Surgical Strike: Outcome of terrorism lava from India’s volcanic Eruption: Lesson For Pakistan Feded Militants

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Introduction

“Death is lighter than a feather, Duty is heavy as a Mountain”- this proved by our Indian Army.

“The most dangerous place in the world today, I think you could agree, is the Indian sub-continent and the line of control in Kashmir,” I remarked United States President Bill Clinton in March of 2000. His contentious statement rang loudly throughout the world, reflecting the 21st century reality that the Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan had undergone a complete transformation from a seemingly contained, bilateral situation into an international issue that has vast ramifications for the entire world, due in large part to the introduction of nuclear weapons and mid-range missiles into the arsenals of both countries.

"India has a much better case to go for pre-emptive action [against Pakistan]” announced Yashwant Sinha the Indian External Affairs Minister during the first week of April. He also made a statement in the Rajya Sabha, “If lack of democracy, possession of weapons of mass destruction and export of terrorism were reasons for a country to make a strike in another country, then Pakistan deserved to be tackled more than any other country.” (The Hindu, 10 April 2003) Later, George Fernandes, agreeing with Yashwant Sinha, stated, “Pakistan is a [more] fit case than Iraq for a pre-emptive strike.” (Hindustan Times, 13 April 2003)

The Uri attack was a carefully planned terrorist attack that saw Pakistani handlers exploiting a fleeting opportunity to inflict maximum casualties on Indian troops. Coming as the attack did in the wake of the cumulative build-up of terrorist attacks and infiltration attempts, the Indian government resolved to act to send a message to Pakistan. That message assumed the form of calibrated surgical
strikes against terrorist launching pads across the Line of Control and a diplomatic campaign to isolate Pakistan within South Asia, both of which were premised on the wide-ranging international condemnation of the Uri attack.

The Uri Terrorist Attack

On September 18, 2016, four terrorists belonging to the Pakistani jihadi group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) struck at an Indian Army camp in Uri. The camp housed more than the usual number of troops, given the changeover between two infantry battalions. This had resulted in the creation of additional temporary accommodation in the form of tents. Unlike in the past, this was seen as an obvious vulnerability by the Pakistani terrorist handlers who decided to exploit this fleeting opportunity.

The resultant impact of the Uri incident, which led to the death of 19 army soldiers, was not the only provocation that hardened the government’s resolve to move beyond standard reactions. The Army’s action against terrorist launch pads was also linked to the cumulative build-up of terrorist attacks that had been emanating from across the Line of Control (LoC). This was reinforced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who indicated that those responsible for the Uri attack would not go unpunished. Therefore, a robust and determined response was expected sooner rather than later. It was a matter of time before a strong message was delivered, through surgical, yet demonstrative, means.
India’s reaction to the Uri terrorist attack is a distinct departure from the strategic and tactical approaches it had adopted in the past. The government decided to undertake a shallow surgical strike along the LoC. This clearly implied that the Army intended to target terrorist launch pads, which are typically located between 500 metres and a couple of kilometres along the LoC inside Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK). The decision reinforced the government’s restraint and mature response, which had characterised past Indian responses as well. Second, by limiting the strike to terrorist launch pads, India maintained the requisite balance between resolve to punish the perpetrators of terrorism and keeping a low military threshold as would be expected from a reasonable state. Third, on completion of the strike, the Director General Military Operations of the Indian Army informed his counterpart in Pakistan of the same and simultaneously indicated termination of the mission, thereby, ensuring that no ambiguity existed regarding the scope and scale of the operation. Fourth, a large number of friendly foreign countries as well as the media were informed about the operation. This saw the government and the army take ownership of the operation and its intended consequences. Fifth, the government called for cooperation from the Pakistan to fulfil its international obligations to fight terrorism, as has been promised by Islamabad on more than one occasion.

