

Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, *India's 'Surgical Strike' Stratagem: Brinksmanship and Response*, [Khurshid Printers (publishers) Ltd., 2019], pp. 234.

India's Surgical Strike Stratagem: Brinksmanship and Response is the first book that attempts to provide a detailed account of Indian false claims of a surgical strike across the Line of Control (LOC). The author, Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, is a Professor of Politics and International Relations at Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad. On 18 September 2016, 18 Indian soldiers were killed in an attack in Uri that India swiftly blamed on Pakistan without any evidence. Eleven days after Uri attack, on the intervening night of 28 and 29 September 2016, India claimed to have carried out a surgical strike in Azad Kashmir. Pakistan rightly rejected these claims calling them an 'illusion'.

The book discusses the Indian *phantom* strike on September 29, 2016, as well as the recent Balakot adventure on February 26, 2019 and Pakistan's well-calibrated response. The crisis that ensued the Pulwama episode brought to light some important takeaways. Firstly, although a full-fledged war may not be imminent between the two nuclear South Asian neighbours, yet crisis instability entails dangers of escalation; secondly, the international community's blind eye towards India's claims of surgical strikes and recent Balakot strike depict an emboldened a risk prone attitude.

The book scrutinizes India's 'Surgical Strike Stratagem', addressing such important questions whether India actually conducted a 'Surgical Strike'? What was the authenticity of India's claim and how would it impact on the strategic competition between India and Pakistan? Why is it officially incorporated in The Joint Doctrine of Indian Armed Forces-2017? And how did Islamabad handle this issue?

The book has five chapters. Each chapter deals with different aspects of India's 'Surgical Strike' Stratagem. India's strategic philosophy and evolution of its military doctrines are elucidated in great detail.

Statements given by political leaders, military leaders and diplomats have been analyzed by the author in order to put into context, the evolution of doctrinal thinking in India. The first chapter, *India's Military Doctrine: Philosophical Bedrock and Evolution*, has two sections. The first part focuses on study of seven decades of evolution of Indian strategic thinking while the second part elucidates the theoretical framework of India's military doctrines.

To understand the transformation of the Indian military doctrine from defensive to offensive, the author refers back to the offensive realism associated with the Hindu Hyperrealist strategic thinking originating from *Arthashastra* authored by Chanakya Kautilya. It says that international relations should be executed for occupation of territory, accumulating wealth and increasing the influence of the state. Hyperrealism and Hindutva are two basic schools of thought dominating the Indian politics and India's military modernization program. According to the author, it is aimed at Pakistan, as India with its current military capability is unable to penetrate the protective fence of China. India's Cold Start Doctrine (CSD) also aims to augment India's war-fighting capabilities against Pakistan.

In the second chapter, "Phantom Surgical Strike: Mystery Unfolded", Dr. Jaspal, quoting statements from the Indian government officials and statements made by Pakistan, concludes that India did not conduct such a strike in 2016. He terms it as 'Phantom Surgical Strike'. However, the Modi government uses surgical strike claim as a powerful political tool to show that it has the courage to make hard decisions against Pakistan. The author points out that the Indian government used the fake strikes claim to shift the attention of Indian voters from Rafael aircraft purchase scandal of \$ 8.6 billion which had put the BJP's and Modi's reputation at stake.

At another place, Dr. Jaspal calls "Surgical Strike" a "Sham Strategy". The author discusses the military modernization of India and argues that the critical examination of India's military capabilities and the

defensive capabilities of India's adversaries reveals that Indian surgical strike is a gimmickry to achieve political mileage and shift the attention of domestic and international audience from the human rights violations in Kashmir. The author emphasizes that Pakistan's armed forces responses exposed Indian government claims of superiority.

The fourth chapter of the book, *India's aggression: A Befitting-cum-Restraint Response*, looks at the causes of Pulwama incident and the Balakot attack, violation of Pakistan's airspace and the appropriate response of the Pakistan Air Force. The Pulwama suicide attack was in fact a continuation of Kashmir's resistance to the oppression of Indian law enforcement agencies in Indian occupied Kashmir. The author observes that the insurgency is homegrown however, it cannot be termed illegal because Kashmiris were never allowed to exercise the right of self-determination as per United Nations Security Council resolutions. Kashmir is thus an occupied territory; and the Kashmiri struggle is a freedom movement and not an insurgency.

The last chapter of the book entitled, 'Risky and Illegal Strike', discusses the legal question with regard to conducting a surgical strike as India has claimed. The author analyses the legality of such strikes according to customary, international law and the articles of United Nations Charter. In the light of Article 2(4), Article 51 and Article 42(12), the author explains that such surgical strikes are not only against the spirit of United Nations Charter but also brazenly violate international laws of territorial sovereignty. This chapter also includes an excellent account of 'warfare and lawfare approach' followed by Modi and Imran Khan in countering terrorism. Modi chose to use military power whereas Imran Khan's response was measured and aimed at de-escalation of tension between the two neighbors.

The book has a brief conclusion in which the author postulates that a limited conventional war between nuclear armed states can escalate

into an all-out war and nuclear strikes. India's poor understanding of nuclearized strategic environment severely endangers the strategic stability in South Asia. In this context, the book has explored an important aspect about India's No-First Use Nuclear Policy. The author points out that there is a potential gray area about India's use of nuclear weapons. Post Pulwama Nuclear submarine deployment reveals that India may follow First-Use policy in a conflict without formal revisions in its nuclear doctrine.

Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal's book is the first book that presents the Pakistani perspective on the dangerous evolution in Indian thinking towards self-styled notion of preemption and sham surgical strikes. The author offers a factual account of events and gives an objective analysis of India's claim of surgical strikes in Azad Kashmir on Pakistani territory and likely outcome of this Indian policy. There is repetition in the book, as the second and third chapters, although with the similar subject matter, have been divided into two separate chapters. The language of book is easy to understand. It is a valuable addition to the literature, in the backdrop of recent developments in Indo-Pak relations. The analysis of the present situation makes the book valuable for students and academics of the current political climate in South Asia. Dr. Jaspal gives due credit to the restraint exercised by Pakistani political elite, armed forces and media in avoidance of escalation of tensions and war with India.

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