to capture three important Pakistani posts on the other side of the 'Cease Fire Line' in Kargil, including the now famous 'Tiger Hill' which was returned to them after the cease fire. In the 1971 war, India again captured vast areas in Kargil-Dras sector including Tur tuk, Kokarthang, Tharu, Jubar, Tiger Hill and Kaksar, in all more than 804 sq. km. of Pakistani territory was captured. Incidentally all these areas were the scene of the bitter Kargil war in May-July 1999.  

Kargil therefore has always been an important objective for Pakistan, in its attempts to capture Kashmir in the past three wars. After coming to power, Zia again addressed Kargil and included it in his plan for the annexation of Kashmir via a proxy war. An important guiding factor in Zia's renewed interest in Kargil must have been the occupation of the Siachen Glacier by the Indian Army in April 1984, and the fact that Kargil affords Pakistan the freedom of a dual ingress capability - towards Leh and towards the Kashmir valley. By introducing proxy war in Kargil, Pakistan could interdict the long line of communication (the Srinagar-Leh highway) there by isolating India's forces operating in Ladakh and Siachen. Pakistan could also then exploit their capability of using Kargil-Dras as a base to strike into the valley.

In May 1999, this plan was revived and implemented by Gen. Parvez Musharraf in Kargil, exactly in the manner envisaged in Zia's 'Op Topac'. Gen. Musharraf's Kashmir strategy therefore was congruent with Zia's, when during a visit to Siachen, after taking over the valley.

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as the new chief of the army staff he said "we are not talking of winning the war, we are talking of the degree of difficulties. You can create for the other side." Col. Bhaskar Sarkar, VSM (Retd.) in his latest book on Kargil says "Phase 2 of OPERATION TOPAC planned by General Zia-ul-Haq for Liberation of Kashmir was put into effect by Mrs. Benazir Bhutto after Zia's death in 1988. This phase visualizes escalation of the conflict at Kargil, Ladakh and Poonch-Rajouri sector to suck in Indian Army reserves in Kashmir. This is exactly what has been happening over the last three months."

This operation was also a classic example of Pakistan's two level strategy, that it had implemented in 1947-48, 1965 and in the valley during the late 80's. The use of irregulars and mujahideen's for purposes of infiltration and intrusion, followed by a full scale involvement of their regular Army, while, at the same time denying the involvement of their regular troops. Also, Pakistan kept on indulging in a diplomatic campaign against India, with a view to influencing the international community in their favour. That, they failed in this endeavour is because of our effective counter diplomatic offensive. Since, the Kargil operation or 'Operation Vijay', as it was called by India, was not only the latest example of Pakistan's two level strategy, it was also its third major conflict on Kashmir that failed yet again.

This fact raises many pertinent questions regarding the viability and insistence by Pakistan, of its two level strategy in Kashmir for the last 52 years. Is the use of military force an answer to the Kashmir issue? Is another question, if not, what are the various options available. All this, and more is proposed to be taken up and analysed in detail when the Kargil crisis is debated in detail in this study later on.

Rajouri and Poonch Sectors: Zia, specifically wanted these areas also to be targetted as part of his plan - 'Op Topac'. The importance of this area to Pakistan can be comprehended by the news expressed in a paper presented to the Pakistan Government by the last British Chief of the Pakistan Army, Lt. Gen. Douglas Gracey, in April 1948. "An easy victory of the Indian Army, particularly in the Muzaffarabad area is almost certain to arouse the anger of tribesmen against Pakistan for its failure to render them more direct assistance and might

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90 The Week, (Cover Story), Kerala, July 11, 1999, p.36.
even cause them to turn against Pakistan... If Pakistan is not to face another problem of about 27,50,000 people uprooted from their homes, if India is not to be allowed to sit on the doorsteps of Pakistan to the rear and the flank, at liberty to enter at will and pleasure, if civilian and military morale is not to be affected to a dangerous extent, and if subversive political forces are not to be let loose within Pakistan itself, it is imperative that the Indian Army is not allowed to advance beyond the general line Uri-Poonch-Nowshera.92

