

## Strategy of Stage Management

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States, at times, take actions that neither have rationale nor can be explained or justified. But, there is always a purpose behind it. India is no different. For it does not miss an opportunity to plan, execute and exploit gains from its stage-managed incidents to malign Pakistan for its self-designed specific objectives. Be it the attack on the Indian Parliament in 2001, soon after 9/11 incidents in the US, or the tragedy of Samjotha Express to sabotage the peace process, India seems to have mastered the art of stage-managing the incidents to divert the attention from domestic issues. As expected, the blame is always put on Pakistan without any investigation or evidence. Aware of its growing international stature, India knows that whatever it projects would be accepted, particularly against Pakistan and in the garb of terrorism and extremism. Thus, it would be able to attract the attention of the international community.

As the narrative goes, on June 26, 2021, “Two explosives-laden drones crashed into the Indian Air Force station at Jammu airport in the early hours of Sunday. The IAF said two low-intensity explosions took place in the technical area of Jammu Air Force Station. The first blast took place at 1:27 am and the second at 1:32 am,” causing minor damage to building roof.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has been tasked to investigate the incident. Its team has reached IAF Station, Jammu immediately. Also, to provide a legal cover to an age-old strategy of maligning Pakistan and its certain outfits, a police report was registered under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. Again, it is not surprising that Pakistan-based terrorists have been suspected to have carried out this unlawful act. However, what is different this time is the use of an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), perhaps to avoid getting exposed or to use a newer method.

India has been successful in its endeavors in the past. Table were turned, however, when Pakistan did its homework right at the time of Pulwama and Balakot in February 2019. Prime Minister Imran Khan had warned unambiguously that if India tried to venture into a misadventure to satisfy its constituency following the Pulwama incident, Pakistan would not think to act but act. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not take PM Khan's warning seriously and tasked India Air Force (IAF) to penetrate deep into Pakistani territory to teach us a lesson under the garb of surgical strikes against terrorist camps. IAF, perhaps without much consideration and preparation, launched a failed strike in the Balakot area in the dark hours of February 25, 2019; destroying a few trees. Lacking any proof, the IAF claimed to have destroyed a terrorist training camp; killing some 300 terrorists. Pakistan Air Force (PAF) did not disappoint its leadership and responded the very next day on February 27, 2019, in a multiple manner. PAF launched off-target strikes against Indian military sites and concurrently shot down two IAF fighters in aerial engagements. The pilot of one of the downed aircraft, Wing Commander Abhinandan, landed in the Pakistani territory and was initially captured by the locals. Afterward, Pakistan Army's patrol took charge and treated him nicely. Since Pakistan did not want a

military escalation, it handed over the captured pilot to India after necessary documentation at the Wagah crossing within a few days.

India's strategy of stage management as well as behind the lines support to certain separatists' elements is as old as the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. India's Prime Minister Modi confessed to supporting Mukti Bahni (A separatist outfit in East Pakistan) at the time of war against Pakistan in 1971, during his visit to Bangladesh in 2015. Likewise, India's support to outlawed terrorist outfits in Balochistan to fight against Pakistan's Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) was reported to United Nations, and a dossier containing proofs was shared by Pakistan's Foreign Office. Moreover, an India's Research and Analysis (RAW) operator Kulbhushan Jadhav was apprehended near the Iranian border, and Pakistan was able to satisfy the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in Hague about his involvement in illegal and terrorist's activities inside Pakistan.

Coming back to recent drone attacks on an IAF Station in Jammu, India has so far failed to build any domestic or international momentum against Pakistan despite its failed attempts at the international forum. However, India does not undertake such tactical operations without any strategic objectives. Therefore, it is incumbent upon Pakistan to be prepared for any eventuality, though the probability at the moment for expanded operations is low.

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