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Pakistan Army Chief's Adventurism 2016 and India's Options

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Pakistan Army Chiefs have compulsively resorted to Kashmir-centric military adventurism against India based on flawed and misconceived assessments on Kashmir Valley being ripe for secession from India and a misreading of firmness of resolve of Indian political leaders in responding to their military adventurism.

The Pakistan Army supported and facilitated terrorist attacks against the Indian Army have increased for over a year now during the incumbency of the General Raheel Sharif, the present Pakistan Army Chief due to retire in November 2016. In case of General Raheel Sharif what requires to be noted is that his adventurism is not confined only to military adventurism against India but also extended to political adventurism in Pakistan's domestic politics. For all practical purposes, he had carried out a 'soft coup' against Pakistan's duly elected PM Nawaz---reflected in one of my papers of that time. Having carved a larger than life domestic political image with his disputable counter-terrorism offensive in frontier regions, General Raheel Sharif seems to be having second thoughts on living upto his January 2016 public announcement that he will not seek extension. What better way to get out of his commitment than to escalate tensions with India and thereby facilitating an extension to be thrust on him. Be as it may, what is of concern to India as to what impelled the Pakistan Army Chief to indulge in conflict-escalation with Kashmir Valley-centric contours?

Once again like in 1965 and thereafter, yet another Pakistan Army Chief has grossly misread that the Kashmir Valley is ripe for secession from India based on the intensity of the Pakistan Army incited unrest. Blame for this misreading has to be shared by the Indian policy establishment in its permissive toleration of Kashmir Valley separatists like the Hurriyat leaders openly declaring their loyalties to Pakistan. Greater share of such blame needs to be apportioned to India's 'intellectual terrorists' of Indian opposition parties, media elites and

academics propagating 'dialogue' with secessionists. Such Indian manifestations seem to have fed Pakistani Army Chief's perceptions that India was adopting appeasement policies to Kashmir Valley secessionists out of fear of loss of the Kashmir Valley because the people of Jammu and Ladakh hate Pakistan.

Against such a contextual background, three questions emerge which need to be answered initially and these two questions are (1) Has India lost control of the Kashmir Valley? (2) Is the Kashmir Valley ripe for secession from India and (3) Are the Indian Armed Forces incapable of stemming and defeating Pakistan Army's Kashmir Valley-centric military adventurism?

The answers to all of the above three questions is in the negative. India has not lost control of the Kashmir Valley because what is in play is the Indian democracy's tolerance of dissent within certain reasonable limits. The Indian State is strong enough to exercise strong and effective control over the Kashmir Valley secessionists paid by Pakistan.

Media reports tend to sensationalise that the Kashmir Valley is ripe for secession from India and that the Valley populace is alienated from India, The truth is that the vast silent majority in Kashmir Valley is a hostage to the terrorising and violence inflicted on them by Pakistani and some Kashmiri terrorists. If the Kashmir Valley had been ripe for secession then why did the Valley register nearly seventy percent voting in the last Assembly elections despite the threats of the terrorists and secessionists?

The answer to the last question is that the Indian Armed Forces ever since 1947 have not only stemmed and defeated Pakistan Army's military adventurism against India more notably the 1971 War which besides leading to the creation of Bangladesh (erstwhile East Pakistan) but also led to 96,000 Pakistani Army Prisoners of War being in Indian Army custody.

The Uri terrorists attacks by Pakistan Army affiliated Jaish-e Mohammad brings to a head the crucial question as to how long India can bear Pakistan Army's strategy of a 'Thousand Cuts' without strong reprisals against Pakistan and Pakistan Army in particular? This too in an environment when India today is counted as a an emergent major power and when Pakistan Army's repeated military adventurism has incensed Indian public opinion to a feverish pitch demanding strong retribution. What are India's options now?

The Indian electronic media has been alive for the last three days with panel debates and TV anchors giving out military solutions to reflect India's strong reprisals. But then war is so serious a matter to be left to arm-chair strategists, former diplomats and Army Generals and so - called academic strategic experts

When it comes to planning and executing strong Indian military reprisals, this domain is strictly and exclusively for the Indian Armed Forces professionals who have spent their lifetime dealing with Pakistan Army's military adventurisms credibly and with success. Indian military responses and their operationalisation to put an end finally to Pakistan Army Chiefs propensity for Kashmir Valley-centric military adventurism should be left to the trustworthy hands of the Indian Armed Forces hierarchy without interference by civilian bureaucrats and

intelligence officials.