Facts about Surgical Strike

- A surgical strike is a military attack intended to inflict damage on a specific target, with minimal or no collateral damage to surrounding areas.
- After running through a variety of non-military responses to the September 18 terrorist strike at an Army camp in Uri, the Centre on Thursday announced that Indian forces had carried out “surgical strikes” across the Line of Control.
- With this, India’s next steps, post-Uri, are in uncharted terrain, with New Delhi abandoning the self-proclaimed policy of “strategic restraint” adopted in the face of earlier provocations by terrorists believed to be backed by Pakistan.
- The operation, that began and concluded in the early hours of Thursday, was claimed to be a military success, with no injuries to the Indian para-commandos who went across the LoC into Pakistan-occupied Kashmir to attack several locations.
- The decision to strike in this manner was evidently taken after specific intelligence that terrorist groups were planning attacks in India.
- This may not be the first time India has undertaken quick cross-LoC operations, but it has never before chosen to share information so publicly.
- The terms “surgical strike” and “preemptive strike” used by the Centre were intended to convey that this was not an attack on Pakistan’s defence forces, but a targeted action against terrorists poised to wreak damage in India.
- Pakistan of course has played down the Indian operation, characterising it as an act of habitual cross-border shelling. It is welcome that New Delhi declared the strikes complete shortly after the
operation, with the DGMO calling his Pakistani counterpart to convey that India would not escalate the conflict beyond this.

- This, along with the briefings held in New Delhi for envoys of various countries, indicates that the Centre wants to end hostilities with Pakistan for the moment.
- This strengthens the view that the operation was the result of pressure on the Modi government to manufacture a strong response to Uri. Over the past few days there has been a cascade of moves to underline that such provocations cannot be followed with business as usual.
- The government reviewed the working of the Indus Waters Treaty, declared it is flirting with the idea of reviewing Pakistan’s Most Favoured Nation status, and pulled out of the SAARC heads’ meet to be held in Islamabad.
- 29 September 2016 marks a turning point, with India sending out an unambiguous message: it can no longer be business as usual. There are four reasons for that:
- Surgical strike by India is a paradigm shift in India’s approach to external threats. It is exactly how an advanced, modern nation would respond to such challenges. The singular message is that it can no longer be business as usual; the message is that India is willing to give and take in its international relations and that it can no longer be business as usual.
- Second, the Modi government has demonstrated that nothing is off the table in a negotiation or dialogue. In the build-up to the surgical strikes last night, it unambiguously signalled as much: including its review of a seven-decade-old Indus Water Treaty.
- Third, India has demonstrated its willingness to undertake risky manoeuvres, albeit calculated ones. This is a dramatic shift from the past, when India’s response was often defensive; countries like Pakistan and China often interpreted this pacifism for the lack of a stomach for a fight.
- Fourth, like it did in Myanmar—when it chased down an outlawed Naga terrorist outfit—it has signalled that India has the right nous for measured but effective retribution. While war as an option is extremely difficult to exercise and entails huge economic and social costs, surgical strikes, though risky, are relatively easier to undertake swiftly.

- In the final analysis, it is clear that the Modi government has signalled a change in tack. It will be very difficult to retrace the steps from here. Presumably, it has worked this out in its calculations.
- Pakistan reaction on surgical strike is somewhat surprising as it has not endorsed that India has conducted any Surgical Strike in Pak Occupied Kashmir.
- World powers including Britain and China are trying to reduce tensions between India and Pakistan and asked both countries to exercise restraint in the wake of surgical strikes by Indian troops across the Line of Control.
- Pak media ridiculed and denied surgical strike by Indian troops across the Line of Control. Chinese media has shown expressions of hope and said that all the issues between the two countries can be resolved through meaningful dialogue. British as well as US media do not play down the surgical strike and deem it to be paradigm shift in India’s approach to deal with external threats.

- If International Relations Experts are to be believed, surgical strike by India will definitely curb Pakistan sponsored terrorism.

**Brief History of Stabilising the Border Regions**

The Indian military has won many wars against forces. In this climate of war we want you to look at these 6 most successful military operations that the Indian military launched against Pakistan.

1. **Operation Vijay**: Operation Vijay was launched during Kargil war of 1999 by the Indian military. The war began when the Pakistani army dressed as Majuhideen decided to infiltrate into the Indian mountainous terrain of Kargil.

2. **Operation Meghdoot**: Operation Meghdoot was the secretive code name for the operation launched by the Indian army and the Airforce in order to capture the Siachen Glacier.

3. **Operation Trident**: Operation Trident is the most famous defensive operation and the pride of the Indian Navy. The operation was launched on 4th December 1971 with the aim of destroying the Karachi port. The operation was launched when the war of 1971 was underway between India and Pakistan.

