CHAPTER II

INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM IN INDIA AND ITS INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS
The eighties saw the entire Indian sub-continent in the midst of conflict and change due to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and the presence of inherent escalatory components in domestic conflicts. The assertion of independent ethnic and communal identities and the mix of religion and politics provided a fertile ground for armed dissensions and movements for self-determination and secessionism to flourish. Cross-border abetment of terrorism in Punjab and Kashmir escalated violence and was evident in bank loots, arson, bombings, kidnappings and killings including those of two of our Prime Ministers, namely, Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi.

Currently, terrorism in India may have lost some of its initial venom and vigour, but as a political movement of extreme violence, it still occupies centre-stage in many parts of the country. In a country the size of India, with a pluralistic society, there is no lack of dissatisfied and disgruntled ethnic and political groups that may provide unscrupulous political leaders and external forces inimical to India, a chance to manipulate and exploit this situation for their own designs.  

Added to the above, is the resort to proxy -wars by forces keen on India’s destabilization. As conventional wars become too expensive and chances of achieving objectives through them have decreased rapidly, the use of proxy war has become an important policy option for external forces inimical to India. A proxy war being an attractive low-cost, high-success rate option, with a greater degree of deniability on the part of the instigator, it is no wonder that whenever India witnessed a socio-political or ethnic upheaval, forces from across the border capitalised on the moment

to foment trouble clandestinely. In many ways, the terrorist problem in India would have not reached the proportions it reached had external forces not used the problem as a means of furthering their expansionist designs. Of course, the roots of the problem have been, for starters, internal and political and it will be suicidal for any government to gloss over its administrative and political shortcomings and lay the blame squarely on the “foreign hand”.

Terrorism in India, has been a dominant force directing the life of various citizens for many years in some parts of the country. This chapter deals with the terrorist problem in Punjab, Kashmir and the North-East. The various groups that have operated/operate in these areas would be mentioned along with a reference to their, support structures. The LTTE menace down South would also be discussed. An overview of the ISI’s operations and ambitions would be given to gauge the gravity of the threat we still face.

(A) Terrorism in Punjab

‘Terrorism’ and ‘terrorists’ gained popular currency in India as never before only after the Punjab problem, began and brimmed over the top. Ordinary life in Punjab became hostage to terrorist whims and fancies for almost a decade. Undoubtedly, militancy in Punjab has had close links with state politics. The Akali Dal has always been contesting for political power by championing the cause of Sikh religion. It has always sought to garner the Sikhs’ support to thwart any threat to the “Panth”. Thus, religion and politics in Punjab have always been a queer medley and it was from a distorted perception of this historical tradition that most of the ‘80s terrorist groups found succour and sustenance.
The Sikh perception of being betrayed first by the partition of 1947, which they had always thought of as unfair to them, coupled with their resentment over the linguistic reorganizations of all states except Punjab in 1956, fuelled the demand for a Punjabi Suba at around the same time. Though the principle was accepted by Mrs. Gandhi in 1966 and a Boundary Commission set up, new demands sprang up. These included the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab, a fair share of river waters and a separate High Court for Punjab.

The death of Darshan Singh Pheruman in November 1969, after a three-month fast led Mrs. Gandhi to come up with the knee-jerk reaction of hastily awarding Chandigarh to Punjab in exchange for the Hindi-speaking areas of Abohar and Fazilka to Haryana. The non-implementation of the award, only ended up mollifying the Sikhs all the more and made the government’s intentions seem all the more malafide to them. The seventies saw more politicking between the Akali Dal and the Congress, with cunning politicians taking over the leadership of both the fronts. With the dismissal of the Prakash Singh Badal government and the subsequent Akali defeat in the polls, the frustrated Akali leadership became bitter and this opened the way for the extremists to come to the political forefront in the state. The growing unemployment among the Sikh youth, led to a major political and economic insecurity, and the resultant explosive situation was exploited to the hilt by extremists and their abettors alike.

These developments coupled with the Congress’ politicking plans as evident in their cultivating Sant Jarnail Singh Bhinderwale to weaken the Akali Dal and restrict its political ground, effectively sowed the seeds of militancy in India’s most prosperous state.
These ground realities also boomeranged in more ways than one. The composition of the terrorist structure in the state revealed that almost fifty percent of the terrorists came from families of rich peasants, landlords and the urban middle class.

The largest number of terrorists came from the land-owning Jats and had links with politicians and zamindars. The popular sympathy arose from the perception that "the mundas" were sacrificing their lives for the cause of the Sikh religion and people. All these led to the cry for a separate nation for the Sikhs -Khalistan. A horde of terrorist groups sprang up and plunged the state into darkness.

For any society, it was a giant leap backward. The militant movement in the state shackled the physical and mental lives of its people, eroding the authority of the state. Almost as fearful as the people it had to defend, the State government found its boundaries being rolled back and its not-so-strong political will undermined into nonexistence. And as the militants cloaked their renewed terror in ideological purity, the state slid swiftly into lawlessness. The ISI found the time ripe for a full-throated intervention and thus began their programme of supplying the terrorists with arms and ammunition, sanctuaries and sympathy and funds and propaganda. All this lead to chaos, which held sway in Punjab for almost a decade until a strong and concerted police and para-military effort as evident in Operation Black Thunder (1988) brought down the degree of militancy. Elections to the State Assembly followed by the

2 ibid, pp. 157-59
3 Punjabi term for young boys : here it refers to the young terrorists.

4 The demand for Khalistan was first voiced by the members of the Panthic committee who went all out to enlist the support of the World Sikh Organization (WSO) and the International Youth Sikh Federation (IYSF)to help explore the ground for the creation of an independent Sikh state. They also got in touch with Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan the self styled president of Khalistan
restoration of popular government eroded the terrorists base and helped win popular confidence too.

The main terrorist groups that spawned in Punjab during the militancy and
Their support structures are discussed as under:

1. The Khalistan Commando Force (KCF)

It was set up by the first Panthic Committee in February 1986. Manbir Singh Chaheru, in the name of Hari Singh, became its Commander with Tarseem Singh Kehar, as its second-in-command. With Chaheru’s arrest in 1986, his place was taken up by Sukhdev Singh alias Sukha Sipahi, alias ‘General’ Labh Singh. His major terrorist acts included the killings of the teenaged son of the SP, Amritsar city, H.S. Kahlon, the son of R.K. Bedi, the then DSP, Ludhiana City, and Joginder Pal Pandey, a former Minister of Punjab at Ludhiana.

On taking over the reins of the KCF, Sukhdev Singh established his tactical headquarters at Jalandhar and assigned different territories to different subgroups led by top militants. Fresh supply of sophisticated arms arranged by the Panthic Committee from Pakistan were made available to the subgroups. For a better command and control, Punjab was divided into four areas and each region was placed under the charge of a ‘Lt. General’. A three-member supreme body in the KCF hierarchy, comprising of Daljit Singh Bitto, Gursharan Singh alias Gama and Charanjit Singh alias Channi, had the power to over rule the decisions taken by Sukhdev Singh, the KCF chief.6

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5 Times of India (New Delhi), 9 August, 1986

6 As per information provided to the army by an apprehended KCF militant.
On 15 December 1986, on quelling intergroup rivalry, Sukhdev Singh was bestowed with the title of 'General' Labh Singh. Immediately after this he claimed that the KCF had emerged as an apex body of various militant organisations including the Khalistan Armed Police, the Dashmesh Regiment (owing allegiance to the AISSF-G), the Khalistan Armed Police and Mata Sahib Kaur Commando Force to intensify the struggle for Khalistan and to eliminate the so-called communal leaders of India and their puppets like S. S. Ray, governor of Punjab, J.F. Ribeiro, director-General of Police, S. S. Barnala, Chief Minister and Balwant Singh, a minister in the Barnala Ministry.

In general, the KCF cadres were organized on very professional lines and were well-equipped and well-trained. They excelled at committing bank dacoities and also fuelled communal passions by killing many Hindus in 1987.

After the death of Sukha Sipahi, Kamaljit Singh Sultanhind, member Panthic Committee, took over the KCF command and after he was killed, Sukhdev Singh Jhamka and Gurjant Singh Rajasthani put forth their claims to head the KCF. Subsequently, the KCF split and Wassan Singh Zaffarwal, member Panthic Committee, became the KCF chief. Gurjant Singh Rajasthani and Pipal Singh also formed another main group.

The KCF also indulged in large-scale smuggling of arms and ammunition from Pakistan through Wassan Singh Zaffarwal. To extend their operational base, they coordinated with the Babbars, the KLF and the KLO as well as the AISSF. The KCF

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7 Labh Singh was a legendary Sikh hero and conferring this title on Sukhdev Singh elevated him to the stature of popular legend.

suffered a major setback during Operation Black Thunder but continued to remain active. In an extremely gruesome case, they killed eighteen students of the Thapar Engineering College at Patiala in 1988.

In 1989, almost all the top leaders of the KCF were killed by the security forces. The rest - Bikramjit Singh Talwandi, Balwinder Singh Fatehgarh, Bachittar Singh Dera Baba Nanak, Randhir Singh Fatehgarh etc - were arrested one by one.

2. The Babbar Khalsa (BK)

It was set up in 1978 and was the political offshoot of the Akhand Kirtani Jatha. It was a pro-Akali and an anti-Bhindranwale group. Its most prominent base overseas was the one at Vancouver. The leaders of the BK considered Pakistan to be a natural and cultural neighbour and believed that the Sikhs would not be able to maintain their 'purity' till they achieved an independent state of their own. It had a hundred determined fanatics, curiously opposed to Bhindranwale but fiercely dedicated to the extremist cause. The Babbars were renowned for their individual valour and their skill with explosives. The latter's training came from the British SAS in early 1984 as did the training in sabotage. With the Jewish and Kurdish struggles as its models, and many bases abroad, the BK rose to become a very fearful terrorist group in Punjab.

After Operation Blue Star, Sukhdev Singh Dasuwal, the first chief of the Babbars, Tarseem Singh Kalasanghian and Wadhwa Singh, along with some other BK activists went over to Pakistan for training in arms and explosives. This group was responsible for many explosive terrorist acts in Punjab, Delhi and Haryana in the 1980s. The 1985 transistor bomb cases in Delhi were their handiwork. After

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9 ibid p.29
operation Black Thunder, their base was diminished but they continued to remain in operation. The late - 80s saw a change in their target tactics as they took to using remote control devices to hit their targets.