What Gen. Gracy implied is true, for India to make any military foray into POK, Poonch-Rajouri-Nowshera sectors are the ideal launch pads conversely, for Pakistan also, the success of its present proxy war in Kashmir is dependent on, and directly related to its subversion in this sector too. Zia therefore, wanted to keep the Indian Army tied down in this sector by sponsoring and encouraging militancy here, so that, besides denying the Indian army this launch pad, it could also tie down its army reserves so that they could not be employed in the valley. In short, Zia’s aim was to spread the area of conflict (Proxy War) outside the valley, thereby keeping the Indian army dissipated and away from the Kashmir valley. In so doing, Zia hoped to ‘bleed’ the Indian Army, the Indian economy and the Indian will - like that of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.

Sudhir S. Bloeria, in an article writes “Having failed in its two earlier attempts in 1947 and 1965, and drawing lessons from its experience, Pakistan renewed its attempts with changed strategies in the mid eighties. Instead of using armed men from outside the State to infiltrate and create disturbances, this time efforts were concentrated on misleading the Muslim youth of the state to spawn internal disturbances and militancy. According to Pakistan’s plans, this was to be followed by active involvement of its army under a well-conceived plan, Operation Topac.”93 According to the writer, the aim of Pakistan’s efforts to inseminate militancy in “Rajouri-Poonch districts was with a view to enlarge the arc of operations, as also to strike deep in the South of the Pir Panjal in order to open up an

enveloping second front." This exactly, is what this (self) researcher meant by referring to it as the strategy of "Concentric Crescent of Militancy".

Alluding to this strategy, Bloeria says "In the initial phase, the people who masterminded and controlled terrorist activities in the state primarily concentrated on the valley, with the developments in Rajauri-Poonch relegated to a supporting role. All activities which were carried out in and for the valley were also repeated, at a reduced scale, in this area... During the winter of 1989 - 90, over 100 youth from villages of the Mendhar-Suvankote-Poonch belt (of Rajauri district) crossed over to POK for training... The beginnings of militants activities in Rajouri-Poonch coincided with the escalation of terrorist activities in the valley... As the efforts of the ISI increased in Rajouri-Poonch, the arc of militancy was further extended to the Gool Gulabgarh area of Udhampur district, a Muslim-majority pocket South of the Pir Panjal, and strategically located between Doda and Rajauri districts. It was a clear game-plan to engulf the entire area adjacent to the valley and South of the Pir Panjal range, making it even more difficult for the Indian security forces to respond effectively to the pincer onslaught."

If you add the Kargil-Drass-Doda-Kishtawar arc to this, the concentricity of militancy in J&K would be complete. As, Mr. M.M. Khajuria, a former Director-General of police wrote "Poonch-Rajouri bears a veneer of deceptive calm. Underneath, it is in deep ferment... ISI has been quick to recognise the favourable climate generated in the area... Poonch-Rajauri is important for the ISI for sustaining and extending the ongoing militant onslaught in Doda which is being spearheaded and co-ordinated by foreign mercenaries."  

Initially, militancy in these areas was at a very low key, primarily because of better vigil on the borders, efficacy of the local police and civil administration and most of all because of well coordinated joint effort by the security forces and the civil administration. The counter insurgency strategy adopted in Rajauri-Poonch district was not much different to that of the valley i.e., eliminating militancy on one hand and winning the support and goodwill of the local population on the other, but the main reason for success in this area vis-a-vis the

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94 Ibid., p.122.
95 Ibid., pp.122 and 130. (Bracket mine).
96 Kashmir Times (Jammu), 14 March 1994.
The valley was that the local population, by and large, was not hostile. The armed forces had, over decades of their presence amongst the locals, created a fund of goodwill. It may be interesting to mention that the present Prime Minister of PoK, Sardar Abdul Qyoom Khan is originally a resident of Mendhar town of Rajouri district. Incidentally, the locals of Rajauri-Poonch districts are not, ethnically like Kashmiri Muslims, they are mostly Gujjar's, Pahari's, Rajput and Jat, Muslims. Hence, the difference in the perception of 'Azadi' between the two people.

