

IFF

The outcome of our latest round with India would be debated for a long time to come. In the meantime, most of us have worked out our own suppositions. For me the most relevant indication that we were getting the better of our nemesis was provided by the Indian High Commissioner in London. He said his country was prepared to cease hostilities if Pakistan stopped bombing India's military installations. I had always believed that these were the only legitimate targets and from the perspective of an old soldier who had witnessed two countries always fighting gentlemanly wars – hitting mosques and madrasahs was nothing less than blasphemous. It was now obvious that India had been badly hurt. People's mood is also a good index. Hand held guns were once primarily used to shoot partridges. When I saw our villagers taking pot-shots on Israeli drones, I knew they were preparing for Gaza. Dancing on streets would have been no surprise except when the Bobbies in the UK joined the festivities, one had a fairly good idea that Pakistan had won the war. I personally would have supported measures like blackouts and sounding air-raid sirens, but then had to accept that our hybrid era generations couldn't care less for the drills we followed before the BVR weapons drove the death knell into the age of chivalry.

Enough of this romanticism and let me talk substance.

It's not only the sorrows that come in battalions but also the blessings, and at times in squadrons. Besides the celebrations, paying tribute to the many who contributed to our feelings of elation was therefore absolutely in order.

People here as expected stood in solidarity and that must have been a great help. Airmen bore the brunt and came out with flying colours. Soldiers did not flinch and gave the adversary no chance. Navy's traditional role as a force in being effectively kept our shores free of any mischief. Both the civil and the military leadership get full marks for steering the wheel. Chinese help was the key and we probably can't thank them enough. The Almighty has always helped when we were serious. One person is however missing from this list even though without him nothing could have been accomplished.

Just imagine if Vajpayee or Manmohan Singh were ruling the roost in Delhi. Both in their time had handled the two events – 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament and Mumbai 26/11 – regardless of who dunnit; with India looking good and Pakistan on the defensive. Mercifully, it was under Modi's watch that we got a chance to settle the score – in fact, to payback with compound interest. The two late prime ministers were constantly egged to finish the job Indira Gandhi had started but they knew better. Narendra ji, though pleaded to show restraint, was programmed to defy conventional wisdom. I don't think I can recount all the favours he has done but following are a few I could think of:

Delhi had spent better part of the last two decades to get de-hyphenated from its troublesome twin. It probably was almost there but Modi mercifully restored the hyphen.

The international community – assuming that there was such a thing – was trying its best to shove the Kashmir issue away from the limelight. The youngest of the Abdullah Dynasty complained only the other day that already burdened by the family's collective sins, he was now blinded by the global glare

As if the Pak-China friendship being higher than the Himalayas and deeper than the Oceans was not already an ache in India's neck. Modi's misadventure has catapulted it in the cyber pace.

I'm sure many Indian strategic buffs are deeply worried by the turn around in the Army's standing in Pakistan. It was fast losing its image but one false move by the Hindutva driven clique and all these mercurial Pakistanis have rallied under the khaki umbrella. For that sin alone Modi-Doval combine must be court martialled.

And then for us there have been many other collateral benefits.

The illusion that Pakistan could balance its relations with the US and China has been blown to bits. Pak-US ties at the best of times were never more than expedient. Now they are merely an evil necessity – a reluctant upshot of Sino-US rivalry. By all means continue with some minimum essential diplomatic mumbo-jumbo or to meet any geopolitical obligations, but for heaven's sake don't ever forget Kissinger's caveat and the lessons of our bilateral history.

Peace lovers are nice people but when they want us to remain optimistic about Indo-Pak amity, I suspect a few of them are trying to lull us into slumber. We may see better days in future but not before the price of conflict became unaffordable for a country that smugly trundles along with the stalemate.

Our own media never went beyond inanities but in India, with its verbal onslaught, it had become an instrument of state policy. If it's now in disarray, one more reason to applaud the grand theatre of the absurd. Hope, it would retain its entertainment value like the ceremony that marks the lowering of flags on the Wagah borders.

The Region stood together – despite our short-sighted and knee jerk hesitance.

A letter of thanks to Modi is indeed due but don't expect that he would also do our part for us

He has helped us get back on the right track and we only have to remember that the conjoined twins are programmed at birth to cause each-other everlasting pain. But still no harm looking for any silver lining.

A young lady, Sophia Qureshi, was chosen to be the spokesperson for the Indian Military. Some of my compatriots described it as yet another example of India showcasing the Muslim card. Yes, it may have started when Maulana Azad was called the Show Boy of Congress but for me SQ's career record was so impressive that I could not help admire a system that lets someone from the most maligned community lead its contingents beyond the national frontiers. And then I was reminded of a large number of non-Muslims who served Pakistan with utmost devotion. Even a bigoted regime knows that the religion was no substitute for realpolitik. All is thus not lost.

No need to gloat over Delhi's relenting under Trump's pressure and shedding the veneer of a NO to third party intervention. India has always sought outside help whenever it was expedient. Ending hostilities and resolving issues on the table in any case would depend upon our mutual convenience and not because Washington got involved.

Ceasefires are always tactical — often to let the adversary lower its guards — and Modi makes no pretence that it was looking for a Nobel Peace Prize.

False Flag Operations go a long way back in history and like deception must be acknowledged as a legitimate tool of war. Don't hold your breath for evidence. Elias Davidsson produced tons of it to argue that the official versions of both the collapse of twin towers in New York and the four days carnage in Mumbai were highly suspect. No WMDs were found in Iraq and the then incumbent governor of IHK, Satya Pal Malik, publicly accused the BJP leadership in Delhi to be complicit in the Pulwama Massacre. No one held anyone accountable or take the evidence to a court. So, as soon as something like Phelgam happens saddle up your war horses. Use of Chinese technology was very helpful in these fateful days but please do not forget that a human being was the best weapon system created by no one less than the Hand of God. And just in case any rationalisation was necessary, make use of the wielders of the pen and the verbal warriors. Wars in Afghanistan and our periodic clashes with India have amply proven that they are up for sale and can keep the non-combatants usefully distracted.

The real enemy is always within. In our case it has done a marvellous job— kept us hooked to the opiate from the IMF; subverted projects like the CPEC; greased the right palms; and planted the wrong narratives. Fifth column is deadly and has even made us believe that it's the economy that would save our freedoms. Arabs are now so rich that to protect their mana from heaven they have employed thieves. The Taliban did one better—had the enemy finance their war.

Yes, for the stupid it's the economy, but Plato in his Republic rooted for wisdom

PS: IFF in the title stands for "Identification Friend or Foe" – as important in an air battle as in our daily lives.

Asad Durrani
Lt Gen[®]
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