The first big jolt to the BK was in the form of the arrest of its leader Makhan Singh. But their rampage continued and during 1989, their main targets were the officers of the police and paramilitary forces and the “police informers”

The most sensational terrorist act of the BK was the gruesome killing of Lala Jagat Narain on 9 Sept 1981. It was also responsible for killing many Nirankaris. To spread their influence wider, their leader Surjan Singh Gill, in February 1984, wrote an open letter to the Punjab militants to organize ‘suicide squads’ to change the situation in Punjab. In May 1984, a meet was organized wherein it was decided to boycott the Indian Airlines flights by Sikhs. This was to be monitored by BK squads and defaulters had to pay with their lives.

The BK were the first terrorist group to be formed and the last to be neutralized. Now all their leaders have been either arrested or killed. In its heyday, it had support bases in Canada, the U.S., the U.K., Holland, West Germany and Pakistan. It received training from Britain’s Kinnie Minnie Services and also from Jon Vanderhearst.

The BK had a lot of support outside India. Surjan Singh Gill, a Canadian citizen, first organised a demonstration at Vancouver on 27 September, 1981 to

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10 The Tribune (Chandigarh), 10 September, 1981.

11 John Vanderhearst was hired by the Babbars in 1982 to constitute a team of men with military experience to train Sikhs in British Columbia in the use of firearms and combat techniques.
protest against the alleged repression of Sikhs in India. Later on, with the active connivance of Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan of the National Council of Khalistan, they got currency notes and 'passports' of the 'Government of Khalistan' printed in an American town bordering Canada.

Gill also wrote to the Legal Division of the United Nations at New York seeking observer status for the "Khalistan Movement" as analogous to the PLO. The BK also released a booklet, "Case for the Republic of Khalistan" in Canada in June 1983 where in it reiterated that an international lobby was essential to promote the Sikh cause worldwide. It also said that the 'government' and people of Khalistan will welcome friendly relations with Pakistan.

Almost all secessionist organizations indulged in malicious propaganda campaigns against the government of India between 1980-84. The other terrorist groups are mentioned as under

3. **Khalistan Liberation Force (KLF)**

The KLF is the group most remembered for the attempt on the life of DGP Ribeiro in Romania in 1991 and also the kidnapping of the Romanian diplomat Liviu Radu in New Delhi in 1991.

Towards the end of 1986, Arun Singh, dispelled from the Panthic Committee, resorted to organizing splinter groups called the Main Bhago Regiment, Tat Khalsa, Khalistan Armed Police, and Dashmesh Regiment under the banner of KLF, the armed wing of the AISSF (Presidium). A major killing by the KLF was of the then SSP

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12 The Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 27, Sept, 1981.
13 D.P. Sharma, n. 8 p. 42
14 ibid, p 43
Patiala, A.S. Brar in December 1987. Avtar Singh Brahma was the KLF Chief who created terror in the districts of Amritsar, Majitha, Taran Taran and Ferozpur. He was killed in Rajasthan in August 1988, while returning from Pakistan and was succeeded by Gurjant Singh Budhsinghwala. The KLF had close links with the KCF.

In September 1988, an unsuccessful attempt was made to bring together the KLF, the KCF the Babbars and the KLO. But by 1990, with most of its leaders dead in encounters, the KLF had lost most of its earlier influence.

4. **The Bhindranwale Tiger Force of Khalistan (BTFK)**

On leaving the Panthic Committee in April 1987, Gurbachan Singh Manochahal organized the BTFK which was responsible for a spate of killings in Punjab and Delhi in 1987. A splinter group was formed after Nishan Singh Makhan split. The most active pre-Black thunder group could never recover after it. Almost all its top leaders - Bhupinder Singh, Khoka, Nirmal Singh Nimma, Sukhdev Singh Alowal, Gurdeep Singh, Gurmel Singh Makhwaal, Mohinder Singh Manochahal, Paramjit Singh Ghandasa, Bhagat Singh Baghala, Satnam Singh alias Satta and Rachpal Singh Chugh were killed in Police encounters. Its entire leadership including Gurbachan Singh Manochahal and Satnam Singh has since been neutralized[^15].

5. **Khalistan Liberation Organization**

It was formed in January 1988 by Atinder Pal Singh of the AISSF along with Puran Singh of Rangretta Commando Force, Gurdeep Singh of Chak Raman, Harbajan Singh Rasulpur, Jagir Singh of Dera Baba Nanak, Jaspal Singh and Sodhi of Hoshiarpur. It was set up in Anandpur Sahib with Atinder Pal Singh as its head. Its aim was to achieve Khalistan by military action.

The KLO was responsible for a number of explosions in Punjab, Haryana and Delhi in the late 80s. Most of the KLO leadership died in police encounters while Atinder Pal Singh was arrested in 1988.

6. **The Dal Khalsa (DK)**

It was set up in 1978 to attain a sovereign Sikh state. Its branches were set up in 1983 in UK and West Germany. One of its most important base was Vancouver. A substantial amount of its funds came from the ISI of Pakistan. The DK was responsible for the hijacking of an Indian Airlines plane in September 1981.

Jaswant Singh Thekedar, the Chief Organiser of Dal Khalsa, escaped to London in December 1982 and established a DK unit there. In January 1983 along with his supporters, he demonstrated outside the Indian High Commission at London, demanding Khalistan. In June 1983, a branch of Dal Khalsa was set up in Hamburg in Germany too. But except for making provocative and seditious speeches, organizing meetings and collecting funds, the Dal Khalsa did not do anything that could influence the Sikh psyche strongly, in India or abroad. Their activities mainly limited themselves to (a) poster campaigns in West Europe, the USA and Canada for propagating the ideals of the Dal Khalsa (b) drive for collecting funds and (c) making the Sikhs abroad aware of the anti-Sikh designs of the "Hindu Imperialists" in India. On 11 June, 1984 they claimed to have set up a clandestine "Government of Khalistan' in exile.  

7. **The National Council of Khalistan**

It was formed by Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan in April 1980. He proclaimed himself as its President and appointed Balbir Singh Sandhu as its General Secretary. In

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16 No address of the 'government' was disclosed by the Dal Khalsa.

17 *The Tribune* (Chandigarh), 27 January, 1984
July 1980, Chauhan declared the formation of 'Khalistan' in an address to the Sikhs in London while Balbir Singh Sandhu did the same in India. In April 1981, the passport of Dr Chauhan was revoked and a case for sedition and promoting hatred among different communities was registered against him four months later. He did not surrender his passport and managed to stay in the U.K and visited Canada, USA and other European countries. He also indulged in organising demonstrations, burning the Indian National Flag and making provocative statements all of which put the Indian government in the dock, domestically and internationally. He also claimed to having enlisted American and Pakistani support for his cause. With his guidance and connivance, his trusted lieutenant in India, Balbir Singh Sandhu, raised the 'Khalistan' flag on top of a building near Harminder Sahib on 26 January, 1984. The fact that despite Indian government protests, Chauhan managed to get a visa to the U.S.A in 1983 was instrumental in worsening Indo-American understanding on the matter of cooperating against terrorism.

Dr Chauhan also had close links with the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation front in the U.K. He also claimed that his movement enjoyed support of the Jamait-e-Islami of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Thus his linkages with other forces inimical to India compounded the terrorists situation in the country. The NCK base in Vancouver also got help from Pakistan to print, stamps, passports and currency notes of Khalistan.

7. **The All India Sikh Students Federation (the AISSF)**

The AISSF was set up in 1944 with the purpose of inculcating love for the Guru's teachings in the Sikh youth. It developed terrorist undertones in the age of terrorism in Punjab. Its main terrorist act was the hijacking of a Srinagar bound Indian Airlines Boeing to Dubai in 1984. Its main support came from Pakistan and Canada.
Apart from the above mentioned terrorist groups, there were a lot of separatists based abroad who fuelled the terrorist fire in Punjab in the tumultuous decade of the 1980s. Among them was Ganga Singh Dhillon who has been called the Sikh Jinnah. A citizen of the USA, he was the President of Sri Nankana Sahib Foundation of Washington. He was in touch with General Zia on greater Sikh involvement in running the Sikh Shrines in Pakistan. He demanded the Indian Army’s withdrawal from Amritsar after Operation Blue Star and also a UN referendum on the Sikh demand for nationhood. The Indian government, however, declared him a personal non-grata and denied him a visa to India.

Thus the genesis of the problem in Punjab can be traced to the assertion of the independent Sikh identity in the wake of political mismanagement, territorial and water disputes, Central interference and the adoption of radical counter terrorist strategies like Operation Blue Star of 1984. The intrusion of religion into politics created Bhindranwale on the one hand and spawned a number of terrorist groups that were previously lacking in ideology. The turmoil at home invited intervention from across the border and in no time training camps for terrorists sprung up in Kasur, Shekhpura, Aminabad and Pok in Pakistan. Arms, sanctuaries and propaganda were generously provided by Pakistan through its ISI. primarily and with this kind of logistical, political and diplomatic support, the movement infiltrated into Sriganganagar (Rajasthan ), Terai (U.P.), Nanded (Maharashtra), Bastar (M.P.) and to certain coal-mines in Bihar. With the restoration of democracy in Punjab, the Pakistani focus shifted to Kashmir which became the new hot bed of proxy war in India.

It would be fatal on the part of the state apparatus in India and in Punjab to naively assume that the terrorist threat is over. The preponderence of terrorist activities on our borders and their nefarious destabilization designs should allow no room for
complacency. According to the Director General of Police, Punjab, O.P. Sharma, Pakistan, of late, has been infiltrating terrorist groups with volunteers from some fundamentalist organizations to revive militancy in Punjab\textsuperscript{18}. The new ISI gameplan is to revive terrorism in the name of jehad. Pakistan is also involved in fuelling narcoterrorism in the region. DGP Sharma, on a later occasion, has also expressed the fear that the 15,000 odd unemployed Punjab youth in various European countries would prove to be a fertile fodder for terrorism training by the ISI\textsuperscript{19}

Earlier, he had also disclosed that due to the mounting pressure on terrorists in Punjab, they had infiltrated into New Delhi from Thailand and Nepal under fake names\textsuperscript{20}. He said that these terrorists were getting support from the chiefs of the ISI and the Jamat-e-Islami of Pakistan, Pakistani narcoterrorist cartel, militant leaders living in Pakistan and around five hundred smugglers working as ISI agents in Pakistan. As the ISI is finding it extremely difficult to enlist recruits from Punjab youth, it is sending its own nationals who fly from Pakistan to Bangkok, then to Nepal and finally enter India\textsuperscript{21}. The Allaka Gai camp in Afghanistan is used by the ISI to provide training arms and explosives to the recruits who are then sent to India\textsuperscript{22}.

\textsuperscript{18} The Times of India, New Delhi, 3 March, 1996.

