India and Pakistan came into being in August of 1947. Ever since the two nations have been in confrontation mode, exchanging skirmishes at the Line of Control (LOC). Pakistan has fought four bloody battles with India but still maintains its stubborn and bolshie comportment. Continuing with its practice of infiltrating terrorists into the Indian side, Pakistan has become a menace. Pakistan is often referred to as “Terroristan- the land of terrorists”. India has lost thousands of lives because of Pakistan’s belligerent deportment, earlier in Punjab and now in Jammu and Kashmir. In its latest sponsored flagitious incident, five security personnel including CO Col. Ashutosh Sharma lost their lives during an operation in North Kashmir’s Handwara.

**Why is Pakistan the way it is? A rogue State.**

Ever since Pakistan came into being, its biggest obsession has been India and Kashmir. After partition, Pakistan in lieu of managing its disarrayed internal situation embarked upon a misadventure to capture Kashmir. And since that very moment, the saga has never ended. One of the biggest misfortune for Pakistan was a lack of credible civilian leadership. In the words of Stephen Philip Cohen “-Failure of vision. Pakistan’s founders expected the idea of Pakistan to shape the state of Pakistan; instead, a military bureaucracy governs the state and imposes its own vision of a Pakistani nation.” This shortcoming gave the army a chance to intervene and take over the functioning of the civilian government. At the time of partition, Pakistan received a large share of military personnel as compared to the share of civilian migrants from India. Ever since its inception, the army has played a decisive role in the internal governance and foreign policy, especially vis-à-vis India. Pakistan has always tried to de-indigenise its history, culture. It has always tried to attach its cultural habits with the Arabs like Khuda Hafiz has become Allah Hafiz, Ramazan is referred to as Ramadan.
The Pakistan Conundrum

A Pakistani soldier poses for a photo under Pakistan’s national flag. Image source: REUTERS/Mian Khursheed

It is quite paradoxical as the biggest Pakistani idée fixe is parity with India. The deploring economic condition, ever-increasing scarcity of water, dishevelled education system and growing radicalisation take a back seat in the breadth of bleeding India by a thousand cuts. Every nation has an army but the Pakistani army has a nation to rule. The only thing that helps the army to stay in power is by vilifying India and delineating India as the biggest threat to their survival. Pakistan has been fortunate with its geography and it has exploited it at the fullest. One of the biggest victims of this geographical exploitation has been the United States. Their dependence on Pakistan vis-à-vis Afghanistan is no hidden secret, earlier in the fight against the Soviets and later in the war on terror. America declared Pakistan as an MNNA (Major non-NATO allies) in 2002 which allowed the release of $25 billion of aid to Pakistan.

States employ different policies to conduct diplomacy with other States. But Pakistan is
idiosyncratic even to this common notion. Pakistan is the only state in the world which sponsors terrorism as a state policy be it in India or Afghanistan. Repeated warning from the US and other watchdogs like the Financial Action Task Force (FATA) has not yielded any significant outcomes. It continues to harbour terrorists and support outfits like Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM), Lashkar-e Tayyiba (LT), Indian Mujahdeen (IM), Haqqani Network (HQN). Not seeing any decisive and constructive outcomes, the United States suspended security assistance to Pakistan in January 2018.

The state of the economy is in total disarray. Lack of economic development has pushed Pakistan into a vicious cycle of bailouts. IMF in 2019 approved a $6 billion bailout to Pakistan, which was the 13th bailout in the last 30 years. It is not just the IMF who serves the beggers’ bowl of Pakistan. Countries like the US, Saudi Arabia, the UAE have always stepped up to save Pakistan’s economy from collapsing.

**Policy Dilemma**

Indian policymakers have not been able to come up with a definitive policy framework to resolve the Pakistan conundrum. India has tried both the diplomatic and the military ways to find a solution to the problem. But nothing has worked out so far that could deter Pakistan from sponsoring terrorism. India has shilly-shallied about going for an offensive response every time Pakistan sponsored a misadventure on the Indian soil. Even after 26/11, India’s responses were mostly limited to diplomatic and covert operations. Indian responses pre-surgical-strike were mostly dictated by the nuclear hangover. Surgical strike and Balakot strike manifested change in India’s attitude to take punitive and decisive action. But the deterrence which was expected to have been created have been short-lived. The artillery duel at the LOC will not for a moment deter Pakistan from carrying with its low-cost business of bankrolling terrorism. Artillery exchanges are mainly a defensive response to an offensive action of Pakistan. Artillery responses are just best at creating a distraction without any tangible outcomes. Destroying the enemy’s bunkers would be nothing more than collateral damage, which is very much acceptable to the Pakistani army. It helps them to maintain the parity, which they dreadfully want, with a much superior army.
India’s Policy options

India needed to call the nuclear bluff, especially the deceitful and lame threats of use of the tactical nuclear weapons. They have successfully managed to decimate nuclear hoax. But the intended deterrence has not been achieved. Pakistan seems to be an exception, to deterrence theory, as Helium is to the Noble gas family. Expecting Pakistan to be deterred by just one surgical strike or a Balakot strike would be an example of shallow strategic thinking. India needs a coherent decisive disciplined and long term planning involving all three wings of armed forces and intelligence agencies. India should formulate multiple deterring plans of action which could be implemented in a phased manner. Traditionally India has been reluctant in using air force, which was abandoned with the Balakot strikes. India should be considerate in using air power because along with the escalatory component it also carries de-escalatory component. Pakistan knows its limit on the escalatory ladder. So India shouldn’t be hesitant in pushing Pakistan to its brink. India should hit Pakistan where it would hurt the most. Any offensive military action would jeopardize the image of the Pakistani army. India can contemplate a two-prong one focusing on the asymmetric element of the problem and the other concentrating on the army. India should invest more in building up its capabilities to carry out operations like Neptune Spear. India needs to do
more of Balakot kind of strike which will directly challenge the army’s credibility.

“Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat” and “Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory” - Sun Tzu.

India needs to prepare a grand strategy to decipher this Pakistan conundrum which should take into consideration all the facets of the problem be it symmetric or asymmetric warfare, information warfare. India cannot let these tactical advantages go in vain. It will have to capitalise on them. Another important aspect of this grand strategy, which would need greater accentuation, is the bonhomie between China and Pakistan. Pakistan has always tried to leverage her relationship with China against India. China has obliged Pakistan, for its malevolent motives, on several occasions. A recent example could be an attempt to the internationalisation of Kashmir issue at UNSC meeting. India needs to excogitate for this inevitable prickle in this Pakistan conundrum

*The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Kootneeti Team*