

YES, NO, IT'S COMPLICATED

# After the terrorist strike in Pulwama, is war even an option?

YES



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Our conventional deterrence has failed. It is necessary to initiate strong military measures

The terrorist attacks in Pulwama, Pathankot, Uri and Nagrota, among others, are part of Pakistan's low-intensity limited war on the Line of Control (LoC) since 1947-48 and its 30-year-old proxy war to bleed India through a thousand cuts.

**Proportionate reaction**  
India should resist a knee-jerk emotional reaction to this grave provocation, which unquestionably crossed its threshold of tolerance, to satisfy an enraged public. Instead, the response should be part of a comprehensive long-term, national-level strategy to counter Pa-

kistan's proxy war. The aim should be to raise the cost for Pakistan's deep state – the army and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) – for waging its proxy war, with a view to eventually making the cost prohibitive. The response should be proportionate and multidisciplinary in approach, comprising diplomatic, economic and military measures. It should include overt and covert actions.

What if miscalculation on either side leads to war? Military theorist Carl von Clausewitz theorised that war is an instrument of state policy. Today, some analysts believe that,

because of the destructive power of modern weapons, war is no longer a viable option unless the most vital interests of a state are threatened.

The object of defence preparedness of an appropriate level is to deter war and, if deterrence breaks down, to fight and win. Since the victory over Pakistan in 1971, the Indian armed forces have succeeded in deterring a major war, with the exception of the localised Kargil conflict of 1999.

However, India's conventional deterrence has failed to deter Pakistan's proxy war and state-sponsored terrorism and it is now necessary to initiate strong military



measures to prevent future terrorist strikes being launched from Pakistani soil. These measures should be carefully calculated to minimise the risk of escalation and must avoid collateral damage to the extent possible.

The military's aim should be to inflict punishment on the Pakistan army deployed on the LoC and terrorist training camps and related infrastructure in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). For each new act of state-sponsored terrorism, the scale and the intensity of the punishment inflicted should be increased by an order of magnitude.

Military operations should include artillery strikes with guns fir-

ing in the 'pistol gun' mode to destroy bunkers on Pakistani army posts on the LoC with minimum collateral damage; and Smerch and Pinaka rocket and missile strikes with precision-guided munitions (PGMs) on brigade and battalion HQ communications centres, logistics infrastructure, ammunition dumps and key bridges on major rivers.

Trans-LoC attacks by troops should be limited to raids by special forces and border action teams like the surgical strikes launched after the Uri military camp was hit in September 2016. Brigade-level attacks or larger infantry attacks must be avoided at least to begin with. The employment of fighter aircraft, particularly those armed

with PGMs, launched from a stand-off range on the Indian side of the LoC is also a viable military option. As long as the international boundary in Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat is not crossed by Indian Air Force aircraft, escalation by Pakistan is unlikely.

## Covert operations

Counter-proxy war operations should be supplemented by covert operations. Since the remaining roots of militancy are now in Pakistan and PoK, and Pakistan is not inclined to bring to justice the leaders of terrorist organisations like the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammed, terrorists they call 'strategic assets', they must be neutralised through covert operations.

NO



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We have been spending next to nothing on strengthening our defence forces

The point is not the message which is to be sent, but whether we are capable of an effective and sustained campaign. You cannot wake up one fine morning and decide to go to war. You have to prepare for war.

## State of preparedness

Last year, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence noted that 68% of our equipment in the defence forces was in the 'vintage category'. It also pointed out that we do not have sufficient ammuni-

tion to support 10 days of war with Pakistan. We are supposed to have 42 squadrons in the Air Force, but have 33 which are operational, of which there are nine that should already have been phased out, which means they are being pressed into service well beyond their shelf life. So, we have roughly 24 squadrons when we should have had 42. There are comparable deficits across the board in all the armed forces. That is the state of our preparedness. If we continually invested in the defence forces, the option of war

would have been real. But we have been spending next to nothing on strengthening our defence forces. We are in deficit in every aspect. Wars are not fought by men alone in the modern age. Of course, we have men out there who are willing to fight and are willing to take all the risks they are told to take. But that doesn't mean they will prevail.

