

Raging Killers: Corona and Terrorism in Indo-Pak scenario



Brig JS Rajpurohit¹

Pakistan has been abetting terrorism in Indian UT of Jammu and Kashmir and Indian attempts to bring end terrorism have not been respected by Pakistan. Pakistan has acknowledged its inability to managed Covid-19 pandemic but is relentless in its impish attempts to push terrorists in J&K. During the trying phase of Covid-19 pandemic, when the whole world is fighting against the pandemic to save human race, extremists are adding fuel to the fire to the human values. Unfortunately, Pakistan Supreme Court has allowed its government to conduct elections in Gilgit-Baltistan province in Northern Areas. This is an attempt to change basic structure of original J&K that extends up to Hunja, Gilgit, Baltistan and Skardu and has been forcibly occupied by Pakistan. This is stirring at a time when IMF has agreed to give a massive credit an relief to Pakistan and US is supporting them with millions of dollars' relief to fight Covid-19. This chapter of human antiquity is a crucial one; the world is in a state of shock when there is no solution to the pandemic. Scientists, all over the world are preoccupied with research work to counter the terror of Corona virus.

Two sets of disparate operations are being conducted by India; one against the extremist called Corona by all of us as humans and another against the real extremists sponsored by Pakistan based Jihadi groups. India has to find solutions to Pak supported terror on Indian sovereign territory. Paper analyses the impact of terrorism during the Covid-19 pandemic to seek solution the existing challenge.

Key words: *Terrorism, Jammu and Kashmir, Covid-19 pandemic, Pakistan, India*

Introduction

Saturday, 03 May 2020 was the last day of 2.0 lockdown. Version Lockdown 3.0 (India, 2020) started on 04 May 2020 but the terror struck in Kashmir. India was transiting into third phase of fight with Corona virus but had to shift attention to the extremist attack in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). As the India planned to relax and give enough space to its people to breath and feel comfortable after a hectic and tight schedule of lockdown to curb the menace of Corona virus, Jihadi extremist group *Lashkar-e-Taiba* (University, 2020) unleashed terror on

¹Brig, Ph.D, New Delhi, jsr1989@gmail.com

innocent villagers in the J&K, Northern most UT of India. This extremist outfit is backed by Islamic Republic of Pakistan (ISP) and has been the exclusive cause of many terror related activities in the northern border areas of J&K UT. During the unexpected and unwanted phase of Covid-19 pandemic (Organisation, 2020) when the whole world is fighting against the pandemic to save human race, extremists are adding fuel to the fire to the human values. Unfortunately, ISP Supreme Court has allowed its government to conduct elections in Gilgit-Baltistan province (Hindu, 020). This is occurring at a time when IMF has agreed to give a massive credit and relief to ISP and US is supporting them with millions of dollars' relief to fight Covid-19. Can we ever expect this type of behavior from any civilized nation? Certainly not.

The Mighty Enemy: Corona

Indians in general are very happy the way covid-19 has been handled; preventive, protective and treatment measures have been adopted across the country. Entire national effort is in full swing to manage the utmost threat to the existential component of mankind by Covid-19. Comparative fatalities due to Covid-19 have been much lower in India. State of contaminations, repossession and losses of some of the major affected countries as reported by WHO on 05 May 2020 (Organisation, <https://covid19.who.int/>, 2020) are listed below :-

Ser No	Country	Confirmed cases	Deaths
1.	<u>World</u>	3442234	239740
2.	<u>USA</u>	1125719	60710
3.	<u>Spain</u>	217466	25264
4.	<u>Italy</u>	210717	28884
5.	<u>France</u>	129708	24859
6.	<u>China</u>	84401	4643
7.	<u>India</u>	42533	1373
8.	<u>ISP</u>	20884	476

The present phase of human antiquity is one of the crucial time periods which inevitably entails rigid administrative measures and intensive and exhaustive research work on the invention of antidote in the form of vaccine. Till date, the world is in a state of doldrum without operational solution to this pandemic. Scientists, all over the world are preoccupied with research work day and night in their laboratories to counter the terror of Corona virus. The combination of selected drugs like Remdesivir (White, 2020), Hydroxychloroquine (Sahaj Rathi, 2020) and many others are being tried by doctors and scientists for treatment of this pandemic. So far there is no confirmed treatment to Covid-19 (Organisation, <http://www.emro.who.int/health-topics/corona-virus/questions-and-answers.html>, 2020). Scientists and governments are working overtime to collaborate and integrate resources to find the remedial medicines. All out efforts are in full swing to work towards goodness of human race. This is one side of the story of deaths and efforts to protect human life.

Virus called Terrorism strikes Kashmir Valley

This might appear to be lopsided domain of the reality of the horror faced by the people across the globe. The wide spread virus of Terrorism is pervading in Kashmir Valley since independence. This virus has wreaked havoc in Kashmir Valley, J&K UT of India. Till date in the year 2020 within last five months, Indian Security forces have exterminated 65 extremists.

