



Needed: Policy, not Reaction

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(The editorial is based on the article “Needed: Policy, not Reaction” which appeared in The Indian Express for 18th February 2019. In this article we will discuss the concerns that arose after the tragic incident in Pulwama.)

Whenever Pakistan starts to speak the language of peace, it raises hackles in India because it seems evident that something unusual is in the offing and the overtures are primarily there to bait India.

As the nation mourns the tragic loss of 40 gallant CRPF jawans, killed in a “fidayeen” attack, people are engulfed by emotions of grief, hatred, and anger. Stomach-churning visuals of the mangled CRPF vehicle speak of the technical expertise that went into the preparation of a powerful improvised explosive device (IED) as well as the detailed planning is undertaken for this deadly ambush of the police convoy.

Pakistani fidayeen attacks on the Pathankot air base, followed by the Uri and Nagrota army camps — and now, Pulwama — showed, little had changed.

The Pakistani experience had also much to do with religiously radicalized young men strapped with explosives detonating themselves at gatherings of people — the suicide bomber as against the suicide fighter.

Suicide bombing was neither experienced in earlier years nor has it manifested itself yet in Kashmir. Its threat potential, of course, remains live and its entry could further change the nature of the proxy war.

Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)

- It is the premier central police force of the Union of India for internal security.
- The Central Reserve Police Force came into existence as Crown Representative’s Police on 27th July 1939.

- It became the Central Reserve Police Force on enactment of the CRPF Act on 28th December 1949.
- **Broad duties being performed by the CRPF are:**
 - Crowd control
 - Riot control
 - Counter Militancy / Insurgency operations
 - Dealing with Left Wing Extremism
 - Overall coordination of large scale security arrangement especially with regard to elections in disturbed areas
 - Fighting enemy in the event of War
 - Participating in UN Peacekeeping Mission as per Govt. policy
 - Rescue and Relief operations at the time of natural calamities and disasters.

Concerns

- **One of the first instances of a vehicle-borne IED being used in J&K, the success of this tactic could mark a new phase in the ongoing counter-insurgency operations.**
- At the core of any cogitation [i.e a carefully considered thought about something] about Pakistan, firm the focus needs to be retained on the centrality of its “**deep state**” — **the unholy nexus of its army’s General Headquarters and the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) Directorate.**
- Crisis after crisis has caught India by surprise — unprepared and invariably in the reactive mode.
- **Nothing illustrates the barrenness of New Delhi’s prevailing strategic culture better than the failure of the Indian state to evolve a strategy for resolution of the Kashmir complication.** They have allowed, instead, this issue to become a pressure-point for exploitation by our western and eastern neighbours, separately and in collusion.
- Pakistan’s three-decade-long strategy of “bleeding India by a thousand cuts” — using terrorists and religious fanatics — premised, at first, on India’s “strategic restraint”, and then on its own nuclear capability.
- **National security has suffered neglect for decades due to the intense and sustained pre-occupation of our politicians with electoral politics.** This neglect is evident in the yawning gap between political pronouncements and the voids, increasingly evident, in our military capabilities — material as well as organisational.
- Whether it is kidnappings, hijackings, terrorist strikes or other assaults on India’s sovereignty, we have been found wanting in an early and coherent response, because state functionaries lack SOPs [standard operating procedures] for guidance.
- **India remains deficient in intelligence-analysis, inter-agency coordination, and, above all, a national security doctrine.**

- Having created an elaborate national security framework, post Pokhran II, India has strangely shied away from promulgating a doctrine. Apart from diplomatic and economic steps that are being initiated, the current juncture would be apt for the urgent promulgation of a security-cum-defence doctrine.
- Such a document, whose public version defines India's vital interests, aims and objectives will not only become the basis for strategy-formulation, contingency-planning, and evolution of SOPs, but also send a reassuring message to our public.

Way Forward

- **For preventing a recurrence of such tragedies, it is vital that an urgent review be undertaken of the quality and timeliness of intelligence inputs and the SOPs being followed by the armed police force convoys; especially if different from the army's.**
- Rather than the scope for any knee-jerk or emotional response, this tragic incident provides India yet another opportunity for reflection and introspection about our management of crisis situations in general, and of Pakistan's role in Kashmir, in particular.
- The national political leadership would do well not to be guided by the immediacy of electoral considerations; national security interests transcend this.
- **Whatever are the selected options, the two things that would make for stronger execution are political consensus and management of internal social cohesion.**
- **India cannot achieve its strategic objectives if Kashmiris remain targets of physical abuse and harassment, and minorities are vilified on social media.**
- It is a difficult time for India and the leadership has to work overtime to ensure that the Indian armed forces have a 'firm base' to operate from; that is always a military need anyway.
- **Reaction for an action cannot be considered as a sustainable solution. There is a need for policy reforms which can rebuild the trust of misguided Kashmiri youth and provide a way for the overall development of Kashmir.**

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