Even as things appeared to be all right in these districts the militants struck on the night of 6/7 February 1993 at Balnoi (Mendhar, Tehsil, district Poonch). Balnoi was the base of the unit being commanded by this student. In the exchange of fire three foreign mercenaries belonging to Dawat-ul-Arshad including one Afghan were killed and five others arrested which included two Afghans. This was the first time, in the area of Rajauri-Poonch, that during a raid by hardcore foreign mercenaries, from across the border, (which was approximately 3 kms away), was launched at a military base. Thereafter, there were regular bomb-blasts and rocket attacks from across the border. By the beginning of March 1997 the escalation in militancy in Rajauri-Poonch was visible.

A daily from Jammu observed, “there are disturbing reports of accelerated militant activity in the border districts of Rajauri and Poonch. The fast developing situation in these districts has security and politico-economic dimensions.” On 10 September 1997, the army and militants fought a sustained seven day battle in the area of Thanamandi. On 24 October 1997, the General Officer Commanding the Rajauri-Poonch sector (Major General S.S. Chahal) told the press “Pakistan has launched the third stage of operation Topac, the militants have fanned into the twin border districts. This exercise was aimed at increasing the domain

97 The student was posted at Mendhar upto October 92 and personally knew the family of the PM of POK. He was also, actively involved in anti-militancy operation in this area during the period. In which, sometime in mid July 1990, 33 militants were killed in one single encounter in Poonch, on August 2, 1990, 5 Pak trained militants surrendered themselves at the Surankote police station along with arms and ammunition.
98 Besides being a personal expereince, the case is reflected in a booklet catalogue No.C-6054/322.42 of USI Library titled “Development of Pakistan in Terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir”, p.25, Column.17.
100 Kashmir Times (Jammu), 17 September 1997.
of their operations."\textsuperscript{101} The trend of increased militancy in these two districts has continued unabated, despite induction of extra troops into this sector. The activity of the militants is mostly confined to the Surankote area of Poonch and Budhal tehsil of Rajauri. Shujaat Buhkari reporting for The Hindu on November 20, 1999, writes “with the induction of a fresh batch of militants, mostly foreigners in Rajauri-Poonch sector, militancy in the Jammu division of state has been taking new roots... sources said that at least 200 militants have managed to sneak into this side in the recent weeks... Having specific plans to indulge in subversion, the militants have their targets fixed and the engagement with security forces in the recent past have stood testimony to their presence. They also are planning to expand their bases in the places nearer to Jammu and Kathua... Rajauri-Poonch districts have also witnessed several gun battles... From October to mid-November (1999) 17 militants were killed in Rajauri and in Poonch 43... Interestingly unlike Kashmir valley., where Lashkar-e-Toiba and Harkatul Mujahideen have been in the news following recent attacks on civil secretariat and Badamibagh Army Headquarters, it is the Hizbul Mujahideen which is active in Rajauri-Poonch sector.”\textsuperscript{102}

It therefore can be said that the ground realities prove that Pak sponsored militancy, has, as per ‘Op Topac’ spread its arc to the twin districts of Rajauri-Poonch. The responsibility of doing it has been allocated to Hizbul Mujahideen, thereby, dividing the State of J&K between separate militant groups for reasons of better command, control and coordinator and to achieve optimum results. “Attack and destroy base depots and HQ (Headquarters) located at Srinagar, Pattan, Kupwara, Baramulla, Bandipur and Chowkiwala by covert action at a given time.” All these places are military nodes for fighting militancy in the valley. Zia planned to attack them at an opportune moment with the aim of shattering the morale and the credibility of the security forces, so as to impress upon the local population the inability of the security forces to protect, even themselves, leave alone the prospect of protecting the civilians. However, the right moment only arrived post Kargil period, between July and November 1999, when the valley had been thinned of troops needed for the Kargil operation. Taking advantage of this more than 1,000 trained mujahideen’s reportedly infiltrated into the valley. This time with a different strategic agenda to use suicide

\textsuperscript{101} The Pioneer, (New Delhi), 25 October 1997.