Let's suppose we declare war. China is clearly with Pakistan and even if they just start massing troops on our eastern borders, what will we do? We have a two-front war doctrine on paper, but it



is not backed by anything. Despite boastful claims to the contrary, we do not have the material capacity to fight a two-front war. Not only must we be prepared to fight a two-front war, we must have the capacity to prevail in such a war. Only then does war become an option. You can't decide after a terrorist strike that you will go to war. You have to prepare for war. Then, if a situation like this arises, without boasting about it, you declare war.

Of course, there is this whole argument that Pakistan has a nuclear umbrella. But I don't think that is a

deterrent to war from our side. We also have a nuclear umbrella. I don't see China trembling and saying India is a nuclear country, we must not do anything to provoke it. The nuclear issue is not an issue.

## The decision is political

The capacity to prevail in a confrontation is an issue. If that is absent, talking of going to war is a waste of breath. Political leaders are running an electoral campaign, and by striking manly postures, they think they will win votes. But they are only going to be exposed. Nowhere in the world does the army decide to go to war. Political leaders do not say, we give the army

a free hand. War is an act of political intent. The army fights wars. It does not decide whether or not to go to war. That decision is a political one, and this has already been made for us. It is made every year when we announce our Budget and make miserly defence allocations.

Today, even where we talk about specific acquisitions, these would only partially meet our requirements of 15 or 20 years ago, not our requirements today. So, how is war even an option? Of course, if we are forced, the armed forces will fight, but they would have to do so with both hands tied.

As told to Anuradha Raman

IT'S COMPLICATED



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If we consider war, we must think rationally about its impact and the desired end result

Is the terrorist act in Pulwama an act of war? Is it akin to the 2001 attack on Parliament, which, being an attack on India's symbol of democracy, was considered as one and Operation Parakram was launched? In one sense, the attack in Pulwama may not be an act of war because, though the number of brave Indians lost was far too many (and even one life lost is one too many), Parliament carries an indelible significance of India's nationhood. However, the attack, if seen as a dare to India's military power and to the Indian government's

writ, could be termed an act of war because its sheer audacity makes it a strike on India's pride as a sovereign independent nation.

Nations cannot be reformed but managed. Germany and Japan are exceptions, but it took World War II, tens of thousands of lives, and trillions of dollars to make them democratic entities. The shrill cries for emasculating Pakistan so that it stops aiding terrorism from its soil are not grounded in reality. This also does not mean accepting the status quo of the past decades, with Pakistan-aided terrorists killing In-

dians on and off.

## Issues to consider

Four basic issues have to be taken into account for taking a decision. First and foremost, what is the desired end state:

destruction of the Pakistan army, which yields real power, or an action that buys a greater duration of peace? Second, if war is the solution, what would be the economic and social impact on India? Third, India has international support now, but would that be the case in a long-drawn-out affair? China will never dump Pakistan due to its large economic and geopolitical stakes in Islamabad. The U.S.,



though it has professed its strategic partnership with India, has made its exit from Afghanistan its first priority. It needs Pakistan in its talks with the Taliban and hence there are limits to its support.

Russia, too, has its own interests in Kabul, especially after the American exit, and hence requires Pakistan as an intermediary. Thus, geopolitically, Pakistan has the upper hand in pulling the power strings. Finally, should cold, calculated logic decide the future course of action or should public pressure and electoral calculations be the catalysts?

The answer to the last question is simple, though vital: national inter-

ests override every other argument. The answers to the other questions are governed by the following facts. If escalation occurs through kinetic action, there would obviously be a loss of human lives – and India needs to be prepared for that. Here, the red herring of the nuclear factor needs to be removed. In terms of economic costs, the 1999 Kargil conflict made India poorer by many tens of thousands of crores (no official data are available and estimates vary greatly). More importantly, we lost 527 brave Indians trying to re-take those hills. Diversion of monies (and they would be substantial and long-drawn-out) towards fighting efforts would denude finance required for

addressing the economic and social realities of India.