4. **Battle of Longewala**: The Battle of Longewala is one of the most memorable war in the world and the war fought between India and Pakistan on the western side of the Indo-Pak border in Dec 1971, Pakistan forces launched an attack
on insuspecting and unprepared Indians at the border post of Longewala in the Thar Desert of Rajasthan.

5. Tangail Airdrop: Tangail Airdrop was an operation launched by the Indian Airforce against the Pakistan Forces who were occupying east Pakistan in the Bangladesh Liberation war of 1971. The operation was launched on 11th Dec 1971 by the 2nd battalion of the Indian Army’s Parachute Regiment. The paratroopers landed by parachute and blocked off all the Pakistani military’s Entrance into Dhaka. The main objective of the Tangail Airdrop Operation was the Capature of Poongli Bridge on the Jamuna River. It was this operation the successfully managed to cut off East Pakistan From West Pakistan and Ultimately Lead to the Liberation of Bangladesh.


Impact and Implications of the Surgical Strikes

This was the first operation conducted by the Army across a wide frontage of well over 100 kilometres at multiple terrorist targets along the LoC. Second, by taking ownership of the strike, India snatched the initiative from Pakistan, which had continued its provocations through terrorist attacks at regular intervals. Third, the Army raised the cost of using terrorism as an instrument of state policy by a couple of notches. Fourth, the Pakistani narrative about the absence of India-targeting terrorists on its soil stood exposed for the world to see.

Map 3: the sensitive zone between India and Pakistan

Fresh fighting has erupted along the southern stretches of the Line of Control with Indian forces engaging terrorists in the village of Mankote, close to the location of some of the most intense combat in Thursday’s pre-dawn special forces raids on jihadist staging posts.

Fifth, the strikes proved to be an important element for maintaining the morale of the people of India and the armed forces. Sixth, the strike reinforced the credibility of the government and displayed its resolve, even as justified restraint and maturity was on display. Finally, India called into question the Pakistani belief that it would not react to terrorist provocations because of the fear of escalation. Along with this, the army also crossed the laxman rekha that had for long constrained its ability to hit terrorists in their own backyard.

Indo-Pak Border likely to be sealed

Amid rising tension between India and Pakistan following the surgical strikes across the Loc, Union Home Minister Rajnath singh on Friday (7th October,2016) said the entire stretch of 3323 km long border between the two countries would be “completely sealed” by December, 2018 for which a time bound action plan would be formulated. Speaking to reporters after holding a security
review meeting in Jaisalmer, Mr. Singh said the procedure for sealing the international border would be development in a planned manner, with a mechanism in place for its periodic monitoring at multiple levels in the defence establishment as well as the government of the four border states.

Rajasthan CM Vasundhara Raje, Deputy CM of Punjab Sukhbir Singh Badal, Gujarat Home Minister Pradeep Singh Jadeja and Jammu and Kashmir Chief Secretary Brij Raj Sharma attended the security review meeting. Mr. Singh visit the border outposts at Munabao in Barmer district with interact the BSF personally on Saturday (8th October, 2016) asked about the ongoing tension and deteriorating relations between Pakistan and India,

Mr. Singh said- the nation must have full faith in its Army “we will take all steps to ensure that the nation’s security is not risked. Just as a farmer protects his crops, our soldiers will protect the Country.”

Pakistan’s Response to the Surgical Strikes

Following the surgical strikes carried out by the Indian Army across the Line of Control (LoC) on the night of 28/29 September 2016, the Pakistan establishment was in denial mode once again. It has accused India of “fabrication of truth” and explained the death of two soldiers and injury to nine others as resulting from cross-border firing between troops deployed on either side of the LoC.

However, in a move unusual for cross-border firing, which is fairly routine, the Indian High Commissioner was summoned to the Pakistan Foreign Office and issued a demarche. In the initial statement carried by The Nation on behalf of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, it was stated that the PM “condemned the military action undertaken by the Indian Army along the Line of Control.” However, the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) categorically stated that no surgical strikes were carried out across the LoC.

