

O HERALDO

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The shifting face of terrorism

On May 7, in a press briefing that has now gripped national attention, Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri named TRF while justifying India's retaliatory measures against Pakistan. According to Misri, TRF is nothing more than a facade, a digital mask, worn by Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), one of Pakistan's most notorious terror outfits. Though no direct evidence was presented during the briefing, the signs are disturbingly familiar.

The pattern is consistent. A brazen terror attack, this time in Pahalgam. TRF claims responsibility through a fleeting social media post, only to retract it later, blaming unauthorised access to their accounts. This attempt to sow confusion is neither new nor surprising. It's part of a carefully calibrated information warfare strategy: plausible deniability, masked intentions, and psychological manipulation.

TRF was born in the ashes of August 2019, right after Article 370 was abrogated and Jammu and Kashmir's special status was revoked. What began as a social media propaganda outfit has since evolved into a fully armed insurgent group, now claiming deadly attacks with alarming frequency. Its fingerprints are all over some of the most heinous ambushes in recent memory from the killing of senior security officials in Handwara, Kulgam, and Anantnag to the brutal murder of migrant workers and a doctor in Ganderbal.

Each attack is a scar on the conscience of the nation.

India, for its part, must strike a careful balance responding with strength, but not surrendering to provocation. Intelligence coordination, cyber surveillance, community engagement, and diplomatic pressure on Pakistan must work in tandem. Most importantly, the people of Kashmir must not be made collateral damage in this geopolitical chessboard. They are victims too, caught between militant propaganda and militarised responses

Each bullet fired under the TRF banner is a message: that terrorism has not been extinguished, only rebranded.

In January 2023, India finally declared TRF a terrorist organization under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), naming its alleged founder, Sheikh Sajjad Gul, as a designated terrorist. The charges are grave: inciting youth, spreading radical propaganda online, and smuggling weapons into the valley.

But the bigger question remains: Why TRF? and Why now? The answer lies in global geopolitics and Pakistan's diplomatic calculus. Since 2016, Pakistan has faced mounting pressure from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to curb terrorist financing and dismantle extremist infrastructure. With the threat of blacklisting looming large, terror groups like LeT and Jaish-e-Mohammed needed to disappear; at least on paper. What emerged instead were local-sounding, faceless new fronts: TRF in Kashmir Valley and PAFF (People's Anti-Fascist Front) in Jammu's Rajouri and Poonch districts.

These groups are not spontaneous grassroots movements. They are tactical evolutions, an attempt to disguise cross-border jihad as indigenous rebellion. It's a cynical strategy, designed to mislead the world and confuse the conflict's true nature.

Military analysts argue that such proxy outfits operate under strategic detachment. When pressure builds or international scrutiny intensifies, they recede into the shadows. But when they feel forgotten or irrelevant, they strike again to remind their handlers, and their ideological base, that they are still "useful."

This grim dance of violence, withdrawal, and resurgence is the reality India faces in Kashmir today. It is not merely a security issue. It is a war of narratives, symbols, and identity. The global community must wake up to this charade. The world cannot afford to see Kashmir through the outdated binary of nationalism versus separatism. The battlefield has shifted. The weapons are not just AK-47s, but encrypted messages, viral videos, and fake narratives of "resistance."

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The time has come to call TRF what it is: not a resistance front, but a recycled terror front. And in that recognition lies the first step toward dismantling the latest mask of militancy.

comment



We resent the migrants or 'outsiders', though we know we can't do without them, especially for menial work. We are surely conscious that we are prepared to do any dirty work abroad, but not in our own land. Much of the development, which Goa has witnessed, especially in infrastructure, is thanks to the migrant labour



most of them were authoritarian and unfriendly, probably thinking that they were dealing with "conquered people". Eventually, there were demonstrations and even fasting by some people to push them out, which happened only after sustained efforts and demands from the people.

