

Why don't we learn from Chemistry? *

Kashmir must be a tough nut. Over the last seven decades, Pakistan with its ham-handed efforts could not possibly make a dent. India with its territorial obsession had indeed no chance. Both the countries, at times even seriously, though never sincerely, tried to put it on the back burners. But these Kashmiris, like their Palestinian counterparts, are far too good for their neighbourhood. Arabs at least have conceded impotence. The two South Asians remain in denial over their incompetence – and are therefore doomed to live from crisis to crisis. Whether the latest that kicked off on the 22nd of April was over or not, the best for us is not to do more of the same that backfired every previous time. Only the other day for example, I heard an incorrigible idiot asking the most frivolous of questions from an Indian: “how can you take an action without providing any evidence”? No idea how such of my compatriots could be fitted with a silencer!

These were pre- 9/11 days and somewhere something happened and dot on the script Delhi gave Pakistan the credit. The Indian Ambassador in Washington was asked if there was any proof! “The man caught was a Pakistani and that was proof enough”. He moved on to become the Foreign Secretary and was not available to answer a follow-up question. Soon after the twin-towers were brought down and fifteen of the nineteen alleged hijackers of the guilty plane turned out to be Saudi nationals. No one dared to take the Desert Kingdom to task. Mullah Umar asked for the evidence of Osama bin Laden’s involvement and his country was bombed for decades. It took ten years to find OBL but not for any proof.

Come to think of it: no evidence is needed; nor does it ever help.

Elias Davidsson, a German Jew, wrote two books to argue that both the 11s, 9 & 26, were false flag operations. The affected countries – The US and India – had of course already done what they believed had to be done. But the more relevant part is that these hefty volumes of evidence were never taken to any court even by those who were screaming for them. No one less than the then Governor of IHK, Satya Pal Malik, publicly proclaimed that Modi and Doval were complicit in the 2019 massacre in Pulwama. That did not matter; what however did was the Indian attack on a forest and the Pakistani reprisal. After the outrage of Pahalgam, another famous Indian, Shashi Tharoor, a former under-secretary general at the UN and a graduate of diplomatic double-speak, got it right: a befitting response by India was the priority and not who the hell might have dunnit. That’s precisely what in ‘Alice in Wonderland’ was the Queen’s verdict: “hang them first and carryout the trial later”.

Since most of the Pakistanis believe that the atrocity of 22 April was an Indian handiwork, Delhi must have worked out what next to do and is not waiting for any international inquiry commission. Under the circumstance, if anyone thought we had any option other than to prepare for whatever the Great Modi could throw at us, must get his or her head examined. Tempers on our side might be more tempered than across the borders but repeated assertions that this time around our riposte would be tougher give the impression that we were not quite sure. In a discourse, one must have noticed that a clueless participant shrieks and shouts but the more confident one makes the point briefly, concisely, and sits back. Our

version of *barking dogs seldom bite*: “more it thunders, the less it rains”; might be more refined but it’s the canine model that’s delightfully expressive.

I did not know what our defence minister had said that sent many a dog barking up God knows how many right or wrong trees. By the time I found out the puppies had been distracted but if the history was any guide they would be back. I suggest next time we hit them hard. If their problem is with the non-state actors, tell them that sanctioned by the state, ours are not. Moreover, no country in a conflict zone can do without them. They may have different names: Blackwater, Mukti Bahani, Kuka Parrey, Daesh, hitmen, or some other class of proxies; they serve the same purpose. Any country that does not employ all elements of national power to achieve its objectives would not survive to be applauded for observing laws that no one else does. Considering how effective the unconventional warriors are – Afghanistan is just one example – for a weaker country, they’re a weapon of first resort. Morality had always taken a back seat in world affairs; post Gaza even humanitarian arguments are for the birds. I’m not sure if Khawja Sahib talked about the successes our NSAs achieved around and beyond the borders, and the reason they’re so feared and we consequently under the cleavers.

Wonder what’s this noise about the suspension of some water treaty! Didn’t Liddell Hart, the famous British Historian, tell us that the “validity of treaties depends upon mutual convenience”. If the battles were to be fought in the courts, legalities might matter. But as the ground situation sets the stage, we can’t wait for some arbitrators to come years later to restore the flow of water. We have some autonomous means to help ourselves.

Social Media is the new employment exchange. Out of work, even if one was a fired cartridge, it provides us a perfect platform. Looking for money! Start a u-tube channel. I’m told no one has to watch it – accidentally pressing some obscure button does the trick. The best part is that one does not have to talk sense – in fact, talking non-sense was more likely to get you better dividends. But then nothing comes free and the blessings of the social media too extract a price. Don’t remember who said that the truth might eventually catch up but before that the lies go five times around the world. Temptation to look at whatever lands in your inbox must be irresistible – and so is spreading the falsehood. Anonymous posts were once banned but now even the authorship is faked. Deleting them faster than they arrive is certainly a good idea. If an information comes to you from multiple sources one could safely assume that it was planted. The more difficult part is to have the courage to wait till these were proven wrong. And BTW; any of us two gloating over fielding more fake stuff than the other might as well know that the Goebbelsian days are long past.

*such keh doon aye brahman, gar tu buraa na maaney
terey sanam-kadoan ke butt ho gaye puraaney*

(if you don’t mind Mr. Priest, the idols in your temple have lost their shine)

I do not know what India might do after it hyped up the latest incident in Kashmir but do know that there was no such thing as boxing oneself in what a semantic genius described as *credibility trap* (from which you can only shoot your way out). I also do not know how prepared we are to effectively react to any conceivable Indian action but have a good idea

that a country like Pakistan has a range of options. And if this message was credibly conveyed, one would be surprised how nimble-footedly the great acrobat would play a Houdini act.

- The title has nothing to do with the contents of this article – only inspired by Liddell Hart's classic: why don't we learn from history.

Asad Durrani

Lt Gen [®]

5 May 25