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# Hot Military Pursuit by Means of a “Cold Start”: India’s Response to Pakistan’s Policy of Sponsoring and Supporting Terrorism

Philip Campose

India’s proactive military doctrine against its adversarial western neighbour is a sub-set of the as yet unwritten national security doctrine. The promulgation of the doctrine came about in 2004 due to a realisation that dawned on India’s security planners that a merely and solely defensive doctrine is inadequate to deal with a perfidious neighbour, which decided right at the outset, when it was carved out of India, that the very basis of its existence thereafter would find strength in nurturing enmity and hatred towards India. Although it may sound strange that though there was an ongoing evenly balanced debate in the pre-independence era about the merits, or otherwise, of partitioning India to create a separate nation-state for the Muslims, once the division took place, there was no doubt in the minds of the Pakistani leadership that the one thing that would bind the country together was hatred towards India. Otherwise, the way they saw it, how could the creation or existence of this new state be justified? Thus, from the early years of

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Lieutenant General **Philip Campose** (Retd) is former Vice Chief of India’s Army Staff and presently holds the Chair of Excellence at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies, New Delhi.

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its existence, goaded by the military, Pakistan has had no hesitation in selling its “geo-strategic advantage” to anyone who was willing to buy into it by funding Pakistan economically, or in kind, by supplying it with weapons. Initially, it was the US that fell into this vicious trap due to its Cold War and subsequent Afghanistan campaign compulsions, and now, many billions of dollars and F-16s later, it is China which has bought this offer, with billions of dollars of investment into the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. In the meanwhile, Pakistan also sold or hired out its status as a global champion of Muslim interests, a supporter of various modern-day claimants of the Caliphate, by providing access to its military capabilities, even nuclear technology, to other Muslim nations, for taking on their enemies, real and imagined, both within and outside the faith.

David Headley, the Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT) operative, who used his American name and passport effectively to carry out reconnaissance of Indian targets prior to the Mumbai terror attacks of 26/11, reportedly revealed to his Indian interrogators recently that he hated India because his school was bombed by an Indian aircraft during the India-Pakistan War of 1971. There would be similar stories being put out as explanations to outsiders by most Pakistanis about why they hate India. But it appears that in Pakistan, they are given no second choice when it comes to the question of whether they should have any other feelings, apart from hatred, for India. Right from Pakistan’s independence, its leadership decided, as a state policy, that Pakistan could survive as a nation-state only if every Pakistani holds, and nurses, deep disdain for India. This justified forming alliances at the cost of its sovereignty, it justified moving around permanently with a begging bowl, it justified tainting its school books with venomous text, it justified the four wars that were deviously planned and launched, and as a corollary, it justified the use of terrorism as an instrument of state policy, where “every terrorist who kills an Indian would be assured of a place in heaven”.

## **When Terrorism Becomes a Convenient Option and Instrument of State Policy**

Terrorism was honed into a fine art by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) much before organisations like Al Qaeda or the Islamic State (IS) were heard of. It was a direct offshoot of Pakistani President Zia-ul-Haq's diabolical vision, based on the experience and expertise the ISI had gained while recruiting and training Mujahideen for the Afghan *jihad* – aimed to cause grievous harm to India, at a very low cost to Pakistan. Not that he was the first to come up with such an idea. That dubious distinction belonged to Maj Gen Akbar Khan who launched the so-called raiders (namely, the tribals from Waziristan), backed by military regulars, to try to grab Kashmir and the northern parts of the Jammu region in October 1947, just two months after the Pakistani state was formed. Though that attempt failed miserably, it did not deter President Ayub Khan and Maj Gen Akhtar Hussain Malik in 1965 from launching tribals and military men yet again as part of Operation Gibraltar to grab Kashmir. That attempt also tasted defeat, primarily attributed to the patriotism of the Kashmiri people, who did not fall prey to the Pakistani machinations which took their support for granted.