The Indian debates over the last few days have focussed on diplomatic and economic options with the former being highlighted more and being gloated upon as India's diplomatic strikes in 'Pakistan's diplomatic isolation'. True, Pakistan stands diplomatically isolated but then in international relations such developments are transient by themselves and they also denote an Indian dependency on external powers to execute policy initiatives that India should put into effect on its own standing as a regional power and emergent global power.

If India wants to bring about complete diplomatic isolation of Pakistan and which should be highly visible in South Asia, then it should give a lead in the boycott of the SAARC Summit scheduled in November 2016 to be held at Islamabad. Afghanistan and Bangladesh have advocated such a course. Sequentially, as advocated in my last SAAG Paper a week back before the Uri attacks that SAARC should be disbanded and India should strive for a new regional cooperation organisation minus Pakistan and with no 'observer status' for powers external to the Indian Subcontinent.

The next notable Indian reprisal against Pakistan is that India should itself designate officially Pakistan as a 'Terrorist State' and apply economic, cultural and social sanctions. India should not as a supplicant been seen pleading major powers to control Pakistan's terrorism against India. Even if US pressures come in the wake of such a step, they must be firmly resisted. Or, if the US is so concerned to bail out the Pakistan Army then why has it not secured rendition of Hafeez Saeed and Massod Azhar carrying sizeable US bounties on their heads?

More telling and something that would force the Pakistani public at large to curse the Pakistan Army is for its military adventurism against India is to forthwith abrogate the Indus Waters Treaty which was thrust on an unsuspecting Nehru as Prime Minister by United States and World Bank pressures. India is not the India of five decades ago. India has a salience today in the global power balance which major powers cannot ignore just to side with Pakistan. Release of waters from rivers flowing through India need to be regulated in direct proportion to Pakistan Army Chiefs amenability to control terrorism against India emanating from Pakistani territory and disbandment of its Islamic Jihadi surrogates.

On the above count Pakistan's strategic patron China would have no standing or moral voice to protest Indian actions since China itself has been regulating and diverting waters of the mighty Brahmaputra River flowing into India from the Tibetan Plateau.

Countering Pakistan Army Chief's propensity for Kashmir Valley-centric military adventurism against India has never received due attention of 'Psychological Warfare Operations' to highlight the damage the Pakistan Army Hierarchies over decades has inflicted on Pakistan's nation-building. In the last decade I had written a couple of Papers on the subject of "Pakistan's Democracy is a Strategic Imperative of India". This should be a special focus beamed at Pakistan to highlight as to where India has reached since 1947 economically and where Pakistan too could have reached had it not been for the Pakistan Army constantly subverting democracy in Pakistan.

The Uri terrorist attacks will not be the last of such Pakistan Army inspired attacks against India in the Kashmir Valley or elsewhere in India. The “Kashmir Mantra” is the magical potion that ensures Pakistan Army’s survival as the dominating force in Pakistan’s domestic dynamics, chiefly by stoking fears of ‘Hindu India’ domination and destruction of Pakistan. To deny this mantra to the Pakistan Army, India needs to fully integrate the State of Jammu, Kashmir Valley and Ladakh as an integral and inviolable part of the Indian Union with no Special Provisions. The people of Jammu and Ladakh demand full integration with the Indian Union. Let here be no Indian ‘Doubting Thomases’ advocating tinkering with the unanimous Special Resolution of the Parliament 1992.

Concluding, it needs to be observed that while India is rightly incensed and Indian public opinion demands reprisals against the Pakistan Army as the patron-saint of all terrorism against India, this crucial response must be left exclusively to the Indian Armed Forces professionals and not become an over-kill analysis by TV anchors. In the same vein, to make this task of the Indian Army easier, the Indian Government cannot be seen parleying with Kashmir Valley separatist leaders who ruminate and preach anti-India hatred as Pakistan Army’s fifth columnists.

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