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**Wrong conclusion**

Sir

If we are to go by the usual definition of the cold war as being economic and political rivalry between nations without actual military conflicts, then it may not be quite correct to say that the cold war has come to an end as has been made out by D.S. Kamtekar in his article "Foreign policy – Agenda for change" (IE Jan 25).

The nuclear parity between the Super Powers that has made a war between them unthinkable is the phenomenon of the fifties. The dramatic cuts in arms that the Super Powers are making is not indicative of a détente between the two but is, in fact an attempt by each to reduce wasteful expenditure on maintaining the present capability of an "over kill" against the other.

No let-up is seen on the part of the Super Powers as far as their quest for sphere of influence is concerned. Evidently the Soviet Union has read the writings on the wall and has voluntarily granted freedom to its own people of Eastern Europe before they could acquire it by force. So nothing has changed as far as the Super Powers are concerned.

But even if we take it that the cold war has ended how does this affect us, when the possibility of wars (even if localised) between regional powers with clashing interests still remains. Whether the US will henceforth need us more and Pakistan less or the Soviet Union will need us less and Pakistan more, the threat to our security remains the same. We cannot base our defence against China on the supposition that the Soviet Union will be able to restrain China. Nor are our disputes with china and Pakistan capable of being settled across the conference table. It would be wrong to think that our dispute with China is just a border dispute. The fact that their maps continue to show the whole of Arunachal and Assam and parts of West Bengal as Chinese territory would indicate much more sinister motives than mere acquisition of Aksai Chin. With Pakistan the dispute is over Kashmir which, as rightly pointed out by Kamtekar, is a case of disputed sovereignty with no scope for negotiations. We may decide to give up for good what we have lost to both China and Pakistan but we would still need a good of armed strength to retain what we are holding. Diplomacy without the backing of armed strength is meaningless. In this context our diplomacy of the fifties was more a failure than something to feel proud of.

The requirement for the armed forces to be strong enough to face a combined threat from China and Pakistan is not based on some pretensions but on reality.

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