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Submitted by asiaadmin2 on Wed, 02/27/2019 - 13:57

Paper No. 6501

Dated 27-Feb-2019

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India with its pre-emptive Indian Air Force strikes on Pakistani terrorist bases on February 26 2019 marks a significant signal under PM Modi's leadership that India has finally dispensed with its 'Risk Aversion Strategies' and will not shirk upholding India's 'National Honour' in face of repetitive provocations by India's military adversaries- Pakistan to be more precise in instant case.

Dispensing with 'Risk Aversion Strategies' followed by past Prime Ministers could not have been an easy decision for the Indian Prime Minister as it has in attendance the challenges of Pakistan climbing the 'Escalation Ladder' in response. But should that deter India which today counts geopolitically high in global power calculus be deterred by Pakistan's constant needling.

Pakistan has in the past been emboldened by the political timidity of past Prime Ministers and also countries like China presently and the United States in the past ego-messaging of the Generals in Pak Army HQs in Rawalpindi that Pakistan is the 'Strategic Equivalent' of India. In the process India's 'National Honour' was being besmirched by Pakistan with impunity.

At this significant turning point in India's history of upholding India's 'National Honour' a quote of Major General J F C Fuller of 1923 which I used in my Book 'India's Defence Policies & Strategic Thought: A Comparative Analysis' (2004) needs to be repeated to drive home this point. Abridging the quote in my book, a relevant portion applicable today, makes thoughtful reading:

“There is only one balsam which can make peace worth living—Honour, which is righteousness....Peace without honour is degradation.....so will an upright nation because of its honour, not only protect but sacrifice itself for righteousness cause. All may be lost save honour, for without honour, mankind ceases to exist”.

India had literally ceased to exist with its ‘National Honour’ singed by Pakistan and China by their repeated military provocations. Pakistan revelled in the myth that it could not be expended by China or United States because of its strategic utility to both these nations because of tactical political expediencies.

India has by its strikes signalled that it will no longer be a passive spectator to military provocations by its adversaries whatever the costs. Surely, the Modi Government and the defence establishment would have worked out the contingencies that would arise from the instant decision.

India’s upholding its ‘National Honour’ is not the sole responsibility of the Government and the Indian Armed Forces. It is also the duty of all Opposition Parties and the media to do likewise and not display political fissures emerging from the politicking of Election Year campaigns.

Some are already visible. Opposition leaders have gone all out to extoll the Indian Air Force valour for political correctness but have not one word of appreciation for PM Modi’s display of POLITICAL WILL. Surely, the Indian Air Force proceeded with the strikes against Pakistan on orders of the Government of the day determined that the moment had arrived when India’s ‘National Honour’ can no longer be trifled with by Pakistan.

Similarly, some TV anchors have started disputing the damage estimates arising from the strikes. This is immaterial as to what matters are the exercise of India’s ‘Political Will to Uphold India’s National Honour’ and that rich symbolism cannot be drowned in statistical debates.

India, and I believe, the vast majority of the Indian people going by visuals and media reports stand by the Government in dispensing with the ‘risk Aversion Strategies’ of past Governments, including BJP first government tenure

Within India, it needs to be appreciated that for the first time a Pakistani Prime Minister, PM Imran Khan was directly intervening in India’s domestic politics and elections by publicly asserting that Pakistan could wait for India’s Elections My 2019 and its outcome. Implicit in Pak PM Imran Khan’s public statement was the hope that India would vote-out PM Modi in the coming General Elections.

What makes PM Imran Khan lead to such conclusion? Obviously, the fractitious Opposition parties electioneering campaign politicising national security issues and defence acquisitions rather than concentrating on finding faults with the Government’s shortfalls in providing effective governance.

Added to this was the distortion of India's political landscape by visits of some Opposition political worthies to Lahore and making discordant noises giving political mileage to Pakistan's propaganda and fostering or perpetuating the myth that India was a divided house and that Pakistan could have a free run to indulge in its favourite pastime of 'Bleeding India' through Jihadi affiliates of Pakistan Army. The JeM suicide bombing at Pulwama on February 14 2019 killing 44 CRPF soldiers was the latest such provocation and that led to this Indian Air Force strike within Pakistan as a retaliatory response.

Having taken the first measured and deliberate military step in climbing the 'Escalation Ladder' with Pakistan we need to be alert and vigilant to ward off any ripostes cooing from Pakistan, and which it will compulsively do so.

India had put Pakistan on notice when in 2016 PM Modi authorised the first 'surgical strikes' by Indian Army Special forces in the wake of Uri attacks on Indian Army base. Pakistan did not pay heed to this witnessing the immediate politicisation by Indian Opposition Parties.

The Prime Minister immediately after Pulwama suicide attack by Jem operating from its HQs in Bahawalpur adjacent to Pakistan Army Corps Headquarters had given enough notice to Pakistan that a strong retaliation was coming for such military adventurism. Once again Pakistan felt secure that India would be shackled as before by its traditional policies of 'Risk Aversion' of past Prime Ministers.

India in 2019 is not the India of earlier decades of not following up rhetoric with action with sharp retaliatory actions as it happened in Mumbai 26/11 when the Congress Government was in power.. The present Indian Modi Government is strongly backed by Indian public opinion incensed with Pakistan's repeated terrorists attacks and suicide bombings and demanding that Pakistan's military adventurism be tamed or deterred.

Since Pakistan had commenced attacks targeting Indian Army bases and security forces convoys' Indian public opinion against Pakistan was more vociferous. That combined with PM Modi's POLITICAL WILL to not allow India's 'National Honour' be sullied impelled P Modi to order these IAF retaliatory strikes against Pakistan-based Jihad terrorist infrastructure.

Unlike the past, this time around, even in the wake of Pulwama suicide bombings, international support in terms of condemnation of Pakistan for not reining in Jihadi terrorists attacks against its neighbours was vocal. President Trump was on record castigating Pakistan on this issue. US National Security Advisers Bolton is also on record that India had the "right of self defense" against Pakistan-based terrorism provocations.

Also, the UN Security Council Permanent members with exception of China have expressed their determination to not let China again shield JeM chief Azhar Masood from being designated as 'global terrorist' by the UN.

No doubt the above factors were factored-in by the Modi Government in its calculations when it took the fateful decision of ordering IAF

strikes within Pakistan on JeM terrorist launch pads and bases. Also would have been factored-in was the remote likelihood of a reckless opting by Pakistan for the nuclear option----highly unlikely though.

In Conclusion, all that is required to be stated and emphasised is that India has signalled its intention of dispensing with past policies of 'Risk Aversion' so far shackling India's audacious responses and retaliation against Pakistan military provocations. It is upto Pakistan's strategic patrons to advise Pakistan for restraint and it is upto Pakistan and specifically its Army Generals that India has awakened to forcefully retaliate against Pakistani military provocations, or for that matter from any other quarter also.

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