President Zia-ul-Haq, after taking over power in yet another coup, painstakingly supervised the synchronisation of the military's role with that of the clerics, a potent mix, which has, since then, gradually destroyed the fabric of democratic institutions and the rule of law in Pakistan. It was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan that provided the opportunity to President Zia-ul-Haq to launch 'Operation Tupac', a terror operation derived from the name of a Peruvian revolutionary, "to bleed India by a thousand cuts". While the US government, in the early 1980s, conceptualised the idea of a "global *jihad*", utilising Muslim youth from all over the world to run a sub-conventional campaign against the Soviet Army in Afghanistan, the opportunity provided by the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA's) use of the Pakistan Army and its Inter-Services Intelligence as conduits for the

funds, training and weaponry, was seized by Gen Zia and his cohorts to plan a terror campaign against India in Kashmir and other parts of India. Fearing strong retaliation to such terror attacks by a militarily stronger India, Pakistan began stepping up efforts to develop nuclear weapons to thwart that possibility.

Once the nuclear technology and the weapons were in place, Pakistan strategised launching a campaign of terror attacks, starting in the early 1990s,

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in which hundreds of innocents were killed across the border in India. Further, ISI terror cells were opened up in Pakistani Embassies all over South Asia and became the medium for funds and fake currency for anti-India groups and activities. Around the same time, weapons and logistics from the US, UK and Canada, were provided to Khalistani terrorists who wanted to take over power in Indian Punjab through the bullet, rather than the ballot. Somewhere in between, perceiving success in these apparently 'low cost' operations, Pakistani planners turned their attention on Afghanistan too, and in a similar vein, launched the Taliban as their proxy, to take control of Afghanistan. Ongoing alliances with the US, China and Saudi Arabia during that period ensured that there was neither global approbation nor retaliation throughout against these gross violations of international laws and human rights. This emboldened the Pakistani leadership and military all the more to promote the combination of terrorism and nuclear blackmail as the basis of their security doctrine against their neighbours on both sides. The US government turned a blind eye towards Pakistan's 'beg, borrow or steal' approach towards acquiring nuclear weapons, while China provided technology, testing facilities and funding for the project. Falsehoods and denials by the national leadership,

like the denials of the Pakistani military's involvement during the Kargil intrusion, became an extension of state policy.

The attacks against prominent targets in the US on 9/11 using hijacked commercial aircraft were planned by Al Qaeda from their Taliban controlled sanctuaries in Afghanistan, linking Pakistan's 'deep state' to the catastrophic terror attack against the US, technically its ally. The CIA apparently was aware of 9/11 mastermind Khaled Sheikh Mohammed's close links to Osama Bin Laden and Pakistan's ISI. Moreover, there were reported Pakistani and ISI signatures in a number of diabolical incidents which occurred during that time, whether it was the meeting of the two Pakistani nuclear experts, Sultan Bashiruddin Mahmood and Abdul Majid with Osama Bin Laden two months earlier or the assassination of Ahmad Shah Massoud, the leader of the Afghan Northern Alliance against the Taliban, just two days before 9/11. Reportedly, the two Pakistani scientists had had detailed discussions with Osama Bin Laden on the development of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons for Al-Qaeda.

President Musharraf, thus, had to resort to a wily stratagem of denial and false promises to get out of a sticky predicament caused by the obvious links between Pakistan's ISI and the perpetrators of 9/11. His efforts at distancing Pakistan from them were hastily rewarded by the US, allowing him to pull out the Pakistani "advisers" from Afghanistan before the US and its allies commenced their bombings and missile attacks against the Taliban and Al Qaeda targets there. Yet, the ISI sponsored suicide bombing of the Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) legislature building in Srinagar by a Pakistani national Wajahat Hussain, took place just 20 days after 9/11, on October 1, 2001, but there was no serious international condemnation of the incident, as if Indian lives did not matter. The Indian Foreign Ministry issued a strongly worded statement aimed clearly at the Government of Pakistan, "India cannot accept such manifestations of hate and terror from across the borders. There is a limit to India's patience".

Farooq Abdullah, then Chief Minister of J&K, while eulogising the 38 victims, said “The time has come to wage a war against Pakistan and to bomb the militant training camps there. We are running out of patience.” But soon thereafter, on December 13, 2001, impervious to the rising universal anger against terrorism, Pakistan, through its ISI, launched the infamous terror attack against the Indian Parliament within a few weeks of commencement of the US-led campaign in Afghanistan, ostensibly to divert attention from the failure of its ignominious Afghan ‘strategic depth’ policy. The attack was carried out by nine terrorists belonging to the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) and the Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT), who operated under the close control and guidance of Pakistan’s ISI. The very next day, on December 14, 2001, the Indian government handed over a demarche to the Pakistani High Commissioner Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, setting out three specific demands: that Pakistan stop the activities of the two organisations; their leadership be taken into custody; and curbs to be put on the financial assets of these groups. Despite the clear ‘technical’ cross-border signatures, Pakistan responded with characteristic denials and counter-claims of “Indian deviousness”.

