



ISSUE BRIEF

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Tools of Terror in Jammu and Kashmir

NOTHING SUCCEEDS LIKE SUCCESS

The terrorist groups' activities can be divided into two categories, activities that sustain the group's existence as a cohesive entity and activities that allow terrorists to sustain series of successful attacks. Admittedly, these two categories are interrelated. The ability of the terrorist groups to sustain a series of successful attacks can turn this success into a recruitment campaign or use the success to reinforce their members' confidence in the group and, hence, bolster group cohesion. In the event of terrorist attacks, social media postings can serve as a force multiplier and accelerator that can amplify the carnage and spread anxiety and fear beyond the immediate victims of a terrorist attack. Despite efforts to counter radicalisation and recruitment on social media platforms, a range of challenges persist. Perhaps the greatest challenge to these efforts is the ability by theatre actors to upload commentaries and videos in real time. Terrorists can utilise live-streaming functions, such as Twitter Periscope, Facebook Live and YouTube 360 Degrees. Currently, there is no reliable machine-learning technology, sentiment analysis software or artificial intelligence programs that can monitor and vet all content in real time. The probability of false positives is high when utilising said technology.



AS Chonker is a Senior Fellow in CLAWS, is pursuing research on a very current and relevant topic "Perception Management in J&K". While doing so, he is exploring the complex interplay of human behaviour with internal and external factors in J&K through a net assessment and system analysis study in order to evolve relevant strategies for the future.

Key Points

1. The activities of terrorist groups can be divided into two categories, activities that sustain the group's existence as a cohesive entity and activities that allow terrorists to sustain series of successful attacks.
2. If policymakers want to completely dismantle the terrorist organisation over the long term, counterterrorism activities should include a significant emphasis on the first category, which is undoubtedly a more holistic approach.
3. The six organisational tools (terrorist capabilities that sustain group cohesion and existence) are ideology, alienation through radicalisation, leadership, recruitment pools, publicity and finance.
4. The operational tools used by terrorist groups to sustain a series of successful attacks are command and control, weapons, operational space, operational security, over ground workers (OGWs), cyber space and agitational space.

Tools of Terror ...

As a result, time-consuming human analysis will be necessary to filter out false positives.¹

Terrorist organisations, over the years, have successfully used social media tools to recruit, propagate and raise funds for their dreadful agendas. Sermons by so-called charismatic extremists have succeeded in influencing youths to join terrorist organisations and carry out sinister attacks across the world. One of the key reasons behind using mass media heavily is because ultimately, these anti-social elements are trying to legitimise their unlawful activities as most of them have a mass following online and have a possibility of gaining greater audience.²

If the organisation wants to prevent a particular attack or alleviate an immediate threat or try to bring in a semblance of peace then counterterrorism activities should focus, in general, on the second category. In comparison, if policymakers want to completely dismantle the terrorist organisation over the long term, then counterterrorism activities should include a significant emphasis on the first category, which is undoubtedly a more holistic approach. Unfortunately, our strategy over a period of time has focussed primarily on the second aspect that is to try and get a semblance of peace for the government machinery to function.

ORGANISATIONAL AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

Having divided the terrorist groups' activities into two categories, we next identify certain basic tools that terrorists use – with varying degrees of sophistication – to sustain these activities. The six organisational tools (terrorist capabilities that sustain group cohesion and existence) are:

- ideology
- alienation through radicalisation
- leadership
- recruitment pools
- publicity
- finance

In addition to these organisational tools, the operational tools used by terrorist groups to sustain a series of successful attacks are:

- command and control
- weapons
- operational space

- operational security
- over ground workers (OGWs)
- cyberspace
- agitational space

ORGANISATIONAL TOOLS OF TERRORISTS

Ideology

With regards to terrorism, the term ideology means the consensus of grievances and objectives that a terrorist group is trying to address through violence. In this context, terrorists' ideologies may take on many forms – for example, religious or political – but still serve the same purpose – motivating actions, unifying members and linking the organisation to communities for which it purports to fight. In Kashmir, the ideology is different for different groups. While Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) is basically fighting for an *Azad* Kashmir which comes under Pakistan, the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LET) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM) seem to have more religious lineages with the ultimate aim of merging with Pakistan. Thus, the ideology is a mix of 'ethno-religious separatism' and Islamic extremism. The huge influx of madrasas in the valley, the rise of the Wahabi/Salafi group, the fiery speeches of terrorist leaders calling for jihad, the change in the dress code and the massive protests after the Friday congregations are all indicators of growing influence of religion in the day-to-day life of an individual in the valley. The guidance of Islam could be used as a uniting force to keep all the people true to the cause – that is 'to fight to liberate land from infidel occupation'. Factors used to rouse sentiment to join jihad and exacerbate the feeling of fundamentalist keywords such as *Al wala' wal bara'* which symbolises a belief that Muslims owe allegiance to Muslims alone and must reject non-Muslims as allies or friends³, *fatwa*: a religious edict often issued by a religious authority in response to a question seeking clarification of Islamic doctrine, *jihad*: literally 'to struggle' but often used to refer to armed struggle, and so forth, are no longer a validation to join a terror campaign.

