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Cross-border terrorism: The case of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir

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Abstract

Cross-border terrorism has been present in the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir since 1947, when both the dominions of India and Pakistan were created. One of the first documentations of the phenomenon was maharaja Hari Singh's letter addressed to Lord Mountbatten, dated 26 October 1947, which accompanied the Instrument of Accession and cited the need for protection against 'soldiers in plain clothes, and desperadoes with modern weapons,' which resulted in 'wanton destruction of life and property' (Singh, 1947). Over seven decades later, we can see that despite the logic of terrorism remaining the same - to destabilise India - the operations have grown more complex and the destruction more radical. Drug trafficking is also an old phenomenon in the region, as the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir is close to the main drugproducing areas of the world. What is relatively recent is the international recognition of the fact that terrorist groups with links to the Pakistani state are also trafficking drugs. This paper seeks to first investigate how cross-border terrorism works on the ground; then examine recent trends in the production and trafficking of drugs; and, lastly, to explore how closely the two criminal areas are linked. In doing so, our starting point shall be hitherto SADF research on both topics, as both drug trafficking and terrorism have been examined extensively.

Introduction

SADF has researched and published intensively on cross-border terrorism and trafficking in drugs¹. In the aftermath of the 2016's Pathankot attack (SADF, 2016, p. 3) SADF analysed the relationship between Pakistani authorities and terrorist outfits operating in India. Siegfried O. Wolf has argued that cross border terrorism is an important element of Pakistani foreign policy, as Pakistan sees it as a way to reduce the asymmetries between the two countries and 'cut India down to its size' (SADF, 2016, p. 4; Wolf, 2019). In this last publication, Wolf also argues that as the general purpose of jihadist outfits operating out of Pakistan is to destabilise India, it is also intended to challenge Indian hegemony on the subcontinent (Wolf, 2019). Cross-border terrorism is funded as well as logistically supported by Pakistan and goes hand in hand with other criminal activities. The interaction between criminal activities and cross-border terrorism was thoroughly analysed in SADF Policy Brief 8 (SADF, 2018). Here, it was highlighted that Pakistan has the highest per capita heroin addiction rate in the world, being also one of the countries whose security apparatus, namely the Inter-Security Services (ISI), traffics drugs internationally so as to fund its activities (SADF, 2018). In the book *Terrorism Revisited*, Wolf argues in a similar fashion that Pakistan 'is not only flirting with (militant) Jihadism but has also been using terrorism as an instrument of state policy for decades' (Wolf, 2017). India has been the main target of such activities. This paper elaborates on previous SADF research while specifically focusing on the situation in Jammu and Kashmir.

1 - Cross border terrorism in the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir

Pumping drugs into Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir serves a twofold purpose. On the one hand, it funds terrorist activities; on the other, there is a strong correlation between receptive attitudes towards jihadism and drug use. Indian authorities have an acute understanding that the operations of terrorism and drug smuggling are linked to the highest levels of the Pakistani state. The Chief of the Indian Army Staff, General Bipin Rawat, has stated that there is 'a nexus between drugs and guns, and unless movement of drugs [is] controlled, it will be difficult to contain the movement of funds and guns' (Press Trust of India, 2019). Some observers trace the origins of these drugs to the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) (Asian News International, 2015). Whilst there is not necessarily a causal link between the two phenomena, the same observers argue that local terrorists - mostly natives of the former princely state - are initially led into the path of extremism through drug addiction. Otherwise, some argue that sometimes people who smuggle drugs also engage in terrorist activities

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¹ For a detailed analysis, see SADF publications in its website www.sadf.eu

(<u>Mandhana</u>, 2016). Terrorism and drug trafficking in Jammu and Kashmir is however often labelled as 'self-determination activism' (<u>Bhatt</u>, 2018).

The Indian authorities' conclusions on the terror-crime nexus are in line with those reached by the international community. Since 9/11, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has recognised the link between terrorism and drug trafficking in the Resolution 1373 (UNSC, 2001). Since then, this approach has been reinforced several times, most recently through the Resolution 2482 (UNSC, 2019).

The crux of the matter is therefore that drug trafficking and other common criminal activities are replacing state funding on cross-border terrorism while keeping the underlying logic intact. (Balarishnan, 2018, p. 11). More to the point, even when groups engaging in drug smuggling act independently from terrorist groups, their links are often close.

Highly populated India is close to main drug-producing areas in the world and is therefore a large market for drugs (<u>Balarishnan, 2018, p. 12</u>). Balarishnan argues that the major external 'actors fighting in J&K are Pakistan-based groups' (<u>Balarishnan, 2018, p. 14</u>). Kukreja argues that ISI provides both training and funding to Pakistan-based terrorist groups carrying out rogue operations in India (<u>2017, p. 267</u>).

Brigadier Gurmeet Kanwal also points out that 'smugglers, drug-traffickers and fundamentalist terrorists are often in league with local criminals, lower rung political leaders and police functionaries,' which adds the element of corruption to the situation (Kanwal, 2008).

