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The Pahalgam abyss

Context: Pahalgam Attack and Its Far-Reaching Impact

- A deadly terrorist attack at Pahalgam targeted tourists based on their religion, resulting in over two dozen deaths.
- The incident highlights the persistent threat of cross-border terrorism and raises deep political, social, and communal concerns across South Asia.

The Pahalgam Tragedy: A Moral and Existential Crisis

- The brutal killing of innocent civilians evokes not just grief but a profound sense of moral disorientation and existential crisis.
- The article uses W.B. Yeats' imagery of the falcon spiraling out of control to symbolize the chaos descending upon the region.
- The moral clarity of the incident is stark: there is no justification, no mitigating context—only raw barbarity.
- Discussions about motives—whether geopolitical signaling, economic disruption, or strategic manipulation—seem secondary compared to the sheer inhumanity of the act.
- The most significant aftermath is the deep psychological scar left on the national consciousness and the inevitable political ramifications.

State Response: Justice, Revenge, and the Risk of Recklessness

- The magnitude of the attack gives India both the moral legitimacy and legal authority to pursue decisive action against the perpetrators and their supporters.
- However, the article warns that even the most successful military or punitive action would only provide momentary closure, without eradicating the underlying cycles of violence.
- Retaliatory strikes might satisfy public sentiment but risk perpetuating an endless loop of action and counteraction.
- It stresses the need for wisdom and restraint, cautioning against performative or reckless measures driven by anger or political opportunism.
- No matter the response, the horror of the Pahalgam tragedy will continue to cast a shadow over India's political and social trajectory.



The Pakistan Paradox: Patronage, Delusion, and Chaos

- Pakistan remains at the center of India's strategic concerns, with strong belief in its role in perpetuating cross-border terrorism.
- Since Partition, Pakistan has survived in global geopolitics by remaining indispensable to superpowers like the United States and now China.
- International patronage has shielded Pakistan's military establishment from genuine accountability, enabling a culture of impunity.
- The article paints Pakistan's elite as trapped in a regressive, delusional ideology, particularly an obsessive fixation with Kashmir.
- Pakistan's military doctrine thrives on strategic chaos: nurturing proxy wars, radicalizing religious elements, and destabilizing neighbors rather than building internal stability.
- The cyclical nature of Pakistan's internal crises ensures that even when weakened, the state apparatus regenerates itself through tactical, not structural, adaptations.
- Hence, even diplomatic isolation or military pressure from India is unlikely to bring about fundamental reform in Pakistan's behavior.

Kashmir: A Bleeding Wound Reopened

- Within Kashmir, while the Pahalgam attack has drawn widespread condemnation, the symbolic damage to the idea of peace is profound.
- It starkly reminds the nation of the fragility of the perceived normalcy and the ease with which violence can undo years of progress.
- The likely fallout will be intensified securitisation of the Valley, leading to potential human rights concerns, public alienation, and political distrust.
- Gains in local governance, economic development, and youth integration could be reversed, re-entrenching a security-first approach over community-driven peace-building.

Communal Polarisation: South Asia's Growing Faultline

- The broader and more dangerous impact is on communal relations, not just within India but across South Asia.
- Although tragedies often unite India in collective grief temporarily, underlying religious divisions get deeper over time.
- Post-Balakot, the public mood has shifted towards expecting rapid military retaliation, sidelining diplomatic patience and moderation.
- This shift endangers India's foundational commitment to secularism, with growing sections of society viewing religious division as inevitable.



- A disturbing philosophical trend is emerging: the idea that the incomplete partition either needs to be completed (through hard segregation) or undone entirely—both paths carrying catastrophic consequences for regional peace and stability.

Conclusion: A Region at a Dangerous Crossroads

- The article ends with a grim image: the falcon (symbol of peace, stability, and secularism) continues to spiral downward, with no falconer (no unifying leadership) capable of restoring balance.
- Justice may be served through targeted responses, but the broader, haunting dread of instability and polarization will linger.
- South Asia is now closer to a dangerous tipping point where communal polarization, strategic despair, and regional instability are fusing into a volatile and unpredictable mixture.
- The true tragedy is not just the immediate bloodshed but the deepening sense that the dream of a peaceful, united future for the region is slipping further out of reach.

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