## Some years of peace

So, is war an option? Of course it is, with the above points rationally thought through. Once the government decides to go down the kinetic path, the armed forces are ready. The 'reformation' of Pakistan vis-à-vis India is not possible but this may get us some years of peace. The peace dividend can be elongated by managing our diplomacy with other countries so that subsequently their acceptance of India's just position serves as a deterrent to Pakistan's inimical stance towards India.

Views are personal

SINGLE FILE

## Holding a mirror to war

The technology of warfare has evolved, but grief and loss remain

ANJALI THOMAS



In the aftermath of the suicide bombing in Pulwama district on February 14, which killed 40 Central Reserve Police Force personnel, war seems to be on the collective mind of the nation with some baying for blood and others cautioning restraint.

Few words in the English language evoke such powerful emotions: patriotism and glory, love and hate, fear and anger, hope and despair. For centuries, poets have borne witness to the strife that humans have inflicted upon themselves since the birth of civilisation. Just as the technology of warfare has evolved from spears to drones, the tenor of war poems has changed too.

*The Iliad*, one of the oldest war poems, glorifies heroes. It begins, not with the abduction of Helen that sparked the battle of Troy, but with the wrath of Achilles. It ends, not with the rape of Troy, but the death of another hero, Hector. In *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, Alfred Tennyson flogs the motif of heroism in the 1854 Battle of Balaclava: as the cavalry rides into the valley of Death knowing that someone had blundered, theirs was not to reason why, "theirs but to do and die".

World War I poetry began on a patriotic note too, but soldier-poets – half buried in the trenches and witness to the slaughter that their generals had sent them to – began to revolt. Wilfred Owen upended the Roman poet Horace's view of patriotism: "My friend, you would not tell with such high zest/To children ardent for some desperate glory,/The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est Pro patria mori* [It is sweet and fitting to die for one's country]".

Even for the triumphant, the battlefield is a place that births nightmares. In the poem, "The King Speaks to the Scribe," by Keki N. Daruwalla, Emperor Ashoka contemplates the cost of his victory at Kalinga: "The battlefield stank so that heaven/had to hold a cloth to its nose. I trod/this plain, dark and glutinous with gore,/my chariot-wheels squelching in the bloody mire."

By World War II, the instruments used in battle had changed. Planes and submarines provided distance from the violence, drowning out the agony of the dying. Today, drones have dehumanised war into video games. The heroism and horror in war poetry has given way to cynicism, satire, and alienation.

One emotion, however, remains unchanged: loss. Achilles mourned the death of his best friend. The World War I poets mourned the loss of innocence. Sarojini Naidu, in her 1915 poem, "The Gift of India," gives voice to the motherland who grieves for the soldiers that have been torn from her breast to the "drum-beats of duty sabres." Hatred may fuel a war, but what remains is loss and grief. Our failure to acknowledge this by allowing the narrative to be taken over by an army of trolls is a disservice to the nation. As Mr. Daruwalla writes in 'At War': "...haven't we enough on our plate/without having to think of war/and blood-stained jihad?"

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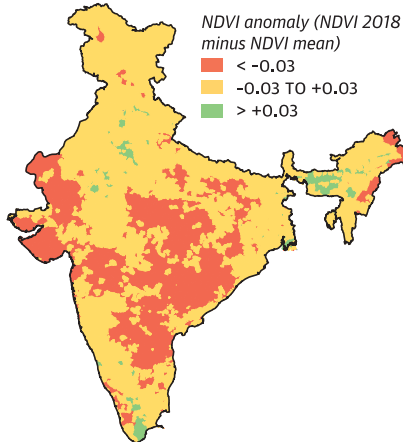
DATA POINT

## Good crop, bad crop

Severe shortage of rainfall in 2018 reduced soil moisture across several States. This has led to weaker or sparser vegetation. By **Vignesh R**

### No green shoots

The map depicts the change in vegetation in 2018 compared to the mean vegetation between 2010 and 2017, in 4,449 blocks across all districts in the country. This change is called **NDVI\* anomaly**. Blocks in red had sparser or weaker vegetation in 2018 than the mean. Blocks in green had thicker or healthier vegetation in 2018 than the mean. Blocks in yellow had negligible change in 2018 from the mean. Sparser vegetation means that the quantity of crops is affected. Weaker vegetation means that the quality of crops is affected



The blocks with NDVI anomaly in red mostly match with those which had inferior soil moisture (see earlier data point on February 6)

The Normalised Difference Vegetation Index\* (NDVI) is used to measure the health and vitality of vegetation. Healthy or dense vegetation reflects more near-infrared light (NIR) but less red light (RED) as chlorophyll absorbs RED. On the other hand, if the vegetation is weak or sparse, the NIR reflection is less and the RED reflection is more

$$NDVI = \frac{NIR - RED}{NIR + RED}$$

This value will always be between +1 and -1. A positive value indicates healthy or dense vegetation and a negative value indicates the opposite.