\textsuperscript{19} The Tribune, Chandigarh, 3 June, 1996.

\textsuperscript{20} The Pioneer, New Delhi, 26 February, 1996.

\textsuperscript{21} The Tribune, Chandigarh, 24 Feb. 1996.

\textsuperscript{22} The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, 19 June, 1996.
The external hand in Punjab terrorism

Ever since the 1971 war of Independence of Bangladesh, when India's involvement in training Mukti Bahini guerrillas and providing them and other Bangladeshi leaders safe sanctuary on Indian soil, fashioning the surrender of Pakistan Army and keeping some of them as prisoners of war in Indian detention camps, Pakistan was looking for an opportunity to retaliate against this 'humiliation'. Operation Blue Star of June 1984 and its aftermath proved to be a god-sent chance for Pakistan as it opened its gates to Sikh militants trying to flee from the Indian army. Among others, those who escaped before Bluestar were Sukhdev Singh Dossuwal and Wadhwa Singh of the Babbar Khalsa, Bhai Kanwar Singh of Akal Federation, Atinder Pal Singh of the AISSF, Gurjit Singh of the Damdami Taksal and Balbir Singh Sandhu of the National Council of Khalistan. Pakistan also kept the myth of Bhindranwale being alive in Pakistan after Blue Star and this attracted hordes of militants to it.

The apprehended militants revealed the presence of training camps at Narowal Rangers Headquarters, Inspection Bungalow on the outskirts of Sialkot Cantonment and Safe House near Lahore. It was here that these Sikh youth were encouraged to undertake training in terrorist activities in Pakistan. As more and more people crossed over, there came up atleast eleven such centres in Pakistan.

The training included indoctrination against the Hindus to handling of firearms and weaponslike .455 and .38 bore revolvers and pistols, stenguns, selfloading riles, .303 rifles etc. Use of chemicals and high explosives was also taught. Elaborations were provided on how to destroy railway tracks, transformers, buildings, bridges and

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23 Revealed in the interrogation of apprehended militants in 1986

24 D.P.Sharma, n.8, p.270
Army convoys etc. After this, the other tasks assigned were fomenting Hindu-Sikh riots, killing Hindu leaders, destroying Hindu places of worship, liquidating Sikh “colloborators” and traitors of the Panth, luring Sikh Army personnel to report on the deployment and movement of Indian Army units into Jammu and Kashmir. Sabotaging vital buildings and installations like the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, creation of guerrilla and political cells and winning over of ideologues for propagating the cause of Khalistan were some other tasks assigned jointly by the Pakistan Field Intelligence Units and the militant leaders in Pakistan. Due to all this, terrorists succeeded in wreaking havoc in Punjab for almost a decade.25

(B) Terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir

The problem of Kashmir is a political and territorial problem with geostrategic implications. Pakistan's involvement in this crisis is well-documented and has plunged the state into a mess from 1989 onwards.

Actually, Kashmir has been a bone of contention right from day one when the Indian subcontinent came to be split into two - India and Pakistan. The partition was based on Jinnah's two-nation theory and it was on this basis that Pakistan's claim to Kashmir tends to rest. In October 1947, even as Maharaja Hari Singh signed the Instrument of Accession with India, Pakistan sent hordes of its 'irregulars' - tribal militants backed by its Armed Forces without uniform - to occupy Kashmir. The loot and plunder stopped only when the Indian Army was called upon by the Maharaja to help him out of this crisis. The Indian Army pushed back the raiders to some extent when a cease fire was declared. At that time, Pakistan was in occupation of almost two fifths of the states territory and is still holding on to it. This so-called 'Azad Kashmir' area is the part where Pakistan has now set up maximum number of training camps for

25 Steve Coll in the International Herald Tribune. 10 December 1990
terrorists to be sent to India for subversion and destruction of socio-political fabric and governmental credibility.

The next attack from Pakistan came in 1965 when it perceived India to be weak after the Chinese aggression of 1962. But Pakistan suffered major reverses then too at the hands of the Indian Army.

The third confrontation came in 1971 during the Bangladesh war. At the end of the sixteen day war, Pakistan lost its eastern wing and 96,000 of its soldiers surrendered to the Indian Army. This reduction in its size and influence made Pakistan restless and it almost ached for an opportunity to hit India and assuage its own sense of revenge.

As Pakistan decided that another confrontation on the battle field would not be a paying proposition, it contemplated various options to resort to. The Defence cabinet Committee of Pakistan at a meeting ruled out any major military confrontations with India over Kashmir. After astute calculations, it was decided that a low intensity conflict over a prolonged period would be successful in Kashmir to break the morale of India. The Government of Pakistan decided to leave all covert action to 'Azad Kashmir' and ordered the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) to maintain a position that would deny any complicity in such a proxy-war. 'Operation Topac', an unconventional war, was thus planned by the Defence Cabinet Committee and put into effect. This new strategy has been put to use to build up an atmosphere conducive to militancy through the various terrorist groups that Pakistan has taken care to recruit from the volatile section of the Kashmiri youth. These youth are taken to POK in Pakistan and given training, motivation and equipment before being sent back to Kashmir to subvert

26 Indian Defence Review, July 1989, pp 39-42
the administration and the law-enforcing agencies, to create anarchy and launch a
guerilla warfare and finally force India to quit Kashmir.

This Operation Topac has been the result of an evolved grand strategy of
destabilization. It will be insightful to go in to its details to understand the LIC in
Kashmir better.

Named after Topac Amin, an Inca prince who fought an unconventional war
against Spanish rule in the eighteenth century Uruguay, Operation Topac was brought
up at a secret meeting of military generals presided over by the Pakistani President
General Zia-ul-Haq in April 1988. He had full faith in this weapon which he planned
to use to overpower Kashmir with full-scale terrorism, subversion, insurrection and
insurgency all at a time. Its seeds had already been sown in the previous two years of
militancy already let loose in the valley. The back-up to be provided by this operation
consisted of a well planned and sophisticated effort to infiltrate the Pakistan-trained
saboteurs into all branches of the Kashmir government and also to expose the entire
population to a sustained anti-India propaganda without going in to an actual war. In
Zia's words only: "... Here we must adopt those methods of combat which the
Kashmiri mind can grasp and cope with— in other words, a co-ordinated 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". 27

Further he said that Phase I of Operation Topac would initiate a low level
insurgency against the regime, so that it is under siege, but does not collapse as Delhi's
Central rule was not a favourable option with the Pakistanis. Putting in saboteurs in
key positions in the state administration, police forces, financial institutions,

27 ibid p 42
communications network and other important organizations as well as whipping up anti-India sentiments among students and peasants and enlisting their support for rioting and anti-government demonstration also were the important components of the phase. Another long-term impact it aimed to create was by collaborating with the Sikh extremists to create chaos and terror in Jammu to divert attention from the Valley at a critical juncture and discredit the regime even in the Hindu eyes.\textsuperscript{28} Phase II of Operation Topac centred around exerting maximum pressure on the Siachen, Kargil and Rajouri-Poonch sectors to force the Indian Army to deploy reserve formations outside the valley. It also set the stage for the infiltration of foreign mercenaries particularly some Afghan Mujahideen settled in Azad Kashmir, to extend the terrorist area of influence in Kashmir. A Special Force, under selected retired officers, was sought to be set up to attack and destroy airfields, radio stations, block Banihal Tunnel and the Kargil-Leh Highway.

Phase III was meant to centre around detailed plans being drafted for the liberation of the Kashmir Valley and the establishment of an Islamic state there. The large stocks of arms from U.S consignments intended for the Afghan Mujahideen were to be deployed for the purpose. The initial phase of Operation Topac was apparently put in to action in late 1988 and its threw Kashmir in to an unprecedented turmoil. Terrorism overtook the state to a degree which was bordering on war. Thus from 1988 what started by Pakistan against India was what is called as "low-intensity conflict" in U.S Army parlance.

Militancy in the valley entered an extremely violent phase from July 1989 onwards. Attacks on selected targets and police-mob clashes made their presence felt like never before. There were bomb blasts all around and their increasing frequency

\textsuperscript{28} D.P. Kumar, Kashmir : Pakistan's Proxy War. Har-Anand Publication. 1995. PP 119
threatened to erode the credibility of the government. From December 1989, an organized phase of assassinations, kidnapping, murders and looting started in J & K, when the JKLF chairman Amanullah Khan announced a 18 month terror campaign against India. Thus Pakistan's plan of balkanising and weakening India began with a bang. The Islamic Card has also been played skillfully all along to instill a feeling of distrust towards the government of India.

To sum up, at the macro-level, Pak-sponsored moves seem to be aimed at:

1) A gradual escalation of insurgency and terrorism.

2) Further subversion of the local administration by infiltration of sympathisers and informers, who are made to undergo a kind of brain washing and training for subversion by experts.

3) Use of religion to garner support for sponsored terrorism and to whip up anti-India sentiments.

4) Creation of chaos and terror in chosen areas of Jammu to communalise the situation there.

5) Engineer events to invite harsh government measures and then highlight abuse of "human rights" to the world, particularly through hectic lobbying in the US, Europe and at the United Nations.

6) Physically eliminate all political opponents in the valley to stall any political process there.

All these tactics have suitably rewarded Pakistan with the objectives it set to achieve: the bleeding of Indian resources the demoralization of its army, the

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29 Dina Nath Raina, Unhappy Kashmir : The Hidden Story Reliance N.D 1990, p 196
undermining of India's reputation abroad, the acquisition of diplomatic leverage against India retaliation for Indian meddling in Pakistan's own ethnic unrest and the disarming of the Pakistan government domestic political opponents. 31

Though elections have been held successfully in Kashmir and a popular government restored, it seems unlikely that Pakistan will give up its policy of aiding and abetting J & K terrorism even though people are getting disillusioned with it. What the state of Jammu and Kashmir needs is the creation of a suitable environment for it to pursue far sighted policies and programs. Insincere rhetoric about 'Kashmiriyat' needs to be bid adieu and replaced by a genuine need to find a solution to the many problems of the people. A multi dimensional policy looking in to all aspects of the Kashmir problem -military, political, diplomatic and psychological is the need of the hour. It is only when internal conditions are strong that external intervention can be effectively dealt with.

**Terrorist groups in Kashmir**

The militant groups in Kashmir can be classified as either pro-Pakistan groups or Kashmiriyat (pro-independence) groups. The pro-Pakistani category consists of the Jamat-ul-Tulba, People’s League, Al-Umar Mujahideen, Jamat-e-Islami and Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) along with other smaller groups as well. Of this lot, the HM is the most powerful terrorist outfit in the valley. Of late it has been embroiled in a power struggle after its split in to the pro-Jamat faction led by Ahsan Dar and the non-Jamat faction led by Nasrul Islam.