\textsuperscript{102} The Hindu (Delhi), 21 November 1999.
squad or “Fidayeens” to attack army bases. On 4 July, 1999 when Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif asked the militants to pull back from Kargil. Syed Salahuddin the head of United Jihad Council - the 14 party militant alliance located at Muzaffarabad vowed that the militants would not pull out but instead change their position.103 The militants promptly executed their plan. Between July and November 1999, a series of such daring attacks were launched.

The first attack occurred on the night of 13 July, 1999, when militants, in a daring raid, entered the residential quarters of the BSF sector Headquarters at Bandipora (one of the targets identified by Zia in ‘Op Topac’) and gunned down a DIG, a deputy commandant and a sub inspector. This was perhaps the first time in valley that such a suicidal mission was undertaken by the militants. Lashkar-e-Taiba which claimed responsibility for this attack announced that it had formed ‘fidai’ groups (suicide squads) to take the fight against security forces into their camps.104

The second raid was targetted at the Kupwara (another ‘Op Topac’ objective of Zia) camp of 4 Rashtriya Rifles (RR). In this pre-dawn attack on 5 August 1999, that left 5 soldiers dead and several wounded, the army camp was stormed by the militants of Harkat-ul-Ansar and Hizbul Mujahideen simultaneously from five different directions.105 The very next day they struck again at Kupwara ambushing and killing a colonel and three of his body guards. They also carried out fresh attacks on a security camp at Court Road in Sopore (in Baramullah district - Zia’s ‘Op Topac’ target) and two posts of SPOs at Bhaderwah in Doda district.106 The same evening, militants fired rockets and missiles on the army’s brigade headquarters at Trehgam 68 Mountain Brigade.107 Incidentally militants have not kept themselves restricted to Kupwara alone. Two armymen got killed in a sneak attack on a camp at Beerwah in central Kashmir.108

103 Sunday (Calcutta), 29 August-4 September 1999, p.58.
104 Ibid.
105 The Hindustan Times, (New Delhi), August 7, 1999.
106 Ibid., August 8, 1999.
107 The Hindustan Times (New Delhi), August 9, 1999.
The strategy of “taking the fight into Indian Army’s Camp” reached its pinnacle on 3
November 1999, “when for the first time in more than a decade of insurgency, a suicide
squad of Pakistan backed militant outfit Lashkar-e-Toiba stormed the heavily guarded
headquarters of Indian Army 15 Corps (located at Srinagar - another Zia ‘Op Topac’
objective) killing a Major and five other people.”

Incidentally, this attack coincided with the Lashkar-e-Toyaba, three day convention starting from 3 November 1999, that was allowed to
be held by General Pervez Musharraf, the new Chief Executive of Pakistan, at Muridke in
Lahore, thereby, providing further proof of Pakistan’s sponsorship of terrorism in Kashmir.

On 2 December 1999, two militants were killed in the third known attempt at entering an
army establishment, near Baramulla on December 15, 1999, a heavily-armed gang of 40
Lashkar militants stormed the heavily guarded Rashtriya Rifles camp at Dengiwachi-
Watergam in Baramulla district killing one army Jawan and injuring three others. The same
day they attacked a police camp at Pahalgam killing seven police personnel.

