

# CENTRE FOR JOINT WARFARE STUDIES



SYNODOS PAPER

| VOL - XIV NO-03 / FEB 2020

## CHANGING PAKISTAN'S BEHAVIOUR: INDIA'S OPTIONS



**Lt Gen Vinod Bhatia, PVSM, AVSM, SM (Retd)** superannuated after 40 years of distinguished service in the Army as the Director General Military Operations (DGMO). Presently Director of CENJOWS.

**I**ndia faces full spectrum of security challenges from Terrorism to Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNWs). However, the present and clear danger still continues from Pakistan sponsored three decade old proxy war, wherein Pakistan Army as a state policy has perpetuated terror attacks not only in Kashmir but in almost all metros in India. Waging a 'Low Cost High Effect War' in perpetuity and with impunity, comfortable in the thought that India will continue to exercise strategic restraint, avoiding escalation as Pakistan threatens a nuclear war. Pakistan has smartly operated in the low intensity conflict domain with a nuclear rhetoric, thus denying the space of conventional war to India, which is India's military strength.

There is a need to understand Pakistan's aim and end objectives, to comprehend why Pakistan behaves the way it does.

This apparently is Pakistan's philosophy of bleeding India with a thousand cuts which translates to a proxy war, a war Pakistan has executed for over three decades now. Equally important is Pakistan's intrinsic need to seek parity with India. Since the British administered partition an anti India policy is central to Pakistan's identity and survival, often acting as a unifying force for diverse regions, society and people. So in essence Pakistan's India policy is predicated on seeking parity with India and bleeding with a thousand cuts. The policy is driven by the Pakistan army, who derive its domestic, political and economic relevance and power from an anti India stance. Granting the devil its due they have exploited the people of Kashmir by espousing the Kashmir agenda ensuring a reactive India till recently. The key question is what should be an effective strategy for India to counter Pakistan's aims, which in effect implies changing Pakistan's behaviour. What are some



pragmatic and implementable options for India? To analyse some of these options it is an imperative to recount certain landmarks in the relations between the two nuclear armed nations with adversarial relations. The four wars between the two nations have been well covered and hence need no further elaboration, however, the 1971 war which led to the liberation of Bangladesh made Pakistan realise the futility of fighting conventional wars with a much stronger Indian military. This realisation gave birth to OPERATION TOPAC initiated by Gen Zia Ul Haque, conceived by Pak ISI. Put into effect in the eighties it had a three stage action plan to create and provide support to separatist and terrorist in Kashmir. The objectives of OPERATION TOPAC are :-

- ♦ Disintegrate India.
- ♦ Create and exploit terrorist organisations to bleed India.
- ♦ Exploit porous borders with Nepal and Bangladesh to set up bases and conduct terror operations.

OP TOPAC gave birth to an overt Kashmir militancy on 13 Dec 1989, the day Rubiya Saeed the daughter of the then Home Minister of India was released in exchange of five imprisoned terrorists, after having been abducted by Pak supported terrorist organisation on 07 Dec. This was the commencement of the Kashmir militancy. Since then in J&K alone India has suffered over 30,000 fatalities, resulting in deployment of security forces at a great cost. In addition there have been a number of high profile attacks all over the country like the March 1993 Mumbai Serial Bomb Blast, 26/11 Mumbai attack, October 2005 – Delhi Serial Bomb Blast, Akshardham, Coimbatore, Pune, Bangalore, Srinagar assembly, Kaluchak, Pathankot, Samba and many others. India suffered these attacks without an appropriate response, emboldening Pakistan to carry out more attacks in perpetuity and with impunity. The December 2001 attack on parliament resulted in a year long military mobilisation

OP Parakram, which further strengthened Pakistan's belief that India will avoid escalation at all costs. The first indications of change were visible after the NDA 2 government came to power under PM Modi in May 2014.

PM Modi started by investing considerable political capital in normalising relations with Pakistan, inviting PM Nawaz Sharif for the swearing in ceremony to Delhi. This was an opportunity lost by two nations and two people. With two strong leaders both voted with an absolute and massive mandate, the two countries could have worked together towards peace and stability. This was not to be, as the effective control is with Pakistan army, who for reasons stated earlier will not let peace prevail. Pakistan as always responded by perpetuating terror strikes in India.

The Proxy war was a total success till and upto Uri terrorist attack in Sep 2016. The reason for that was mainly a perceived lack of political will to escalate to a war, leading to a benign Military Counter Terrorism Strategy, which was mostly reactive and refrained from even mentioning 'Pre-emptive and Punitive' Operations as a means. It was not that the armed forces lacked the capability and ability to execute these operations; it was the lack of political will and direction. High profile terrorist attacks mostly were tolerated by an Indian public with short memories and it was business as usual after a few days of anguish and anger, only to be remembered till the next high profile terror attack. The pattern of terrorist attacks emanating from Pakistan was predictive, it was constant and consistent in periodicity and intensity so to raise the costs. High visibility attacks either proceeded or preceded political dialogues and peace initiatives. Some of the more obvious examples are the peace initiative including the composite dialogue by the then Pakistan President Zardari which had to be shelved post 26/11 Mumbai. Prime Minister Modi's, 25 Dec 2015 unscheduled

visit to wish Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on his birthday was preceded by the 01/02 Jan 2016 Pathankot Air Base terror attacks. Prior to that the 15 Jul 2015 meeting between the two heads of state at Ufa was again preceded by the 25 July Gurdaspur terror attacks. Pathankot attacks forced India to foreclose all dialogues from the Indian side despite the permission to a Pakistan Investigation team to Pathankot. Indian stance of terror and talks do not go together served the purpose of certain elements within the Pakistan establishment creating major decision dilemmas for India.