**The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front. (JKLF)**

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The most popular among the Kashmiriyat groups is the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front. Terrorism in Kashmir has been synonymous with the atrocities of the JKLF for a long time. It was the JKLF which was responsible for bringing in Kalashnikov Culture into the valley. Its independent streak has lead to its gradual falling out with the Pakistani government. The JKLF was founded by Maqbool Butt and it made its presence felt through the hijacking of Ganga airplane in 1971 by Hashim Qureshi. This first important terrorist act lay the basis for their strategy of sensationalism. This, coupled with the popular support that it enjoyed in the early nineties, made JKLF the most important outfit in the valley, Led by Amanullah Khan, the JKLF believes that only an armed struggle can lead to liberation.

Among its other terrorist acts have been the Mhatre killing in Birmingham in 1984, the kidnapping of Rubaiyya Sayeed in 1989 and the murders of eminent people like Yusuf Halwai, the block leader of National Conference, Tiklal Taploo, the state BJP Vice-President and Neel Kanth Ganjoo, the judge who sentenced Maqbool Butt to death. The most gainful experience of them all was of course Rubaiyya Sayeed's kidnapping as this gave them a bargaining chip which they successfully used to negotiate the release of four of its members.\(^\text{32}\)

The JKLF is most active in Kupwara district and gets training in camps in Uri, Karna (in Baramullah district) and Tanghdar (in Kupwara district). Its international linkages are wellknown and well documented too. The London base of the JKLF has worked in tandem with the Punjab militants. Its nexus with the other Kashmiri groups like the People's League and the Islamic Students League have extended the range of its activities in the region. As part of a larger game plan, the JKLF has also successfully

\(^{32}\) Hamid Sheikh, Ashfaq Majid, Javed Ahmed and Yasin Malik were released as a result of this.
developed links with the LTTE and the insurgents of the North-Eastern region of India.

After the deportation of its leader, Amanullah Khan to Pakistan in 1986, following the legal proceedings that followed the murder of the Indian diplomat Ravindra Mhatre, a fresh impetus was provided to the Kashmir militancy. Pakistani strategists found in him a hero who could kindle the fires of freedom. With Zia-ul-Haq's support, the ISI prepared a blue-print to promote secessionism in Jammu and Kashmir. The plan chalked out a Kashmiri uprising against India.

The Field Intelligence Units (FIUs) and the Geographical Section (GS) of the Pak Army have always had close links with the JKLF cadres, but they succeeded in their designs only to a limited extent. But with the ISI taking charge, the Kashmir operations were integrated with those in Afghanistan. In the post-1987 period, the scale of assistance to JKLF assumed serious proportions. Between 1987 and 1989, the JKLF infiltration in to the valley had been less blatant, but from 1989 onwards, the induction of both militants and sophisticated weaponry increased dramatically.

But Pakistan's all-out support to the JKLF stretched on till the beginning of 1990 only, during which period it grew in to a potent terrorist and subversive outfit in the state. Pakistan through the activities of the JKLF, could thus subvert the state administration, whip up anti-India feelings among the masses, and undertake various missions of insurrection to destabilize the state. The JKLF also acted as Pakistan's recruiting and motivating agents, and splendidly did the job of sending disaffected Kashmiri youth to Pakistan for training in subversion. This ISI-JKLF co-ordination helped spread violence and terror to Baramulla, Anantnag, Pulwama, Badgam and

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33 D.P Kumar, n.8 p 102
Kupwara districts. As violence reached a crescendo, 3,096 cases of arson and explosion were reported in 1990. Almost 1,777 people were killed in these incidents. A year later, the situation became increasingly criminalised with militants indulging in large scale elimination of those branded as 'informers' in extortions, rapes and other heinous acts. With JKLF's 'azadi' stance, the ISI's support to it has dwindled while that to HM has been on an upswing. Over all, if nothing else, Indian officials agree that the terrorist movement in J & K is badly fragmented. Ex-governor Jagmohan listed 44 different terrorist outfits in his book. 34 As per the JKLF chairman Amanullah khan, there are 60 to 70 groups active in the valley since 1991. 35 Most of these outfits are splinter groups, based in particular localities, enrolling few followers, and moving in and out of new alliances and groupings with other groups. Loose co-ordination of militant groups activities is reported and no central military command appears to exist. 36 The All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) though was set up as an umbrella organization of about 32 groups to seek a platform for political negotiations with the state administration.

Roughly, the terrorist outfits in Kashmir can be classified as

Pro-Independence group

1. JKLF. 37  2. AL-Fatah  3. Islamic Students League
4. Students Liberation Front

34 Jagmohan, My Frozen Turbulence in Kashmir, New Delhi, pp 703-04
35 Amanullah Khan in an interview to Robert Wirsing in Rawalpindi on 9 June 1993. For details see Robert G. Wirsing,n 28, p.132
36 Ibid, p 132
37 The JKLF now has two divisions- one led by Yasin Malik and the other by Shabir Siddique.
Pro Accession groups


As far as their areas of operation are concerned, a following list can be drawn.

1. **Kupwara District** Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, Hizbul Mujahideen and Al Barq and JKLF

2. **Baramullah District** Al Jehad, Ikhwan ul-Musalmeen and HM

3. **Srinagar District** Al Umar, JKLF, HM, AL Jehad and IUM

4. **Budgam District** HM, JKLF, IUM

5. **Pulwana District** IUM, HM, JKLF

6. **Anantnag District** JKLF, Al Jehad, HM\[38\]

As far as the pattern of militant activities goes initially there was an urban theatre. Later on, due to greater deployment and superiority of the security forces, the terrorists were forced to move to rural areas. However with the security forces expanding their areas of operation to rural areas, the terrorist activity has shifted back to the urban areas.

As part of the terror tactics, the outfits have never carried out their activities all over the valley simultaneously. They have always sought to confine themselves to penny pockets to divert the attention of the security forces and to release pressure on the anti-national elements operating in certain areas of the state.

Also, according to army sources, the ground realities in Kashmir indicate that the rural population is pro-independence, where as the urban areas favour accession to Pakistan. Such sentiments have helped Pakistan accelerate its infiltration designs and

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\[38\] Major General Afsir Karim, n.30, pp 312-14
for this it uses Sopore, Kupwara and Baramulla as staging centres. The nerve centre of militancy is Srinagar as most of the militant leaders are based here.

**Hizbul Mujahideen**

It is a Pan-Islamic Jamat-e-Islami force. It boasts of ideological and organizational links with the ISI of Pakistan. It has taken over the reins of terrorism in the valley in a big way after 1990. It is purely a pro-Pakistan group and follows the technique and the model of Afghan insurgency and a majority of its constituents are foreigners. Most of them joined the militancy in Kashmir in mid-1991 and were drawn from the Afghans loyal to the Hizbe-Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmetryar. After the fall Najib in Afghanistan, the number of foreign mercenaries entering Kashmir has gone up drastically. By late summer 1992, non-Afghan insurgents from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Palestine, Sudan, Algeria and Pakistan had joined this outfit. Post-Pokharan II, this outfit and its nefarious activities have got a shot in the arm as Kashmir is put on the fore front of the sub-continental agenda.

Harkat-ul-Jihad is another terrorist group that also has many Afghan fighters, so much so that the group is called 'Afghan'. This outfit is still in its nascent stage and is being nurtured by the ISI.

The Harkat-ul-Ansar (Movement of companions of the Prophet) is a radical group based in Islamabad. It fervently believes global supremacy of Islam. It lists the

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40 ibid, p 130
U.S and Israel as its top enemies in its ranking of foes. The group is sustained mainly by generous donations coming its way from U.K based Pakistani merchants.

The recruits to the HUA are imparted training in the techniques of subversion at a training camp in Miram Shah, north of the Pakistani border. The HUA is actually the product of the merger of two earlier terrorist outfits - the Harkat-ul-jehad Islami and Harkat-ul-Mujahideen. The Afghans played an important role in uniting these two group in late 1993. Thirty percent of the constituents are Kashmiri in origin. Its eight thousand strong cadre has waged a war of subversion in the valley and has operated mainly in the hilly and rural areas. Due to popular apathy, its appeal is on the wane.

The Al-Faran is an offshoot of the Harkat-ul-Ansar. It made its appearance in the Valley in mid 1995. Its ranks comprise militants from Afghanistan, Pak Occupied Kashmir, Turkey and Pakistan. It is essentially a pan-Islamic force that operates on the directions of the Harkat-ul-Ansar. Among its most notorious acts was the kidnapping of five European tourists in July 1995. Other small groups operating in the Valley include Janbaz Mujahideen, Jamat-I-Islam (Kashmir), Pak special Force, Ikhwaan-ul-Muslimeen, Al-Jihad, Al-Barq, Al-omar Mujahideen, Ajmat-ul-Mujahideen, Hizb-I-Islami etc.

The Pakistani hand behind Kashmir terrorism

The Pakistani involvement in the abettment of terrorism in Kashmir is a well-documented fact. The standard ISI strategy for the Valley has included motivating Kashmiri youth to take up arms against India, providing them with weapons and promising them that their 'liberation' from their 'oppressors' is just around the corner.

41 Information about all terrorist groups got during interviews with terrorism experts Ved Marwah, KPS Gill, J.F Ribeiro and others
42 Rajya Sabha Debates, 4 December, 1991, pp 133-5
The extent of Pakistani activity in this field is documented by the Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare of the House Republican Research Committee of the U.S House of Representatives. It said "... sponsoring international terrorism and subversion is not new to Pakistan. Since the 1970's Islamabad has been training Sikh and other Indian separatist movements as part of (former Prime Minister) Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's strategy of 'forward strategic depth'... Having witnessed the initial impact of the Islamic message in Indian Kashmir, Islamabad began to broaden its horizons and set its sights on bigger goals. Thus in 1986, with growing experience with training, organizing and running the Afghan Mujahideen and with military supplies available (through US, Saudi and other foreign assistance), Pakistan began expanding its operation to sponsor and promote separatism and terrorism primarily in Kashmir, as a strategic long term programme."

This fact was also acknowledged by the former Army Chief of Pakistan General Mirza Aslam Beg when he confessed to Selig S. Harrison, the well known US journalist and Carnegie Endowment Scholar that this programme of subversion has been on from 1986. Pakistani journalist Mushahid Hussain also acknowledged Pakistani conspiracy to make Kashmir "into a bleeding wound for India". This fact has been confirmed by the JKLF Chairman Amanullah Khan in 1990.