It should be stressed that the same drugs-terrorism nexus also exists within Pakistan, where jihadists are interlinked to the local population through drug supply networks (Ahmed, 2015). In essence, Pakistan is exporting an already well-functioning domestic industry into India.

1.1 - Recent trends: from Jammu and Kashmir to Punjab

Indian Punjab forms a geographically important link between Pakistan and the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir (Nayak, 2003). Its relevance for illegal activities depends on the situation around the Line of Control. For instance, as India suspended trade across the Line of Control after the Pulwama attack in 2019, Punjab's importance for drug smugglers increased. Since then, drug seizures around the Punjabi border have increased (Outlook Web Bureau, 2019). We can view trafficking through Indian Punjab as a sort of a barometer of the situation in the Line of Control.

The suspension of trade across the Line of Control on Thursday 18 April has been seen by some as a symbolic response to the Pulwama attack; however, in fact smuggling across the Line of Control played an essential role in the decision (Wire, 2019). On 19 April, ten Pakistani-based citizens native

to the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir were arrested by Indian authorities for transporting weapons, drugs and counterfeit currency into the Valley of Kashmir (<u>Press Trust of India, 2019</u>). Crucially, all ten were found to have connections to Pakistani-based terrorist outfits. We can see that India's action to suspend trade across the Line of Control is not simply a political decision.

2 – Drug trafficking between India and Pakistan

2.1 - Some examples of innovation concerning smuggling methods

In 2019, the World Drug Report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) claimed that roughly half of the world's opioid users reside in South Asia (UNODC, 2019, p. 8). Authorities are constantly on the lookout to improve their grasp on dealing with organised crime and terrorism, and terrorists and smugglers also have to keep up with the demands for constant innovation both in products and methods. Local Indian authorities have noted that whilst the use of conventional goods - such as picture frames or shoes - is commonplace to make illegal substances to cross the border, drug traffickers are also at the constant forefront of innovation. In 2018, a Special Task Force formed in 2017 seized one and a half kilogrammes of heroin disguised within fish. Authorities admitted that while most drugs are carried using rather conventional smuggling methods, some traffickers are increasingly more innovative in their methods (William, 2018). Sometimes, terrorists minimise human involvement and employ entirely technological solutions such as PVC pipes (Bhargava, 2018). These PVC pipes are a good example of innovation – the length of the pipe in this instance discovered on the Indian border is rather short, but removes the task of a given citizen having to physically bring the product across the border.

2.2 - Some recent examples of innovation in drug production

It is important to know the routes via which things are smuggled, but it is also helpful to understand what is being smuggled. As the UNODC recognised in 2016, synthetic drugs are of growing global importance. Between 2015 and 2016, the whole market has risen by a fifth (UNODC, 2017). The report clearly marks that South Asia is a relatively new market for synthetic drugs - yet such substances are fast consolidating their position on this market. Specifically, trafficking in amphetamines goes beyond traditionally established routes used for opioids. We can pinpoint 2016 as the year when India was first flooded with synthetic drugs. Seizures in preceding years indicated India to be a relatively small proportion of the complete drug market; however in 2016 the seizures of amphetamines amounted to around 24 tons (UNODC, 2018, p. 59). As this indication is both alarming and sobering, it sheds light on the continuing importance of researching the relation between

drug trafficking and terrorism in the context of networks that span borders. By 2019 it is clear that Pakistan is mostly a source country for drugs. India - despite being an important transit country and a gateway to North America, Africa, and Middle East - remains an important destination country as well, especially in light of its relatively volatile population susceptible to cheaper and easier to manufacture drugs (UNODC, 2018).

3 – Cultivating fanaticism in the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir

Cross-border terrorism in India goes hand in hand with creating societal divisions. This is done by exploiting either ethnic or religious qualities. Some argue that relative underdevelopment is a necessary condition for the success of jihadist rhetoric (<u>Kukreja, 2017, p. 266</u>). Perhaps the most upto-date proof of general alienation among the local citizenry is the 2019 Indian general election, where the turnout in Jammu and Kashmir was less than 10%.

Challenges to authorities will be even greater in the future. The arrival of synthetic drugs makes it more difficult for them to do their job. According to the UNODC, there are around 70,000 addicts living in the region at the moment (Bhat and Imtiaz, 2017) - which is of course low when compared to the total population of 12 million. However, in 2018 the Indian Army carried out a study which concluded that around 40% of the youth in Jammu and Kashmir suffers from some form of drug addiction. Even more striking is the related fact that before 2008 this figure was below 5% (Raina, 2018). The above-mentioned study by the Indian Army further proved the claim that most drugs that end up in the state originate from Pakistan. Contrarily to what the UNODC's figures claim, drug addiction in the region appears to be taking the dimension of an epidemic. Notably, this situation is used by terrorist organisations who cultivate fanatic ideologies on this fertile soil. In this context fingers are then pointed at Delhi for its inadequacy in guaranteeing safe livelihoods to the local citizenry.

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