The terrorist strike at Uri army camp on 18 Sep 2016 forced India to change its counter terrorism strategy and response options. Pakistan crossed the Lakshman Rekha, challenging India's strategic patience and demolishing the Pakistan belief that India will not respond in the military domain for fear of an escalation possibly leading to a nuclear exchange. This was also the first time that all elements of national power, political, diplomatic, military, informational and to an extent economic were synergised, leading to a diplomatic isolation of Pakistan. By executing the surgical strikes India signalled a strategic resolve and indicated that its strategic patience has run out. While signalling a strategic resolve India also in a very nuanced statement demonstrated a strategic restraint. The choice of targets - terrorist launch pads, demonstrated India's 'Strategic Restraint'.

Back to the counter terrorism strategy – NDA 2 government had defined a hardline strategy supporting a muscular response to Pakistan's terror attacks. The 18 Sep Uri attack changed the way India's response to Pakistan proxy war, demonstrating an unprecedented Politico-Military will, executing surgical strikes at multiple terrorist launch pads in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK), thus for the first time ever giving a military response to Pakistan. The Surgical Strikes preceded by the Balakot precision air strikes on the JeM training camp at Jabba

Top in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are indicative of a risen, resurgent and responsible India, capable of protecting and projecting its core interests, synergising all elements of national power – political, diplomatic, military, informational and economic. The strikes raised the costs for Pakistan as evident from the redeployment of certain elements of the military, relocating terrorist camps and providing them with protection by the army. More importantly the surgical strikes have created a strategic dilemma for Pakistan, shaking the Pakistan army out of its comfort zone. It was the first time that a Pakistani Prime Minister was critical of the Army Chief, blaming him for isolating Pakistan. Unlike the 26/11 Mumbai terrorist attacks and many others, Pakistan will now ensure that these terrorist attacks do not cross India's threshold for fear of retaliation.

What India needs to do is ensure that Pakistan's 'high effect low cost war' becomes a 'low effect high cost war' and that is exactly what the surgical and precision strikes have achieved. There are many contributors and indicators that Pakistan will continue to wage the proxy war as hitherto-fore albeit at a higher cost and caution now. Pakistan army chief General Bajwa in a departure from the past has mooted a resolution to the Kashmir issue through "political and diplomatic" means. The US has been openly critical of Pakistan's support to terrorist organisations. China too, for the first time has equated Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed with global terror groups Islamic State and al-Qaeda, endorsing India's counter cross-border actions. The revised Counter terrorism strategy is a game changer and Pakistan will be subjected to more such strikes as and when it crosses the Lakshman Rekha. Modi Government's 05 August parliament resolution suspending the provisions of Article 370 and 35A, and bifurcating J&K into two union territories has been a master stroke. The positions and narrative has taken a U turn with Pak not only being on



the back foot but reactive. It is now Pak stance not to talk to india. A political resolve and a muscular policy is yielding results and needs to be taken to its logical conclusion.

The key question still remains what's the end state India should seek and that is undoubtedly 'Changing Pakistan's Behaviour'. Historically nations go to war with a singular aim of imposing their will on the adversary. The end state of changing Pak Behavior may be difficult to achieve but is possible. To accomplish this end state only military power may not achieve end results and hence India needs a full spectrum multi domain, multi dimensional approach synergizing all elements of national power, be it in the political, diplomatic, economic, informational and military domain. Some of the options could be

- ◆ Diplomatic isolation of Pakistan at various multilateral and economic forums.
- ◆ International pressure to proscribe the various anti India terrorist organisations..
- ◆ Projecting Pakistan as the epicentre of terror repeatedly reminding the world that over 80% of the terror attacks the world over have a direct or indirect connect with Pakistan.
- ◆ Ensuring Pak is blacklisted in FATF. This will make it difficult for Pak to obtain loans from world bodies, to overcome its economic stress..
- ◆ Diplomatic and political support to Baluch people, highlight human rights violations in Pakistan in POK.
- ◆ Exploiting the present stress in Pak economy by a sustained and planned economic offensive.

- ◆ Investing in people, projects and security forces of Afghanistan. Pak needs Afghanistan for its strategic depth.
- ◆ Target Pak army economic interests.
- ◆ Strengthen and synergise India's intelligence structures and linkages.
- ◆ Review certain provisions of Indus Water treaty, water is a major tool as 95% of the water in Pakistan flows from India .
- ◆ Militarily hit where it hurts.
- ◆ Preemptive and punitive operations to be a policy option to deter Pak from employing terror as a policy.
- ◆ Enhance the surgical and precision hit capabilities of the military.
- ◆ Hafiz Saeed, Masood Azar, Sayeed Saaludeen, Zawahiri and Dawood Ibrahim are fair targets, and there should be a constant threat and plans to take them out.
- ◆ Counter Pak information war by creating own structures and alternate credible narratives.

These are some of the options. India could also exploit new age technologies and cyber space to achieve the desired end state for a relatively terror free India. As Pak Army drives the India policy, Indian options should aim at degrading the political and economic clout of the Pak Generals. The Indian aim should be singular, raise the costs for Pakistan High effect low cost war and make it a low effect high cost war, resulting in a change in Pakistan Behaviour in the mid to long term, thus ensuring a relatively terror free india.

**Disclaimer** : Views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of CENJOWS.

## CENTRE FOR JOINT WARFARE STUDIES

Kashmir House, Rajaji Marg, New Delhi-110 001

Tel. Nos : 011-23792446, 23006535, 3306538/9, Fax : 011-23792444

Website : [www.cenjows.gov.in](http://www.cenjows.gov.in), e-mail : [cenjows@cenjows.gov.in](mailto:cenjows@cenjows.gov.in)