

India strikes back, but the tension continues to mount.

(By N.T.Ravindranath)

(Dated 9-11-2016)

India finally struck back at the terrorists sheltered in terror camps in POK. In a daring cross border operation on the intervening night of 28th and 29th September, 2016, a special task force of Indian Army attacked seven terrorist launch pads located in POK killing about 40 jihadi terrorists who were trained for terror strikes in India and were poised for induction into Indian territory. All the security personnel who participated in the attack managed to return back unharmed. Though the Modi government had undertaken such a cross- border operation in June 2015 against the NSCN-(Kapleng group), a Naga terror outfit, sheltered in a Myanmar camp following the killing of 18 Assam Rifles personnel in Manipur in June 2015, this is the first such cross-border attack on a Pakistani terror camp ever undertaken by the Indian Army.

After- effects

A jittery Pakistan, which had all along been threatening and blackmailing India with retaliatory steps with nuclear weapons if India indulged in any adventurist surgical strikes against it, is apparently now in a confused state of mind with the Pakistan Army denying any such surgical strike, while many in the government describing it as a routine border skirmish. While the JUD leader Hafiz Zayed has threatened to teach India as to how to deliver a real surgical strike, even a moderate leader like Tehreek-e-Insaf chief Imran Khan also warned India not to have any illusion that all Pakistani leaders are cowards like Nawab Sherif. This is a clear indication about the growing anger and disillusionment of the people against Pakistan prime minister Nawab Sherif who is considered as a moderate leader. There is some speculation among analysts in western countries that hawkish jihadi elements or army generals in Pakistan may stage a coup to dislodge the Nawab Sherif government if it fails to respond to Indian surgical strikes in an appropriate and effective manner. Former Pakistani president General Musharraf's recent statement that the democracy is not suited to Pakistan's environment is also indicative of his support for a regime change operation in Pakistan. Meanwhile, US presidential nominee Hillari Clinton has also expressed her fears about the jihadi elements staging a coup in Pakistan to dislodge Nawab Sherif to take over the nuclear weapons amidst growing tension between India and Pakistan. Though the jihadi hawks in Pakistan may have such intentions, such a possibility can be ruled out as the US and Israel will never allow such a thing to happen as such a scenario will be posing a greater threat to the US and Israel.

The cross-border surgical strikes carried out by the Indian Army against the Pakistani terrorists was most appropriate and timely. In fact, such a retaliatory strike should have come immediately after the attack on Pathankot airbase. However, the Modi government acted like the Manmohan Singh government in responding to the Pathankot attack. Our investigation had clearly proved the unmistakable role of Lashkar-e-Taiba in the attack on Pathankot base. And yet, Instead of taking strong punitive action against the perpetrators of terror, the NDA government allowed a Joint Investigation Team from Pakistani to visit the Pathankot IAF base in India to conduct a probe into the attack on Pathankot airbase on January 2, 2016. The five-member team from Pakistan led by Muhammad Tahir Rai of Punjab Counter Terrorism Department also included Lt.Col.

Tanweer Ahmed, a senior ISI officer. The team was allowed to interrogate 13 Indian witnesses, including former Gurdaspur SP Salwinder Singh, and record their statements. The NIA also shared all available documents about the four terrorists killed in the attack with the Pakistan team. It was a very humiliating experience for India. Such things were quite routine during the UPA rule. But nobody expected such a timid reaction from the Modi government, whatever may be the extent of pressure from the US. To add insult to injury, the Joint Investigation Team after returning to Pakistan released its report declaring that the Pathankot attack was stage-managed by India in an attempt to malign Pakistan. After the shameful Pathankot fiasco, many nationalists in India, including this writer, had started losing faith in Modi's ability to withstand pressure for restraint from the US and take some tough action against Pakistan. Then finally, the much-awaited retaliatory strikes against Pakistani terror camps came in the wee hours of September 29th, 2016 to the great joy, happiness and relief of almost all sections of people in India. The nation celebrated the retaliatory strikes. These surgical strikes also helped the people who have started losing faith in the ability of Modi government in taking effective steps to neutralize the cross-border terror threats from Pakistan, in restoring their faith in Modi government.

The Pakistani security forces were obviously stunned by the meticulously planned and executed surgical strikes by the Indian Army on selected terror camps in POK, and as usual they were in the denial mode. What else they could do? If they admitted to the Indian claim, they would have been forced by the people in Pakistan to take suitable steps to avenge the attack which would have led to an escalation of the conflict.

Admitting to the surgical strikes, would have also exposed the hollowness of the nuclear threats that the Pakistani leaders were addicted to making at regular intervals.