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44 Ibid

45 Salman Khurshid, Beyond Terrorism; New Hope for Kashmir, UBSPD, New Delhi, 1994, p.69

46 The Frontier Post, 29 May, 1991

47 The Times (London), 30 Jan, 1990
Chairman Dr Farooq Hyder also elaborated on the various phases and techniques that the ISI had planned for them to adopt. The knowledge that other powerful nations like the U.S have clinching evidence against Pakistan in this regard has not really made much of a dent in the terrorist psyche.

It is convenient for Pakistan to play the Islamic card and induct foreign mercenaries into the valley as Kashmir is seen as an easy target. Being geographically isolated and chock full of weapons and terrorist outfits, any ultra-Islamist groups believe that the wresting of Kashmir from India would be a good reward gained at a minimal cost, and would inspire their followers elsewhere in the world. Thus, the general belief is that fighting and infiltration of mercenaries will go on for quite sometime in the valley. As the arc of crisis now moves into Jammu, Poonch and Rajouri sectors, the price that India pays in terms of men and morale would only go up.

(C) Insurgency in the North-East

Half a century after independence, the North-eastern region of India remains as isolated, backward, alienated and distrustful of all politico-administrative overtures as ever before. These factors have also made it backyard of insurgency. It will be erroneous to assume that the Central and state governments shirked totally from playing their role in evolving a blueprint of development for this region. On the other hand, the number of accords and initiatives undertaken to usher in peace in the region

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48 *The Economist* (London), June 9, 1990

49 Aziz Hanifa in *India Abroad News Service* (New York), 3 July 92

50 Salman Khurshid, n.45, p. 70

51 *Task Force Paper of the US House Republican Research Committee*, 21 May, 1994
make for an enviable count. The Shillong Accord of 1975, the Assam Accord of 1985, the Mizoram Accord of 1986, the Tripura Accord of 1988 and the Bodo Accord of 1994 have all been the result of protracted consultations, negotiations and a desire to bring peace and development to the region that most certainly deserves it, but somehow still has miles to go before achieving them.

One major problem regarding the North-East is the feeling of extreme isolation and alienation that its people harbour in their minds. The failure to integrate this region into the national mainstream is attributable to the Centre's wrong perception of the region's multitude of problems, characterised by political apathy, arrogance and hypocrisy\(^2\). These regional movements and identity aspirations have only gone on to become some sort of anathema to national leaders and mainstream political parties.

The North-Eastern region is of extreme strategic importance to India. With Burma (Myanmar) becoming a separate country and after the partition of India, all subregions in the North-east, for the first time in their history, had a foreign nation on their borders. Thus, this region acquired crucial security implications for India. The geo-strategic importance of the region has encouraged secessionist movements and insurgency.

It will be pertinent here to delve into the causes of insurgency in the region. A question that has haunted the minds of the academia and the administration alike is why the seeds of insurgency never seem to die in the North-East. Also equally important is the need to find an answer to the fact as to why all movements for socio-economic redressal become potential insurgencies? The threat of growing ethnic and cultural consciousness is always on the verge of spilling over into a cry for ethnic

nationalism in the region. A plausible reason is the inherent diversity of the area as well as the historical fact that some parts were never really a part of pre-colonial India. The colonial incorporation also happened very late-Assam in 1862, Garo tribes in 1873, Naga Hills in 1889 and the Lushais in 1971-89. Also the “Inner-line” system of the British kept the people not-so-splendidly isolated. The colonial manipulation of the dualistic nature of the population - tribals -non-tribals, hill people-plains peoples into a convenient line of division served the British intention of ruling the region but plunged the populace into a position of disadvantage that it still is trying to come out of.

Coupled with this, is the heterogeneity of problems, social systems and customs in the North-East. Physiographically too, three broad divisions can be had: hills, plateau and plains. The twenty six million populace stands ethnically, linguistically, religiously and culturally diverse. The 116 plus tribes of the region and an equal number of their sub-tribes belong to at least five different ethnic groups. Also noteworthy is the presence of a large non-tribal population of Assam and Tripura. The region’s diversity can be gauged also from the fact that it accounts for 420 out of the total of 1652 dialects used in the country.

The seeds of insurgency in the region are thus also attributable to the intra-regional differences in the North-East. The diverse ethnic groups living here have always thought of themselves as separate people and their lack of physical, cultural and emotional links with the rest of the nation has only plunged the area into a veritable ground for separatist tendencies. These are the factors that have fuelled the separatist forces, aided and abetted by foreign powers into starting secessionist movements. The

\footnote{Ved Marwah, Uncivil Wars: The Pathology of Terrorism in India, Indus, New Delhi, pp. 224-25.}
partition of India seriously dislocated the old system of communications, with serious demographic consequences.

The Chinese incursion of 1962 also worsened the feeling of isolation and insecurity assigning the region's masses. The root of the problem lay in the generation of a new political consciousness and an urge, especially among the tribal communities, to assert their identities. The land-locked nature of the terrain also complicated things further. Another intractable problem was the result of the influx of migrants from East Pakistan (now-Bangladesh). The fear of domination of the outsiders is the reason that has kept alive so many secessionist movements till date.

The terrain of the region, being hilly and the abundance of jungle traps are factors that have been responsible for the success of militancy in the region to some extent. For effective security arrangements, a large force is required that translates into a huge financial burden on the exchequer. The abundance of the army and the paramilitary forces in the region to guard the international border along China, Myanmar and Bangladesh and to tackle the various internal security problems has almost become a fact of life for the region's populace.

There is a fairly strong undercurrent of subnationalism in the region. The Naga and Mizo subnationalisms are deeply rooted in the socio-economic aspects of their life. According to many experts, the growing assertion of ethnic identity and search for autonomy are basically the result of a desperate cri de coeur in defence of a particular way of life and value pattern. Hence, the insurgency movements in the North-East can be understood in terms of the "relative deprivation theory". Insurgency here thus is the expression of popular disillusionment with the non-

54 Lok Sabha Debates, 10th series, 15(22), 6 August, 1992, pp 275-9
performing development model resulting from years of political manipulation, economic neglect, bureaucratic bungling and rampant corruption. It won’t be wrong to say that the menace is only a symptom of a deep-rooted malaise.

This chapter will discuss the terrorist problems of the region state-wise. Before that, here is an overview of the major militant groups still active in the North-East:

Assam - (1) United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)
(2) Bodo Security Force (BSF)

Manipur 1) National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah Group)
2) People’s Liberation Army (PLA)/revolutionary People’s Front (RPF).
3) United National Liberation Front (UNLF)
4) People’s Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK).

Meghalaya 1) Achick Liberation Matgrik Army (ALMA)
2) Hynniewtrept Volunteer Council (HVC)

Mizoram Hmar People’s Convention (HPC).

Nagaland 1) National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) (Isak Muivah Group)
2) National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) (Khaplang Group)
4) Naga National Council (Khodao Group).

Tripura - 1) All Tripura Tribal force (ATTF)
2) National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT).

The situation is compounded by the formation of Indo-Burma Revolutionary front comprising the ULFA, the NSCN, the PLA and the UNLF. Here is a state-wise overview of the militant menace in the North-East.

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(i) Mizoram:

The story of Mizoram's grievances is typical of the region. Demands for autonomy here have been as old as the Lushai hills. On 22 October, 1961, Laldenga, a clerk in the District Council, formed the Mizo National Front (MNF) and manipulated and exploited the populace's strong feelings of discrimination and neglect to his advantage. He could thus organize his militant supporters to indulge in anti-national activities. Insurgency in the area started in full swing when on 28 February, 1966, armed MNF volunteers simultaneously attacked a number of government installations at Aizaud, Lunglei, Vairanfe, Chawngte, Chhiml'ang and some other places.

On 1st March, 1966, the MNF made a formal declaration of independence from India. The government's shock at such a development delayed its response by two crucial days in which the MNF went about its business of attacking people and property. Somehow, both the Central and state governments did not take cognisance of the gravity of the threat posed by the MNF. When the government finally responded, it sent in the Air force, whose "bombardings" only alienated the populace more. As troops later poured in, many rebels fled to the neighbouring Chittagong Hill Tracts and to Chin Hills and Arakan in Burma (now Myanmar).

Even after its rout, the MNF put up its fight against the Indian army by setting up a provisional government in East Pakistan and harassing the security forces through acts of terrorism. It also set up training camps in the Chittagang Hill Tracts with the help of East Pakistan and the Chinese government. India's defeat by China in 1962 also accelerated the support, both moral and material, that these insurgents received from its hostile neighbours, Pakistan and China.

As popular support for insurgents grew, the insurgency developed a much stronger character. After a lull between 1967-69, it picked up in the end of 1969.
that time both, China and Pakistan gave training facilities to the militants, mostly in the Sajek range of hills in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. In some of the most glaring acts of terrorism the insurgents ambushed an army contingent in Marpara in 1969, killed non-tribals in Tripura in July 1970 and set off a number of explosives in different places of Aizawl on 15 August, 1970.

The 1971 Bangladesh liberation war marked a watershed in the history of insurgency in the North-East. With the defeat of Pakistan, the insurgents lost a main support base and contemplated a peace compromise with the government. Mrs. Gandhi's opportune handling of the situation led to the passage of the North-East Areas (Reorganization) Act of 1971 and this gave a Union Territory status to the Mizo district. The North-Eastern Council (NEC) was also set up simultaneously to formulate and implement an integrated development plan for the entire region.

Terrorist acts in Mizoram however, continued unabated. The MNF was on an upswing and with Burma's connivance, set up its headquarters there. The pro-Chinese Burmese Communist Party was a sympathiser and with its help, the MNF found sanctuaries in Chin Hills and Arakan.

The MNF's military wing, the Mizo National Army (MNA) also contributed to the spurt in terrorist violence. Its most sensational act was the 13 January 1975 killing of the Inspector General of Police, Mizoram, G.S. Arya and his aides in a conference hall. Subsequently the MNF and the MNA were declared unlawful associations. Later on in 1977, President's rule was imposed in the state and it ended in 1978 with Sailo taking over the chief ministership.

The year 1979 saw a renewed wave of militancy in Mizoram, but at around this time, popular support for Laldenga's MNF was on the wane. Though he entered into an agreement with the Centre in 1980, he didn't strictly abide by its terms. Another
accord was entered into in 1985. Though Laldenga finally became the chief minister in 1986, he could rule only for around eighteen months.

