

# Indian subcontinent plagued by geopolitical maneuvering over Kashmir

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The Indian media are awash of late with articles on the arrests of Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agents deep inside India, and it has been alleged that these agents were entrusted with the job of carrying out serial bombings in such major commercial cities as Calcutta and New Delhi, and assassinating some ethnically important political figures. These arrests were made at a time when it has become evident that the residents of the troubled Kashmir Valley, unwilling any longer to associate themselves with ISI-promoted terrorism, are trying to resume their normal way of life.

This change in attitude, evidenced among the valley residents in recent days, has no doubt made the ISI nervous. There are indications that the ISI has stepped up the infiltration of terrorists into the Kashmir Valley. These terrorists, some of whom are foreign mercenaries trained and broken in during the 1980s in the so-called jihad against the Soviet Army in Afghanistan, and some others who were brought in from the valley to be given arms training, work under such groups as Hizbul Mujahideen and Harkatul Jihad Al Islami, controlled fully by the ISI.

While the ISI is busy sending more and more terrorists through the Line of Actual Control, the Kashmiri residents, who feel as alienated from India as from Pakistan, are now being steadily pushed by the British-style geopoliticians toward claiming an independent Kashmir nation. The violence caused by the ISI-promoted militancy in its conflict with the Indian security forces lodged in the Kashmir Valley, is cited by the geopoliticians and academics as evidence that India and Pakistan, left to themselves, are incapable of resolving the complex Kashmir issue.

## Nuclear danger exaggerated

By blowing up Kashmir as a prime hotspot, western geopoliticians are trying to convince the world that India and Pakistan, now both having crossed the nuclear Rubicon, are ready for a nuclear exchange over Kashmir, potentially bringing about the annihilation of the billion-plus people living in this subcontinent. The message is supposed to serve two purposes: First, this exaggerated analysis of the situation, more than adequately represented in a book titled *Criti-*

*cal Mass*, is being used to influence public views around the world and to force India and Pakistan, both non-signatories to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) of 1970, to sign on the dotted line of the highly discriminatory treaty and open up their nuclear facilities for international surveillance and monitoring—a requirement that nuclear weapons states do not have to adhere to.

Secondly, by allowing the Pakistani ISI to infiltrate a large number of foreign and local mercenaries into India, and promote large-scale violence thereby, the situation has been created whence the Indian part of Kashmir has turned into a fortress. The conflicts caused by the militarization of Kashmir are taking an enormous toll in human lives; in 1993 alone, according to official figures, 1,323 people—militants, security forces, and civilians—died. During the first three months of 1994, at least 217 were killed. Such large-scale killing has also provided the opportunity to the non-governmental organizations and the United Nations to mold public opinion everywhere against gross human rights violations occurring on a routine basis in the Kashmir Valley.

## The ISI role

In order to have a clear understanding of why Pakistan's ISI is involved in the killings, which involve Muslims from various countries, one has to look at the genesis of the organization. The ISI was founded in 1948 on the basis of a plan drawn up by an Australian-born British Army officer, Major General Cawthorne, who had opted to serve the Pakistani Army following independence from the British Raj in 1947. As deputy chief of staff with his headquarters in Karachi, Cawthorne developed the blueprint for the structure and functions of the ISI. He served as liaison between the Ministry of Defense and three service headquarters.

The ISI remained for some time a low-profile outfit, and its job was mostly centered around coordinating the working of foreign military attachés accredited to Pakistan and Pakistani military attachés posted in foreign countries. But as the Pakistani Army became more and more powerful over the years, it was used by the Army brass to tinker with local politicians. However, it was during the jihad against the

advancing Red Army in Afghanistan that ISI attained its current, powerful status. The ISI directorate shaped the Afghan rebel leadership, formed the seven-party guerrilla alliance based in Peshawar, and in effect commanded and coordinated its military and political actions. During this period, which lasted the entire decade of the 1980s, the ISI undertook the crucial task of running the logistics pipeline for the Afghan rebels and became the conduit for channeling hundreds of millions of dollars worth of weapons and equipment provided by the United States, Saudi Arabia, and other foreign powers.

In addition, the ISI became fully involved in the massive heroin trade that came as a bonanza to the jihad. The heroin money, amounting to billion of dollars, became a vast off-budget source of financing for various operations. The kitty was large enough to keep everyone happy and to intervene without limit, in political matters inside Pakistan. This strengthening of the ISI muscle was supervised by the CIA and other foreign intelligence agencies.

