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INDO-PAK BALANCE OF POWER

Dear Editor,

In his article “Pakistan, Afghanistan and Kashmir” (KT Sep 8) Prof M.L. Kapoor has very correctly analysed the worth of the Simla Agreement. The way we are harping on the Simla Agreement one might even think that, it, perhaps, reflects a vindication of our stand on Kashmir. In fact, however, the Simla Agreement is an innocuous document that just recognises the dispute and lays down that it be settled in a peaceful manner through negotiation and without resort to the use of force. No doubt the Agreement may be considered as some sort of a no-war pact between India and Pakistan but who would know better than those connected with the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses that no-war pacts/agreements can never, by themselves, prevent wars because of the complete ease with which they may be broken. In practical terms what a no-war pact between two countries means is that the parties to the pact would remain at peace with each other till they decide to go to war. Military history is replete with examples of no-war pacts proving to be worth less than the paper on which they are written, as far as the prevention of wars is concerned.

What can actually prevent a war between parties to a dispute, that is vital for both, is a balance of power between them. Balance of power precludes chances of a decisive victory for either side, making wars not worthwhile and, therefore, meaningless. If war has not broken out between India and Pakistan it is because, (as Dr Kapoor also seems to imply though he has not put it in these words), of the balance of power that obtains between the two. In fact this balance of power has always existed between India and Pakistan and if still Pakistan has gone to war with India it is because of a series of miscalculations on its part on both the occasions. It is unlikely that Pakistan will miscalculate again. In any case having found a more effective and economical method of engaging India over Kashmir, why should Pakistan want so go to an open war with India. It is now India that needs to wage an open war with Pakistan to overcome the handicaps under which it is having to fight the present proxy war of Pakistan’s making. This would involve on the part of India, the establishment of a power equation vis-à-vis Pakistan which is much more favourable than at present – a task not impossible of performing but most unlikely to be undertaken under the present circumstances.

Dr K Brahma Singh