With the MNF's coming down, a new group gained prominence in Mizoram. The Hmar Peoples' Convention (HPC) is active in Mizoram, Manipur's Churachandpur district and the North Cachar Hills district of Assam. Militants of the Hmar Volunteers Council (HVC), the HPC's 'armed wing', and the NSCN-South are known to have engaged in joint operations in Assam's North Cachar district. Talks between the Mizoram government and the HPC for the latter's demand for the creation of a 'Hmar Autonomous District council started in 1993.\(^{36}\)

(ii) Nagaland:

It is the only all-tribal state in India with 16 major and 20 smaller tribes staying there. The Naga leader Z.A. Phiso had started agitating for freedom long before India became independent and under him, the Naga National Council (NNC) declared independence for the Naga Hills on 14 August, 1947. He followed this with a "referendum" declaring that 99% of the Nagas had voted for independence.

By 1953, insurgency in the state was on in full swing and the army was sent in 1956. Like the Mizo ionsurgents, Phizo also had bases in Chittagong Hill Tracts and Arakan in Burma. He also found favourable allies in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

In Pakistan especially, Phizo had a willing ally. To balance the uncertainty of its hold over East Pakistan, the Pakistani government has given support to all secessionist movements in the North-East from the very beginning. The Chinese too, due to their border dispute with India and for ideological reasons, encouraged

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\(^{36}\)M.S. Prabhakara, "States of Insurgency", Frontline, February 11, 1994, p.28
subversive forces in the North-East and provided weapons and training to the secessionists.

Nagaland became a state of the Indian union in 1963, negotiations started and failed and hostilities erupted again in 1970. The five-year peace was shattered by new terrorist groups who were better trained and equipped with more sophisticated weapons.

Following the 1971 war, support from Pakistan diminished and the right environment was set up for negotiations that finally led to the Shillong Accord of 11 November, 1975. The underground leaders agreed to come over ground and surrender their arms. But a section of the under ground Nagas who had gone to China for training and were still ideologically under communist influence, repudiated the Accord and refused to surrender. They shifted their base to the North Burma Hills under the leadership of Muivah, a Tangkhul Naga from Manipur, and Issac Swu.

There was thus a vertical split in the underground movement. The faction with communist leanings named itself the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) and its aim was to establish a Pan-Mongloid state committed to the ideals of socialism. The other faction called itself the Naga Federal Government (NFG).

Over the years, the NSCN became the most important terrorist group in Nagaland. The NFG was left way behind. The NSCN's Myanmar base has always exercised very little control over its northern areas. Among its other act of terrorism, the NSCN has been responsible for a number of attacks on army personnel and convoys. It however suffered a setback when Haw, a staunch Muivah supporter was killed in an army encounter at Ukhrul in 1987. To garner more popular support, the NSCN started a social reform campaign in 1987 on the lines of the ones started by the terrorists in Punjab and Kashmir.
The NSCN (N) faction, comprising Tangkhul and some tribes was, after the 1988 split was driven out of its sanctuaries in North-West Myanmar by the Khaplang faction. It has since regrouped, and has built sanctuaries in Bangladesh. Where earlier the NSCN (M) activities were confined only to the Ukhrul district of Manipur, now they are extended all over Nagaland and the three hill districts of Manipur. The tribes in Nagaland support NSCN(M) and only the relatively more backward Kanyaks tribe still supports the NSCN (K).

The Naga demand is for a greater Naga state comprising all the Naga inhabited areas in the region, including North Myanmar. NSCN(M) are being supported by Pakistan’s ISI and Bangladesh. In fact the Bangladesh government permitted them to build sanctuaries there. This makes situation in Nagaland a matter of great concern for India’s national security. NSCN’s active links with the ISI and other terrorist groups is a matter of serious concern to India.

The rising tide of insurgency in Nagaland still continues unabated. The underground is openly advertising in local newspapers for new recruits with salaries of upto Rs. 15,000 per month. The insurgents are running a virtual parallel government in the name of the government of the people’s Republic of Nagaland (GPRN). There has been an escalation in terrorism since 1992. In a well-planned strategy, the NSCN is extending its control over more areas in the North-East since 1993 and has forged strategic alliances with several insurgent groups operating in the region. Its functioning in Upper Assam too. Their extortion amount from tea gardens in Assam, Nagaland and Manipur came to Rs. 85 crores in 1994. Its armed wing boosts of 4000 personnel. The NSCN has also succeeded in building a “safe corridor” through the North Cachar Hills to Bangladesh. According to army sources, the Bangladesh government has been
turning a blind eye to the ISI’s acts in the border region. This international support and intra-tribal feuds are complicating Nagaland’s problems further.

The North-Eastern insurgency started in Nagaland and unless it gets controlled here, it can't be controlled elsewhere. To neutralize the insurgent’s support base, what is needed is a coordinated multi pronged approach to defeat the separatist forces.

The challenge to the Central government lies in responding well to the desire for talks expressed by the NSCN (Isak-Muivah) chairman Isak Chishi Swu. Speaking on Naga day, March 21, 1997, he said that the government has agreed to their demands for talks in a third country. He disclosed that an understanding had been reached with the government as three areas -

I. talks to be unconditional from both sides.
II. talks to be held at the highest level, that is, the level of the Prime Minister
III. venue has to be any place abroad only. 57

In his speech he noted the obstacles that the government and the state in India face on account of India’s “insurmountable problems and internal vulnerabilities”.

According to PMO sources, efforts are on for the Prime Minister’s meeting with Thuingaleng Muivah, NSCN (In) general secretary in Switzerland in the near future.

(iii) Manipur:

The Nagas and the Kukis are the two main tribes of Manipur, followed by the Meities who live in the valley. The Tangkhul Nagas support the NSCN (m) as Muivah himself is a Tangkhul. The NSCN (MS) has been active in Manipur for a long time.

57Indian Recorder, Vol IV no 19, May 7-13, 1997, Telegraph (Calcutta) p 2799
Manipur has an old history of left extremism though secessionism took roots much later on. The economic unrest among the Meitei youth was an important factor in the genesis of terrorism in the state. Under the leadership of Bisheshwar, terrorism got a new lease of life in Manipur. He went to East Pakistan in the mid-sixties and set up a Revolutionary Government of Manipur there. His firm belief that the only way the Meiteis can get a fair deal from the Indian government was by a resort to arms, led him to set up the Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA) to wage the war of liberation.

The UNLF and Meitei State Committee (MSC) made terrorism take a virulent turn in the sixties. The other active groups have been Peoples Revolution party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) and the Kangloipak Communist Party (KCP) - both following the communist ideology, PREPAK, however did not emphasize ideology but asserted a separate Meitei identity and its main demand was the ouster of outsiders, the "Mayangs". The PREPAK tactics include looting banks and treasures and assassinations of police officers and other security forces. As of its current status, the UNLF countries to be a force to reckon with in Manipur. Recently, its front ranking leader Thanil Khumancha rejected the peace offer of the centre saying that time was not ripe for negotiations. He termed the talks "suicidal" saying as India would still not be willing to grant "independence" to Manipur, it was useless to sit across the table with the government and except a favourable outcome. He cited the "failed" Shillong Accord of 1975 with the Naga guerillas and the Mizo Accord of 1986 with the MNF and said that on both the occasions, the original goals of the insurgents were compromised with.

What makes things worse for the North-East is the development of a nexus between the UNLF, the NSCN and the ULFA. The three groups came together to constitute the Indo-Burma Liberation Front in 1989 and since then have held the region hostage to insurgency.

A new element in the murky politics of insurgency in Manipur is Kuki insurgency unleashed by an outfit called the Kuki National Army (KNA), not to be confused with another KNA, the acronym of a recognised regional party called the Kuki National Assembly. The KNC, which engaged in bloody clashes with the NSCN-South, is believed to be an ally of the NSCN-North, a natural alliance given the enmity between the two factions of the NSCN. Another Kuki-Chin outfit called the Chin Liberation Front (CLF), which like the KNC is based both in Burma and Manipur, is believed to have links with the NSCN (South). The UNLF, the oldest insurgent group in the Valley, is formally a part of the IBRF but supports closer coordination with all the other insurgent groups. Other valley-based insurgent groups like the RPF, the KCP and PREPAK have close relations with the NSCN-South but these must be seen in the context of the complex relations between the Meiteis and the Nagas and the fact that the fulfillment of Naga nationalist aspirations, under any appellation, are predicated on the disintegration of the present geographical Manipur - something no insurgent group there can support.\(^59\)

(iv) **Tripura**

The Tripura problem basically originates from the large-scale migration of Bengali refugees from East Pakistan after Partition. The problem has worsened due to the continuous influx of Muslim migrants from Bangladesh in the past few years and this has changed the demo-graphic balance in the state. As per the 1931 census, the tribals
constituted half the population of Tripura and are now relegated to just one-third of the total numbers in the state. This has aggravated the tribal sense of betrayal and grievance as their lot has been reduced to a minority status in their own state.

The TUJS- the Tripura Upajati Juva Samiti- was formed to protect the rights of the tribals as they feared land encroachment by nontribals. As their fears became real, the CPI(M) government under Nripen Chakravarthy took some steps to assuage their hurt sentiments and passed the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council Act in 1979. The Bengali populace resisted these measures by forming a militant organization called “Amra Bangali” which committed a number of terrorist acts in 1979.

To counter such pressures, the TUJS extremists started a training camp in Chittagong Hill Tract for their armed wing called the Tripura Sena, later called the TNV (Tripura a National Volunteers). They built their ideology around their distinct ethnic identity and socialism and vowed to drive out the non-tribals from Tripura to establish tribal supremacy. They also have close links with the Mizo underground.

In their armed struggle against the Bengali refugees, the violence unleashed by the underground has cost a thousand lives in the last ten years, terrorist activity reaching its peak between November 1981 and January 1988. Law and order worsened as the security forces were picked up to be special targets by the militants. After some kind of a lull in the late eighties and the early nineties, the All Tripura Tribal Force once again made its presence felt by killing sixty one persons in October and November 1992.60

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59 M.S. Prabhakara,”States of Insurgency”, Frontline, February 11,1994,p.28
60 Ved Marwah, n.l., p.299
The TNV had close links with the Mizo underground, but after the 1985 Mizo Accord, these links were considerably weakened. The 1988 Assembly election were very violent and subsequently to quell the violence, Tripura was declared a disturbed area and the operation of the Disturbed Area Act was extended to Tripura. The army was also sent in at around the same time to control the situation.

Peace efforts from the Centre included inviting the Sangram Union leader Hrangkhawl to Delhi for talks and the subsequent signing of an accord in August 1988. But a political fight between the Central and state governments has prevented them from coordinating to implement a long term counter-terrorism strategy in Tripura.