When looking at the clear articulation of the event by the Director General Military Operations (DGMO) of the Indian Army, the political leadership, and briefing of envoys of 25 countries by Foreign Secretary in New Delhi on 29 September, it becomes clear that an operation was indeed carried out. Subsequent press reports also suggested that two members of the strike force from the Special Forces units of the Indian Army have also received injuries during the operation.

The question that arises is the reason for Pakistan’s denial of the operation ever having taken place.

(a) Pakistan wants to deny the existence of terrorist launch pads in the territory presently under its control and wants to avoid accountability on this account.

(b) Pakistan wants to avoid a linkage between India’s targeting of terrorists and the casualties its troops suffered in the vicinity of the terrorist launch pads.

(c) The Pakistan Army does not want to be seen in a poor light vis-à-vis India, particularly after its loss of face in not being able to detect the US strike at Abbottabad (Operation Neptune Spear) in which Osama bin Laden was killed.

(d) Denial also becomes necessary to prevent questions about the Pakistan Army’s level of alertness and preparedness and consequently greater public pressure to undertake retaliatory
action at the earliest even if that turns out to be a misadventure.

Militants killed by Indian Armed Force

World opinion has definitely turned against Pakistan and there is more than enough evidence to link the Pakistan Army with terrorist groups. The Pakistan Army, therefore, has a difficult choice of either denying the presence of terrorist launch pads in the portion of Jammu and Kashmir under its occupation close to the LoC or having to undertake a retaliatory action for which it may not be prepared presently.

All told the Pakistan government and Army obviously know the facts. Therefore, two main reasons to downplay the operations are: (a) avoid admitting association with terrorists, and (b) avoid public pressure to retaliate.

But soon enough the Pakistan public would know the facts when jihadi tanzeems start holding functions to honour the jihadis who have been killed in the Indian surgical strike. It is then that Pakistani public will hold the Army responsible for such incidents.

Hafiz saeed threatens action against India & Zee News, says we will teach you what surgical strikes are:

A day after Indian Targeted terror launch pads along Line of Control (LoC) conducting Surgical strike on Pakistan, furious Jammad-ud-Dawaah (JUD) Cheif Hafiz Saeed threatened India for Carrying out military operation.

Baffled with the befitting response of the Indian Armed Forces post Uri attacks in which 18 jawans were killed, “Hafiz Saeed Said Pakistan forces will teach Indians what surgical strikes are”. While addressing a gathering of his supporters in Pak Occupied Kashmir (POK), also threaten Zee News Channel over their coverage on India’s military operation in Pakistan.
International Responses to Uri and India’s Surgical Strikes

- India’s diplomatic offensive launched post the Uri-attacks provided the broader context in which its decision to carry out the surgical strike needs to be seen. The thrust to ‘name and shame’ Pakistan as a sponsor of terrorism emanating from its soil was carried out systematically, at the national, regional and global level across all fora. Indian diplomatic representations in the 71st session of the United Nations General Assembly in response to Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif’s efforts to internationalise the Kashmir issue called out Pakistan on its “long-standing policy of sponsoring terrorism, the consequences of which have spread well beyond our region.”
- In a statement intended to provoke, the Indian response also stated that “The land of Taxila, one of the greatest learning centres of ancient times is now host to the Ivy League of terrorism. It attracts aspirants and apprentices from all over the world.”
- This was followed up by External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj who, in an evocative speech at the UN General Assembly, called for the isolation of Pakistan and added that “in our midst, there are nations that still speak the language of terrorism, that nurture it, peddle it, and export it. To shelter terrorists has become their calling card. We must identify these nations and hold them to account. These nations, in which UN declared terrorists roam freely, lead processions and deliver the poisonous sermons of hate with impunity, are as culpable as the very terrorists they harbour. Such countries should have no place in the comity of nations.”

