Ceasefire in Jammu & Kashmir; An offer for peace

Current research on transnational terrorism and counter-terrorism has broadly focused on the violent manifestation of the phenomenon, and respectively its containment through aggressive strategies, such as coercive measures, military intervention or hard-hitting economic sanctions. However, decades of *'hard power'* approaches adopted to combat terrorist activity have exhibited how such tactics lack effectiveness. Often, the usage of *'hard power'* solely could undermine positive efforts of decreasing the influence and spread of violent extremist groups. While such measures might be legitimised in certain circumstances where threats are critical or imminent, failure to accompany these with sound *'soft power'* initiatives could prove detrimental in the longer-term, since it creates a destructive cycle of tit-for-tat retaliation.

This article will examine the obstacles, which arise on the path towards developing consistent and coherent counter-terrorism measures. It will outline the theoretical definitions of the notions of *'soft- and hard power'*, while illustrating their defining features. The article will also highlight the importance of introducing *'soft power'* means in the *'War on Terror'*, and will justify the significance of non-violent strategies in formulating effective counter-terrorism policies. In order to set out an intelligible approach towards analysing and assessing the development and implementation of such policies, the article will make reference to India's recent call for a ceasefire in Jammu & Kashmir during the holy month of Ramadan, while evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of such measures by drawing an example with the existence, or lack thereof, of similar *'soft power'* measures in other conflicts. Overall, it will conclude with arguing that counter-terrorism initiatives that embrace the utility of *'soft power'* might be more successful than those that only rely on the use of brute force. Although soft power could never be divorced from the deployment of *'hard power'* when responding to terrorism, its auspicious potential should not be neglected.

Soft Power

Dr. Joseph Nye, a renowned American foreign policy scholar and practitioner, coined the term *'soft power'* in 1990, in the context of US foreign policy practices. According to Nye, *'soft power'* is the ability of states to obtain desired outcomes through the power of attraction and persuasion, rather than the power of coercion or payment. Yet, *'soft power'* could be yielded not solely by states but by all actors in international politics, such as NGOs, corporations, civil society groups, municipal and regional governments, supranational institutions, or even individuals. It is viewed as the *'second face of power'* since it allows for the indirect fulfilment of desirable objectives. Nye argues that, "*Seduction is always more effective than coercion, and many values like democracy, human rights, and individual opportunities are deeply seductive*".

He further states: "*A country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries – admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness – want to follow it. In this sense, it is also important to set the agenda and attract others in world politics, and not only to force them to change by threatening military force or economic sanctions. This soft power – getting others to want the outcomes that you want – co-opts people rather than coerces them*".

'Soft power' resources are the assets that produce attraction, which often leads to compliance. Nye explain how it is more onerous for states to yield *'soft power'* than *'hard power'* since a lot of its essential tools are outside the control of governments, such as popular culture and history. *'Soft power tends to work indirectly by shaping the environment for policy, and sometimes takes years to produce the desired outcomes'*.

Hard Power

In contrast, the notion of *'hard power'*, which dates back to Niccolò Machiavelli, who described the unscrupulous leadership tactics of a ruler, stands for the utilization of military and economic hard-line means, which influence the behaviour or interests of other political bodies or nations. Such political power is often defined as aggressive and coercive, and is deemed most efficient and well-functioning when it is imposed by stronger political bodies upon weaker ones.

As the 16th-century Italian diplomat and political theorist further justifies the use of *'hard power'* over *'soft power'*:

> *'There are two modes of fighting: one in accordance with the laws, the other with force. The first is proper to man, the second to beasts. But because the first, in many cases, is not sufficient, it becomes necessary to have recourse to the second: therefore, a prince must know how to make good use of the natures of both the beast and the man.'*

'Hard power' strategies include a broad spectrum of procedures driven towards coercing or threatening other entities into compliance. These procedures could be defined by *'sticks'* and *'carrots'*, where the *'sticks'* are threats, such as the threat of military intervention or the implementation of economic sanctions; and, the *'carrots'* are inducements, such as the promise of military protection, the offer of an alliance or the reduction of trade barriers. However, the *'sticks'* tend to be generally preferred over the *'carrots'*.

While using *'hard power'* could act as a trigger towards inflicting compliance, numerous obstacles could arise, which in return might injure its legitimacy and credibility. Too much '*hard power'* could have negative consequences on the country's international image – being recognised as autocratic and unaccountable by other nations. In addition, if a country's legitimacy declines, mistrust and suspicion on behalf of other international actors tend to grow, which in return diminishes international cooperation, and gives oxygen to the rise of non-state groups, such as violent extremist outfits.