### **The drug money**

However, with the withdrawal of the Soviet Army from the plains of Afghanistan and the subsequent death of President Zia ul-Haq, who made the ISI as big as it is today, the ISI had to shift its theater of operations partly to Kashmir. It is said that the Pakistani Army—which to date has not reconciled to the fact that East Pakistan became Bangladesh, not because of help that the Indian security forces had lent to the liberation fighters in Bangladesh but because of the massive manslaughter that the Pakistani Army was involved in—figured that what India had done in East Pakistan could be replicated in Kashmir with the help of the ISI, with its massive structure, foreign mercenaries, and the heroin money.

Using the general dissension that exists among the Kashmir Valley people against the Indian government in New Delhi, the ISI began to play a stellar role in the Kashmir uprising. In addition, the militant outfits, helped by ISI, established linkages with narcotics smugglers. Today, a huge amount of heroin is flowing into India through Jammu and Kashmir, just as it flowed through Punjab during the heydays of insurgency in that state. Of late, Indian security forces have captured Afghans and Pakistanis, along with the locals, bringing heroin into India.

### **The British hands**

There are reasons to conclude, knowing the antecedents of the ISI, that Pakistani intelligence is working on behalf of British intelligence, while, at the same time, getting the satisfaction of bleeding India. Such conclusions can be drawn from two basic pieces of information. First, there was never any indication that the Kashmiris living in the Pakistani-held side had any allegiance to Pakistan, or, in other words, toward the Punjabis who dominate the Pakistani scene. The northern part of Kashmir, which Pakistan has integrated as

the “Northern Territories,” is inhabited by Baltistanis and Darads. The Baltis are of mixed Turko-Mongoloid stock and the Darads are of Pamirian stock. These are quite different from the Mirpuris, who have become the voice of British intelligence, and other Kashmiris in Azad Kashmir, the unannexed but Pakistani-held part of Kashmir. They are also quite distinct from and have little in common with the Punjabis who dominate Pakistan. The Baltis and Darads are closer to Central Asian races and have nothing in common with the Mirpuris or the people from the Muzaffarabad region. Once Kashmir becomes independent, it will take little effort to wrench the Northern Territories out of Pakistan, and the Pakistan government in Islamabad is aware of this danger.

The second piece of evidence recently came from Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Talking with the *New York Times* in mid-May, Bhutto said that Pakistan could lose a plebiscite if the option of independence were given to the people of Kashmir, even as Islamabad resumed aid and training to Kashmiri militants. While rejecting the concept of an independent Kashmir, Bhutto said: “When people raise the question of an independent Kashmir, we feel this is a ploy to divide the Kashmir vote. The Hindus are going to vote for accession to India because they are in [the] minority. . . . If you are talking about the Muslim majority deciding between accession to Pakistan or an independent Kashmir, the Muslim vote could be fractured and we could find ourselves with the status quo, where the Hindu minority accepts the Indian rule and the Muslim majority does not accept us.”

There is little doubt that Bhutto is close to the mark, and this became evident when the Kashmiri militants based in Britain gave the call to begin a struggle against Pakistan. Meanwhile, the international “seminar network” has begun in earnest to shape people’s opinion in Europe around the “independent Kashmir” gameplan. Two conferences on Kashmir, one in Brussels last winter and the other in Copenhagen recently (see *EIR*, June 17, p. 43), saw British Members of Parliament and Mirpuri secessionists joining hands demanding an independent Kashmir.

In addition, certain developments in India are also puzzling. The Americans, deeply concerned over the doomsday scenario associated with a war between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, have launched the Nimrana Initiative for confidence-building measures between the two nations. The Nimrana Initiative, named after the town in Rajasthan where the first meeting took place, has organized seven meetings so far, attended by Indian, Pakistani, and American delegates. At the same time, it is widely acknowledged in India that the ISI, once a hand-maiden of U.S. intelligence agencies, could not have escalated its efforts to further destabilize the area without the informal, but definite, signal from the powers-that-be in the United States. It seems the geopolitics of Kashmir have yet another wrinkle, and one would not be surprised if something of the nature of the Iran-Contra affair is exposed in this region in due time.