

NOT A BLOODLESS OPTION FOR INDIA

Relevant for: Security Related Matters | Topic: Basics of Cyber Security and related matters

hacker on binary code background. vector illustration - eps 8

Amidst U.S.-Iran tensions, an American drone was shot down by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in June. President Donald Trump delivered a customary response on Twitter stating that Iran had made a "very big mistake". A military strike was planned, and even authorised, but later called off by Mr. Trump who apparently favours bloodless wars.

In pursuance of this bloodless war, the U.S. cybercommand conducted online attacks against Iran. It is speculated that the strikes targeted Iran's military command and systems such as those that control Iran's missile and rocket launchers. In this context, a general question that arises is: Can India conduct such retaliatory attacks?

After every terror attack, India has few kinetic options to retaliate. Primarily, they comprise air strikes, ground-based surgical strikes, stand-off strikes from inside the border and covert operations. Additionally, there is the option to impose diplomatic pressure on Pakistan.

Following India's response against Pakistan, especially on the past two occasions, a few implicit criteria relating to the handling of the aftermath of an operation can be deduced. It is necessary to meet, or foresee the meeting of, these criteria before any operation is incorporated into India's arsenal of retaliatory options. It is pertinent to note that these criteria are not in the context of the operational requirements of the Indian armed forces. The criteria are: pre-emption, non-military nature, and deterrence.

First, the fulfilment of the criterion of pre-emption would allow India to argue and justify the operation on international forums. It feasibly falls under the exception of Article 2(4) of the UN Charter through the passage of self-defence. Second, in such instances, the operational aim has never been to target the Pakistani people or even the Pakistani military. Accordingly, it is imperative for any operation to be able to claim that it is non-military in nature. Third, the operation should be of such an impact that it creates deterrence, that is, it fulfils the purpose of imposing substantial damage on the enemy, which invariably leads to deterrence.

The conduct of U.S. cybercommand was aimed at the Iranian establishment, specifically targeting its military installations. If India conducts a cyberstrike against Pakistan's military command or systems, it will be termed as one against Pakistan and not the terrorists. The non-military nature and pre-emption of the operation will be viewed through the perspective of attacking Pakistani military and Pakistan in essence, rendering them as futile, for example in terms of diplomatic parleys. Further, a cyberstrike against Pakistan will call for counter-cyberstrikes. Instead of the intended deterrence, it will likely lead to an escalation. In such a situation, all or at least most of the criteria will not be met. Hence, a cyberattack is not a feasible retaliatory option for India at present.

It is, however, noteworthy that the dependency of terrorist groups on computers, networks and the Internet has increased. Various, if not all, terrorist groups use the Internet for propaganda. This can certainly be curtailed by any necessary cyberoperation. Most importantly, such an operation should not be a 'retaliatory operation' but a 'regular operation'.

A cyberattack can certainly be an option when the situation changes, and India decides to act against providers of safe haven to terrorists. In such instances, the Pakistani establishment

might be targeted beyond diplomatic pressures. The ability of the Indian armed forces to conduct such cyberstrikes is not completely known, and rightly so, given that disclosure of such details would take away the element of surprise.

The writer is a researcher at the Observer Research Foundation

Please enter a valid email address.

Long hours of work, no holidays and large vacancies in the force cause stress and depression

Join our online subscriber community

Experience an advertisement-free site with article recommendations tailored for you

Already a user? [Sign In](#)

To know more about Ad free news reading experience and subscription [Click Here](#)

or Please whitelist our website on your Adblocker

END

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

CrackIAS