V. R. Raghavan

The Double-Edged Effect in South Asia

The terms of engagement in the global war against terrorism waged in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks are being defined more or less exclusively by the United States. In this new environment, individual states and separate regional groups are repositioning themselves to maximize their room to maneuver. Such post–September 11 hegemonic politics ill serve the new security needs of the developing world, the most critical being economic growth coupled with social and political stability. Positing terrorism as an Islamic phenomenon—despite assertions to the contrary by the United States—has placed many developing countries in a strategic dilemma. South and Southeast Asian developing countries are either Islamic or contain significant numbers of adherents to Islam. The leadership of these countries has found it difficult to support the United States in the war on Islamic terrorism with the sullen if not hostile response by their populations.

Indeed, the sole superpower has introduced a new type of state into the realm of international law: the "harboring state," defined as one that funds, trains, or allows its territory to be used by proscribed terrorist groups. Once designated as such, the harboring state, potentially also called a rogue or outlaw state,[1] ceases to be entitled to the sovereignty guaranteed to each state under international law. India had expected and worked to have Pakistan included in such a category in light of its known support for groups practicing terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.

Significant discontinuities in traditional alliances have also continued to emerge[2] as part of the North-South dichotomy in fighting the war on terror-

V. R. Raghavan is a retired lieutenant general and former director general of military operations of the Indian Army. He is currently president of the Centre for Security Analysis in Chennai and director of the Delhi Policy Group.

ism. The states of South and Southeast Asia, which see terrorism as a technique adopted to gain political ends, traditionally have taken the route of political and social assimilation of disaffected population segments that had taken to terrorism. Based in part on a long and unfortunate experience dealing with terrorism and its causes, developing states, including India, have pursued a strategy that has included both negotiations and military pressure, but not regime change or the annihilation of terrorist groups, to combat terrorism.

The Impact on South Asian Security

The events of September 11, 2001, changed South Asia's security calculus in unexpected ways. Transnational threats to U.S. security, particularly in Pakistan and Central Asia, brought a U.S. military presence nearer to India. The U.S. presence in the region after the attacks gave India an unexpected opportunity in its own war against terrorism. New Delhi expected the United States to see Pakistani-backed terrorism in Kashmir as being of the same ilk as the United States' terrorist enemies and the situation in Kashmir as a terrorist war. To India's surprise, however, its partnership with the United States did not lead Washington to seek to isolate Pakistan despite the fact that, since the nuclear tests of 1998, India had carefully developed that partnership in numerous ways. New Delhi had sought to reassure the United States, among others, about its nuclear policy by making a firm commitment to a moratorium on nuclear tests and to a no-first-use policy; the Indian government had energetically pushed economic reform and established a range of economic and trade partnerships with the United States; and India had welcomed some elements of U.S. policies pertaining to the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty and missile defense.

The September 11 attacks occurred at a point when Indo-U.S. relations were on a significant upward trend and terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir was at a peak, most of it organized by groups operating from Pakistan. The Indian government thus expected that Pakistan, whose connections with the Taliban and Al Qaeda had become evident, would come under intense U.S. pressure, including the demand for a change in Pakistan's policy in Jammu and Kashmir. It soon became apparent, however, that, notwithstanding Pakistan's role in accommodating the Taliban and Al Qaeda, the United States saw Pakistan's potential to eliminate these two groups and change the political structures in Afghanistan as more important. Pakistan's president, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, had become the United States' most important ally in the war against Al Qaeda.

Two months later, the reality of the new U.S. need for Pakistani cooperation was reinforced. In response to the December 13, 2001, attacks on

India's parliament and the subsequent January 2002 attack on the Kaluchak army camp, the Indian government ordered a military mobilization along the India-Pakistan border. In light of each country's possession of nuclear weapons, the Indian military mobilization raised the prospect of war between India and Pakistan spiraling toward a nuclear exchange, significantly raising the international stakes in avoiding such a war. From India's point of view, the U.S. response at the time was unsatisfactory. New Delhi believed that Pakistan knew the United States felt it had to maintain good bilateral relations with Islamabad. Given its new regional relationships, the proximate cause of India's 2002 military mobilization essentially landed the United States in the middle of the zero-sum contest between India and Pakistan, making "[o]ne of the most irreconcilable conflicts in the world … Washington's business."[3]

India was surprised that Washington did not seek to isolate Pakistan after 9/11.