The 1995 elections to the Tribal Areas Autonomous Council marked a change in the State’s scenario. The TUSS, an ally of the Congress for over a decade, lost to the ruling Left Front. This defeat of a tribal party at the hands of non-tribal dominated left front exposes the new reality in the state. As militant organizations disintegrate into splinter groups and end up being accused of extortions and criminal activities, the separatist movement stands bereft of its leadership. Violence will end only when the politician backed criminal-insurgent nexus will cease to exist.

Some remnants of the TNV under Dhananjoy Reang had earlier organized themselves as the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT). In 1994, with the surrender of Reang and his colleagues, the wind has gone out of the NLFT threat though same of its remnants still retain their links with the NSCN-South. This group enjoys sanctuary in the Mayani Reserve Forest Area of Bangladesh’s Chittagang Hill Tracts across Tripura’s south district. Though militarily not much superior to the now surrendered ATTF, its links with the NSCN-Isace-Muivah is of grave concern to the state’s security.
Other groups operating in the state include the TNTF (Tripura National Tribal Force), allegedly patronised by a former TUSS Minister who lost in the 1993 elections, and the All Tripura Bengali force. Though they are yet to cut their teeth in a major attack, it may not be long before they do so. What is of greater concern is that some ATTF ‘returnees’ who came under attack from active extremists have vowed to go underground if the Government fails to ensure their safety. Moreover, there are reports that some TNV militants who surrendered in the wake of the Rajiv Gandhi - Hrangkhawl accord of 1988, have participated in some terrorist acts in recent times. On the whole, the situation in Tripura remains quite complicated so far as extremism is concerned.

(v) Assam:

The one issue that has fuelled the terrorist problem in Assam is the demand for deportation of illegal migrants from the state. This influx, which continued unabated right from the Partition days to the post 1971 Bangladesh war, escalated the demand for the deportation of illegal immigrants from East Pakistan into an insurgent movement.

The situation worsened like never before in 1980. The AASU - the All Assam Students’ Union launched an agitation in that year’s elections aimed at striking off the names of illegal immigrants from the electoral rolls. The government’s refusal to do so polarized the Brahmaputra valley populace and eroded the credibility of the government too.

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61 Frontline, November 19, 1993, p.49
The AASU, under the leadership of Prafulla Kumar Mohanta and Bhigihu Kumar Phukan, resorted to many acts of picketing oil refineries in the state to stop the outward flow of oil from Assam. Their violent acts also graduated very shortly into a campaign demanding secession from the rest of the Union.

Though the early '80s saw many sounds of AASU - Centre talks, not much headway was made. The Centre’s urge to find a quick-fix solution to the state’s woes resulted in the announcement of state election in 1983, which the AASU promptly boycotted. In the violence that followed, the Nellie tragedy occurred, in which Lalungo tribals attacked Muslim immigrants in the village and killed over 1700 people, mostly women and children. The elections, however, ensued and Hiteshwar Saikia, the new Congress Chief Minister started secret negotiations with the AASU leaders. As public support for AASU’s blood-bathed tactics petered off, the organization agreed to stop pressing for the deportation of migrants who had come to Assam between 1966 and 1971.

It was against this, backdrop that one of the regions most deadly terrorist outfit made its debut. The United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) was formed in April 1979 under the leadership of Paresh Baruah who had close links with the ISI of Pakistan. The ULFA acts of selected kidnappings, terrorising the populace, disruption of communications and hitting economic targets was aimed at forcing the government to agree to the AASU’s demands. The ULFA’s links with the Kachins and the NSCN too worsened the efficacy of the state’s law and order system.

Negotiations between the AASU and the Centre continued, with the latter being represented first by the Cabinet Secretary Krishna Swamy Rao Sahib and later by the Union Home Secretary R.D.Pradhan. This finally led to the signing of the Assam
Accord in 1985, an accord that was followed by elections in which the AASU swept the polls. Mohanta became the Chief Minister after the polls.

Later the AASU - ULFA links led to a spate of renewed violence in Assam, with the ULFA killing prominent businessmen and tea garden managers in the late eighties and the early nineties. AASU’s development of links with the LTTE, thanks to the ISI’s connivance, gave terrorism a new face in the region. Though President’s rule was imposed in Assam in 1990 and the ULFA - infested districts declared as disturbed areas, the ULFA activities did not cease. It was then that Operation Bajrang was launched and the ULFA was banned. The army operation was not much of a success as the ULFA had sympathisers among the public, a thorough knowledge of the terrain and a strict code - the Sowel code - to punish dissidents. But Operation Bajrang did create a psychological fear among the ULFA members, and as Arabindo Rajkhowa and Gopal Baruah fled to Bangladesh, a lot of the men went into hibernation. Another blow to the ULFA was the December 1990 arrest of Jugal Kishore Mohanta who had reportedly gone to Sri Lanka to seek the LTTE’s help in training and equipping the ULFA cadres and though he managed to escape from jail, a lot many ULFA men surrendered to the security forces.

The ULFA, however, resurfaced strongly in 1991 by killing the Russian hostage Sergei Gritchenko and T.S. Raju. This way they succeeded in pressurising the government to release almost twenty one of their hard core militants languishing in jails. The ensuing army operation left the ULFA much enfeebled and therefore, in January 1992, a five member ULFA delegation appealed for an end to violence. Inter-ULFA disagreements regarding the subsequent agreement caused a breach among its members. Paresh Baruah termed it a surrender and vowed to fight on from Bangladesh. Rajkhowa, Chetia and Gogoi, who were sent by India to Bangladesh to
persuade Baruah, decided to stay there and hence the ULFA could once again come to a position of using violence and creating chaos in Assam. But some India-based cadres, including Memin Nobe, Sunil Nath and Kalpajyoti Neogi, signed a statement on 31st March 1992, eschewing violence - a call that was denounced by the ULFA’s Bangladesh based leadership which has contacts with the ISI.

The Bangladesh government is playing a dangerous game in providing shelter to the ULFA leaders. According to army and intelligence sources, about 200 ULFA members are staying in camps in Cox’s Bazaar and Mymensingh districts of Bangladesh. Though their presence is officially denied by the Bangladeshi authorities, it is a common knowledge in the corridors of power in Dhaka that certain policy makers there see this as a chance of getting even with a bigger and much more influential neighbour, India. Violence, thus has became part of everyday life in Assam.

The Bodo problem has further complicated affairs in the state. The Bodo grievance centres around the dispossession of tribal land by Bengalis and Assamese, neglect of the Bodo language, and a sense of exploitation. The Bodo strongholds are Kokrajhar and Goalpara districts in Assam. Led by Upendra Brahma in the late eighties, the Bodo demand centres around their pressing for a separate statehood. It is for this cause that they have resorted to large-scale violence in the state. In the recent years, the most prominent Bodo bases are in the Manas sanctuary, bordering Bhutan.

The hastily drafted and similarly signed Bodo Accord of 1993 between the Assam government, All Bodo Student’s Union and the Bodo People’s Action Committee, remains on paper only. Disagreements about the demarcation of the Autonomous Council area that the accord sought to create, as well as differences
about the powers to be vested with the Autonomous Council have exposed the inherent fundamental flaws that it suffers from.

The Bodo Security Force (BSF) is the most feared outfit in the area and has continued its terror campaign with a renewed vigour. Their acts include the raiding of Assam Armed Police Headquarters in March 1993 as well as the kidnapping of the son of Gopinath Bardoloi, Assam’s first Chief Minister in April 1993. Another glaring act was the murder of fifty inmates of a Muslim refugee camp at Barpeta in July 1994. But their most dastardly act was the bombing of the Delhi bound Brahmaputra Mail on Dec 30, 1996.

The BSF, along with me ULFA, remains a deadly outfit in Assam. The BSF is probably a better organized outfit, with five regional commands under a central committee presided over by Rajan Daimary, who is currently based in Bangkok. The BSF-NSCN links have resulted in an exhaustive training being imparted to the BSF by the NSCN. The latter is also helping them with smuggling of weapons through the Dimapur-Thailand-Bangladesh route. The BSF boats of around four hundred cadres. Though two of its “Area Commanders” Haren Brahma and Raja Narzary surrendered in January 1995, the BSF is still going great guns. Though so far the Bodo militancy has confined itself to the demand of a secessionist colour, its links with the NSCN and the ISI may make such an eventuality only a matter of time. The BLTF- Bodoland Liberation Tiger Force is another outfit in the region and has close links with the ABSU and is responsible for the majority of bomb blasts in the state in 1991.
A spate of recent Central initiatives vis-a-vis the North East have resulted in announcing a package of Rs. 6100 crores for the development of the region. All the seven states have been agreed to been declared as economically backward too.\textsuperscript{65}

What the North East needs today is a break from the politics of opportunism to which it has been subjected for years on end. Though the ideology of most of the militant groups and students organizations is simple xenophobia, their perceived sense of neglect and alienation makes them regionalist stand extremely formidable. Hence a strong approach is needed to wipe out these feelings along with the glaring economic disparity that has almost become the fate of the region.

\textbf{(D)Terrorism in the South - The LTTE}

The Tamil problem in Sri Lanka has had an indelible impact on Indo-Sri Lankan relations. Probably at the base of this peculiar relationship which lasted for the entire decade of the eighties between the two South Asian neighbours is the gradually growing autonomous capitalist state of India, highly sensitive to its security concerns and to its ideological preferences in the region. The entire gamut of Indo-Sri Lankan relations has been sought to be explained by some experts in the context of the twin aspects of the security consciousness and the ideological structure of the Indian state.\textsuperscript{66}

Hence the deep-rootedness of India's security perception in the geo-strategic make-up of the Indian subcontinent.

\textsuperscript{65} Indian Recorder, Vol. IV, No.6, February 5-11, 1997, Indian Express, New Delhi, p. 2587.

\textsuperscript{66} S.D. Muni, Pangs of Proximity: India and Sri Lanka's Ethnic Crisis, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1993, p.69
The root of the ‘decade of discord’ between India and Sri Lanka lay in the explosive ethnic situation in Sri Lanka in the early 1980s. At that time, a number of Tamil militant leaders left for Madras and continued with their struggle against the Sri Lankan state. This led to the activation of the Tamil social constituency in India and a well of warmth soon swelled up in favour of the Tamil cause across the Palk straits. Certain Sri Lankan Tamil groups also erected training camps for their recruits in Tamil Nadu.67 Certain analysts also cite instances of the Indian RAW (Research and Analysis Wing) helping Tamil guerillas even before the anti-Tamil violence of July 1983.68

The month of July 1983 is an important time period in our relations with Sri Lanka. It was then that massive ethnic violence broke out in Sri Lanka, with its epicentre at Jaffna. It was a holocaust aimed at decimating the Tamil populace and psyche in Sri Lanka. India was not untouched by this gruesome development as some Indian nationals and members of the Indian High Commission were also affected by it. This marked a clear departure from India’s previous policy of being a silent spectator to that of a nation resolved to safeguarding its regional security and ideological sensitivities.

