

To The Editor, Military Review, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, USA, 02 Jan, 1974.

Sir,

I have read with great interest the comments of LCDR Richard Davis on my article *Lest we Falter* (MR Jan, 1973). It is indeed heartening to note that LCDR Davis has taken so much pains to make a critical study of my article. It would, however, appear that much of the difference of opinion that has arisen is basically because we are on two different planes of thinking. One would, however, still wonder on what facts LCDR Davis has based his view point that “there is not only no fire there is no fuel either”. He must no doubt be having sound reasons which he probably he could not explain in his short letter but before accepting his view one would want to know how he intends to discount all the arguments contained in my article to prove that there is plenty of “fuel” for the “fire”. How is he going to ignore the fact that India has already fought four wars in the last 25 years; the maximum fought by any other country in the World during the same period. There was a time when we too thought that there was no “fire” or the “fuel” and we paid very dearly for such thinking. LCDR Davis could not appear to be wishing us well by suggesting that we slide back to that state of make believe and wishful thinking in matters of defence.

I would not agree with LCDR Davis for branding my bidding for a larger armed force for my country even if it be of a dedicated soldier. What I have bid for is the minimum that the country requires after taking into account the other commitments of China. Consequently I have taken into account a threat from only 20 Chinese Divisions out of a total of 110 that they possess. As a matter of fact they already have 13 Divisions deployed against us in Tibet. Is it too much to expect the Chinese to reinforce these with another seven in event of a war.

One percent of our GNP comes to about Rs 400 crores. This may not mean much to a rich country but for India in 1972, when the article was written, would have meant an increase of the defence budget by 1/3 which would have been sufficient to meet our requirements. How much we can afford for defence and how much we cannot form part of an age-old debate on “butter” vs the “guns” which is peculiar not only to India but also to every other country in the World including the rich. Can it be said the rich countries could not have put to better use the amount they are spending on defence. “Guns” are necessary for eating the “butter” – however little one may have – with safety and honour. That is the reason why every country must bear the burden of defence.

LCDR Davis doubts that India will ever become strong enough to challenge China. Well who ever thought (except perhaps Napoleon) that China would one day be strong enough to challenge the Super Powers. Or for that matter who in 1961 thought that India would even be as strong (reluctantly though) as today.

It would be putting the cart before the horse to assume that “tensions” could be reduced through disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. In fact disarmament would be possible only after tensions between nations are reduced. Tensions result from clash of interests, which may be political or economic, and they in turn invite the armed forces to the region. In any case it would not be fair to expect countries like India to unilateral disarmament when the root cause of most of the regional tensions is the chronic rivalry between the Super Powers. Under the circumstances it is doubtful if disarmament is at all possible but even if it was to take effect every country would still have to be allowed to retain some armed force based on some standards like the size, population, nature of the remaining threat etc. I am certain that judging from any

standard, India would be allowed to retain a much larger armed force even after a World wide disarmament that it has at present.

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