The foregoing does not only prove the existence of ‘Op Topac’ but also indicates a
change in the militant’s strategy - Post Kargil scenario. Having been humiliated by the Indian
Army the Militants, supported by their mentors in Pakistan, commenced to launch daring
attacks on Indian Army bases, camps and headquarters with a view to regaining some of their
lost image and reputation. “Defeated in Kargil, Pakistan is now trying to step up its proxy war
in Kashmir Home Minister L.K Advani said in Delhi.”

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local populace.

“Some Afghan Mujahideen, by then settled in Azad Kashmir, will then
infiltrate in selected pockets with a view to extending areas of our influence.” Initially,
between 1987 to 1989, militancy in J&K was purely indigenous. Unemployed youth in J&K

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109 The Times of India (New Delhi), November 4, 1999 (brackets mine).
110 The Times of India (New Delhi), December 3, 1999, p.8.
111 The Hindu (Delhi), December 16, 1999, p.8.
112 India Today (New Delhi), July 26, 1999, p.46.
were readily available for enrolment by Pakistani sponsors (ISI, Rangers and Army) from across the border, these gullible young men were motivated, exfiltrated, trained and then infiltrated back into the valley. They were lured, bribed, trapped, blackmailed and misguided into becoming militants. Till 1989, JKLF, the pro Azadi, militant group comprising of local members held sway in J&K. However, they fell foul of their masters because of their divergent ideology of Independence or ‘Azadi’ to J&K. ISI promptly emasculated them and simultaneously formed the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HUM) (trained, amongst others, by the infamous Afghan guerrilla leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar). September 1989, was a landmark year in the history of the sub-continent, in as far as militancy in the region was concerned. The Soviets had left Afghanistan and the conflict there was subsiding, rendering thousands of trained, fundamentalist and blood thirsty guerrilla’s jobless. Militancy in Kashmir was being stoked by its Pakistani sponsors and needed to be boosted. The time was ripe to swing the pendulum of insurgency from Afghanistan to Kashmir. Islamabad needed just this type of an external situation to take advantage for the good of its own domestic politics, ranging from the diversion of popular attention away from the domestic collapse to keeping the dangerous ISI and the military away from meddling in politics. The financial benefits accruing from aid from oil rich Islamic countries would, of course, be a welcome fallout of this “all to gain nothing to loose” gambit.

It is reported that 65,000 tons of US weaponry was transferred to Afghanistan via Pakistan at a cost of over $5 billion. ISI plundered this supply of weapons at will and stocked it for resupplying it to Kashmir. The major beneficiaries of this arms dole were the Afghan militants who were now being diverted to the valley along with these weapons. William Clark Jr. a former US Ambassador to India says “Too much was put in there and some of it is finding its way out... Weapons outlast the conflicts they were intended for.”114 The Afghan experience was being transposed on to the Kashmir situation Hashim Qureshi writes, “The so called Islamic war fought in Afghanistan is now being thrust upon Kashmir by the religious extremists (Zia and his cotrie) on the same pattern as in Afghanistan.”115 Robert Oakley, the US ambassador to Pakistan during the crucial period of the Afghan war in an interview to an Indian journalist’s querry as to how strong is the Afghan war shadow over Kashmir replied “I

114 India Today (New Delhi), May 15, 1994, p.66.
think this came up first in the mind of General Beg (the Chief of Pakistan Army) in 1990 when he thought that he could easily replicate the Afghan strategy in Kashmir. He thought many of the common elements were present. There was religious fervour and the organisational experience which could help mobilise an Islamic force in which the Kashmiris would make a central element.”

