

India's "Surgical Strike 2.0" against Pakistan or Big Bollywood Spectacle?

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India is portraying its first aerial violation of the Line of Control (LoC) in nearly half a century as another "surgical strike" against Pakistan that followed in the footsteps of the operation that it claimed to have pulled off without evidence in 2016, but in the absence of any proof to once again back up its assertion and considering that Pakistan already presented contradictory photographic evidence proving that the so-called "attack" only destroyed a couple of trees, it's clear that this was just another big Bollywood spectacle for infowar purposes.

Facts First

India dramatically claimed to have pulled off another "surgical strike" against Pakistan in the early hours of 26 February, declaring that 200-300 members of Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) were killed in retaliation for the group's involvement in the [Pulwama attack](#). The country's media is wildly celebrating what their government portrayed as a massive victory over Pakistan after the Indian Air Force violated the Line of Control (LoC) for the first time since the 1971 war with their neighbor and didn't instantly trigger a larger conflict. The message being conveyed to their citizens is that India can "surgically strike" Pakistan at will without repercussions, but the actual facts of the matter state something altogether different and show that this is nothing more than a big Bollywood spectacle for infowar purposes.

Here are the facts as they objectively exist at the time of writing:

1. *The Pulwama attack was the worst Indian military loss in a generation;*
2. *India reactively blamed the Pakistani state for involvement in the attack without presenting evidence;*
3. *The Indian Air Force violated the LoC for the first time since 1971;*
4. *Pakistan [proved](#) that only a few trees were destroyed and no infrastructure damaged or people killed;*
5. *Islamabad says that the Indian jets shed their payload in fright to jettison extra weight as they fled;*
6. *New Delhi denies that its jets were chased out of Pakistani airspace by its neighbors';*
7. *India presented no evidence to back up its claims that it killed 200-300 JeM fighters;*
8. *and Pakistan vowed to respond to this border violation at a "[time and place of its choosing](#)".*

Modi's Motivations

Accepting the publicly verifiable veracity of the abovementioned facts, it's possible to piece together the motivations that Indian Prime Minister Modi had for ordering this stunt. The first and most obvious one that comes to mind is that it was a re-election ploy to ensure his victory ahead of this May's polls, seeing as how it temporarily appeased his party's chest-thumping ultra-jingoist base that's been braying for blood even prior to the Pulwama attack. He's able to present this as an "unprecedented foreign policy success" against his countrymen's hated neighbor and show that he's "tough on terror". Correspondingly, he can continue to contrast his two "surgical strikes" with the lack of a "kinetic response" to the 2008 Mumbai attack that the Congress opposition blamed on Pakistan when it was in power at the time.

In parallel with this, Modi also wants to shape international perceptions about his country and Pakistan. Per the first-mentioned, he wants it to appear like a "rising military superpower" capable of carrying out "surgical strikes" against another nuclear-armed state without triggering World War III, something that neither the US nor Russia have ever claimed to do against one another even during the height of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. Pertaining to Pakistan, Modi wants to paint the country as a "state sponsor of terrorism" that's "militarily weak" and perennially on the edge of "sliding into instability" because it "can't control its own borders". These weaponized narratives are supposed to deter states and private citizens alike from investing in the globally game-changing China-Pakistan Economic Corridor ([CPEC](#)), which India opposes on the basis of its maximalist claims to the [Kashmir Conflict](#).

Strategic Context

All of this is occurring in a specific strategic context. Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov [warned](#) earlier this week against India being used by the US to "contain" China through what he said is the "artificially imposed" concept of the "Indo-Pacific Region". Seeing as how CPEC is the Belt & Road Initiative's ([BRI](#)) flagship project, the latter of which is the engine of the [emerging Multipolar World Order](#), it makes sense why India and its American ally are jointly waging a [Hybrid War on CPEC](#) through interconnected terrorist and infowar aggression, especially in the strategically located Pakistani province of Balochistan where the megaproject's terminal port of Gwadar is based. About that aspect of this unconventional conflict, India recently succeeded in [manipulating Iran into blaming Pakistan](#) for the spillover effect of this campaign and even getting Tehran to [imply the threat](#) of its own cross-border strike last week.

Bearing this backdrop in mind, India's latest claim to have carried out its second "surgical strike" against Pakistan in less than three years correlates perfectly with its desire to destabilize its neighbor and the CPEC project that it hosts on behalf of its new American patron in the larger context of the US' New Cold War competition against China. Neither "surgical strike" accomplished anything of military significance because both were intended from the get-go to be infowar provocations that would negatively shape international perceptions about Pakistan and scare off foreign investment in CPEC, which could have in turn indirectly led to setbacks for China's grand strategy if they were successful. The latest one, however, saw India dangerously violating the LoC for the first time in almost half a century, which it may have partially done in an attempt to inspire Iran to do something similar.

Debunking The Bollywood Bluster

Three simple points debunk the Bollywood bluster behind India's false claims of "victory":

1. *The absence of any evidence implicating Pakistani state institutions for involvement in the Pulwama attack means that India's "surgical strike" claim is technically an aggressive violation of international law, which is counterproductive for its desired soft power gains.*
2. *The absence of any evidence proving that 200-300 JeM members were killed means that India's "surgical strike" claim is a lie and intended to cover up its military failure of being too fearful to attack Pakistan while inside of its territory, which is counterproductive for its desired military reputation.*
3. *In view of the aforementioned and the fact that Pakistan is unfazed by this "surgical strike" claim and wasn't destabilized by it in the least, India's stunt actually bolstered its rival's international standing and counterproductively proved why the [global pivot state](#) is more than suitable for foreign investment.*

Concluding Thoughts

Far from being the "devastating blow" against Pakistan that many in both the Mainstream and [Alternative Medias](#) are presenting it as, India's latest claims of a "surgical strike" backfired against it after the absence of any evidence confirming the attack or even the supposed "justification" for it (i.e. that Pakistani state institutions were involved in the Pulwama attack) exposed this stunt as being nothing more than a big Bollywood spectacle for infowar purposes. This entire operation failed with every one of its intended objectives because the easily obtainable truth actually harms India's soft power and military reputation instead of Pakistan's, Iran wisely didn't emulate India's example, and CPEC has yet to be destabilized by New Delhi's hand at its American ally's behest. Like all Bollywood productions, "the show must go on", but the "surgical strike" series won't have a happy ending for India.

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