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PROXY WAR: INDIA STRIKES BACK



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ADOPT A PRO-ACTIVE POLICY

It is India which has to take the lead in defeating Pak-sponsored terror and other hostile designs. This would require India to follow a proactive Pakistan policy. The present policy of reacting to Pakistan with some retaliatory strikes after Pak-sponsored terror would only have limited impact. The aim of India's Pakistan policy should be to change the dynamics of present India-Pakistan relations. This was partly achieved after the 1971 War. It has to be taken to its logical conclusion now if India wants permanent peace in South Asian subcontinent.

The Pulwama terror attack was yet another example of the externally sponsored terrorism that India has been facing for a long time. The magnitude of the terror attack was such that it shook the conscience of the nation as it had done during the attack on the Indian Parliament and after 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks by Lashkar-e-Toiba. This time the culprit was Jaish-e-Mohammed, another Pakistan-based terrorist outfit, which immediately owned responsibility for the attack. To penalise the perpetrators, a retaliatory action became necessary as the NDA government has been talking tough against terrorism. No response would have seriously dented its credibility. In these circumstances, the Balakot airstrikes became a necessity to bolster the morale of the security forces and the people in general. The air strikes soothed the frayed

tempers in the country against terrorism, but it also exposed the absence of a long-term Pakistan policy in India.

Visceral Hatred

The hostility of Pakistan towards India is no secret, though it presents as if it is related to the issue of Kashmir.

Kashmir is just a smokescreen for the larger visceral hatred of Pakistan for India. The Pakistani Army Generals are still haunted by the memory of 1971. Their total defeat in that war and surrender to the Indian Armed Forces thereafter still rankle them. The Pakistani rulers are unwilling to realise their mistake that precipitated



1971: Pakistan Soldiers surrender to Indian Army in Bangladesh.

that war resulting in their defeat. Finally, Pakistan also dislikes India's emergence as a major power for geopolitical reasons.

India and Pakistan have fought three major wars since their independence; two of which were over the issue of Kashmir. After its defeat in 1971 War, Pakistan had vowed that it will go for nuclear weapons. It has finally succeeded in this effort with the help of its all-weather ally, China. In 1998, both India and Pakistan went overtly nuclear. It was believed that after nuclearisation of South Asia, both countries would not go for war. Pakistan has, however, found a way around this nuclear deterrence.

Terrorists As Proxies

Pakistan has now developed terror as a tool of its foreign policy. And, the main objective of its foreign policy is to harm India. It wants to bleed India through thousand cuts so that its ultimate objective is achieved. It sees India as its existential threat or at least that is what its army Generals want people to believe.

It is not surprising therefore that India faces incessant terror attacks supported by Pakistan. It has purposely nurtured groups like Jaish-

e-Mohammed, Lashkar-e-Toiba and Hizbul Mujahideen with the objective of harming India. These terror attacks help Pakistan to keep the pot boiling in Kashmir and raise the issue at every possible fora. It has also meant that India has to deploy large number of security forces to keep situation under control at huge cost. Pakistan even went for a misadventure in 1999 in Kargil. Though Pakistani regulars and other terrorists were successfully pushed back, it was done at a huge cost of men and material. For Pakistan, it's a low-cost proxy war that serves its interests well.

It is nearly impossible for India to prevent each and every terror incident in the country, especially when a terror factory is running in our neighbourhood with the objective to harm India. Actually, it was ridiculous when some people tried to blame Pulwama attacks on Intelligence failure. Interestingly, Pakistan also tried to use this argument in its own defence. Gathering proper Intelligence can only reduce terror incidences but it can never entirely eliminate them. To eliminate terror, we have to strike at the root of terror. In this case, it is rogue State, Pakistan and its army, which is using *jihadi* terrorism for waging proxy war.



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Nuclear Threat

Pakistan has indulged in mischief, thinking that it can hide behind the nuclear deterrence. In fact, lack of Indian response after the Parliament attack and 26/11 Mumbai attacks validated Pakistani assessment. After the NDA government came to power, 'no reaction' no longer remains an option as the alliance has been promising strong action against Pakistan-sponsored terrorism. They were forced to go for surgical strikes after the Uri attack and now for air strikes after the Pulwama attack

NDA's Reactive Policy

While India has now increased the level of its retaliation after the terror attacks, one thing is clear that it is only reacting to what Pakistan is doing. India does not seem to have a long-term Pakistan policy and whatever we are doing is just reactive. The Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan says that this kind of situation could lead to miscalculations and result into war between nuclear



*Nawaz Sharif*

powered neighbours. It is another thing that Imran Khan does not want to do anything to ameliorate the situation. Actually, he is in no position to do that as despite being the Prime Minister of Pakistan, he enjoys no power. Nor any of his civilian predecessors have enjoyed any power vis-à-vis policies related to India. On the other hand, whosoever tried to defy military was ousted from power. A recent example is former Prime Minister and leader of Pakistan Muslim League, Nawaz Sharif, who is cooling his heels in a Pakistani prison.

There is no doubt that India must respond to the Pakistani terror and should be ready to fight even a war despite the nuclear overhang if it is necessary. But as they say, the best wars are those which are won without fighting. To win a war without fighting, India requires a long-term strategy for Pakistan. Unfortunately, it seems we do not have a Pakistan policy in place to overcome the challenge posed by our hostile neighbour.

