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Security objectives are not negotiable

Sir,

One cannot agree more with General AS Kalkat's suggestion in his 'A broad spectrum anti-dote' (April 27) that the proposed National Security Council should be restricted in size to keep it from degenerating into a mere debating society.

The bane of Indian security planning has so far been that it is based on the convenience of those responsible for its implementation rather than on necessity.

This is a legacy of the Nehruvian era. When Nehru was asked in Parliament in 1962 why India was not prepared to meet the Chinese threat, he said "defence preparedness was a relative term". Nothing seems to have changed since those fateful days.

The requirements of our armed forces continue to be decided on the basis of what we can afford and not the necessity. This mind-set must change. Wars cannot be avoided, least of all by remaining militarily weak.

Let us not bluff ourselves that we have managed to avoid a war with Pakistan. We are already at a losing war with Pakistan over Kashmir in which we have suffered more civilian and military casualties than we did in the preceding two open wars put together.

We should realise that our defence objectives are set for us by the enemy and are, therefore, not negotiable. It is the resources that must match the defence requirement and not *vice versa*.

K BRAHMA SINGH
Jammu