Declaration of Ceasefire

Therefore, as Joseph Nye summarises it, "*power with others can be more effective than power over others*". This statement could be well exemplified through the recent calling of a ceasefire on behalf of the Indian government in the Muslim's holy month of Ramadan. The country declared "*suspension of all military activities against terrorists in Jammu & Kashmir in order for the peace-loving Muslims to observe Ramadan in a peaceful environment*", according to the words of India's Home Ministry.

The decision, which was enforced on 17 May 2018, came days after Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti suggested the initiative referring to a similar move taken by then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajypayee in 2000. The idea behind the ceasefire was that the security forces will temporarily suspend any *'hard power'* pro-active operations against terrorists including Cordon and Search Operations (CASO), and Seek and Destroy Operations (SADO).

According to the Tactics in Counterinsurgency Field Manual Report issued by the Headquarters Department of the US Army, Cordon and Search is a military strategy of occupying or controlling an area and searching the premises for weapons, intelligence data or insurgents. Efficient Cordon and Search Operations deploy a sufficient number of forces in order to both effectively cordon a target area and thoroughly search that target. CASO lays one of the foundations of counter insurgency measures. The two basic methods of executing a cordon and search are — *'cordon and knock',* and *'cordon and enter'*. They differ in level of aggression. The former is less intrusive and is utilised when the community is seen as friendly or neutral, when no resistance is expected, and when the objective is to disturb the occupants and create nuisance as little as possible. The latter is more forceful, since it is performed without obtaining permission from the occupants and potentially with the usage of coercive means. Seek and Destroy is another military strategy, which calls for installing ground forces into a hostile territory, looking for the enemy, eliminating it, and withdrawing immediately afterwards. Often vehicles, such as helicopters are used in these sort of operations in order to accomplish a quick and swift action and subsequently withdraw.

Justifying the decision of declaring a ceasefire, the Indian Home Minister explained that it is essential to temporarily halt such military tactics since "*It is important to isolate the forces that bring a bad name to Islam by resorting to mindless violence and terror*". Nevertheless, the security forces preserve their right to retaliate if attacked or if it is indispensable to the protection of innocent lives. And indeed, shortly after the declaration of ceasefire, on 26 May, terrorist forces tried to infiltrate through the Line of Control (LoC) in the Tangdhar sector, to which the Indian Army responded with fire. Hence, fears that extremist outfits will receive a breathing space and opportunity to reorganise and rearm during the called period of ceasefire, thereby unleashing a wave of new terrorist attacks, have been partially justified.

The concept of cessation of military activities is not extraneous to the Indian Home Ministry. As aforementioned, in November 2000, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee declared a ceasefire. The initiative also known as Non-initiation of Combat Operations (NICO) which took place between 19 November 2000 and 31 May 2001, in Jammu & Kashmir was discontinued following no positive development with regard to ceasing the terrorist activities, since the

terrorist groups in question were unwilling to cooperate. As a matter of fact, during the NICO, these violent extremist outfits launched a series of attacks on vital installations and took an opportunity to regroup, plan future offensives and rearm themselves.

Therefore, having a retrospect at the attempt under Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's leadership, the current unilateral ceasefire in Jammu & Kashmir appears as an even more sensitive move, which requires thorough examination and deliberation. The government must meticulously estimate and consider all options, if it wants to succeed with its strategy. The decision of the Centre to respect the interests of civilians during the Muslim's holy month of Ramadan indeed invites plaudits and will unambiguously expose the intentions of terrorist groups in addition to conveying a positive message to the Muslim community.

Public opinion widely supports the government's initiative, however terrorist outfits such as Hizbul Mujahideen (HM), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and the Jaish-e-Muhammed (JeM), which all recruit its cadre from Pakistan, Afghanistan and among the vulnerable youth in Jammu & Kashmir, have rejected the peace offer.

In the public's perspective, NICO could only work if Pakistan-based terrorist groups active in Jammu & Kashmir and their sponsors will come to see the futility of their actions and reciprocate to the announced ceasefire. The current initiative does not come in the backdrop of naivety and gullibility, as Akola Ganapathi Bhat, a resident from the region who publicly addressed the recent ceasefire states, "*Army's Cordon and Destroy Operations (CADO) and Cordon and Search Operations (CASO) may have temporarily been suspended, but the eagle's eye on the enemy's nefarious design cannot waver an inch*".

The Indian Government's usage of *'soft power'* should not be perceived as a weakness, on the contrary, attempts to restore confidence in the local population and providing relief to those who has suffered will only facilitate the creation of an atmosphere of reconciliation and peace, while maintaining its right to retaliate if necessary, ultimately developing a long term plan with an eye on the future. Furthermore, since counter-terrorism has been largely influenced by *'hard power'* approaches, countries begin to understand the utility of *'soft power'* in their fight against terrorism, especially after recognising that terrorist groups themselves use *'soft power'* to recruit vulnerable individuals, and governments need to use the same method to win back the hearts and minds of its people.

