



PERSPECTIVES

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India Needs Effective Surgical Strikes Against Pakistan-Based Terror

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The Modi government claims, as have other Indian governments before it, that it has conducted surgical strikes against terror organizations in Pakistan. Whether or not these claims are true, terror activities have continued. If surgical strikes are to be effective, they must be properly targeted.

Several of India's leading politicians claim that New Delhi has conducted surgical strikes against terror outfits based in Pakistan. On December 1, 2018, for example, Congress party president Rahul Gandhi claimed that during his party's government headed by PM Manmohan Singh, the Indian Army conducted three surgical strikes in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

On March 4, 2019, Bharatiya Janata Party supreme leader and India's current PM Narendra Modi said that India "has run out of patience with terrorism," will "beat them (terrorists) in their own house," and will not spare them "even if they hide in the bowels of the earth" or "on the other side of the border." His government claims that India's Air Force conducted a "preventive non-military strike" on a Jaish-e Muhammad (JeM) terrorist camp in Balakot across the Line of Control in Pakistan's Khyber Pakthunkhwa province on February 26, 2019.

Notwithstanding these claims of surgical strikes, terror activities have continued from across the border. If the Modi government's strikes are to be effective, they must primarily target two locations: LeT's 200-acre compound in Muridke near Lahore and JeM's madrassa near Bahawalpur.

Pakistan's Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) carried out the November 2008 terror attack against India, and the JeM committed attacks in Pathankot and Pulwama. In its surgical strikes, New Delhi must focus on elements like Mumbai underworld

criminal mobster Dawood Ibrahim, LeT chief Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, and JeM founder Masood Azhar in Pakistan.

To achieve this objective, the Indian political leadership must do two things above all. First, it must modernize its intelligence and security agencies and impart professional and operational autonomy to them. Had these steps already been taken, various terror outfits, including JeM, LeT, and the Hizbul Mujahideen (HM), would not have grown in India, and the Pulwama and preceding strikes would not have occurred. And second, India must turn to its most trusted friend, Israel, to help it effectively dismantle India-specific terror outfits in Pakistan. Israeli intelligence and weapons can play a decisive role in accomplishing this goal.

New Delhi should not entertain much hope of Islamabad, which is currently under the civilian government of PM Imran Khan. Ever since the days of Pakistan's Field Marshal Ayub Khan, it has been Pakistan's army that has shaped its politics. That army was itself the main creator and protector of jihadi elements against India. Inter-Services Intelligence funded the separatists to fuel unrest in India, particularly in Kashmir.

In 1959, the Ayub Khan regime advocated "jihad through unofficial militias." His idea was to "lock the army in their barracks and train the irregulars" to bleed India. In 1965, it sent infiltrators into Kashmir. General Zia ul Haq carried forward the same policy, using American funds and intelligence received during the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Recruits and tactics from the Afghan jihad helped him intensify the struggle in Kashmir. General Pervez Musharraf sent irregulars across the LoC to capture mountain peaks in Kargil in 1999. He said, "Kashmir is in our blood."

Former Pakistani Ambassador Husain Haqqani has revealed that anti-India terrorists received funding and training in Pakistan. ISI first supported Kashmiri groups such as the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front and Hizbul Mujahideen. Later, it shifted its support to Pakistani jihadi groups such Harkat ul Ansar, Harkat ul Mujahpdeen, LeT, and JeM.

New Delhi must grasp that the deep state will never stop anti-India terror outfits from operating from Pakistani soil. Khan will not dare to take on the deep state. He is certainly aware of what happened to his civilian predecessors when they appeared serious about peace with India. Before Ayub's coup in 1958, then PM Feroz Khan Noon spoke of the "folly of war" with India. General Musharraf undertook the Kargil misadventure and later imprisoned Nawaz Sharif after the latter undertook a peace journey with India's PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Khan knows what the Pakistan Army did after Asif Zardari called Kashmiri militants "terrorists." He is likewise aware of how, after the 2016

Pathankot terror strike, the Sharif government cooperated with the Modi government on intelligence sharing, and what ultimately happened to Sharif (he is in jail today).

Nor can New Delhi expect much from the international community in its war on terror. China, an important world power today, continues to block the listing of JeM chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist at the UN Security Council, despite the fact that the UNSC notes that Azhar accepted funds from Osama bin Laden.

In recent decades, relations between New Delhi and Washington have reached a new high. After the Pulwama incident, US Ambassador to India Kenneth I. Juster called on Pakistan "to end immediately the support and safe havens provided to all terrorist groups operating on its soil." He declared that Washington would work with New Delhi "to get to the bottom" of it. Recently, US State Department spokesperson Robert Palladino said at a press briefing that the US wants Pakistan "to take sustained, irreversible action against terrorist groups that will prevent future attacks" and "abide by its United Nations Security Council obligations to deny terrorists safe haven and block entry to funds..."

India's Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale spoke with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo about the need to bring those responsible for the Pulwama attack to justice and the urgency of Pakistan's taking meaningful action against terrorist groups operating on its soil.

On March 12, American National Security Advisor John Bolton said Pakistani FM Shah Mehmood Qureshi had assured him during a phone call on March 11 that Islamabad "would deal firmly with all terrorists" operating from the country. But Washington is highly unlikely to be tough with Islamabad. It appears to be too focused on seeking Islamabad's help in firming up a deal with the Afghan Taliban to care about India-specific terrorism.

It would be naive in any case to assume that Washington's pressure on Islamabad in this regard would work. It is well documented that American secretaries of state James A. Baker III and Hillary Clinton both warned Pakistan against terror activities in Kashmir. Baker even warned Islamabad in 1991-92 that it could be designated as a state sponsor of terror. After Mumbai, Clinton said, "You will be consumed if you don't go after jihadist groups." Clinton told Pakistan publicly in 2011, "You cannot keep snakes in your backyard and expect them only to bite your neighbors." None of these words had any effect. Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf's 2003 announcement about shutting down terror groups proved a farce.

As for the members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, they seem too attached to their parochial “Muslim cause” to care about the values of liberal democratic India. Pakistan has had a deep military relationship with Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and UAE. Recently, the OIC adopted a resolution calling for an “immediate halt to the continuing gross human rights violations of innocent Kashmiris by Indian Occupation Forces,” and asked member states to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Kashmir.

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