

er claimed more con-
gress will join the Saf-
ron party. —OPB

transfer based on our request," a
party member said.
According to party sources,
Siddaramaiah had informed the
party leadership that while he

not go-
Congress party.
Congress sources say the CM's
choice of chief secretary is likely to
prevail over the party's.

leased at the rate of 11,000 cusecs for a day
or 2,831.7 crore litres of water.

which then CM SM Krishna said was not possible. He was hauled up for contempt of court and
forced to release the water.

The Best Time For Modi To Break Out Of Terror Logjam

The Needle's Eye



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As usual, after a major terrorist attack, we have had a few days of jingoism. One journalist tweets that 'this India' has moved on from strategic restraint. Television anchors burst a few blood vessels urging retaliatory attacks after Uri and 'surgical strikes' across the Line of Control. A senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) functionary recasts biblical revenge to demand a jaw for a tooth. Senior cabinet ministers label Pakistan a terrorist state. Military commanders say they are ready and prepared to deliver a fitting response to Pakistan at a time and place of India's choosing. Then we simmer down. Why do we simmer down after each outrage?

It does not take a rocket scientist to remember that India and Pakistan are the only two hostile nuclear-armed neighbours in the world who share a volatile 3,300-kilometre bor-

der. The two countries have bristled with implied nuclear threats at least four times since their coming-out in 1998 tests. They have fought four wars, and skirmished hundreds of times. Cross-frontier shelling is a regular occurrence. To make matters worse, non-state groups from Pakistan have been staging regular terrorist attacks on Indian targets regularly since the Kashmir crisis erupted in 1989.

Defence analysts know that Pakistan has been aggressively developing its nuclear arsenal. Its Nasr short-range battlefield missile is touted as a low-yield, highly mobile and tactical deterrent for any likely conventional Indian cross-border attacks. Toby Dalton, co-director of the Nuclear Policy Program at the Carnegie Endowment, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee earlier this month that at some point, nuclear weapons "become a solution in search of a problem".

Commenting on Pakistan's heavy reliance on nuclear weapons in its equation with India, Dalton told the senators that India's economic growth, growing relationship with the United States, and improving military capabilities drove Islamabad's build-up.

After the Uri attack, in which at least 18 Indian soldiers died, Dalton and Carnegie's George Perkovich wrote that no conventional theo-

ries exist on how India and Pakistan could proceed in this sort of tinderbox situation: "Studies on deterring and defeating terrorism have not addressed situations in which the major antagonists possess nuclear weapons" and in which terrorists are the instigators of conflict.

India is set to step up its diplomatic offensive; External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj will tell the United Nations General Assembly next Monday. Pakistan, too, is going to beat its drum loudly about the ten week old crisis in the Kashmir Valley.

Do you get the feeling that India is looking like a lumbering giant being harried and wounded by a number of smaller predators? Just after the November 2008 Mumbai attacks, I wrote: "So where do we start? We need a national security apparatus with highly-trained counter-terrorism troops armed to their teeth with 21st-century arsenals stationed in every Indian state and answerable to our version of a Homeland Security administration. We need intelligent men and women capable of piecing together the thousands of bits of intelligence that can be gathered by more feet on the street. We need to be less impatient with security measures. We do not need nastier laws that confer huge power — with scant accountability — on an ill-equipped police force. We have

enough laws to tackle terror. But security demands a fixity of purpose, and a determination to out-think the terrorist."

How much of that has happened? In scale and shock, Mumbai was a rude reminder that India's security apparatus was quite creaky. However, it didn't prevent the United Progressive Alliance from winning a second term in office in national elections just five months

later. Mumbai 2008 was followed by the appointment of a new home minister, who promised he would be far more proactive. One by one, four National Security Guard (NSG) hubs were set up in Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai and Hyderabad in addition to its headquarters at Manesar in Haryana. Land was allocated only six months ago for a fifth hub, at Randesan in Gujarat.

However well trained and equipped, NSG commandos are at best a response to a terrorist attack. What about deterrence? A National Counter-Terrorism Centre (NCTC) set up by P Chidambaram has gone nowhere eight years after Mumbai. NATGRID, an integrated intelligence network, was set up in late 2009 to pull together information and data from hundreds of sources and dozens of agencies that would help to pre-

empt terrorist attacks. This was made more complicated by the fact that law and order is a state subject in India. Progress was slow again. Over five years, NATGRID signed on service providers and user agencies in immigration, banking and telecommunications. Land was allocated for a headquarters in Delhi. NATGRID also acquired some of the world's most advanced data-mining software that can be used to track and potentially predict terrorist attacks. But when Prime Minister Narendra Modi won power in mid-2014, one of the first things he did was to not renew NATGRID CEO Raghu Raman's contract. No replacement was picked until July this year. The current incumbent, senior police official Ashok Patnaik (coincidentally a son-in-law of former PM Manmohan Singh) is rumoured to be already seeking a new post. Eight years after 26/11, NATGRID is still being spoken of as being in a 'nascent stage'.

Both the attacks on the Pathankot air base in January and the Uri army camp last Sunday were apparently carried out by the Jaish-e-Mohammed, a terrorist group ostensibly banned in Pakistan but thriving under the patronage of the Pakistan military's ISI and the leadership of Masood Azhar. Remember him? He was one of the three terrorists freed by India in exchange for hostages aboard the hijacked Indian Airlines plane in Kandahar,

Afghanistan, in December 1999.

Let us not under-estimate the severity of the danger. How long will it be before terrorists target a larger military installation that might conceivably house part of India's nuclear arsenal? Why were all military installations in Kashmir not placed on the highest alert in the wake of the unrest? Why is the People's Democratic Party-BJP government in Kashmir not being held accountable for letting the situation worsen to such an extent that the Army is deployed in some districts for law-and-order duties instead of beefing up vigilance along the Line of Control?

It is high time India broke out of this logjam. Kashmir, Pakistan and terrorism are ugly inkstains on Modi's otherwise impressive copybook. The prime minister certainly does not lack support. A Pew Research survey published on Monday said two-thirds of Indians are satisfied with the way things are going in the country. 80% believe the economy is doing well. 72% believe their children will be better off than they were. As many as four of five Indians surveyed think favourably of Modi.

The only low score for Modi? The Pew survey said: "Just 22% of the public approves of Modi's management of India's volatile relationship with Pakistan. Half disapprove. This harsh judgment is relatively unchanged from 2015." Therein lies the nub.

WORRYING PEW SURVEY



Just 22% of the public approves of Modi's management of India's volatile relationship with Pakistan.



ANIRBAN BORA