

DETERRENT AS THE PERMANENT SOLUTION TO KARGILS

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It is most ironical that in spite of India's general aversion towards wars, and its persistent efforts at avoiding them, even, at times, at the cost of national interests, it has had to fight more wars since Independence than those fought by any other country in the world, during the same period. Evidently wars cannot be wished away and the only security against wars lies in being prepared for them, which we have obviously failed to do. As a matter of fact, except after the Sino-Indian war of 1962, when we trebled our armed strength to cater for, what we considered to be, the future threat from China, we have only gloated over our limited victories over Pakistan after each war but made no effort to put an end to this nuisance once for all. The chances of another would become clear from an analysis of the reasons why wars break-out at all between countries.

In international relations, the policy objectives that countries aim at in pursuance of their national interests may be categorised, in political parlance, under either "containment" or "dominance". Containment means peace as it seeks to maintain a status quo in the existing state of affairs, while dominance, which implies change in the present world order, is ominous of war. It is not for us here to discuss the justification or otherwise of the two policies. What only is pertinent to our subject is the fact that a conflict between the policies of dominance and those of containment is inevitable. This, in fact, forms the basis for determining the measure of the threat to the security of a nation. But not so, perhaps, for India. It has not at least been so for the Indian Governments preceding the present one led by Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee. When Mr IK Gujral, the former Prime Minister, declared in the Parliament last year after Pokharan II, that he perceived no threat to the security of the country, which could justify the Pokharan tests, he was only, perhaps, representing the creed of politicians who have ruled this land before him since Independence. Those politicians, though highly intellectual, were so idealistic that kept the country ill-prepared for war as they considered war as an evil and just could not see evil, hear evil, or do evil. Otherwise with Pakistan hell-bent on annexing Kashmir and still engaged in a proxy war with us on that account, and China not only striving to undo the Mac Mahon Line but also laying territorial claim on the whole of Arunachal Pradesh, large tracts of Assam, and some portions of Bengal, the inevitable conflict between the forces of Dominance or change and those of Containment or status quo as represented by India, would have been evident even to the most naïve and the ignorant.

The most effective method of containing the forces of Dominance is by maintaining a balance of power with them. The concept of balance of power implies that the armed strengths of potential enemies be so balanced as to deter one from taking recourse to war for settling disputes with the other. The forces being balanced, decisive victory is assured to neither – making wars pointless. Attempts would then be made to settle disputes through negotiations or other means of amicable settlement. Depending on the mutual deterrent that exists between the contending parties, disputes may even be allowed to lie unresolved.

Unfortunately, however, the assessment of a country's military potential is not dependent only on mathematical calculations dealing with quantities. Apart from numerical strengths there are some intangible factors, such as organisation, relative proficiency of each others weapons and equipment, strategy, tactics, quality of the soldier, leadership – military and political – that play a vital role in determining the war-making capacity of a country. Besides, the present trend

of short and swift regional wars, necessitated by the inevitability of international intervention for forcing a cease-fire, affords a head-start to the aggressor, no matter what the state of the balance of power between the opponents. There is, therefore, much scope for taking calculated risks, (which may ultimately turn out be miscalculated though), even when there is an apparent balance of power numerically. In short, therefore, whatever the outward causes of wars, the root cause is invariably the military imbalance – whether real or assumed – between nations with disputes. The same is true of our wars with China and Pakistan.

Outwardly the Sino-Indian war of 1962 appeared to have been caused by China's border dispute with India. But in actual fact it was the result of the total military imbalance between the two countries. China has an equally serious border dispute with Russia, then why does it not take recourse to war for settling that. It has even a better claim on Taiwan, with a lot of world opinion on its side but it dare not attempt to annex it for fear of American intervention. Pakistan on the other hand ventured on wars with India, each time miscalculating some or the other of the intangible factors that go to determine the state of the balance of power between the two countries. When Mr Altaf Gauhar, information Secretary to President Ayub Khan in the 1960s, wrote in *The Nation*, an English daily of Pakistan, that all operations against India "were conceived and launched on the basis of one assumption that the Indians are too cowardly and ill organised to offer any effective military response which could pose a threat to Pakistan", he probably wished to say the same thing, even if not exactly. This is not to say that all Pakistan's calculations were based on whims and fancies. Some of them were, indeed, genuine possibilities based on rational military thinking, but which did not materialise because of the some imponderables of war. Be that as it may, the crux of the matter is that though India has an armed force much larger than Pakistan, counter insurgencies and the defence of the border with China, leave it with a force that can just about balance with that of Pakistan and this precarious balance tempts Pakistan to seek a military solution to its dispute with India – a bloody nose at the end of each such attempt that it gets notwithstanding. Pakistan being a rouge state, prepared to strike at the slightest opportunity that presents itself, what India needs to prevent future Kargils is not just a plain and simple equilibrium of forces with Pakistan, as at present, but a pronounced tilt in its favour that would completely eliminate the chances of any miscalculations. In short we should be to Pakistan what China is to us at present. We dare not even call China our enemy number one for fear of reprisals. In practical terms India would require to augment its present forces, so that in addition to meeting its present commitments, at least four strike Corps could be organised, one each for Jammu, Kashmir, Punjab and Rajasthan, which could be either used to reinforce own defences at the point of enemy attack or for making a thrust into enemy territory at a point of our choosing to force him to roll back his aggression. By posing a threat of an open war with Pakistan, we would have also found a credible solution to the on-going proxy war in Jammu and Kashmir.

The increased demand of the armed forces on the national budget will no doubt set off the usual controversy on the Butter verses the Guns. In this connection it will be well to remember that there can be no Butter without the security of the Guns.