Alienation through radicalisation

It is extremely critical to analyse the nuances of 'growing fundamentalism' in the Valley. Although the sense of alienation from the Indian mainland is present in the *Awam*, due to many other reasons like cultural differences, historical baggage and dysfunctional

governance, it is a well-known fact that state-sponsored militancy has dramatically transformed the *Sufism* and *Kashmiriyat*-influenced people of Kashmir into a fractured and radically influenced society which, in turn, has given rise to religious fundamentalism.⁴ Radicalisation of society in Kashmir feeds to further alienation of the people,⁵ which is the aim of the terror groups and it seems to be the first step for gradually bringing the youth into the main line of militant actions.

Leadership

Leadership represents the second organisational tool for any terrorist organisation. In insurgency and terrorism, terrorist groups tend to coalesce around charismatic individuals who attract and inspire supporters. There are many terrorists who are more than willing to get into the shoes of a slain leader. Power and money will always have takers. A strategy to take on the leaders will definitely give an operational advantage, however in the longer run, slain terrorist leaders also provide a grander sense of martyrdom as a cause to the youth which motivates others to take on the cause, a case in point being the Burhan Wani incident. Hafiz Saeed and Maulana Azhar are state-sponsored rogues but Syed Salahudeen is one leader who has the potential to be won over as he himself had taken part in elections and his group had earlier agreed to a ceasefire.

Recruitment

There is an adequate pool of disgruntled, unemployed youth, both educated and uneducated, for recruitment by antinational elements in the valley. Typically, a strategy of 'systematic entrapment' is employed whereby individuals are instructed to undertake operations that are progressively more serious in nature. The objective is twofold: first, to induce inductees to greater acts of disobedience and violence and second, to slowly distance these individuals from mainstream civil society to the point that they have no real option but to remain with the militants. In most cases, the procedure seems to follow a standard pattern that starts out with the youth being used to target Security forces (SF) via stone pelting for money, progressing through more serious vandalism and then being an OGW wherein he provides logistical support for strike teams. The more resilient and motivated youth are then assigned jobs of more serious nature like grenade throwing and snatching of weapons before they join

the mainstream groups for more serious actions. The individuals booked under the Public Safety Act (PSA) and who spend time in jails with hardcore terrorists provide an ideal breeding ground for potential recruits.

Publicity

For the insurgents, the need to win over the population is being reflected in their conduct of operations which have very limited collateral damage. A comparison of the terrorist strikes in the valley and that of other terrorist organisations in the world show a marked difference in the methodology of operations. The propaganda strategy of the terrorists here stem from their actions of avoiding any civilian casualty while at the same time capitalizing on the mistakes of the Security Forces. The terrorists have managed to not only identify themselves as freedom fighters but have also been portrayed as fighting for jihad, both factors which provide them the unconditional support of the population. Informal interaction with the civil populace has clearly brought out that an average Kashmiri may not share any information about a terrorist willingly. The mainstream media also does not help by showing support for terrorists on prime time. This is creating a perception that the terrorists are winning ground.

Finance

The aspect of finance is one of the most important organisational tools for a terrorist organisation. The terrorist organisation can only sustain its operations if there are adequate means to generate funds for the cause. It has been learnt from reliable sources that rerouting the hawala funding from Saudi Arabia, Iran and the Kashmiri diaspora seems to be the primary means of funding. Notably, the terrorist organisations both in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK) and the valley do not use these resources solely for their terrorist operations but also for sponsoring a number of charities in the POK. Thus, it is difficult to separate the funds the organisation uses to support health clinics from those used to support terrorist activities. Therefore, although money is key for terrorist organisations to sustain their activities, they also play an organisational role—group cohesion—by bolstering their relationship to local communities and further legitimizing their activities in Jammu & Kashmir. The balance of payment in the Line of Control (LoC) trade and narcotics, Haj tourism cancellations as well as the sale and distribution of

ancestral property assets between families on both sides of the LoC seem to be the new source of financing the movement in the valley. A new trend not yet fully discovered and investigated is the Hurriyat and Pakistan-sponsored 'scholarship scandal' wherein students are being sent to South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SARRC) and other countries thereby financing terror in kind.