Terrorist Manipulation of Soft Power

A *'soft power'* approach to counter insurgency aims to offer humanitarian and developmental aid and an alternative narrative adept at discouraging potential recruits from joining radical organisations and ultimately making such organisations appear less attractive. Currently, the ongoing recruitment of youth is the lifeblood of violent extremist outfits; they could continue operating only as long as they play upon the vulnerabilities of young minds.

As the former Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Store has observed:

> "*Political extremism does not grow in a vacuum. Ideas are the oxygen that allows it to flourish and spread. Extremist perspectives win sympathy and recruits because they offer narratives that claim to identify deep injustices and enemies. Without this fuel,*

the blaze of extremism is quickly extinguished. Confronting and undermining the narratives and ideas of extremism must therefore be one of our key tasks. To do this, we must retain the courage of our convictions in the face of extremism".

Terrorist organizations' *'soft power'* often stems from the ability to establish a close contact with the local population and the obtainment of governmental responsibilities such as the provision of education and employment. Hence, the decline in States' *'soft power'* is accompanied by the rise of the *'soft power'* of such groups. Therefore, the importance of governments preserving their ability to apply *'soft power'* to domestic and foreign affairs in the backdrop of terrorist influence, becomes a matter of major significance. This is most visible in failing or failed states where the government has lost its legitimacy, resulting in the growth of terrorist groups' enjoyment of *'soft power'*. The more the *'soft power'* of such groups grow, the more they act upon the psyche of the locals and attract their support, as they create a false impression of providing solace.

The *'soft power'* strategies adopted by extremist organizations often frustrate governmental counter-terrorism efforts. Therefore, generating comprehensive strategies, which are conscious of such manipulations, is crucial to reducing their influence. The current declaration of ceasefire in Jammu & Kashmir and its praise by the Kashmiri people, as a result, is a wise move, since it recognises how essential to work closely with the community and expose the treacherous vocabulary of violence that terrorists use to groom young people. Governments need to raise awareness among those vulnerable minds that terrorism is part of a broad-spectrum campaign of brutality and bloodshed, and strip it off from its romanticised image.

In the long run, this could encourage young people to develop the capability to step back and see the bigger picture; It is crucial to collaborate with the population and invalidate the terrorist narrative, by reducing their reach and appeal and exposing their hypocritical stance. The community needs to be shown a way forward, through empathy and solidarity, and the current ceasefire calling could act as a positive alternative in addressing this threatening situation. Failing to reciprocate to the gesture of the Indian government, militants would virtually deny the right of the local people to enjoy peace, which should send a message across the community about their real motives, substantiating the fact that these terrorist organizations do not foster reconciliation as their business model is based on conflict.

Ceasefires: Historical Examples

A temporary suspension of military activities, where both sides agree to discontinue any aggressive operations against the rival force have taken place during other serious conflicts as well. Nevertheless, such armistice usually happen between states, which are at war, and not between state and non-state actors. One prominent exception, however, is the Christmas truce declared by The Irish Republican Army (IRA) during the Northern Ireland conflict. The so-called period of *'Troubles'* was between Unionists/Loyalists, who were mostly Protestants, and wanted Northern Ireland to remain within the United Kingdom, and Irish Nationalists/Republicans, who were mostly Catholics, and wanted Northern Ireland to leave the United Kingdom and join a united Ireland.

The three-decade (1969–1997) conflict was characterised with episodes of mass murders, terrorist attacks and bloodbath. The IRA was the biggest and most active republican paramilitary group during the conflict, which was internationally designated as a terrorist organization. Nonetheless, on numerous occasions the group has declared three-day ceasefires during the celebration of Christmas, which has been an evanescent, yet gratifying relief for the nerve-racked civilian population. After a number of ceasefires, peace talks finally began between the main political parties in Northern Ireland in order to establish a joint political agreement. These talks led to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, which restored self-government to Northern Ireland on the basis of *'power-sharing'*, and the subsequent official disarmament of the IRA in 2005.

The lesson of this case study is that all parties need to agree to a proposed cessation of hostilities in the first place, and have a transparent dialogue in order to bring any negotiations to the table and reach a peaceful agreement. However, if those steps are not taken, resolution to any conflict will remain a mirage. The current situation in Syria clearly illustrates this scenario. Despite that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) unanimously approved a resolution demanding a 30-day ceasefire in the besieged Syrian enclave of Eastern Ghouta in order to allow for the delivery of medical aid and evacuate the population, some of the biggest Jihadist groups, including Islamic State (IS), Al-Qaeda, the Nusra Front and their associates, were not covered by the truce, which raised questions about its real impact. And indeed, the proposed ceasefire collapsed less than two hours after it was put into force.