Today, we resent the migrants or 'outsiders', though we know we can't do without them, especially for menial work. We are surely conscious that we are prepared to do any dirty work abroad, but not in our own land. Much of the development, which

Pride, arrogance, opulence – causes of our downfall

This article may perhaps ruffle many feathers. It is human tendency not to admit our faults and shortcomings and find excuses or scapegoats or blame others for them. However, truths are sometimes unpalatable or bitter and difficult to accept but, unless we acknowledge them, work on them and mend our ways, things will never change and we will be sucking our thumbs, as we do with the happenings in Goa, which were long anticipated, even in my own articles.

I was very young when Goa was merged with India. But I did realise that we tended to look down upon people, who came from the rest of India, and I didn't really know why. But, the fact is that we did appear to have a superiority complex, which perhaps exists till today. We failed to realise how talented, educated and knowledgeable people from other parts of India were. It could have perhaps, initially, been because we took a dislike for Goa's new administrators who came to be known as 'deputationists' and were in charge of various departments in the Government. I understand that

Goa has witnessed, especially in infrastructure, is thanks to the migrant labour. Though Goan labourers may produce work of better standard, we need to acknowledge that Goa is not only short of local staff, but that the migrants are more hard working. They would be prepared to work for longer hours or at night to finish a job, whereas our local labourers would be unwilling to oblige. Hence, many works which could be easily done at night, need to be carried out during the day, with much inconvenience to the public and traffic.

Perhaps the main reason why we work the way we do, is that we have not really seen very difficult days, unlike those who come here to make a living. These are people who have come up the difficult way and are keen in improving their standard of living. Their ways and hours of working are very different from ours. We do not seem serious in running our shops or business and are often very casual about it. We open late and close early. We can't do without our siesta, which often extends beyond 3 hours. This is where we lose in this competitive scenario. We may soon see the migrant community overtaking us.

Another sad commentary on us, is that we have become very arrogant and aggressive. This observation, which I concur with, was also made to me by some young fellow Goans, who have lived abroad for a while and had also visited other parts of India. They were rather shocked that Goans have turned very arrogant, which is something they had not observed earlier. Such unpleasant attitudes are evident on the roads, in parking and in driving SUVs or other big vehicles. Taxi drivers, particularly at hotels are known for their unfriendly behaviour, which is surely detrimental to themselves and the tourist business. Recently, the driver of a vehicle, coming from an internal road, hit a car proceeding on the main road. However, instead of being apologetic for coming onto the main road recklessly, he started arguing, while his wife was pleading to be excused. Such incidents are not uncommon in Goa, even with aggressive pos-

tures. In our congested roads, such minor accidents could have been settled amicably without rancour and with a cool mind and understanding. After all, accidents are not deliberate, though less negligence and recklessness could have spared us some unpleasant moments

Several years back, in Panjim, in a shop selling very delicate items, a young man entered with a child. The shop owner, very politely requested the customer to be cautious with the child, as the items were breakable. The client reacted very arrogantly telling the owner: 'I can buy your shop'. I dispense comments on this behaviour. But, it is really sad that today Goa has no dearth of the nouveau riche, some of whom have more money than brains. Such attitudes and behaviour will take us nowhere and the sooner we realize it, the better.

Goans have really not seen or experienced abject or extreme poverty, as is evident in many parts of India. Luckily, almost everyone has a roof over his/her head and hardly would anyone go to bed hungry. We have seen plenty and that is what perhaps makes us proud and arrogant. Many Goans had properties, which, at one time, were not worth anything, but have today turned into gold mines. A good percentage of Goans have enough to live a comfortable life. But if we continue to take it easy and neglect our business or jobs, we may end up in losing to our competitors. When I had an opportunity to do some recruitment, I did opt for Goans, but I must say that my experience was not a pleasant one, though I still favour my Goan brethren.

The purpose of these lines is not to be critical of my fellow Goans or put them down. I am myself a through bred Goan, with a great love for Goa and Goans. It is meant to correct or overcome our shortcomings. It costs us nothing to be kind and spread love and goodwill around, instead of showing off our power or money. It will go a long way in erasing our own wrongs, which we forcefully need to acknowledge.