OPERATIONAL TOOLS OF TERRORISTS

Command and Control

For the purpose of this Issue Brief, *command and control* is the mechanism that terrorist groups use to plan, coordinate and execute their attacks. Notably, terrorist leaders often attempt to build a degree of redundancy into their command and control network in order to coordinate activities. In the initial stages of insurgency, a hierarchy of mid-level leaders met periodically to formulate basic strategic guidance, allowing the leaders discretion in the way that they achieve their overall objectives. This network was facilitated by a system of radio-transmitting stations. The capability of interception and breaking of codes by our forces led to reduced usage of radio communication. This had severely hampered the command and control set up in the valley. However, of late the terrorists seem to have shifted to sophisticated methods of communication including Internet to transmit messages. The terrorist groups also seem to have adopted the Al-Qaeda model of decentralised command and control system to avoid being intercepted. This apparently allows substantial autonomy to individual local groups to carry out its actions and make it more difficult to predict any major terrorist incidents. Moreover, when members of 'hardcore' or the central leadership decide to conduct a specific attack, they seem to rely less on the leaders of terrorist groups operating in Valley. The suicide attack on Uri in 2016 could be classified as a classic strike from the 'line of March concept'. Planned and conceived by the top terrorist leadership in POK, the group infiltrated with the sole purpose of carrying out its attack with the help of OGW cells in the valley. The point of concern is the ease with which the entire operation was executed. An analysis of the incident along with the Mumbai and Pathankot attacks clearly brings out that major suicide attacks in future will also be planned and executed from Pakistan/POK with utmost secrecy and with limited

support from terrorist groups. Hardcore OGWs could be used to provide the necessary logistics support and interface for completing the task. They could also use sophisticated global positioning system (GPS) to guide them to the target. Major terrorist strikes would continue to be executed by hardcore cadres from outside.

Weapons and Equipment

Notwithstanding the fact that there is an adequate quantity of weapons hidden in the Valley, more still seem to be coming in. Movement of terrorists without weapons or at the most with just a pistol to predesignated caches in order to launch attacks has become a trend.

Operational Space

In addition to command, control network and weapons, terrorist groups also need time and space to plan, train for and execute their attacks. The operational space will range from urban neighbourhoods to sanctuaries within the state and transnational sanctuaries. Each terrorist organisation needs to have an area which provides these groups with a wide range of opportunities to plan, train, and conduct operations, stockpile weapons and protect their primary leaders. Thus, it is an operational requirement to have bases in the valley where the terrorists make themselves comparatively safe. These areas could be traditional hideouts like the Lolab and Rajwad RF or places like Srinagar downtown, Sopore downtown or Pulwama town, where the density of population and houses makes it extremely difficult to conduct operations. Operational space for each terror cell in terms of a jurisdiction or territorial limitation seems to be clearly demarcated by their handlers.

Operational Security

It is primarily the ability of terrorist groups to keep security forces from discovering the plans and people involved in terrorist activities. We would, therefore, expect that terrorists expend considerable resources to protect the integrity of their operations. The terrorist organisations, off late, have switched to cell-like structure to maintain operational security, with individual members associated with local cells that operate relatively independently. As a result, those in individual cells are not always aware of others' plans, reducing the potential for informers or infiltrators to discern any given attack. Terrorist groups have also switched on

to sophisticated methods like encrypted software and mediums like Facebook, WhatsApp, Facetime and other applications whose servers are not in our country. Thus, the terrorists seem to have moved one notch ahead as far as technology is concerned while our SF apparatus does not have the requisite infrastructure to intercept and monitor the communications.

Over Ground Workers (OGWs)

Over ground workers have always been the mainstay for an insurgency movement. Previously, OGWs were primarily involved in logistics support and intelligence gathering. Of late the distinction has blurred considerably with OGWs also capable of carrying out small-scale strikes while retaining the capability to mix rapidly with the population. The comparative freedom of movement available to terrorists due to limited resource control measures has emboldened the terrorists to change their strategy of trying to mix up with population. The recent attack by Pakistani terrorists at Sunjuwan gives a clear impression that the group had infiltrated months ago and were assisted by OGWs⁶. Movement without weapons or with pistol has thus become the order of the day. Thus, a present-day terrorist may not be easy to identify and would operate in the grey area between that of an OGW and terrorist.

