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Pakistan Imposes Conflict Escalation Template on India.

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Pakistan's propensity to generate armed conflict with India has reached a turning point in February 2019 where India was forced into a controlled conflict -escalation by ordering Indian Air Force strikes on terrorists' bases deep in Pakistan territory in a strong retaliatory response to Pak-based JeM suicide bombing of CRPF convoy in Kashmir killing 44 troopers.

Post-IAF aerial strikes at JeM bases at Balakot in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunwa Province on February 26 and Pakistan's PAF attempted aerial attacks targeting Indian Army operational and logistics bases in Naushera area, Pakistan has provoked a likely climbing-up of the escalation ladder by India.

India and the world should not be fooled as India's Opposition parties' leaders are prone to believe that PM Imran Khan's release of IAF Wing Commander Abhinandan was a great humanist gesture impelled by an urge to defuse escalation of conflict. What worked on Pakistan to this end was global pressure from the United States to Saudi Arabia besides Pakistan's obligations under the Geneva Convention.

Fortuitously for India the international attitudes on tolerance of terrorism as an instrument of state-sponsored terrorism by Pakistan has been stretched too far. This has resulted in India's IAF strikes being understood as an inescapable imperative in exercise of right of self-defence against Pakistani terrorism and suicide bombings.

Notably, even with the Organisation of Islamic Countries where India was invited this year as 'Guest of Honour' at the Summit this week for the first time has resulted in PM Modi's political outreach to Saudi Arabia and Gulf Countries. This is a tacit recognition that India matters even in OIC which Pakistan boycotted on India being invited.

Also, coincidentally at the same time, Pakistan based suicide bombings were carried out on Iran's IRGC troopers deployed on Iran-Pakistan border. This when seen added to the perspective of continuous Pakistani terrorists groups attacks on Afghanistan reinforce the conviction that Pakistan Army's use of Jihadi terrorists groups does not even spare Islamic countries as Pakistan's co-religionists. State-sponsored terrorism has now surfaced as the DNA of Pakistan Army and increasingly been recognised as such the world over with exception of China.

Contextually, the scenarios likely to unfold in wake of IAF Balakot strikes are likely to be entirely of Pakistan's making in terms of the options that Pakistan exercises. What are Pakistan's options in wake of India's IAF strikes on Balakot terrorists' bases and Pakistan's knee-jerk reaction of attempting to strike Indian military targets in response? Since India does not have any terror bases operating against Pakistan there was nothing that Pakistan could match correspondingly.

Pakistan has only three options open to it against India in light of India under PM Modi's having virtually called Pakistan Army bluff of use of nuclear weapons---something which frightened India's past Prime Ministers and deterred them from punitive strikes. The three options open to Pakistan are as follows (1) Reset Pakistan's India-policy by liquidating terrorists camps operating within Pakistan under patronage of Pakistan Army thereby facilitating resumption of peace dialogues (2) Intensification of terrorism strikes and suicide bombings both in Kashmir Valley and the Indian Heartland (3) Escalation of conflict into a full-blown war by Pakistan Army as a Compulsive Obsessive Disorder, regardless of consequences.

Pakistan Army despite diminished support of its misdemeanours by the United States and likely diminution of support of China is unlikely to opt for the first option stated above. It would be suicidal for Pakistan Army to agree to dismantle terrorism infrastructure it has nourished for decades for use against India, Afghanistan and Iran. Dismantling terrorism infrastructure would be seen domestically as having succumbed to external pressure under duress by Pakistan Army.

That leaves the two most likely options to be adopted by Pakistan Army, namely intensification of terrorist strikes and suicide bombings against India especially in Kashmir Valley and in tandem intensification of border firing and artillery duels along the LOC and IB in J&K State. This is already ongoing in the belief that India would stand enfeebled as in the past until February 26 2019---the day PM Modi ordered IAF aerial strikes at Balakot and other terrorist locations. Continuance of this option by Pakistan now inherently carries escalation of hostilities by both nations.

Invariably, India now has to be nationally prepared that Pakistan Army's propensity for initiating armed conflict with India including pre-

emptive attacks on India will inevitably follow in the ensuing mix of Options 2 &

In response to Pakistan's propensity for conflict escalation to full blown war India has only one option in 2019 and thereafter and that is to inflict a crushing defeat on Pakistan by targeted crippling attacks on diminishing Pakistan Army's war-waging capabilities and its terrorist-affiliates camps and infrastructure. India thus would be doing two favours- one for itself and one for the people of Pakistan.