Counter extremists' operations are being forced upon Indian army almost every week. In the most recent extremists encounter, a group of civilians in village Changimulla, Handwara in Kupwara district were taken

hostage. Security forces moved into extricate the villagers and in the process, they were fired upon by the extremists. In the gun battle that followed, Haider, a top notorious front-runner of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LET) group was killed. But India also lost five brave army soldiers and a police officer. Martyrs included two officers (a Colonel and a Major), and two soldiers (a Naik and a Sepoy) of army and a brave heart Sub Inspector of J&K Police also lost his life (Sandhu, 2020). The dust of this operation had not settled down and yet another attack on CRPF patrol in Wanagam, Handwara by extremists' gang led to killing of three CRPF soldiers of 92 battalion on 04 May 2020 (Team, 2020).

Now, it's time to compare between two threats to mankind- corona virus and terrorism.

Which enemy is worse; Corona or the Terrorism? A long view.

Two sets of disparate operations were being conducted; one against the extremist called Corona by all of us as humans and another against the real extremists sponsored by ISP based Jihadi groups. Corona is a noxious virus that originated in China and Terrorism in ISP. Both China and ISP are good friends and in times of Corona pandemic both need each other (Sareen, 2020). China had used its veto power in UN in favour of ISP and blocked listing of some of the top Jihadi group leaders (Schwartz, 2019). It is time now to tackle both of them seriously and on priority as both of them are claiming lives. The world must come together to tackle both Corona and Terrorism. Corona is as deadly as death could be and no one knows when how it will strike anyone of us. It has travelled from Wuhan in China to all the continents and from clusters it is spreading to “community spreads”. It is an unknown enemy that could be symptomatic or asymptomatic and is a terminal killer. Terrorism on the other hand is a weapon in the wrong hands that knows no civilisation barriers. They kill at random to spread fright among known populace and target governments. It is deep rooted and lasts more than a generation to wipe out. The Corona virus is soft on this account and has limited shelf life, though second wave and its impact are in definite. Corona shows demonstrative response among the infected and especially those in critical condition. Terrorism is vengeance based and besieged to achieve evil goals.

*Is ISP capable of handling Covid-19 with in its own country?
Should ISP be permitted to play the terror card at its convenience?*

These queries are torrid pains to majority of us in India and ISP. Islamic Republic of ISP has neither the economic strength nor the resources to tackle Corona and yet she has exhibited capability and will to support Jihadi groups. The irony is that ISP that is unable to prevent and protect her citizens from Covid-19 at home but is abetting extremist actions across LOC in India. ISP PM, Imran Khan is silent on extremists' incidents of Handwara and earlier ones since the corona erupted in January 2020. Concurrently, the country had quietly deleted names of about 4000 extremists from its Watch list (Tokar, 2020). This is when ISP has sought additional fiscal grant of \$1.4 billion from IMF to deal with slump in its economy due to Covid-19. In 2019 IMF had accepted monetary relief of \$ 6 billion. Owing to pecuniary poverty that ISP is facing, US had promised to extend US \$ 8 million relief to fight the lethal virus.

Wild Card: Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Elections



Amidst the Corona crisis, ISP Supreme Courton 30 April 2020 has allowed conduct of elections in GB area of ISP Occupied Kashmir as the tenure of Provincial Government is coming to an end in June 2020. These elections will bring federal authority to GB which has been administered as provincial autonomous region since ‘Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order 2009’. This is an attempt to change basic structure

of original J&K that extends up to Hunja, Gilgit, Baltistan and Skardu and has been forcibly occupied by ISP. Indian MEA delivered a *demarche* to protest against the order and called it an attempt to change status of the region. While India strongly objected and conveyed that ISP has no locus stand on the region. ISP's Ministry of Foreign Affairs was quick to rebut that this was in response to Indian government abolishing Article 370.

Northern Area is under forcible occupation of ISP and India has asked ISP to vacate POK. Instead of talking peace, actions by ISP have been self-contradictory. The ruling of Supreme Court has also come at a time when everyone is busy with Corona as if the event will go unnoticed. ISP leaders are incapable to manage funds for eradication of Covid-19 but have found funds and competence to open new fronts and unify Jihadi terror

activities in India. The population of Northern Areas including GB are under constant danger of military actions and strict population control measures are in place. They have been subduing residents ever since who have now started levitating their concerns through violation of the rules and have revolted against the ISP government institutions. ISP army has been dealing with them with brutal and disproportionate force.

Empathy of Pakistani military rulers in all three cases of Covid-19 patients, illegal Jihadi trade and now election in Northern Areas is simply missing.