It is estimated that between 1983 and 1987 the ISI provided military training to 80,000 Afghan Mujahideen. The ISI insisted on controlling and directing the military operations of the Mujahideen. After the Afghan war, the ISI still controlled these vast and dangerous “dogs of war” which they let loose on Kashmir. The first signs of the presence of Afghan warriors in Kashmir were noticed in early 1990. Yossef Bodansky the Director of the task force on terrorism and unconventional warfare of the US Congress writes:

“... by the late 1980’s, with the war in Afghanistan slowing down, the vast network of training camps for Afghan Mujahideen where transformed by the ISI into a centre of Islamist terrorism throughout South Asia... This transformation concurred with an active ISI program “to initiate full fledged subversion in Kashmir Valley”... At first, the ISI assistance to the Kashmiri Islamist was funneled through Gulbaddin Hekmatiyar’s Hizb-i-Islam thus providing Islamabad with deniability.... In early 1992, some of these Afghans were transferred to Azad Kashmir... By early 1993, there were over 1,000 Afghan Mujahids in the Markaz Dawar (established in Azad Kashmir by Pakistan Army) following the completion of advance training they are being sent to Kashmir... In the Summer of 1993, the ISI had in the Markaz-Dawar another force of some 200 Afghans - mainly Jallaluddin Haqqani’s people from the Khowst area... earmarked for special operation in Kashmir. According to Mohammad Fazal-al-Hajj, a PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) terrorist captured in Southern Kashmir in the summer of 1993, additional Afghans were being prepared by the ISI for the forthcoming escalation... At least 400 Afghans were known to being organised in one camp, where they were trained by the ISI to augment and provide quality core of leadership for the Kashmir Hizb-ul-Mujahideen... in forward bases in Kashmir some 600 terrorists, about half of them veteran Afghans, were already at the final phase of their training... In early December 1993, during a state visit to Pakistan, the Deputy Prime Minister of Afghanistan, Maulana Arsalan Rehmani acknowledged that Afghanistan also played a major role in a recent major development among Islamist Organisations fighting in Indian Kashmir, namely, the Merger of the Harkat-

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ul-Jihad and Harkat-ul- Mujahideen into the potent Harkat Ul-Ansar... “There are about 8000 members of Harkat Ul-Ansar who are supporting the Kashmiri struggle against Indian occupation”... Shaykh Jamaluddin, an Afghan mujahid recently captured in Kashmir insists that the ISI-sponsored Islamist forces already in Indian Kashmir are larger. “There are several thousand Afghans in the valley, he stressed. The ISI-sponsored mujahideen operate mainly under the banner of Hizb ul-Mujahideen and Harkat Ul-Ansar.”

The induction of these battle hardened Afghan veterans into the valley has brought about a qualitative change in militancy. The number of militant related encounters and casualties have gradually seen an incline from 1987 onwards. In 1992, alone there were 1,902 terrorism related deaths which is nearly equal to the total number of deaths between 1988-1992. “We believe in fighting from two metres unlike the Kashmiri who attack from a mile” says Fahadullah, a Pakistani trained in Afghanistan. Thus, the Afghan connection of ‘Op Topac’ is not only active in Kashmir, but it is also highly effective.

In continuation of discussing the Afghan influence in Kashmir militancy, a brief comparative study of the militant movements in both these places would further facilitate understanding of Pakistan’s strategy in Kashmir.

Pakistan’s Afghan Strategy: Relationship with J&K

Though the Afghanistan and Jammu and Kashmir embroglio’s are distinctly different in many respects, there are, however, some similarities between the two issues. The most relevant to this study is the strategy of proxy war adopted by Pakistan in Afghanistan. The strategy also envisaged a two level thrust, not unlike the one being employed by it in Jammu and Kashmir. Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Kamal Matinuddin of Pakistan Army writes on the strategy thus: “what options did Pakistan have in December, 1979: (1) it could acquiesce and accept the fait accompli; (2) it could, if it was a big power like India, provide all out military support to the freedom fighters and achieve its objective of eliminating an adversary by force of arms or (3) it could bring political pressure to bear on the Soviet Union along with covert assistance to the Mujahideen.... The third option was to use all the diplomatic pressure that


\[119\] India Today, op.cit., p.48.
could be mustered to build up world opinion, against the Soviet Union for violating the principles of the United Nations Charter and thus force them to leave Afghanistan. At the same time provide...full support to the freedom fighters. Finally this was the option that was adopted”.