### **Operation Parakram and the Indian Dilemma**

The Indian political and military leadership were faced with a huge challenge in the face of Pakistan’s brazen attack on the most prominent symbol of its vibrant democracy, something that stood out in stark contrast to the appalling lack of democratic freedoms in Pakistan. The fact that the attack took place at a time when the entire world attempted to ‘stand as one’ in the post 9/11 global fight against terror was not lost on the Indian leadership. It was obvious that, on the one side, while Pakistan projected its support to the fight against the perpetrators of 9/11, on the other, it would continue its diabolical policy of terror against the Indian state, its democratic symbols and its innocent citizens. It resulted in the Indian military being mobilised for ‘Operation Parakram’, a military plan

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for punitive military retaliation. However, the attack did not materialise because the mobilisation was slow, giving time for Pakistani nuclear ‘sabre rattling’ and the resultant international diplomacy and intervention. Though pressure was successfully exercised on India to not go through with its war plans, there were no related compulsions exerted on Pakistan for stopping the terror attacks or for dismantling its terror machinery – because

Pakistan was once again being seen as the vital pivot in so far as the US’ campaign in Afghanistan was concerned. Consequently, Operation Parakram did not gain any long-term dividends for India and ended up being seen as nothing beyond a “year-long military deployment on the borders, which did not achieve any tangible results”. For Pakistan, it was ‘business as usual’ as evident from the launch of some of the most violent ISI sponsored terror attacks in J&K and other parts of India during the Parakram deployment and in its aftermath.

The Indian government and its military leadership were resultantly faced with a dilemma in the period following the pull back from the border. There was a perception all around that the year-long deployment on the border had served only a limited purpose and should not be repeated without a tangible plan that would force Pakistan to roll back its terror machinery. There was a number of questions doing the rounds, for which answers had to be found urgently. There was a flurry of questions that Indian decision-makers were confronted with. How long would the brazen terror attacks against the Indian citizenry be allowed to continue? Should it be ‘business as usual’ with the terror attacks allowed to continue unpunished, or should there be a coherent policy of a robust response? Should there be a new policy of ‘hot pursuit’ in keeping with similar practices in the past by countries hit by terrorism? Would a system of

‘nuanced’ flexible response be able to deter the Pakistani state and its military, which appeared emboldened by the fact that India and its military had no apparent solution for the terror policy Pakistan had unleashed so successfully? Should not a clear message be conveyed to the Pakistan government and its Army that the Indian government had the wherewithal and the resolve to put a stop to the latter’s terror policy once and for all? It had to be kept in view, however, that any new doctrine of punitive response

would imply a total change from earlier defensive doctrines, where the blame for launching attacks, both sub-conventional and conventional, had always been attributed to Pakistan. The related question was: in case India was to reverse its approach and opt for a more robust policy of retaliation, would the Indian leadership be up to taking the related hard decisions in case Pakistan continued to launch terror attacks against the Indian citizenry even after the new policy came into being?

It is not known as to why the option of ‘hot pursuit’ was played down. For some strategic thinkers and military planners in India, ‘hot pursuit’ has always been seen as a simple operation, which would easily succeed in achieving our national security objectives, at low cost. Examples have been cited of the Israeli experience in dealing effectively with terrorism from across its borders. There have also been past experiences of Turkey striking against the PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan) rebels who operated from sanctuaries in Northern Iraq. It has been perceived that, notwithstanding the related questions of their legality in international law, conceptually, such retaliatory actions are legally, and morally, tenable considering that they would be undertaken in response to grave provocations from across the border. Still, for someone analysing the possibility of such operations

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across India's western borders, it would have been obvious that these would not be 'cut and dried' operations which would achieve their aims easily at minimum cost. These would be far more complex, even if launched with the limited aim of taking out the terror camps.