Map 4: Showing movement towards Uri

- India was then quick to rally international support from the US, UK, and France, which condemned the Uri attack, and also highlighted Pakistan’s atrocities in Balochistan, which led the European Union to respond with a threat of punitive economic sanctions if Islamabad did not come clean on human rights violations.
- In conversations with her Indian counterpart Ajit Doval after the ‘cross-border attacks’, US National Security Advisor Susan Rice reportedly said that, “the US expects that Pakistan take effective action to combat and delegitimise United Nations-designated terrorist individuals and entities, including Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Muhammad, and their affiliates”.
- Media reports suggested that the US and UK even tried to prod Pakistani Prime Minister Sharif to condemn the Uri attack during his meeting with US Secretary of State John Kerry and British Prime Minister Theresa May at the side-lines of the UN General Assembly.6
- Countries such as Germany, Japan, and South Korea also issued statements condemning the incident and expressed support for India’s stand on countering terrorism globally.
- Japan, in a statement condoning the incident, said: “The government of Japan strongly condemns the terrorist attack on the Indian base in Uri, Jammu and stands “firmly on the side of India in the fight against terrorism,” according to an official statement.

West Asian countries and members of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)
also issued statements condemning the Uri terrorist attack. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Qatar all issued statements on the attack. Post Uri, the Saudi Arabian Foreign Ministry stated: “The foreign ministry expressed the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's strong condemnation and denunciation of the terrorist attack that targeted an Indian military base in the Uri area of north Kashmir, killing and wounding dozens.” The UAE’s “Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation renewed the country’s firm stand against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and expressed solidarity with the Republic of India and support to all actions it may take to confront and eradicate terrorism.”

11 News media also reported that the “UAE and Bahrain have, in their statements, even supported any action by India to confront, eradicate and fight terrorism at a time when Delhi is discussing a range of military, diplomatic, political and economic options to retaliate against Pakistan.”

Statements from these OIC members are significant since they have traditionally supported Pakistan’s stand on Kashmir and the OIC itself was doing so with respect to the recent unrest in the Valley. The “OIC Secretary General Iyad Ameen Madani [had] expressed concern over the situation in Kashmir and called for an immediate cessation of atrocities by India, urging the Indian government for peaceful settlement of the dispute ‘in accordance with wishes of Kashmiri people and the UNSC resolutions’.” In the immediate aftermath of the surgical strike, the US reiterated its support for India’s fight in combating terrorism and sought to clarify the need for de-escalation of hostilities by both sides. Meanwhile, media reports suggested that China’s reaction to the strikes came two days after Pakistan dispatched two special envoys on Kashmir to Beijing to drum up support for its position. “As shared neighbour and friend to both India and Pakistan, we are concerned about continuous confrontation and tensions between India and Pakistan,” foreign ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang was quoted as saying. He added, “we call on all relevant parties to exercise restraint and refrain from actions that would escalate tension.” However, on the side-lines, the news of China blocking a tributary of the Brahmaputra river in Tibet at a time when India’s reported decision to suspend talks with Pakistan under the Indus Water Treaty in response to the Uri attacks did not go unnoticed.

Co-incidentally, China also continued with its decision to extend its technical “hold” on a UN resolution to ban the Jaish-e-Mohammed leader Masood Azhar. The resolution to ban him was co-sponsored by the US, UK, France and India, with 14 other countries acquiescing. China was the only one to block it with a technical hold. Russia came out strongly in support of Indian action saying Moscow stood for “decisive struggle against terrorism in all its manifestations.” The Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson added, in a statement, that “we expect that the Government of Pakistan should take effective steps in order to stop the activities of terrorist groups in the territory of the country.”

In another explicit statement of support, given to a news network, the Russian Ambassador in New Delhi, Alexander Kadakin, said, “the greatest human rights violations take place when terrorists attack military installations and attack peaceful civilians in India. We welcome the surgical strike. Every country has right to defend itself.”

Conclusion

The pre-emptive surgical strikes conducted by the Indian Army on 29th September along the Line of Control distinctly advance India’s position of employing both diplomatic and military manoeuvres to counteract the growing threat of cross border terrorism. The surgical strikes as remarked by the DGMO, Lt. Gen. Ranbir Singh, were conducted on receiving specific and credible inputs of some terrorist teams being positioned at launchpads along the Line of Control to carry out infiltration and conduct terrorist strikes inside the state of Jammu and Kashmir. These Counter-terrorism operations not just neutralised the terrorists but also marked a watershed development in India’s response to the incessant rise of terrorist activities on its soil. The Pathankot attack early this year and the recent debacle in Uri dictated the sudden need for a stringent response from the Indian state towards state-sponsored terrorism emanating from the soils of Pakistan.

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