Cyberspace

Groups like Al-Qaeda, LeT and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have successfully created online 'madrasas' that have put a significant dent in the young and vulnerable population across the world from the west to the east and irrespective of their religious inclination. They have also succeeded in gathering massive 'sympathisers' online where these sympathizers evidently are readily available to provide physical support on the behest of several online videos posted on their terrorist organisation's websites and on YouTube (online video channel). There cannot be denying that social media has been steadily converted into a lethal mind game by the terrorist organisations to carry out their dreadful radical terror campaign. Despite the knowledge about social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Google, YouTube, WhatsApp, Skype, Tumblr and Instagram, owned by the US corporations, being misused by the terrorists, it still remains a question why the United States has not actively pursued stringent policy on these social

media platforms so as to work on a mandatory policy for all these media organisations to curb terrorist organisation's freedom of speech.

Agitational Space

Although the word 'Agitational terrorism' was first coined in 2009⁷, the effect of it has been seen mainly since the Burhan Wani incident wherein organised stone pelting mobs stop the proceedings by security forces at an encounter spot becoming almost a norm. The Organisational tools of Finance and Alienation through radicalisation have a deep connect for successfully employing this operational tool.

WHAT DO WE DO INDIA?

- Insurgents must be isolated from the population, their cause and support. While it may be required to kill or capture insurgents, it is more effective in the long run to separate an insurgency from the population and its resources, thus letting it die. Confrontational military action, in exclusion, is counterproductive in most cases; it risks generating popular resentment, creating martyrs that motivate new recruits and producing cycles of revenge. Even carefully targeted military operations against insurgents can create risks for the population. An operation that kills five insurgents is counterproductive if collateral damage and resentment leads to the recruitment of 50 more insurgents. Rules of Engagement (ROE) should address lesser means of force and nonlethal means when such use is likely to create the desired effects and SF can do so without endangering themselves, others or the mission accomplishment.
- If India has to eliminate terrorism threat from social media, the government should create awareness about cyber terrorism and set up highly competitive and efficient cybersecurity think tanks which will monitor and report suspected terrorism-related activities. A database should be maintained about the accounts of users who frequently search these words online. Just merely by eliminating provocative video and text contents from YouTube, Twitter or Facebook will not be sufficient to stymie the growth of the terrorist web. The symbiotic relationship between terrorist organisations that has taken root must be prevented. India as a country is fast evolving into one of the largest internet user

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country in the world and therefore, is much more susceptible to the challenges posed against its national interest in the backdrop of growing misuse of social media by the hands of terrorist. It is the only need of the hour to congregate an agile foundation for cyber security, where the government agencies must work on a robust monitoring and filtering of antinational activities conducted online.

- Working on leaders who have the potential to shift sides for money or power needs to be relentlessly pursued as the gains far outweigh the efforts of counterterror operations.
- Checkmate the radicalisation campaigns in schools, religious institutions, educational institutes and prisons through socio-scientific methods and assistance.
- Implement a detailed perception management strategy on prime time channels as seeing is believing.
- Ruthlessly target terror-funding in real terms as well as in kind. In this regard, carrying out detailed checks on agents supporting terrorists and discreetly investigating the funding for all persons from the state whose children are studying abroad, including politicians and bureaucrats, may pay rich dividends in unearthing the scandal.
- Make our intelligence networks across the LoC more proficient so that we can track the line of March type of major terror attacks more efficiently.

There is a need to identify the potential hideouts and address them with increased frequency so as to deny the terrorists the operational space for planning and conduct of operations. Police and paramilitary forces of India (PMF) should anchor sanitisation operations in towns while SF should be completely responsible for the forests.

- Upgrade to modern interception techniques, hardware and software in order to breach the operational security of the terrorists and always stay one step ahead.
- Procure the best technology to ensure resource control measures without an invasive bent. An effective counter infiltration grid coupled with a technologically enabled checking system for all vehicles entering the Valley both from POK and Jammu would go a long way in completely denying the most important ingredient providing capability to a terrorist, that is, weapons and ammunition.

THE PUNCH LINE

Investment in security and related issues should be immediate and should be without bureaucratic delays and file bashing. Development and governance will automatically improve when the security situation improves. National security is uncompromisable.

Notes

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3. Ibid.
4. [http://www.claws.in/images/publication_pdf/ Psychological Aspects in Kashmir: Why Kashmiriyat Has Won Against Haivaniyat=ASChonker\(Final\).pdf](http://www.claws.in/images/publication_pdf/Psychological%20Aspects%20in%20Kashmir%20Why%20Kashmiriyat%20Has%20Won%20Against%20Haivaniyat=ASChonker(Final).pdf).
5. Ibid.
6. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/sunjuwan-attack-terrorists-were-operating-in-india-for-10-months-conducted-recce-of-army-camp-1167509-2018-02-12>, accessed on March 02, 2018.
7. http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/sair/Archives/sair8/8_35.htm, accessed on March 02, 2018.

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