

# It's advantage Narendra Modi all the way

**New Delhi:** India's air strike early on Tuesday morning, well into Pakistan territory in reply to the Pulwama attack on Indian jawans earlier this month, could well change the narrative for the Narendra Modi-led Bharatiya Janata Party in the 2019 general election.

Noted economist Swaminathan Aiyar on Tuesday said India's pre-dawn air strikes on the terror camps in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK) in a strong response to the Pulwama terror attack may have improved the prospects of the Narendra Modi BJP in the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections.

"I always rated Modi's prospects in the forthcoming elections as 50:50. This may now boost Modi's prospects," Swami told ETNow in an interview. He, however, said a lot will depend on how the situation evolves from here on. "The key thing to watch is how Pakistan responds," he said.

Reeling under the Rafale controversy, economic slowdown, growing unemployment, the alliance of Opposition parties taking a threatening shape and Priyanka Gandhi's entry into politics, the BJP had its back to the wall.

Tuesday's early morning air strike, destroying the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terror camp inside Pakistan, could put the BJP way ahead of others in the run-up to the 2019 parliamentary elections.

Within hours of the strike, an aggressive Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared at a public rally in Churu in Rajasthan: "I promise this that I will not let this country bow down. India is in safe hands."

Swami said Pakistan's economy is not in good condition, but that may not be relevant at this time, as the question of national honour is bigger than the economy.

He said this action is not a guarantee that there will not be any further terror attacks. "After Uri strike, there were more cases of infiltrations," he noted.

The Opposition, which was sharpening its knives to take on the government over the reported "intelligence failure" on the Pulwama terror attack, was not merely stumped but was all praise for the Indian Air Force.

Even as they chose to ignore the PM in their praise, a senior Congress leader pointed out: "No doubt Modi has surged ahead with the air strike." With the strike, Mr Modi has regained his image as a "strong and decisive" leader. A BJP leader said, "Now you know what the man with 56-inch chest can do."

BJP president Amit Shah tweeted, "I congratulate and salute the bravery and valour of our armed forces. Today's action further demonstrates that India is safe and secure under the strong & decisive leadership of PM @narendramodi."

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