The foregoing clearly enunciates Pakistan’s two level strategy in Afghanistan: one at the level of application of external force/pressure and the other at the level of supporting proxy war by the Mujahideen. The book “Bear Trap: Afghanistan’s Untold Story” by Brigadier Mohammad Yausaf and Major Mark Adkin, perhaps, most lucidly and clearly exposes the Pakistani hand in the Afghan war. The author of the book was a senior officer in Pakistan’s Inter-service Intelligence (ISI) and over all in charge of the Afghan Bureau for four years, from 1983-1987. His book was the first authentic expose of the true extent of the assistance given by Pakistan to the Mujahideen in training, logistics and operations. During his tenure of four years, some 80,000 Mujahideen were trained; hundreds of thousands of tons of arms and ammunition were distributed, several billion dollars were spent on this immense logistic exercise.

The writer also claims and acknowledges that ISI teams (which meant Pakistan Army regulars; since, the entire ISI comprises of regular Pak Army officers and men) regularly entered Afghanistan alongside the Mujahideen. He writes “…I know for certain that we at ISI were sending Pakistani military personnel into Afghanistan from 1981 through to 1986.... I must make it clear, however, that the men we sent into Afghanistan were not spies, they were soldiers from the Pakistan Army... All my men going into Afghanistan had plenty of time to prepare themselves and the Mujahideen they would be accompanying.... By this time the trainers had grown beards, were dressed as Mujahideen, so that they were indistinguishable from their guerrilla companion”.

This is exactly the strategy or tactics which was followed by Pakistan in all its wars with India, specially during 1947 and 1965, as has been amply brought out in earlier chapters. It would be reasonable to assume at this stage that the two level strategy was actually

formulated, implemented and finally adopted by Pakistan as a standard doctrine, after it had
been practiced to perfection by them in Jammu and Kashmir during their earlier wars with
India. This then refined and adapted to suit the Afghan conflict environment before being put
to use there, and very successfully at that. Encouraged by these results, it was transposed in
Jammu and Kashmir from 1987-88 onwards. The latest example of the use of this tactics is
the Kargil conflict of May-July 1999, where similar tactics, similar weapons, similar logistic
support and even similar men were used to infiltrate into similar type of terrain. The similarity
between Kargil and Afghanistan is further accentuated by this statement: "under no
circumstances must he allow himself to be captured, as this would expose the Pakistan
government's clandestine support for the Jehad. Of course we would deny everything,
disown them....These men were a great credit to the Pakistan army. Although they each
received an award, roughly equivalent to the US silver star or British Military Cross, for their
professionalism and daring...." 122

In Kargil Pakistan denied that its regular army personnel were inside Indian territory.
They even refused to take back their dead and captured army men, even after it was
confirmed that they belonged to regular army units. Astonishingly, much in the same manner
as they did during the Afghanistan crisis, Pakistan declared the award of 64 gallantry awards
to their Kargil battle armymen, on the occasion of their 52nd Independence day on the August
1999. 123 This included captain Karnal Sher Khan, whose body was handed back to Pakistan
by India. He was awarded Pakistan’s highest gallantry award, the ‘Nishan-e-Haider’. In this
way Pakistan publicly acknowledged the role of its armed forces in Kargil. Proof of the latest
involvement of Pakistan’s armed forces in Afghanistan is provided by Mahendra Ved who
wrote in August 1999: "Close on the heels of the Kargil debacle, the Pakistan army has
suffered heavy casualties in northern Afghanistan where its 3,000 combatants are engaged
in a bid by the Taliban to break the formation of Ahmed Shah Masood...six Pakistan army
officers --- a brigadier; two colonels, three majors and a captain were among many
killed...significantly, the current round of fighting began 10 days after the last Pakistani
soldier withdrew from Kargil...Reliable sources say that the Pakistan army has committed
three battalions, exclusive of the Northern Light Infantry and the Special Services Group