Opposition parties in India were also equally stunned by the surgical strikes just as the leaders in Pakistan. Following the declaration made by Narendra Modi that the perpetrators behind the Uri attack will not go unpunished, the Indian Army for the first time mounted a counter attack on the terrorists by carrying out a surgical strike against seven terror camps located in POK on September 29, inflicting significant casualties upon the enemy side. The news of the surgical strikes was greeted with cheers by all sections of the people, and all the opposition parties were forced to congratulate the Prime Minister Modi for the bold and decisive retaliatory action taken against the Pakistani terrorists. At the same time, all the opposition leaders were worried about the possibility of the NDA government extracting political mileage from the surgical strikes which could endanger their prospects in the forthcoming elections in UP, Punjab and Goa. Hence, they first insisted that the credit for the surgical strikes should go to the army alone. Then they used the Pakistan's denial of any such strikes in their territory, to seek some proof for the surgical strikes from the army. There were also some bizarre claims from some Congress leaders about some surgical strikes carried out by the army during the UPA rule claiming that they never used such strikes for making political mileage. Meanwhile, the Samajwadi Party workers were seen putting up posters in poll-bound UP claiming that the surgical strikes were carried out on the advice of Samajwadi Party leader Mulayam Singh Yadav. All these developments clearly show the extent of insecurity that has gripped the opposition parties over the likely electoral fall out of the surgical strikes in the poll-bound states.

The claim of the Congress leaders about having undertaken some surgical strikes during the UPA rule is most atrocious as it referred to only some local level hot-pursuit incidents happened during border skirmishes. Surgical strikes are much more serious matter involving deeper penetration covering a larger area and requiring greater planning and approval from the higher formations. Indian Army had conducted such a strike against a Naga rebel camp (NSCN-K) in Myanmar. But it was with the consent of the Myanmar government. The surgical strike conducted on September 29, 2016 was the second such strike, both carried out under the Modi rule. During the UPA rule there was a sudden deterioration in the cross-border terror because of the wrong and misguided policies followed by the Manmohan Singh government, like the opening up of the borders in the name of confidence building measures, relaxation of all travel restrictions to Pakistan and resumption of more cross-border bus and train services between the two countries. Thus, it became easy for the separatists in Kashmir valley and other militants to go across the border and get trained in terror camps in Pakistan. This led to a series of serial bomb blasts in different towns and cities in India. Thus, the Pak-sponsored terror which was earlier confined only to Jammu and Kashmir now spread to all across India. Two of the biggest terror attacks in India in the form of the serial train blasts in Mumbai in 2006 and the 26/11 attacks in Mumbai in 2008 took place during the UPA rule. In the case of 26/11 attacks, ten well-armed Pakistani fidayeen terrorists came via sea route to Mumbai, split into different groups, moved into landmark buildings like the Taj Hotel, Chhatrapati Shivaji Railway Terminus, Oberoi Trident and Kama hospital and started shooting down innocent people. 166 people were mercilessly gunned down by them and about 300 people were injured. Those who were killed included ATS chief Hemant Karkare and two other senior police officers and an Israeli couple of the Jewish Centre known as Mumbai Chabad House. Nine of the Ten terrorists were also gunned down by the security forces and one terrorist, Ajmal Kasab, was captured alive during the three-day encounter. All the terrorists belonged to the Lashkar-e-Taiba and they were trained, funded and guided by the ISI, which had set up a control room in Karachi to monitor and supervise the operation. The Mumbai attacks had brought normal life in India to a standstill for three days. It also took a heavy toll on our economy, with the tourism industry being the worst-hit, because of the cancellation of hotel and flight ticket bookings by foreign travelers, including many businessmen. Many business conferences had to be cancelled or postponed because of cancellation of bookings. In fact, the attack on Mumbai by ten Pakistani terrorists amounted to an open war on India. The three-day drama was watched on television by the whole world, and with the capture of one of the terrorists alive there was no scope for any doubt about the identity of the terror group involved and its patronage by the state agencies. But still, there was no retaliation from the UPA government. The leaders of the same Congress party, have the audacity now to claim that the surgical strikes have been carried out during the UPA rule as well. Is this not the most atrocious and abominable claim?