Smart Power

What becomes evident is how the non-initiation of combat operations is fraught with dangers both at the political and strategic side. As recent developments in Jammu & Kashmir have shown, the terrorists might not be on board to take the offer and accept the opportunity to reach a peaceful agreement. As a response to such dangers, the Indian government has clearly stipulated that the security forces would resume operation if any terrorist activity takes place. Apart from recognising the necessity of counteracting the terrorist narrative, the current call for a ceasefire acts in a contextual manner by recognising the strengths and limitations of the opponent. In international relations, that refers to the term *'Smart Power'*. As further defined by Joseph Nye, *'smart power'* is the amalgamation of *'soft and hard power'*, since using only one of the two might be futile. India's fight against terrorism has develop an integrated grand strategy that combines hard military power with soft attractive power. As Nye argues, "*in the information age, success is not merely the result of whose army wins, but also whose story wins"*. While *'hard power'* is needed to overcome the extremists, '*soft power'* is required to reclaim back the faith of the people.

Conclusion

Hearts and minds are not won in the blink of an eye; gaining recognition and legitimacy through *'soft power'* approaches is a long process. Such strategies involve a concerted effort towards fruitful socio-economic development and provision of adequate public education and employment. However, in the fight against terrorism, consistency and continuity is vital for the preservation of the faith of the people and comprehending their needs and problems.

The uncompromising use of *'hard power'* only, and the neglect for *'soft power'* in counter-terrorism, would manifest irreversible long-term consequences.

Mao Zedong has argued that '*Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun'*, yet what determines whether this power is hard or soft, depends on the decision to pull the trigger. Countries are the one in control of loading the gun or not, and should not let themselves be controlled by such intoxicating power. Bullets do not know ethnicity, ideology, cast or creed; they know only how to exterminate and annihilate.

As such, in the fight against terrorism military power should be a strategy of last resort. Initiatives to foster public trust are essential in order to prevent the community from falling prey to the terrorist agenda; It is vital to understand the interplay between these two variables. The *'War on Terror'* requires the harnessing of *'smart power'* - the synchronized deployment of hard and soft strategies; *'smart power'* has no end point, it is constantly shifting and adapting. In an era of asymmetrical warfare, *'smart power'* could be a successful tactic in response to these multi-dimensional challenges; however, what should not be neglected is that terrorist groups could also deploy strategies that mimic *'smart power'*.

The evolution of terrorism since 9/11 has displayed how the moral panic stemming from terrorist activity and insurgency has amplified, leading to a more chaotic and fearful world. Owing to that, paradoxically, states have been obliged to disturb the peace of its citizens at the expense of fighting violent extremism in order to create prospects for peace again. India's recent declaration of suspending military operations against terrorists in the region of Jammu & Kashmir comes as an unparalleled precedent considering the duration and severity of the issue. The country has indicated that the development of the conflict has reached egregious grounds due to cross-border terrorism, and that the only way towards achieving peace is by once and for all putting an end to this perpetual cycle of violence. Powerful countries such as the USA or Israel, for example, have never halted their military activities against terrorist organisations they have been fighting; India's proposed counter-terrorism mechanism comes as an incomparable and ground-breaking strategy.

The anger that inspires hatred and escalates to violent extremism is generational; it evolves over time and if not addressed, easily finds successors. Therefore, the way one responds to terrorism, could also determine whether this anger will be reinforced. The decision on behalf of the Indian government to announce a ceasefire comes as an act of magnanimity - recognising that the best way forward is not to do what terrorists expect; otherwise, that would mean unintentionally providing the necessary fuel for them to continue their ceaseless cyclical pattern of revenge.

The common people in Jammu & Kashmir are tired and utterly devastated from the ceaseless bloodshed. Those who have lost their children in this perpetuated cycle of violence, on all sides - the parents of civilians, militants, army men and policemen – agree that the proposed suspension of anti-terrorists operations, initially called for the month of Ramadan and with a possibility to be extended, should become the foundation for a sustainable environment which will lead to an atmosphere of tranquillity, eventually serving as the foundation for long-term resolutions.

The first step towards defeating terror is making it irrelevant. The power of terrorist groups is not hidden behind more powerful weapons or bigger arsenal. It lies in their ability of changing the rules of the game. Hence, winning this battle for fairness, reconciliation and peace will happen only through changing the course of the game again, instead of playing according to their plan. Putting an end to violence will also extinguish their strategy that anticipates martyrs and justification for the blood they spill, which ultimately helps them regenerate.

The current declaration of a ceasefire by the Indian State has set the stage for both sides to exhibit their real intentions and objectives, and let the public recognise who in reality defends their genuine grievances and aims for peace.