Trade As Self Deterrent

In the past, it has been suggested that economic engagement between India and Pakistan would work to reduce

tension. It is argued that greater trade between two countries would create a constituency in both countries which would work as a bulwark against war and other similar hostilities. Under this approach, India offered the most favoured nation (MFN) status to Pakistan. However, in Pakistan, debate continues that how can we give this status to a country that we hate the most! India's liberal approach towards Pakistan has only invited more terror attacks on this country. The same goes for the cross LoC trade in Kashmir. It has not improved situation in Kashmir Valley.

In reaction to the Pulwama terror attack, India has now withdrawn this MFN status from Pakistan. This step is, however, likely to be only symbolic as very little trade takes place between the two countries. Though the bilateral trade between India and Pakistan has increased from \$0.34 billion in 2003-05 to around \$2.3 billion in 2016-17, it is still only a fraction of their total trade. At present, India exports goods worth \$1.9 billion to Pakistan, while Pakistan exports goods worth \$0.5 billion to India. Thus, it is India that is exporting much more to Pakistan. In this situation, if anything happens,

it would only further constrain India's will to take punitive action after the Pak-sponsored terror strikes.

Pak Military Ambiance

In Pakistan, the civilian government is only a namesake and all important policy decisions are taken by the all-powerful military. The interests of army are paramount. The Pakistan Army corners a major part of the country's budget which it justifies by presenting India as an existential threat. Besides, the Pakistani Army also has its corporate interests. What is more recently seen there is spectacular growth in the businesses controlled by the powerful army. In 2016, for instance, the Pakistan Senate was informed that the army's commercial wings, namely the Fauji (Army) Foundation, the Shaheen Foundation, the Bahria Foundation, the Army Welfare Trust and the Defence Housing Authorities, owned around 50 business concerns and housing property worth over \$20 billion. Three years later, this number now runs into hundreds of businesses with net investment reportedly exceeding \$100 billion. The Pakistan Army has now also moved into the oil business. The Frontier Oil Company (FOC), a subsidiary of the army-controlled engineering firm, Frontier Works Organisation (FWO), has now been granted a contract for the construction of a 470 km long oil pipeline estimated to cost \$370 million. Besides, the Pakistan military is eyeing a key role in developing giant copper and gold mine, Reko Diq in the Baluchistan region. The military will not only be deciding which investors develop the deposit, but Frontier Works Organisation (FWO) is positioning itself to be a member of any consortium involved.

The huge corporate interests of the Pakistan Army encourage it to keep this vice like grip on the Pakistan State. The Generals also enjoy other economic benefits besides enjoying the

State power. The civilian government has always been too weak to assert and whosoever tries to do that has paid a heavy price.

Fated To Fail

The power structure in Pakistan is heavily tilted in favour of the army. Unless there is fundamental change in this power structure, no meaningful change can take place in India-Pakistan bilateral relations. The emergence of non-State actors and the *jihadi* and terrorist activities being carried out by them has further complicated the whole situation. Though the international community has condemned Pakistan after the Pulwama attack, it is strong enough to endure any pressure coming from their side. Moreover, it has refined the art of fooling international community by taking cosmetic actions against *jihadis*. The FATF has put Pakistan on notice and has placed it in the grey list. It wants Pakistan to take action against the *jihadi* groups and check their finances. If Pakistan fails to do that, it might find itself in the black list of FATF. This action of the FATF would be a disaster for

By the time the **United States** saw through the **double game of Pakistan**, combat fatigue had already set in and its leaders started **talking of withdrawal**

the Pakistani economy already in doldrums. To fool FATF, Pakistan is presently engaged in taking cosmetic measures against the terror groups acting from its territory.

US Predicament

Though the United States sided with India after the Pulwama attack and urged Pakistan to take action against all terrorist groups operating from its territory, Pakistan has largely emerged unharmed from the US 'war on terror' despite having close alliance with Taliban, al-Qaeda and other Islamist terrorist groups. Under threat from President George Bush, it pretended as if it is changing sides but in reality remained closely allied with these groups. This strategy helped Pakistan to avoid the wrath

of the United States. Moreover, it also managed to extract military aid from the United States in the name of helping them in the war. By the time the United States saw through the double game of Pakistan, combat fatigue had already set in and its leaders started talking of withdrawal. America is presently engaged in talks with Taliban facilitated by Pakistan. This has made it go soft on Pakistan despite all its wrongdoings. China has also continued with its dubious role. It has again thwarted Indian attempt to get Masood Azhar branded as international terrorist.

India Must Lead

India garnered wide support from the international community in the aftermath of the Pulwama attack but the international community can at best sympathise with India. It does not have any major tool at its hand to penalise the wrong doer. Often, whatever little it can do, gets politicised for geo-political interests of the major powers. It is India which has to take the lead in defeating Pak-sponsored terror and other hostile designs. This would require India to follow a proactive Pakistan policy. The present policy of reacting to Pakistan with some retaliatory strikes after Pak-sponsored terror would only have limited impact. The aim of India's Pakistan policy should be to change the dynamics of present India-Pakistan relations. This was partly achieved after the 1971 War. It has to be taken to its logical conclusion now if India wants permanent peace in South Asian subcontinent. **DSA**



Pulwama fallout: US for India's bid to name Masood Azhar as global terrorist.