Allied with this, was the mass exodus of Tamils into India and the Sri Lankan request to ‘friendly’ countries- the USA, UK, China, Pakistan and Malaysia- for military and political support. Viewed from India’s standpoint, this seemed to be a move on the part of the Jayawardene government to seek a military solution to the island’s ethnic problem as well as to invite foreign powers in the region to isolate India strategically. As a reaction to this call for help from Sri Lanka, India’s External Affairs


Minister cautioned all external powers to keep off the imbroglio.\textsuperscript{69} Undeterred by all this, Sri Lanka activated its diplomatic channels to emphasize the threat to its unity and integrity by Tamil terrorism working in collusion with the government and people of India. The successful exercise resulted in its securing the assistance of Israeli intelligence agencies, the Mossad and the Shin Bet to tone up its own intelligence set up and military training facilities. Some British ex-SAS commando also came as part of a private mercenary network called Keenie Meeni Services and these were reportedly financed by the British Ministry of Defence. Pakistani aid, too came, in the form of Rs 10 million for relief measures but reportedly ended up being used for military equipment. Intensive diplomatic meetings with Pakistan too took place and during Jayawardene's Pakistan visit of March-April 1985, he equated Kashmir with the Afghanistan and pleaded for Kashmir’s independence to decide its future itself.

In a bid to neutralize the Indian-factor configuration of the sub-continent, Sri Lanka also agreed to accommodate certain Western strategic interests, for example, the establishment of a powerful Voice of America transmitter facility, the largest outside the US, on its territory. This led India to fear that its naval and land communications and movements as also submarine deployments in the Indian Ocean could be detected by the use of this hi-tech outfit.\textsuperscript{70}

Thus the ethnic violence in Sri Lanka posed a two pronged challenge to India. One was the threat of a total breakdown of ethnic harmony in Sri Lanka - a development that threatened to spill over and disrupt the Indian socio-ideological balance. The other was the antithesis of this Sinhala hegemonic state, in the form of a

\textsuperscript{69}The Hindu, August 6, 1983.

demand for a separate hegemonic state, the Tamil state, a possibility which also posed an equally grave threat to India’s security as a nation.  

Thus India was left to either (a) fold back the adverse spillover in India of Sri Lanka’s ethnic violence and restore the democratic-secular attributes of the Sri Lankan state through accommodation of legitimate Tamil aspirations for justice and equality, or (b) to diffuse the potential of a separate state for the Tamils by preserving the independence, unity and integrity of Sri Lanka. Mrs. Gandhi also said at that time that any extraneous involvement would complicate matters for both countries.

Thus, the ground realities that provoked India into taking the stand that it took later were firstly, the spillover of Sri Lankan violence in India, the flow of Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka into Tamil Nadu and the subsequent worsening of law and order situation in Tamil Nadu as it grappled with this problem. It was around this time that the Tamil Nadu underground became active with the traffic of drugs and arms ferried across borders by Sri Lankan refugees and spreading into the Bombay underworld, a nexus that is said to be operational even now.

The Indian political response was also propelled by the linkage of Tamil militant groups with Tamil Nadu politicians. So while the TELO became a DMK ally the LTTE sided with the AIADMK. The popular and political support enjoyed by Tamil groups, especially the LTTE gave a fresh impetus to their demand for a separate

71 S.D. Muni, n. 66., p. 60.
72 The Times of India, 3 November, 1984.
74 According to official sources, almost 150,000 refugees had crossed over into India by 1987.
75 The Hindustan Times, 12 August, 1990.
Tamil state. As more and more Tamil groups sought shelter in India, this became the most critical part of the spillover into India.⁷⁶

Keeping these developments in mind, India formulated a three-pronged approach to this crisis:

1. To reverse Sri Lanka’s policy of cultivating extraregional and adversarial strategic interests perceived as threat to India’s security concerns.

2. To persuade Colombo to seek a negotiated political solution of the crisis within the framework of unity and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka, but based upon justice and equality for the Tamil minority.

3. India reiterated that it had no support for either a Sinhala hegemonic or a Tamil-hegemonic state in Sri Lanka.⁷⁷

In consonance with the above considerations, India’s policy functioned at three levels. The first was bilateral, which included the sending of G. Parthasarthy to Colombo on 25 August 1983 to meet Jayewardene. This visit led to a set of proposals regarding devolution of powers, with District Development Councils in the province to be set up. These Annexure ‘C’ proposals reiterated the perseverance of Sri Lanka’s unity and integrity.

The second level consisted of expressing India’s support for the sufferings of Sri Lankan Tamils and of using the Tamil militant groups to obtain a reasonable political solution while safeguarding India’s security interests. To serve this purpose,

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⁷⁶ According to the Sri Lankan National Intelligence Bureau, there were around 35 Tamil groups based in India.

⁷⁷ S.D. Muni, n.66, pp. 67-68.
the RAW got the go-ahead to provide military training, money and arms to the Tamil separatist groups.\(^7^8\)

The third level of policy play was diplomatic and India sought to bring the pathetic plight of the Sri Lankan Tamils as well as the gruesome human rights violations by the Sri Lankan state apparatus to international notice. All this only led to further distrust between India and Sri Lanka. Though India’s arming of militants was of a very moderate type,\(^7^9\) the distance between the regimes increased by the day.

With Rajiv Gandhi’s coming to power, Indian policy underwent a tactical change as was apparent in a softening of the Indian stance, followed by its hardening. As Romesh Bhandari replaced chief negotiator G. Parthasarthy, and drew up a new blueprint of political negotiations between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil militants, it fell flat on its face very shortly as the Sri Lankan government rejected the four cardinal principles—Tamil nation, Tamil homeland, Tamil self determination and fundamental rights of all ‘Tamils in Ceylon’—advanced by the Tamil groups for recognition. The Rajiv-Jayawardene meet in Thimpu, 1985, secured, for the first time, recognition for four Tamil groups—the LTTE, EPRLF, EROS and TELO from both sides as legitimate parties with whom the political settlement had to be worked out.

The new-emerging hardened stance of Rajiv Gandhi propelled him on his path to ‘pactomania’ that led to the ‘December 19 proposals and these envisaged a more evolved form of devolution of powers to the Tamils. But frustration with Indo-Sri Lankan distrust-laden stalemate led India to suspend its mediation efforts in February 1987 and to take up the path of direct intervention. The first instance of this changed policy was in June 1987 when India dropped relief supplies to Jaffna.

This caused the clearing of way for the Indo-Sri Lanka agreement of July 1987. The IPKF (Indian Peace Keeping Force) was sent for its implementation. As the accord broke down in two months, the LTTE-IPKF battle picked up with the IPKF having assumed the status of an occupation army.

**The LTTE Threat to India**

The LTTE’s genesis can be traced to the TNT, a Tamil organization set up in 1972 and later renamed as the LTTE in 1976. The LTTE exploits the ethnic links with the Tamils living in the Indian state to build sanctuaries there. Geographical proximity and ethnic links have thus resulted in the spilling over of terrorism in the southern state. The LTTE threat to Indian security becomes aggravated in view of its alliance with the NSCN, the ULFA and its access to Pakistan’s ISI. This is making south India the hinterland of ethnic violence in Sri Lanka.

As such the LTTE has no religious or ideological content. Its ten thousand cadres, loyal to Vellupillai Pirabhakaran, prefer cyanide to captivity. The LTTE is supposed to be the best explosives experts in the shadowy world of international terrorism. Unlike other terrorist groups, whose motto is “death or glory”, the LTTE’s credo of “death and glory” stands apart to make it an organization of fanatical human bombs, suicide squads and cyanide pill-poppers. The cadres also boast of a three thousand strong womenforce led by Adele Balasingham who is also the editor of the “Voice of Tigers” (Eel Natham). The LTTE is supposed to route arms through Bangkok and Singapore and has contacts in Thailand, Singapore, Switzerland, Cyprus and Greece. Raising of funds through drug trafficking and smuggling of gold biscuits through India is also a LTTE area of specialization. Its nexus with the ISI of Pakistan poses a grave threat to sub continental security.

The implications of the terrorist problem in India and ways to counter are discussed in the following chapters.

(E) The Bombay blasts of 12 March, 1993

A series of explosions rocked India's capitalism centre and the hub of all economic activity, Bombay, on 12 March, 1993. Buildings like the Bombay Stock Exchange were severely damaged and a number of people killed and injured.

Making a statement in the Lok Sabha on the issue, the then Home Minister Shri S. B. Chavan revealed that a conspiracy to paralyse Bombay (now Mumbai) was hatched by Pakistan and it managed to rake in the Dubai-based underworld don Dawood Ibrahim and the Memon family of Bombay, particularly Ibrahim Abdul Razak Memon alias Tiger Memon in its gameplan. According to Bombay Police investigations, Tiger Memon went thrice to Dubai to arrange this nefarious exercise and met Dawood and Pakistani authorities for discussions on the matter. Consequently, a huge arms and explosives cache landed in Raigad district of Maharashtra on 2-3 February, 1993. Tiger Memon also played an important role in recruiting and motivating the trainees to carry out the blasts. Twenty such operators left Bombay for Dubai on different dates in February, 1993. They left Dubai in three groups by Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) flights and were received at Islamabad airport and driven off in a covered vehicle without going through immigration. In Islamabad, they were trained in the handling of grenades and firing from Kalashnikov rifles.

On 1st March, 1993 their departure from Islamabad to Dubai was arranged without any immigration formalities. The significant absence of arrival and departure

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80 Lok Sabha Debates, 21 April, 1993, pp 540-541.
stampings of Pakistan's immigration authorities between 20th February to 1 March, 1993 are an eloquent testimony of Pakistani involvement. The final touches of the ground level arrangements were entrusted by Tiger Memon to his trusted lieutenants Yalkub and Javed Daud Patel alias Chikna. Recovered boxes of explosives from Mumbai's Al-Hussain building bore Pakistani cities stampings. The government of India has subsequently sent the details of the conspiracy to the Pakistani government. Once again, Pakistani involvement in destroying an important nerve centre in order to paralyze Indian economy and demoralize its masses was well-established.

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81 The Pak complicity is further corroborated by a travel data input which shows that six members of the Memon family left Dubai for Karachi by flight PK-214 on 17 March, 1993.

82 Lok Sabha Debates n 26 p 54