(The author is a retired banker)

Post stampede situation at Shirgao

The tragic stampede at the Shirgao Lairai Zatra raises serious questions of accountability. Despite the Goa government declaring the Zatra a state festival, the current temple committee resisted this designation and, according to the former president, failed to consult previous members or adequately plan for crowd management.

Thousands gather for the event, particularly to witness the "Dhonds" walk on fire embers. On May 3, due to poor arrangements—narrow pathways, roadside stalls, and missing barricades—lives were lost and many injured.

A fact-finding report is awaited, but going forward, it is essential that only Dhonds be permitted during the ritual, with the general public allowed in later. A clear action plan, proper mapping and temporary relocation of stalls are crucial. The onus lies with both the committee and the administration to prevent such tragedies in the future.

Raju Ramamurthy, Vasco

Give right of way to ambulances

Two people were reportedly injured in a head-on collision between an ambulance and a car near St Jacinto Island, Vasco on Tuesday. Fortunately there was no patient in the ambulance. A photo that has gone viral showing two ambulances being stuck in traffic during peak hours alongside the elevated corridor being constructed at Porvorim.

If an ambulance carrying a serious patient gets stuck in a

letterstotheeditor

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heavy traffic congestion there is nothing much one can do except hope that the patient gets medical attention in time. There could however be drivers on the road who do not think it necessary to give way for an ambulance. It is crucial to give way to ambulances, especially when they are using their sirens and flashing lights.

One needs to give way, pull over to the side of the road and wait until the ambulance has passed. Research has shown that in India, more than 24,000 patients die each day due to delay in getting medical help in the Golden Hour. According to the Motor Vehicle Act (MVA), failing to give way to an ambulance can result in fine and even imprisonment. Most people do not realise that it is legal for ambulance and emergency vehicles to drive through the wrong side of the road and to break traffic signals.

In Europe, drivers are legally required to create an emergency corridor when an ambulance is approaching. This may not be possible on Indian roads. Ignorance and selfish attitude could be the reason why an ambulance is not allowed to overtake. Drivers on the road should show empathy towards the patient in the ambulance.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

India's response fully justified

'Operation Sindoor' represents a kinetic and fitting response by

India to the Pahalgam terror attack, which claimed 26 innocent lives. Adroitly, India's retribution was designed to be punitive, yet restrained, targeting only terrorist infrastructure while avoiding broader military confrontation with Pakistan.

India's response is fully justified as a necessary measure against those responsible for the gruesome terror attack. Meanwhile, the stated nature of the operation by India as "focused, measured and non-escalatory" and the reported avoidance of military targets appear to be relevant factors in the context of international legal principles governing the use of force. A detailed briefing expected from the Ministry of Defence should provide further clarity on the specifics of the operation and the legal basis asserted by India.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, Chennai

Time for world bodies to act

What does a common man truly require? A simple life - shelter, clothing, food, and employment. Yet what do global organisations offer? Endless meetings and lofty statements, with little tangible action.

One such body recently declared, "Ending global poverty demands prioritising investments in decent work, learning opportunities, and social protection." Fine words, but how

will these be implemented? Only through real engagement with the lived experiences of the poor can progress be made. Those living in poverty are too often stigmatised and dehumanised—judged for their appearance, accent, or lack of address—and blamed for circumstances beyond their control.

The world cannot afford to squander such human potential. Enough of narratives and declarations. It's time for global leaders to act decisively and practically to eradicate poverty.

Rajesh Banaulikar, Arpora

When will we learn the true cost of war?

What exactly is war? It is the failure of diplomacy—when disputes between nations escalate beyond dialogue and lead to destruction. Despite the technological tools of the 21st century, we remain trapped in historical rivalries, with devastating consequences for innocent citizens.