This sequence of regional crises demonstrated that nuclear deterrence, albeit fragile, was viable in the region. Previously, the 1999 Kargil conflict had demonstrated that the Pakistani leadership believed that nuclear deterrence enabled limited operations. As a result, in 1999 it occupied positions on the Indian side of the line of control (LOC) in Kashmir. The obvious military strategy for India would have been to widen the conflict by seizing Pakistani-held territories across the LOC, but India chose instead to confine its substantial military operations to its side of the LOC, a decision influenced in no small degree by the two countries' nuclear capabilities. At that time, New Delhi concluded that the risks and potential costs of a general conflict and possible nuclear exchange usurped attempts to resolve the dispute in Kashmir by force.

After India's military mobilization in 2002, Pakistan's military regime temporarily curtailed the infiltration of militants into India, in no small part as a result of immense U.S. and international pressure on Musharraf to do so. Traditionally, India had dealt with terrorism in Kashmir through defensive and reactive strategies. Security operations had been confined to searching for, arresting, and destroying militant groups in the state. Yet, this approach was insufficient for coping with an endless flow of armed terrorist groups from Pakistan into Jammu and Kashmir. New Delhi termed this terrorism "state-sponsored terrorism" because of the fact that the leadership of such groups operated openly from within Pakistan. These groups had close links with the Taliban and Al Qaeda, and many of them were trained in Afghanistan.

The 2002 military mobilization shows that, after Kargil, Indian strategy had graduated from defensive to proactive, offensive responses to terrorism. Surely, New Delhi's thinking was influenced by the response to the September 11 attacks and subsequent U.S. antiterrorist operations in Afghanistan. The Kargil conflict had already demonstrated that a limited war would not necessarily lead to a nuclear exchange. The link between the 1999 Kargil low-intensity conflict, the September 11 terrorist attacks, the December 13 attack on India's parliament, and India's mobilization of troops in 2002 was complete.

India's political and military leadership began espousing a theory of limited war in a nuclear environment by which India could retaliate directly against Pakistan and would be morally justified in doing so. Henceforth, it was up to the regime in Islamabad to decide whether it wanted further escalation. On the other hand, because India limited its response to troop mobilization in 2002, it retained some significant options to deter, and to use in the event of, Pakistan's escalation of terrorism. We may therefore see India respond in the future with punitive military actions such as air strikes against terrorist infrastructure and military forays to take out terrorist bases in Pakistani territory.

> In 2002, Indian strategy graduated from defensive to proactive responses to terrorism.

Simultaneously being developed after the September 11 attacks, the U.S. counterterrorism posture bolstered the Indian government's stance. In mobilizing its own troops, India was in a better political position than it had been in a decade to pursue a strategy to compel Pakistan to stop harboring or otherwise supporting terrorists.[4] Because Pakistan's complicity in the role of the Taliban and Al Qaeda in international terrorism had become unequivocally clear, and the United States was already launching operations from Pakistani territory into Afghanistan, India expected its own military responses against terrorists and governments harboring terrorists to be accepted, if not supported internationally.

A new set of regional dynamics thus emerged as a result of tectonic changes in strategic relations after September 11. First, the prospects of a nuclear exchange were believed to be credible through an escalatory process of conventional military conflict. Second, 2002 showed that conventional war could start as a result of terrorist acts. Third, both Indian prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and U.S. president George W. Bush faced similar challenges: the two elected leaders of liberal democracies had to respond to public pressure and the expectations of determined and decisive action in the face of major terrorist acts.

Changes in Pakistan

Pakistan's posture in South Asia has been significantly affected by the new international security environment and particularly its participation in the U.S.-led war on terrorism. To assure its national security, Pakistan could ill afford to remain isolated and be singled out as a rogue state. It had to disassociate itself from the Taliban and Al Qaeda, cooperate in the installation of a new government in Kabul, and rethink its policy choices on Jammu and Kashmir. Geopolitical factors made Pakistan's cooperation in the war on terrorism all the more necessary.

Traditionally, Pakistan perceived that Afghanistan provided strategic depth against threats from India and had pursued ties with the Taliban and Al Qaeda to obtain that strategic advantage. Yet, after Washington had already launched military operations into Afghanistan, it threatened to do the same in Pakistan. Under pressure from the United States and the rest of the international community,[5] Musharraf reversed some of the four fundamental pillars of Pakistan's security and foreign policy regarding Kashmir, Afghanistan, its nuclear weapons program, and military rule.