ISP military rulers and puppet government have shown no genuine concern for the Covid-19 pandemic patients in Northern Areas; have been abetting terrorism in J&K and are now planning to conduct elections in the province. Rationality of peace and harmony have been replaced with irrational national behaviour.

Corona Virus and Covid-19

The situation due to Covid-19 is extremely serious and has fragmented spine of majority economic powers, possibly barring China. All the pretentious countries are doing their best to protect their citizens. No single nation has the wherewithal to manage the deadly disease all by itself. Thanks to Goodwill of human race that all countries are doing whatever they are capable of including testing, trials and research on finding vaccine to combat the wrought of Corona virus. India on its part has provided Hydroxychloroquin medicine to 55 countries and has become a pharma manufacturing hub and manufactures 70% hydroxychloroquine of the world.

ISP has to fight Corona and terrorism at home. Corona is a known but unseen enemy whereas the extremists in ISP are visible enemies and can be reined in if political and strategic decision makers take a concerted call. They will have to rise above religious and factional biases. GB is fast becoming epicentre of Corona and ISP does not have enough labs, testing apparatus and drugs to deal with the Corona virus detection, prevention and treatment (UNPO, 2020). Feasibility of detection, prevention and treatment is beyond prevailing national resources of ISP. Local population of GB does not support the ISP government and military rule; is a known fact now and lack of empathy by the government has further alienated the locals. With poor therapeutic facilities, trifling protective equipment, and next to nix medicines, public is left to its own providence. Capability of ISP government is enormously limited in management of Covid-19 crisis and backing terrorism at this critical juncture, is nothing but irrationality.

India needs to find its own remedies for both Corona and terror viruses. The situation of corona contagions is under control and mortality rate is low as compared to Europe and the US. If the charts speak the truth, India will be one of the fast recuperating nations with minimum losses. However, the rising trend of identification of infections post testing and deaths may well take India to a grave state. Efforts by the Prime minister and his team of ministers along with the cooperation of society are adequate to help come out of the crisis with limited losses. Export of hydroxychloroquine to needy countries have earned India immense goodwill. Neighbouring countries have been braced by India and all exertions are made within India to maintain law and order and yet continue with Lockdown 3.0.

Terrorism and Expected Indian Response

ISP supported terrorism has always been a cause of concern for India and has turned for worse during present pandemic. Managing both Corona virus and extremists’ attacks simultaneously are hurting every Indian. This is a unique situation where all economic activities have come to grinding halt. Sectors like aviation, tourism and hotel industries have been destroyed. Employees are being laid off ruthlessly. In times like this when everyone is looking up to God Almighty for mercy, terror strikes are devilish acts. Nations states have to take a sincere and conscious call to deal with extremist acts with a strong hand. India is no different and must take every action possible to prevent reoccurrence of such horrifying attacks. There have to be measures at strategic level to stop jihadis planning terror plots. Bilateral diplomatic approach is the key to overcome pandemic and terrorism by both India and ISP. Actions speak more than words. ISP has plans to conduct elections in GB area and terror attacks by ISP based Jihadi groups are not in the common interest of both the countries. Mr Imran Khan,ISP PM, has again played victim card and has expressed his helplessness to thwart Jihadi activities. He has also openly accepted inability of ISP to tackle Covid-19. On the contrary, he has censured Narendra Modi for unease prevailing in ISP.

India alone has to find solutions to ISP supported terror on Indian sovereign territory. India has the capability to handle existing crises. Indian Army chief has responded by saying apt action will be taken (Nandini, 2020). Should these attacks be considered at par with those at Uri, Mumbai and Parliament and response calibrated accordingly. Or there is still that usual democratic way of saying, ‘next time.’ Issue of Pakistan sponsored terror needs serious attention of Indian politico-military leadership. The world powers at this juncture have neither interest nor intention to be even part of it. They are all engaged in their own battle with Corona. They have their hands full with Covid-19 complexities. China has been and will in future continue to support ISP. China has been able to control Covid-19 taints and is now working towards strengthening its business sector to boost its economy.

Options for India

India is in a unique difficult situation; it has faced over 30 extremist strikes since January 2020. PM Mr Narendra Modi addressed NAM Summit on 04 May 2020 and expressed his anguish.; he was very critical about actions of ISP sponsored terror attacks (Now, Army chief has also alluded to appropriate response. In democratic India, when and how will statements will fructify is not known. It is essential that the incident be considered at par Pulwama attacks and plan accordingly. 2020 has abundant blood shed. SATP data reports total of incidents of killing that included 32 civil

*"Even as the world fights COVID19, some people are busy spreading some other deadly viruses such as terrorism, fake news and doctored videos to divide communities and countries."
~ Narendra Modi in his address at NAM conference on 04 May 2020*

2020).
these
with
seen
90

casualties, 51 security forces soldiers, 101 extremists killed with total deaths amounting to 184 (Managment, 2020). These figures by no means are small ones and need to be taken cognisance of. Some expected responses or options may be as under: -

- **Option I. Hold Bar.** Status quo be maintained till corona is controlled and take diplomatic punitive against extremists' camps later. Army to continue to fight and eliminate extremists.
- **Option II. No Bar.** Take offensive action now when ISP is busy fighting Corona. Air strike at active extremists' camps to destroy them. Simultaneously, continue with Corona related Medical support to the world.
- **Option III. Combo Option.** Maintain balance profile, coercive diplomacy converging into definite targeted actions against Jihadi support system. Continue to support medical operations against Covid-19.