Following the 11 July Mumbai train bombings by Pakistani terrorists, what concrete steps did our government take to ensure citizen safety? Political leaders are never the victims of such attacks—they are protected, while ordinary civilians suffer the consequences.

Diplomacy must be pursued to prevent bloodshed, but we cannot continue to absorb blow after blow. Pakistan must be held accountable, and India must defend its citizens. Let us not lose

people'sedit

USE AND THROW

K S S PILLAI

We often see photographs of employees of roadside eateries and restaurants cleaning utensils with impure water. They have fewer items to clean now, as the glasses have been replaced with 'use and throw' paper cups. Caterers have started to serve meals to guests in disposable plates, spoons and such things. When I drink tea from a paper cup, I feel happy that the bacteria in my mouth won't be passed on to other customers. Medical instruments like injection needles were already using the concept. Though it has made many happy, our planet has been crying due to the serious problem of pollution caused by such materials.

All were happy when light-weight plastic was invented. It was cheap and could be used in several spheres. Once thought a wonder, it has become a source of pollution. Though thin plastic bags have been prohibited as they cannot be recycled, news of factories clandestinely manufacturing them appears often in the media, and shopkeepers make their customers happy by handing over their purchases in the 'free' bags. The public throws them away with other wastes, least bothered about the pollution they cause. They end up in landfills or cause the death of domestic animals that fill their stomachs with them. There has been frequent news of waste mountains near cities catching fire and emitting toxic gas, driving people away for many days.

To curb pollution, beverages are served in some places like railway stations in kulhars - handle-less clay cups. Fired in a kiln, they are sterile and hygienic. They are unpainted and unglazed to avoid pollution. The drinks served in them are supposed to be suffused with an earthy aroma. It was also thought that they would create employment for rural artisans while combating pollution.

Several electronic devices have become a headache as they produce a large quantity of hazardous waste, which is disposed of in unscientific ways. Many shops keep bins to collect such dangerous wastes, but few use them.

The Prime Minister of India is seen picking up plastic bags and other wastes while on a morning walk along a beach. Though there is an urgent need for a 'Swachh Bharat', few contribute to the cause. Those habituated to defecating in the open are asked to use the free toilets with water connections built by the government. The habit dies hard, and most people enjoy relieving themselves in the open while using the toilets constructed by the government for other purposes. With open toilets in trains, railway lines are dirty. I have seen passengers waiting for the train to stop at stations to enter the toilets, making them stinking.

Rich countries transport polluting materials to faraway places and throw them into the sea. Sometimes, they pay the poor countries and get permission to dump them in their area.

It is said that plastic materials take thousands of years to disintegrate, but we throw them into water bodies like canals, rivers, and seas, where they sink away from sight.

Though old things can be repaired and used, people prefer new things. The raddiwallas who buy scraps have been doing a commendable job as some of the things they buy reach the recycling plants.

our humanity in the process, but neither should we tolerate further inaction. Peace must be restored—but not at the cost of innocent lives.

Savio D' Costa, Chandor

Kudos to Bengal's Rugby too

Hats off to Bengal's rugby team for becoming the national champion and Khelo Rugby by Future Hope for producing so many brilliant rugby players from marginalised communities and street children. An NGO like Khelo Rugby holds up a mirror to our policy makers about how to utilise demographic dividends. The policy makers must acknowledge that young talents, both in academics and sporting fields, need support in their formative years when it matters. Otherwise, many talented boys and girls cannot reach the height they deserve.

A kite needs guidance and support, before reaching high in the sky. But, after it gains that height, it can fly on its own. Similarly, a person needs all kinds of support in the very beginning to bloom her or his talent.

Only a small percentage of families in our country can afford to financially and logistically nurture the talent of their children. Now, imagine what would have happened if almost all the children of our country had financial and logistic support either from their parents or from the state to nurture their talents. The result will then be as astounding as Khelo Rugby has done, but on a gigantic scale.

Sujit De, Kolkata