We calculated the NDVI value for June to December 2018 (both the Kharif and Rabi seasons) and compared it with the mean NDVI value for the same months from 2010 to 2017

### Quantifying the difference

The higher the share of blocks with sparser or weaker vegetation in a State, the higher the possibility of farm distress. The table shows the percentage of blocks in each State which had sparser or weaker vegetation in 2018 compared to the 2010-2017 mean. For example, in Gujarat, 70% of blocks had sparser or weaker vegetation in 2018 than the mean. This shows that the crops in those blocks in 2018 either lacked the quality achieved or were lower in quantity compared to the mean period

State	%	State	%
Gujarat	70.2	Jharkhand	25.8
A.P.	66.8	U.P.	22.7
Chhattisgarh	64.6	Bihar	21.2
Maharashtra	56.2	Arunachal	18.8
Kerala	52.4	Rajasthan	15.1
M.P.	49.6	Tamil Nadu	9.7
Odisha	47.7	J&K	7.1
Manipur	40.0	Himachal	5.3
India avg.	38.2	Uttarakhand	5.0
Nagaland	36.4	West Bengal	4.0
Karnataka	26.0	Assam	1.2

### Pinch of salt

While the lack of soil moisture is an accurate indicator of drought, NDVI anomaly is not. For example, 52% of the blocks in Kerala had sparser or weaker vegetation in 2018 than the mean despite heavy rains. This is because floods too affect vegetation as they reduce crop area

Maps, data sourced from MODIS (NASA EOSDIS LP DAAC) and processed by **Raj Bhagat Palanichamy**

FROM The Hindu. ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 22, 1969

## President Ayub not to seek re-election

President Ayub Khan of Pakistan to-day [February 21, Rawalpindi] announced that he would not seek re-election as President when his present term expires this year-end. In an unscheduled broadcast from Radio Pakistan, he said his decision was final and irrevocable. President Ayub told his 100-million people that they would be free to elect a person of their choice as his successor. If his current efforts to resolve the political crisis through which the country was passing with the help of all Opposition leaders and independents failed, he would soon introduce constitutional changes before the National Assembly so that elections were not delayed. President Ayub denied that through the political order he had introduced in the country 10 years ago he was seeking to perpetuate his rule.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 22, 1919

## Bangalore Shooting Incident.

The following is published in the 'Daily Post' in connection with the shooting incident on Neelasundra Lines [in Bangalore] on Wednesday [February 19] during musketry training. A number of recruits of the 280th Infantry had to undergo instruction on the Musketry parade ground and there were twelve squads of men thirty yards apart aiming at targets with dummy cartridges. One recruit named Achtya is stated to have applied to the Naick in charge of arms for cartridges before this parade and was told to take one or two clips of ten cartridges which were lying on a box and he presumably took away a clip of loaded ones. The difference between loaded and dummy cartridges is very slight but the dummies have a few holes bored in them. The instructor on such a parade is supposed to examine the ammunition before the men commence to practise, but this man states that the recruit Achtya was not in the ranks when he went round.

CONCEPTUAL

## Commitment device

SOCIOLOGY

This refers to any choice made by individuals in the present in order to prevent themselves from making impulsive mistakes in the future. It is believed that commitment devices can force people to stick to their original hard decisions without wavering from such decisions under distress in the future. An individual wishing to lose weight, for instance, may choose to buy a year-long membership at the gym instead of a weekly or monthly membership as a way to force himself to go to the gym regularly. Making one's commitments or goals public to a large group of people is another common example of an effective commitment device that can help people achieve their goals.

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