Eventually, in the aftermath of Operation Parakram, the deliberations of 2002-03 resulted in the enunciation of the new doctrine of 'short, swift wars at short notice', announced in early 2004, also referred to colloquially as the 'Cold Start strategy'. The

brilliance of the new doctrine lay in the fact that, other than the initiative for launching war having changed sides to India's advantage, it would lead to an improvement of mobilisation and operational skills, contributing further to India's long-term military edge over Pakistan. It also put the onus of starting a war on Pakistan's continuation of its terror policy against India. Expectedly, the announcement of the Cold Start strategy led to bouts of nuclear 'sabre rattling' in Pakistan to dissuade the Indian polity and military from adopting the new doctrine, a practice that, not surprisingly, continues even to this day. The related flurry of articles in the Pakistani media were targeted at the US government and Indian peaceniks to convince them that the new proactive doctrine was going to lead to nuclear war, especially, when seen in concert with India's nuclear tenet of 'massive retaliation'. Consequently, even some of India's military thinkers, who would not have been aware of the finer nitty-gritty of this strategy, wrote critical pieces about it, thereby casting doubts about, and aspersions on, its efficacy in the public mind, including that of the Indian political leadership.

It was not that the new doctrine had any effect on the Pakistani deep state's traditional mindset. Because, in the meanwhile, Pakistan, while

projecting itself as being part of the global war on terror, commenced fresh meddling in the affairs of Afghanistan by making efforts to yet again prop up the Taliban and continue to provide sanctuary to Al Qaeda leaders of all hues, including Osama bin Laden, typical of its ‘running with the hare while hunting with the hounds’ approach. It continued to blackmail the US and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) forces in Afghanistan by launching well orchestrated attacks on their logistic supply lines from Karachi, whenever

there was any official criticism of the actions of Pakistan and its Army. And strangely enough, every time that hundreds of US and ISAF trucks were set on fire on the highways between Karachi and Afghanistan, it was the Afghan government of the day which was made to feel the heat, rather than the obvious perpetrators of these brazen attacks.

The enunciation of the new strategy triggered an upgrade of strategic, operational and tactical skills by the Indian military, especially the Army, to actualise the doctrine. Over the years, it built in many variations, with a view to refine the doctrine and achieve its war aims in a timely manner. The Indian military revelled in this transformation from a ‘defensive’ to an ‘offensive-defensive’ and ‘offensive’ approach. It led to operational and tactical commanders developing manoeuvre warfare skills and the related directive style of leadership as against the attrition warfare doctrines and authoritative style of leadership that were practised earlier. Still, the doctrine did pose some readiness challenges initially, but these were overcome over a period of time by forward deployments and other capacity enhancements that were undertaken in various sectors.

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The Pakistan Army has made many changes to its organisational structures, deployments and war-fighting doctrines in response to the Indian Cold Start doctrine. Forced onto the back foot, Pakistan's leadership realised that there were limitations to what its policy of nuclear blackmail could achieve in case India did decide to retaliate strongly to the terror-based provocation. To add to its woes, post the Lal Masjid operation of 2007 undertaken by the Pakistan Army under the orders of President Musharraf, which resulted in the formation of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), it appears that many of its home grown terrorists, who were recruited and trained for cross-border operations against Pakistan's neighbours, have turned against their erstwhile masters and are now attacking the Pakistani state and its military instead. As a consequence, during the last decade or so, much of the Pakistan Army remains perennially embroiled in counter-insurgency operations in its western tribal regions and in Balochistan, closer to, and along, the Afghan borders, increasing its vulnerability in case of a Cold Start launch by India.

### **Countering India's Proactive Doctrine with Battlefield Nuclear Weapons?**

India's military remains a march ahead in its capability to successfully prosecute this doctrine despite desperate efforts by Pakistan, with support from its 'all weather' friends, to neutralise the advantage. Introduction of nuclear weapons into the conventional landscape by Pakistan three years ago, through its claims of having developed Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNWs) for battlefield usage was one such initiative by Pakistan's strategic and military planners. In the spring of 2011, Pakistan fired the short-range NASR missile and claimed that it was meant to carry TNWs. In concert, its military strategists announced most stridently that India's Cold Start strategy had been stymied by this new development. And later, in the fall of 2013, when Pakistan claimed that its TNWs had entered

service, it presumed, rather prematurely, that the ‘last nail’ had been driven into India’s Cold Start strategy. Furthermore, making its dubious intentions very clear, the Pakistani ‘deep state’ resumed its *fedayeen* terror attacks after a post-Mumbai 26/11 lull of almost five years, by its launch of strikes in the Jammu region—on the Hiranagar police station and a ‘cavalry’ unit of the Army at Samba in September 2013.