122 Ibid, p. 114-115
123 The Times of India (New Delhi), 15 August 1999, p. 13.
(SSG) (The same troops participated in the Kargil war).\textsuperscript{124} Also, Afghanistan’s ousted President, Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani pressed the UN security council, during early August 1999, to take serious measures against Pakistan, which he accused of intervening in his country. He said: “Members of the so called Islamic extremist groups are continuously recruited, trained, armed and dispatched along with Pakistani military personnel into Afghanistan...”\textsuperscript{125}

The same writer interviewed Mr. Masoud Khalili, Afghanistan’s envoy to Delhi, published in Times of India says “The main fighters, the ones who matter are Pakistani Army regulars, of course, in different disguise. Commander Ahmed Shah Masood, who commands the Northern Alliance fighting the Taliban, told me in mid June (1999) that Pakistan had sent in 3,200 regulars... at least three Divisions guarding Kabul are manned and commanded by Pakistani regulars”. About a connection between Kabul and Kargil, he says “of course, Pakistan connects the two and has deep designs for both... There is a basic difference though in the way Islamabad is dealing with Kabul and Kargil. They want to project our resistance against the Taliban as something localised, not to be taken seriously by the world. But through the mercenaries they have pushed into Kashmir, and now they want to Internationalise the issue”.\textsuperscript{126} Wali Masood, Afghan ambassador to Britain and the brother of legendary Afghan Mujhaeddin Commander Ahmed Shah Masood said in London “What has been unravelling in Kargil today has been the scene of events in Afghanistan for the past seven years”. Hinting at Pakistan’s two level strategy he said, “It is Pakistan military intervention in Afghanistan under the label of Taliban and it is a similar double track card which ISI is playing in Jammu and Kashmir by invasion by mixed force of mercenaries and regular army”.\textsuperscript{127}

About the Kargil-Kabul nexus, Mr. Khalili thinks “neither Kargil nor Kapisa (a province in Afghanistan where Pakistani troops were fighting the Masaud alliance) chapter are over. The same combination of Pakistan’s forces under ISI control and the Arab

\textsuperscript{124} The Times of India (New Delhi), News report by Mahendra Ved in Tajikistan; August 8, 1999, p.11.
\textsuperscript{125} The Times of India (New Delhi), August 7, 1999, p.15.
\textsuperscript{126} The Times of India (New Delhi), July 21, 1999, p.14.
\textsuperscript{127} The Times of India (New Delhi), July 14, 1999.
mercenarys conducting 'Jehad' under inspiration of Osama Bin Laden are fighting on both the fronts. The Kargil-Kabul nexus is complete and this has also been confirmed by the noted Pakistani writer Ahmed Rashid". Mahendra Ved, the writer of this article and interviewer of Mr. Masood Khalili feels that the nexus got established in early October 1998, at a meeting convened by the Taliban, which was attended by officers of the Pushtun dominated Afghanistan desk of Pakistan’s ISI and Saudi dissident Osama Bin Laden. According to the plan formulated in the meetings the offensive was to launched in Kashmir, however, when this Kargil plan failed, they quickly switched forces to Afghanistan and by July 22 the same force had been moved to Kabul to battle Masoud’s forces. “It had 2,500 Pak regulars, 4000 volunteers, 200 Taliban soldiers and 700 Arabs. They were told that they were continuing the same ‘Jehad’ as in Kargil... but the Kabul debacle was equally severe.”

The foregoing clearly brings out the veracity authenticity and reality of ‘Operation Topac’ or whatever name ascribed to it, and its linkage with Pakistan’s two level strategy. The student has attempted to prove the existence of a pre-conceived plan on J&K by Pakistan through the medium and assistance of available written material and a process of interpreting the oral plan in the light of actual happenings in J&K from the revelation of the plan in 1988 to date. The exactness of similarity defies any chances of coincidence.