



YET ANOTHER DASTARDLY TERRORIST ATTACK IN JAMMU: WAY AHEAD FOR INDIA

*By Wg Cdr Nishant Gupta
Research Fellow, CAPS*

On 26 September 2013 state of Jammu and Kashmir suffered another ghastly terrorist attack, and this time the targets were a police station at Hiranagar in Kathua district and an Army Camp in the adjoining Samba district. Once again precious lives of brave soldiers, police personnel and civilians were lost. All the three religiously motivated terrorists, who probably violated international border,¹ were finally eliminated during the successful Army Operation in response. Attack of such a magnitude is a clear attempt of spreading the arc of terror and disrupting any semblance of peace and normalcy. The heinous incidence raises several questions, but amongst them the primary one is how to stop such terrorist attacks and move towards a peaceful sub-continent so that national resources and energies can be productively channelized towards national priorities like energising economic growth and prosperity.

Undeniably, there is a need to strengthen our intelligence and security architecture so that the nation acquires robust capabilities to foil such attempts in future. National security and defence has to be strong enough to deter and dissuade the adversary from attempting such misadventures. At the same time, addressing the menace of suicidal human attacks sponsored by a neighbouring nation state from across the border in the name of religion is a unique challenge, and viable and lasting solutions call for multiple engagements with the sponsors.

It is generally believed that the attack is part of a well thought out of strategy of terrorists (and their masters) who always attempt to disrupt bilateral peace initiatives by creating

¹ As of now, Intelligence Bureau claims violation of International Border but BSF has not yet spotted any breach on the International Border, which is a cause of greater concern.

obstacles, vitiating the peaceful environment and thereby derailing the dialogue process. This terrorist misadventure would also have at least some bearing on the forthcoming meeting between Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh and Pakistan's new leader Nawaz Sharif scheduled on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meeting. It appears that to some extent the terrorists have achieved their objective, as the air is full of belligerent voices against any dialogue with Pakistan under the shadow of gunshots and there is conundrum about utility of holding talks with a nation that is incessantly sponsoring and promoting terrorism in India, despite several rounds of bilateral talks and unfulfilled commitments. There are calls now to not have talks over dead bodies.

But rather than awaiting 'a more conducive environment' will it not be wise to engage Pakistan in continuous dialogue and extract a tangible commitment in the form of an enforceable roadmap towards abandoning proxy war, thus striving for sub-regional peace. It is true that such dialogues in the past have not been successful, but will abandoning bilateral engagements move us towards a solution or a dead end? Dr Manmohan Singh, while condemning the attack has rightfully resolved to continue to endeavour for peace while combating terrorism and pursuing the dialogue process. Lately, USA has also realised the importance of diplomacy over power projection, be it Syria or Iran.

India has been incessantly exploring the feasibility of achieving bilateral understanding and cooperation in various fields including trade and culture; on the contrary, right since 1947, Pakistan has been eyeing the territory of Jammu and Kashmir and therefore keeping Kashmir as the core issue of Indo-Pak relations. A reference to history will help in better understanding of this central issue.

The birth of Pakistan was based upon the concept of human inequality and insecurity, and this sense of insecurity enabled a significant role of the military in its national politics from the very beginning.² Since its birth, Pakistan has been trying to wrest Kashmir from India; this is a central national project. To achieve this motive, Pakistan has been promoting insurgency and terrorism in Kashmir (and beyond), especially since 1989. Support to the so-called Kashmiri 'jihad' has fundamentally shaped its foreign policy. Pakistan seeks to 'bleed

² Sumit Ganguly, "Pak Polity and its Throne of Bayonets", *Asian Age*, Delhi, January 03, 2012.

India through thousand cuts' and coerce India into negotiating a diplomatic settlement on Kashmir. Thus, Kashmir has remained the cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy. Incidentally Kashmir continues to be the oldest item on the United Nations agenda, which still remains unresolved.³

Some experts believe that the Kashmir issue has its roots in water distribution and environmental survivability; religious dimension was attributed to it later in order to colour the vision of all the stakeholders. In 1990, General Parvez Musharraf had argued as a young brigadier, that Kashmir dispute was interdependent on the distribution of Indus river waters between Pakistan and India, and if one was resolved other would not exist. In 1999 he made an unsuccessful attempt to re-draw the LOC through Kargil War. Though India has been earnestly abiding by the World Bank mediated Indus Water Treaty (IWT) of 1960, Pakistan continues to air its dissatisfaction over water distribution. Nevertheless, in spite of four wars and numerous face-offs the IWT is still being abided by both the nations. To get rid-off the general environment of mistrust and hostility, both the nations have to further explore common ground and common interests. Environmental co-operation to mitigate and adapt to climate change is one such area where both the nations can work out mechanisms for mutual cooperation. And trust and understanding generated out of such initiatives can be extrapolated for reducing mistrust in more sensitive issues. Any workable recipe for peace has to have ingredients that enhance interdependence and lessen mutual distrust.

Nevertheless, in the wake of Sino-Pak nexus resulting in strengthening of Pak military capabilities, and huge monetary and weapon support from America (in its war against international terrorism, especially in Afghanistan), India has no choice but to keep its options open by strengthening its national security and national defence capabilities. But alongside, diplomatic channels have to continue to engage Pakistan towards evolving a viable peace formula, as no war or armed conflict can reduce mutual distrust.

(Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Centre for Air Power Studies CAPS)

³ S Paul Kapur, "India and Pakistan's Unstable Peace" *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Fall 2005), p. 143.