A Changed International Security Environment

Beyond South Asia, the scale and impact of the attacks on the United States have raised terrorism from a local or regional phenomenon to a global strategic threat. Post–September 11, the very nature of terrorism itself has changed. Were this period in international relations to be defined in terms of war, it might best be described as an era of asymmetric war generated by terrorist attacks. Modern technology coupled with the new nature of the terrorist threat present unprecedented challenges.

Two to three decades ago, terrorism was about local issues and conducted by small groups that sought to draw attention to their cause through terrorist acts. Terrorism was designed to kill a few and have large audiences watching it for effect. Today, it is ideologically motivated, its agenda is not limited to one country, and it is international in character. The asymmetric character of international terrorism, conducted by elusive perpetrators, has a decapacitating impact on the people and on the state it targets. It forces states and leaders to reconsider policies and respond to terrorist groups through an international effort. The world faces this new form of what some have called fourth-generation warfare, which "pits nations against nonnational organizations and networks that include not only fundamental extremists, but ethnic groups, mafias, and narcotraffickers as well. Its evolutionary roots may lie in guerrilla warfare, but it is rendered more pervasive and effective

by technologies, mobilities, and miniaturized instrumentalities spawned by the age of computers and mass communication."[6]

Clearly, therefore, terrorism's increasing lethality, access to sophisticated weapons and technology, the force-multiplying effect of state-sponsored terrorism, religious motivation, the proliferation of amateurs, and operational competence all make the current threat posed by asymmetric warfare no less than horrific. In the current context, amateurs have ready and easy access to the means and methods of terrorism. Terrorism has become accessible to anyone with a grievance, an agenda, a purpose, or any idiosyncratic combination of the above. Terrorists are particularly dangerous because it is even more difficult to track and anticipate their attacks.[7] Today, modern technology in the service of terrorism provides no warning, and its perpetrators vanish with the act they have committed.[8]

> In the future, India may use air strikes to take out terrorist bases in Pakistani territory.

The role of all states, democratic and not, as well as the challenges they face in this new international context of asymmetric warfare are also changing in fundamental ways. Global terrorism cannot flourish without the support of states that either overtly sympathize with or acquiesce in its actions. Cold War principles of deterrence are almost impossible to implement when a multiplicity of states are involved, some of them harboring terrorists who are in a position to wreak havoc. The transnational nature of terrorism has led governments to adopt new doctrines and develop collective regional efforts.

South Asia has dealt with conflict-generating terrorism for more than 20 years. The experience has been marked by state sponsorship of terrorism and, in other cases, controlled by elements outside the disputant countries. Even though terrorist groups are operationally separate, they share many similar dynamics and goals. To combat these threats, local responses should similarly match international efforts. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Additional Protocol on Terrorism, signed in early 2004, is a step in this direction for regional efforts to combat terrorism by establishing and maintaining a financial intelligence unit to fight terrorism. Previously, the 1987 SAARC Agreement on the Suppression of Terrorism had fallen short of taking specific counterterrorism measures against terrorist financing.

Pakistan made a deliberate decision to join the 2004 SAARC Additional Protocol on Terrorism to show its determination to handle international terrorism, but the problem remains. Although Pakistan seeks to cooperate in

the international effort to fight terrorism, it continues to encourage terrorist activity on its own soil to serve its goals in Kashmir. Even though the region resolves to fight terrorism, a bidirectional approach by a state clearly exists. Despite the fact that the Indian elections in Kashmir changed the political dynamic completely, because of interference and support from Pakistan, militant challenges remain.

When states threaten one another for incongruent reasons in a situation such as this, who deters whom and in the face of what kind of provocation?[9] In the twenty-first century, states face the arduous challenges of identifying (1) the enemy (whether a terrorist organization or a regime); (2) the terrorists' location (their territory, ideology, human resources, and financial base); and (3) the situation and the level at which military power should be used (against whom and where). To speak of a global war on terrorism distorts thinking by suggesting that there is an easily identifiable enemy and an obvious means of attack. Counterterrorism involves aggressive deterrence and prevention on several levels, but, after all, against whom should a state wage war? Should Spain be attacked because the Madrid bombers lived and plotted there?