Conclusion

Present day crisis is unique one and is less than once in a century. On 05 May 2020 US lost more than 4000 people to Corona virus pandemic. These figures are one day losses in US and are higher than total loss suffered in the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Towers. US survived the 9/11 attack but is finding it extremely difficult to fight Corona, with toll topping 70,000. Similarly, India and ISP too are struggling to survive the pandemic. The agony added due to terror attack is like attempting to exploit the situation. Attitude of ISP in the current situation is unexpected of a civilized nation. Now it is up to India to respond functionally with a cool head and should remain quiet spectator to the attacks or initiate a strong military response to teach much needed lessons to the Jihadi devils.

References

1. Hindu, T. (2020). <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/india-protests-pakistan-supreme-court-move-to-allow-elections-in-gilgit-baltistan/article31503615.ece>. Retrieved May 05, 2020, from <https://www.thehindu.com>
2. India, T. o. (2020). <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/lockdown-extension-news-india-whats-allowed-and-whats-not-in-the-three-zones/articleshow/75497261.cms>. Retrieved May 05, 2020, from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>
3. Managment, I. f. (2020). <https://www.satp.org/datasheet-terrorist-attack/fatalities/india>. Retrieved May 6, 2020, from <https://www.satp.org>
4. Nandini, N. (2020). *Army Chief Warns Pak After Handwara Encounter, Says 'India Will Respond Appropriately'*. Mumbai: <https://www.republicworld.com>.
5. Now, T. (2020). <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/pm-modi-slams-pakistan-at-nam-summit-says-some-interested-in-pushing-virus-of-terror-amid-covid-19-pandemic/videoshow/75539575.cms>. Retrieved May 06 6, 2020, from <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com>
6. Organisation, W. H. (2020). <http://www.emro.who.int/health-topics/corona-virus/questions-and-answers.html>. Retrieved May 6, 2020, from <http://www.emro.who.int/health-topics>
7. Organisation, W. H. (2020). <https://covid19.who.int/>. Retrieved May 05, 2020, from <https://covid19.who.int/>

8. Organisation, W. H. (2020). https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1. Retrieved May 06, 2020, from https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1
9. Sahaj Rathi, P. I. (2020). Hydroxychloroquine prophylaxis for COVID-19 contacts in India. *The Lancet Infectious Diseases* www.thelancet.com/infection. Accessed on 05 May 2020 , 1 (April 2020), 1-3.
10. Sandhu, K. K. (2020, May 3). <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/let-chief-among-2-terrorists-killed-in-handwara-encounter-jammu-kasmhir-1673899-2020-05-03>. Retrieved May 6, 2020, from <https://www.indiatoday.in>
11. Sareen, S. (2020, April 28). <https://www.dailyo.in/politics/covid-19-coronavirus-pandemic-china-pakistan-relationship-cpec-kashmir/story/1/32783.html>. Retrieved May 6, 2020, from <https://www.dailyo.in/>
12. Schwirtz, M. H. (2019, March 13). <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/13/world/asia/china-pakistan-masood-azhar.html>. Retrieved May 6, 2020, from <https://www.nytimes.com>
13. Team, D. W. (2020, May 4). <https://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-three-crpf-personnel-martyred-in-terrorist-attack-in-jk-s-kupwara-2823645>. Retrieved May 6, 2020, from <https://www.dnaindia.com>
14. Tokar, D. (2020, April 20). <https://www.wsj.com/articles/pakistan-removes-thousands-of-names-from-terrorist-watch-list-11587393001>. Retrieved May 6, 2020, from <https://www.wsj.com>
15. University, S. (2020). <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/lashkar-e-taiba>. Retrieved May 06, 2020, from <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants>
16. UNPO. (2020, April 13). <https://unpo.org/article/21817>. Retrieved May 6, 2020, from <https://unpo.org>
17. Upnishad, M. *Maha Upnishad, Chapter 6, Verse 72*.
18. White, T. (2020, May 3). *Remdesivir, tested at Stanford Medicine, authorized for emergency use against COVID-19*. Retrieved May 5, 2020, from <http://med.stanford.edu/>