Pakistan Army so militarily diminished would cease to be a disruptive threat to India's sovereignty and integrity by the instruments of military power that it currently employs against India.

Pakistan people would also be gifted by India taming Pakistan Army by removing Pakistan Army from its pivotal and controlling role in Pakistan's governance by thwarting emergence of civilian democratic rule in its purest form. Repeated in my Papers in the last 15 years are that 'Pakistan's Restoration of Democracy Should be an Indian Strategic Imperative'.

Pakistan's adoption of Options outlined above cannot be exercised in a vacuum; however reckless Pakistan Army Generals may be. Pakistan has created an immediate hostile security environment around itself with Iran, Afghanistan and India being targeted as adversaries under garb of non-state actors and other destabilisation activities.

All the Major Powers with exception of China are now ranged against Pakistan with the addition of the Financial Action Task Force which has already placed Pakistan on the 'Grey List' for not liquidating terrorism havens within Pakistan used against its neighbours. China too may have to shift its stances of shielding Pakistan in the United Nations designating JeM Chief Masood Azhar as global terrorist.

Continued denial by Pakistan Army in its complicity in terrorism exported to neighbouring countries and if not complicit then inaction in liquidating terrorist safe havens in vicinity of Corps HQs of Pakistan Army opens Pakistan to nations unitedly seeking United Nations armed intervention under Chapter 7 provisions.

Pakistan's nuclear weapons threat against India carrying war into Pakistan is a myth which in the past was used by Pakistan in the past to deter India's past Prime Ministers. Pointed out as early as 2002 in one of my Papers was the reality that Pakistan risked international intervention at the slightest whiff to Major Powers that Pakistan was moving towards this holocaust option. Yet India has to be prepared that the 'Blind Generals of Rawalpindi' might hope to use some nuclear device by non-state actors against India.

Surely, the Indian Government and PM Modi's advisers have taken into consideration all the hare-brained military contingencies that Pakistan Army may impose on India as retaliation for India's 219 demonstrated intentions that it now reserves the right to strike terrorist bases within Pakistan targeting India.

Presently, it would be fair to assume that the Armed Forces of both India and Pakistan would have been operationally deployed in forward

locations in a high state of alert. They should be expected to stay so deployed for the next few months in view of tensions existing. The onus is now on Pakistan Army not to let a fuse be lit by its terrorists groups that could ignite the tension of forward deployed Armies of both nations.

Before concluding, attention needs to be paid also to the question of neutralising Pakistan's evil hold and stoking Kashmir Valley disturbances misusing the fair name of Islam and subverting Kashmir's traditional Sufi peaceful traditions. The Modi Government should make Pakistan irrelevant to the Kashmir Valley disturbances through its ISI proxies. Notably, Kashmir should be fully integrated as an integral part of India by revoking Article 35A and Article 370. In tandem all Separatists groups active in Kashmir Valley be banned and punitive actions be taken against Pakistan ISI paid 'stone pelters' impeding Army operations against terrorists. Also, the so-called dynastic mainstream leaders be side-lined from Kashmir political dynamics as most of them indulge in soft separatism.

Similarly, India must launch a sustained campaign by media and peoples movements to restrain Indian Opposition political parties in politicising India's National Security challenges for petty political gains in face of impending military threats to India. Political liberalism does not give licenses or indulge in near-seditious activities/statements against national policies initiated by the lawfully elected Government in place in New Delhi. More galling is irresponsible summations on National Security and defence acquisitions made by political leaders deficient in 'strategic culture' and military and security knowledge.

Repeated again, is that geopolitically time is on India's side in terms of international support for India to adopt strong military policies against Pakistan Army's repetitive military provocations. Pakistan-based terrorism is not only an India-specific threat but a global threat as evidenced by the 9/11 attacks on USA, the bombings in London and the suicide bombings in Kabul and destabilisation of Afghanistan.

Concluding, it needs to be over-emphasised that the momentum the Modi Government has imparted to safeguard and protect India's National Honour against Pakistan-based terrorism targeting India by military strikes needs to be maintained till the end aims are met. Such punitive strikes need to be incorporated in India's long range overall strategy. "Risk Aversion" strategies of the past need to be jettisoned. India needs to not only look like a regional power but also act firmly like one. It is India that should impose its will on Pakistan's intransigence and not Pakistan as a State fractional in size and geopolitical power that should be imposing conflict escalation templates on India.

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