Matters of grave concern

Since India's independence in 1947, the country was under the rule of the Indian National Congress for about 50 years. When such a party shows some antinational tendencies and inclinations, it has to be noted with extreme seriousness and caution. The Congress party has committed many mistakes and blunders in the past, but a

closer scrutiny of the events show that the antinational tendencies in the party were noticed only after Sonia Gandhi took over the leadership of the party. This was most blatantly visible during the ten-year UPA rule. Thus we saw some Congress leaders calling the Batla House shoot-out, in which a brave inspector was shot dead by the terrorists, as a fake encounter and some other Congress leaders suspecting that the 26/11 attacks in Mumbai were stage-managed by the RSS. We even saw a Union Home Minister changing his affidavit submitted in the court to depict a woman LeT terror recruit as an innocent girl. Further, some crucial border roads in the Himalayan region were blocked by the Environment Minister raising the bogie of environmental damage, and permission for a naval base in the Bay of Bengal to house nuclear submarines was denied, again on the ground of environmental damage. Though the Congress was ousted from power in 2014, it still continues to support all antinational activities in the country. Though it reluctantly supported the recent surgical strikes by the army against terror camps in POK, some Congress leaders later suspected it as a fake claim and wanted some proof despite the fact that an army general himself had come on TV to declare about the surgical strikes. These traitor leaders have least regard for the demoralization that would cause to the Indian Army personnel by such insensitive statements from some of the antinational Congress leaders. The NSUI, the students wing of the Congress in JNU campus, Delhi, celebrated Dusshra this year by burning an effigy of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in place of Ravana. The JNU is notorious for organizing anti-India protests and programmes as witnessed on February 9, 2016, when certain sections of the students took out a morcha condemning the judicial killing of Afzal Guru, seeking liberation for Kashmir and break up of India into different pieces. The Congress appears to be fast emerging as a nodal agency for organizing all such antinational activities and programmes throughout India.

Bitter truth

No country has criticized Indian Army's surgical strikes directed against terror camps in POK, mainly because no one disputes India's right to punish perpetrators of cross-border terrorism. However, the Indian claim of having successfully isolated Pakistan as a mother ship of terrorism after the Indian surgical strikes in Pakistan, do not appear to have many takers. The recent BRICS summit in Goa is an eye-opener. Addressing the just-concluded BRICS summit, Prime Minister Modi had said that all the BRICS member states were agreed that all those who nurture, shelter, support and sponsor forces of violence and terror are as much a threat to all as terrorists themselves. However, the 109-paragraph summit declaration did not have a single sentence reflecting such a consensus on terror. The summit declaration calls for action against all UN-designated terrorist organizations, but names only the Islamic State and Al Qaeda's proxy Jabhat Al-Nusra, both constituting a threat to China and Russia, but fails to mention Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad, which are a threat to India only. China's President Xi Jinping had stated that the success against terror made it imperative to address both symptoms and root causes, a pet phrase often used by Pakistan referring to the conflict over Kashmir. Russian President Vladimir Putin made no mention at all about terror emanating from Pakistan which is even more shocking and painful for India. The BRICS summit clearly showed that China and Russia do not see Pakistan as a threat to world peace. They do not approve or justify the cross-border terror attacks emanating from Pakistan, but see it more as a bilateral issue which can be and should

be settled through talks. China however has gone a step further to support Pakistan by stating that for the success of tackling terror, it is necessary to address the root cause of the problem. Thus, despite frantic efforts by India to isolate Pakistan as a terrorist state at global level, India miserably failed to convince the even the BRICS members on arriving at a consensus on condemning Pakistan as a terrorist state or even naming any Pakistani organization as a terror outfit in the BRICS summit declaration. This is a big set back for Indian diplomacy. Modi government's misguided foreign policy, especially over our relations with the US, Russia and China, seems to be responsible for this humiliating set back. India's relations with Russia started showing signs of stress during the UPA government itself with India signing a Ten-year Defence Framework Agreement with the US in 2005, a Civil Nuclear Agreement with the US in 2008 and the US replacing Russia as the biggest supplier of arms to India. Modi government had started its innings well initially, with our relations with both Russia and China showing steady signs of improvement. There was general expectation among the impartial political analysts that Modi government will undo the damage done by the UPA government with its blatant pro-US tilt and improve relations with both Russia and China. Chinese President Xi Jinping's three-day visit to India, especially his visit to Modi's home state of Gujarat, further indicated that the relations with both Russia and China were set for a dramatic improvement. But, nothing like that happened. Everything changed after the sudden invitation extended by Modi to Obama to be our chief guest at the Republic Day function in Delhi on January 26th, 2015 and immediate acceptance of the same by Obama. Subsequent events however give scope for suspicion that probably the whole episode was a drama planned and executed by the CIA using its highly-placed assets in India to win over Modi who was a victim of a long and malicious propaganda carried out by various western agencies depicting him as a butcher of Muslims during the Godra riots in Gujarat. The US had even denied a visa to Modi because of his alleged past crimes. The Modi government seems to have forgotten all such malicious campaigns against Modi carried out by various western agencies in the past, as is evident from the fact that there is an undeniable pro-US tilt in India's foreign policy after Obama's visit to India in January 2015. Thus, the Modi government renewed the ten-year defence framework agreement with the US, signed originally by the UPA government in 2005, for another ten years in 2015. In another most atrocious move, India and the US signed a bilateral Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in August 2016 which allows their militaries to work closely and use each other's bases for repairs and replenishment of supplies. Continuing with the UPA policies, the NDA government also has allowed the US to remain the top supplier of arms to India. No wonder that Russia, our all-weather friend, is miffed and disillusioned. India's stand on South China sea dispute supporting Japan and the US is a major irritant to China. India's ONGC Videsh's oil exploration agreement with Vietnam in South China Sea and India's participation in the joint naval exercise with the US and Japan close to the South China Sea are seen by China as deliberate provocation. In April, 2016, India allowed Dalai Lama to conduct a meeting of Chinese dissidents from across the world at Dharmasala in Himachal Pradesh. The meeting sponsored by Citizen Power for China, Initiatives for China and US Institute for Peace, all known CIA fronts, passed resolutions calling for restoration of democracy in China and toppling of the ruling regime. How can we expect China to support India's cause in the UN and