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The international community, instead of assisting in making efforts to nip the new found terror-based belligerence in the bud, allowed the subterfuge to get away unpunished, thus, opening the way for many more follow-up attacks over the next couple of years—at Janglote, Mohore, Arnia, Tangdhar, Gurdaspur and Pathankot. To a certain extent, Pakistan was right in its assumption that the international community would not have the will, or the stomach, for putting pressure on Pakistan, considering that, with the launch of Operation Zarb-e-Azb by the Pakistan military in Afghanistan during that period, it had once again highlighted its important links to US interests in Afghanistan. On the flip side, it can be argued that, without the advantage of hindsight, nobody could have envisioned that the Hiranagar-Samba attacks bore portents of a renewal of Pakistan’s traditional terror policy. Nonetheless, if Pakistan had predicted the negation of the Cold Start strategy as an outcome of Rawalpindi’s development of TNWs, it has been proven wrong as there are no reports that this has taken place. On the contrary, it is now obvious that development of TNWs and the related implication of forward deployment of these weapons has only increased Pakistan’s vulnerability, as it would provide an opportunity to Pakistan’s terrorists of all hues, especially its ‘bad terrorists’ like the TTP, to lay their hands on

them, a catastrophic scenario for Pakistan, if it ever happens. Moreover, following the Pathankot terror attack, every terror strike from across the border into India would run the risk of building up pressure for a robust response, something that may well have occurred in January this year, had the terror attack on New Year's Day succeeded in destroying any military assets.

## Conclusion

It is more than about time that Pakistan realises that it has to close down its terror factories if it has to develop good neighbourly relations with India. Building hundreds of nuclear weapons or developing TNWs is not going to slacken India's determination to protect itself strongly and effectively. In a larger context, it has to give up its 'hate India' policy if it has to come out of the political, military, religious and economic quagmire it finds itself in. Even in the context of Afghanistan, its importance in the context of acting as a conduit to a regressive organisation like the Taliban would have limited uses in the long-term, where the ordinary Afghan citizen would continue to hate Pakistan and blame it for its efforts in keeping Afghanistan confined to the 'back of beyond' in developmental terms, to say the least. It must realise that forming strategic partnerships and alliances with all and sundry will have limited uses on the day India launches its proactive doctrine in response to a cross-border terror strike proven to be involving the Pakistani state and its structures. By then, Pakistan would have also paid a heavy price in terms of the lives of tens of thousands of its people which would have been lost to the innumerable 'cuts' that its own terrorists would have imposed on the Pakistani citizenry.

To that extent, Pakistan must comprehend that President Zia-ul-Haq's despicable and heinous policies of the 1980s have brought untold misery to the Pakistani state and set it on the path of suicidal destruction. Many in the Pakistani polity, military and civil society have realised that, in today's day and age, when the IS has left the ISI far behind in the

levels of hatred and violence that can be perpetrated against the common citizenry, terror-based policies have only limited use. They can only set you on the path of self-destruction. Instead, Pakistan’s leadership should set out new policies which lead to a change of the country’s image in the world. Till then, in the eyes of the global community, Pakistan would continue to be identified by the likes of 9/11 planner Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Mumbai terrorists Ajmal Kasab and Daood Gilani alias David Headley, San Bernadino attacker

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Syed Rizwan Farook, Time Square bomber Faisal Shahzad, the London bombers Hasib Hussain, Mohammad Siddique Khan and Shahzad Tanweer, the Pathankot terrorists Nasir Hussain, Hafiz Abu Bakar, Umar Farooq and Abdul Qayyum, and their like, all of Pakistani origin.

Strange as it may seem to many, despite the tenacity of all the above arguments, it would be mature to end on a positive note. There are some encouraging signs in Pakistan today suggesting that the current leadership, both political and military, may rise to the challenge, and may even succeed in stopping the downward spiral, and reverse this trend some day in the future. But the acid test for that will be the honesty, or otherwise, which the Pakistani government and Army displays in dealing decisively or otherwise with the JeM and LeT, the so-called “good terrorists”, in the wake of the Mumbai and Pathankot terror investigations.