



DAILY NEWSPAPER ANALYSIS

THE HINDU

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**Topic: GS3 : Challenges in the
Pulwama Attack**



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The Challenge in the Pulwama Attack

Context:-

- Recent terrorist strike in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district orchestrated by **Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM)**, the Pakistan-based terrorist organisation is now the **highest toll of security forces in any attack in the State**.
- The Pulwama Attack also poses certain **new challenges** apart from traditional challenges to India, which India should tackle it with cool headed and not to be guided by the immediacy of electoral considerations.

Classical Challenge Posed by Pakistan:-

- Whenever Pakistan starts to speak the language of peace (as seen in **Kartarpur Corridor**), it raises hackles in India because it seems evident that something unusual is in the offing and overtures are primarily there to bait India.
- It has been proved again at Pulwama, with the most dastardly act perpetrated **since the beginning of the 30-year-long proxy war in Jammu & Kashmir**.

New Challenges in the Pulwama Attack:-

- **The Return of Car bomb and the improvised explosive Device (IED):-** The return of this trend to the Kashmir theatre was predicted for the last one year. The trend had died out after the last effective IED attack, on an Army bus in July 2008, and the last car bomb attack, again on an Army bus on the very same road, in 2004.

- It was the progressive improvement in the fabrication of IEDs and car bombs in the wars in **Iraq and Afghanistan** and the **internal security environment of Pakistan** that probably *gave an impetus to perceptions about their potential usage once again in Kashmir.*
- **Suicide bombing** was neither experienced in earlier years nor has it manifested itself yet in Kashmir. Its threat potential, of course, remains live and its entry **could further change the nature of the proxy war.**
- **Increased in the Self Confidence of Pakistan:-** Pakistan's self-confidence has been increasing. This has been despite the **Financial Action Task Force (FATF)** surveillance, its reduced foreign exchange reserves and a failing economy.
 - **Reasons-** The **backing from China** and, most importantly, **Pakistan's enhanced geostrategic and geopolitical significance** in the light of the U.S. decision to pull out in full from Afghanistan have also contributed to it. The moment that decision on Afghanistan was taken, Pakistan once again acquired leverage with the big powers and all stakeholders for peace in Afghanistan.

Other Challenges:-

- **Loopholes in Indian Security Architecture:-** Initial investigation suggests careful planning, infiltration of an 'IED doctor' (a technical person capable of fabricating IEDs) and a module fully functional at work with a network of overground workers was present. This raise question mark on the Intelligence and military forces and their collaboration and convergence.

What Opinions Does the Indian Government Have:-

- **Diplomatic Options-** The diplomatic one is already under execution although the energy of Indian diplomacy to paint Pakistan red must flow longer and focus on not only important capitals of the world but also significant international think tanks and media.
 - The **Most Favoured Nation status** and measures involving **control of water under the Indus Waters Treaty** remain soft options, sans much optics.
- **Military Options-** A **risk analysis** would already be under way to examine a range of options or combinations. It could start with **covert operations** which can be ongoing, **to trans-border raids several notches higher than the surgical strikes and targeting Pakistan Army resources** as against terrorist infrastructure, and surgical air strikes against terrorist bases inside Pakistan. Ground-based operations restricted to Jammu & Kashmir and harking back to some of the options of yesteryear could form a part of the overall response.
 - **However, it should be remembered that Pakistan will not permit such actions without its military response, which too would be robust.**

Way-Ahead:-

- The Indian national leadership would do well not to be guided by the immediacy of electoral considerations; national security interests transcend this.

- Whatever are the selected options, the two things that would make for stronger execution-
 - political consensus (**A rare political consensus** has appeared in New Delhi); and
 - **management of internal social cohesion**
- **India cannot achieve its strategic objectives if Kashmiris remain targets of physical abuse and harassment, and minorities are vilified on social media.**
- It is a difficult time for India and the **leadership has to work overtime to ensure that the Indian armed forces have a 'firm base' to operate from;** that is always a military need anyway.