A long list of states has directly, covertly, or even unintentionally contributed to the success of international terrorist groups. September 11 has changed international security and the international system so drastically that threat perceptions and responses have to be reexamined. The new face of terrorism is one of dozens of local groups across the world connected by a global ideology. U.S. foreign policy has changed perceptibly to deal with such threats, and military preemption has come to form the core of its policy options. Terrorism is now viewed as the principal foreign policy challenge to the United States.

Similarly, the strategic future in South Asia is vulnerable; any terrorist attack akin to those of December 13, 2001, and Kaluchak in January 2002 could bring about a new crisis. Indian policy imperatives now envisage a compellence strategy that has been bolstered by the events of September 11, 2001. Although the distinction between terrorist and military acts was apparent earlier, this is no longer the case. The distinctions between regular armies, irregular armies, and mujahideen have been blurred. This implies that Indian military forces should be kept at a high state of readiness.

Impact on India

U.S. policy substantially affected India's interests in South Asia following September 11 by requiring Pakistani-U.S. relations to fulfill U.S. strategic and military objectives in Afghanistan and in the oil- and gas-rich Central

Asian region. The U.S. need for Pakistan to have a substantial role in handling Afghanistan and the Taliban places a new perspective on India's approaches to conflict resolution and dispute settlement with Pakistan on the issue of Kashmir.

If India had hoped for a constructive response to its being targeted by global terrorism, international action after the December 13 parliament attack leaves no doubt about the future course of action. India carries its burden of combating terrorism on its own. It would need to act alone to force a change of attitude and conviction in Pakistan; the September 11 attacks and international opinion can help only to a certain extent. For this reason, India's peace initiatives with Pakistan broke new ground after September 11, 2001.

Pakistan now also finds itself increasingly vulnerable to major terrorist attacks. Musharraf and some of his top military commanders repeatedly have experienced assassination attempts. Such developments have in turn led to a new understanding of the need to stabilize Indo-Pakistani relations. Vajpayee began the process in April 2002 by extending his hand in friendship to Pakistan on Kashmiri soil. At the 12th SAARC summit in Islamabad in early January 2004, Vajpayee set a conciliatory tone in his speech by focusing on strengthening the organization. India also agreed on the additional protocol updating the 1987 Convention Against Terrorism. After the 2004 elections, the new government in New Delhi is sustaining the momentum created by Vajpayee's Bharatiya Janata Party government.

Clearly, September 11 has served as a catalyst to move diplomatic relations between India and Pakistan forward. Although the immediate aftermath of India's own December 13 terrorist attacks resulted in the 2002 border confrontation and seemed to increase the risk of war, the recent dialogue process outlines just the opposite: both countries argue that nuclear weapons actually add to regional stability. In that environment, a range of discussions between the two governments to resolve all outstanding disputes has gained currency. The importance accorded to improved ties by the new government in New Delhi is evident in its efforts immediately upon assuming power to seek a close relationship with its counterpart in Islamabad. Irrespective of the outcome of the dialogue process, the intentions are clearly to build rapprochement so as to combat international terrorism together. This is the most promising and positive impact of the September 11 attacks.

> India's peace initiatives with Pakistan broke new ground after September 11.

Notes

1. Michael Krepon, *Cooperative Threat Reduction, Missile Defense and the Nuclear Future* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

2. For a detailed description of the elements of continuity and discontinuity since the September 11 attacks, see Nicholas Williams, "September 11: New Challenges and Problems for Democratic Oversight," presentation at the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces workshop on "Criteria for Success and Failure in Security Sector Reform," Geneva, September 5–7, 2002.

3. Jessica T. Matthews, "September 11, One Year Later: A World of Change," *Policy Brief*, no. 18 (August 2002): 7, http://www.ceip.org/files/pdf/Policybrief18.pdf (accessed July 3, 2004).

4. "The Delicate Strategic Balance in South Asia," *Strategic Survey 2002–2003* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press).

5. Ajay Darshan Behera, "On the Edge of Metamorphosis," in *Pakistan in a Changing Strategic Context*, eds. Ajay Darshan Behera and Joseph C. Matthew (New Delhi: Knowledge World, 2004).

6. Harold A. Gould and Franklin C. Spinney, "Fourth-Generation Warfare," *Hindu*, October 10, 2001.

7. Ian O. Lesser, "Coalition Dynamics in the War Against Terrorism," *International Spectator*, February 2002.

8. Henry Kissinger, "Pre-emption and the End of Westphalia," *New Perspectives Quarterly* 19, no. 4 (Fall 2002).

9. Ibid.