BRICS after taking such a hostile stand against China. India's foreign policy has been a disaster. India is going to pay a heavy price for ditching a reliable and all weather friend like Russia and antagonizing a rising super power like China.

India is committing a big blunder by getting too close to the US and treating the US as a close ally and natural partner. The truth is that the US had never considered India as a friend. Its consistent support to Pakistan on Kashmir dispute ever since independence amply proves this point. It was under pressure from the UK and US exerted through Lord Mountbatten that India took the Kashmir dispute to the UN Security Council on December 31, 1948, where it remained frozen for all these years, thus allowing Pakistan to enjoy the fruit of its aggression. In all subsequent discussions on Kashmir in the UN, the US had always supported the cause of Pakistan. During the 1971 war with Pakistan, the US not only supported Pakistan but had sent its seventh fleet to the Bay of Bengal with instructions to target Indian Army facilities in India, if necessary. It was the timely help extended by the Soviet Union, which had sent its warships and submarines to the war zone to neutralize the US threat, that helped India to achieve its objective of liberating the East Pakistan. After the 1971 Indo-Pak war which resulted in the break up of Pakistan and creation of Bangladesh, it was with the knowledge and approval of the US that Pakistan adopted terror as its state policy to punish and bleed India with thousand cuts so as to force India to seek an amicable settlement with Pakistan on Kashmir. The US had prior information about the 26/11 terror attacks in Mumbai as revealed by David Headley, an LeT terrorist in US custody, but this information was not conveyed to India, thus allowing the attack to take place. The US had strongly opposed India's ambition to become a nuclear power, India developing long-range missiles and India acquiring cryogenic technology from Soviet Union. The US was also responsible for promoting and funding all anti-national and secessionist activities in India like the insurgency movements in the Northeast, separatist movement in Jammu Kashmir, Khalistani movement, Dalit militancy, Maoist movement and all anti-development agitations in the country. The reason for this anti-India stance of the US is that the US does not want India to become an advanced country with greater economic clout and military might due to the fear that like China, a stronger and advanced India may also become a threat to the present dominant position of the US in the world affairs. How can such a country be considered as a natural ally of India?

The US is also very much concerned with India's strong bonds of friendship with Russia since the cold-war days and an assertive Russian leader Putin's apparent move to re-establish closer ties with China. What the US dreads most is the coming together of Russia, China and India and the formation of a new power block led by these three countries which are presently headed by three powerful world leaders. This alliance, if and when it is formed, with the possibility of many other developing countries also favourably inclined to join it, could emerge as a more formidable alliance than the erstwhile Soviet Block and could lead to the end of the present uni-polar world dominated by the US. The US, well aware of the threat posed by such an alliance to its world domination, is desperately trying to wean away India from getting closer to Russia and China and trap India into a military alliance with the US. The Indo-US Logistics Treaty signed in August, 2016 and the green signal given by India to Dalai Lama to organize a CIA-sponsored anti-China convention at Dharmasala (Himachal Pradesh) in April this year were meant only to spoil India's relations with Russia and China. There

are efforts by some western agencies to force India to take a more stringent stand against China's hegemonic stance on navigation in South China Sea. The recent visit of American ambassador Richard Verma to Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh, which is claimed by China as Southern Tibet and the much-publicized proposed visit of Dalai Lama to Tawang in March 2017 also have to be seen as deliberate attempt by vested interests to widen the rift between India and China. It is true that the hegemonic assertion shown by China by way of imposing restrictions on freedom of navigation of other countries in the South China Sea region cannot be justified. However, we should deal with this delicate issue carefully and tactfully safeguarding our national interest. We should not allow this delicate issue to be exploited by the US or any other third party to promote their own vested interests.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX