

Pakistan

A Military Challenge in The Backdrop of Nuclear Symmetry

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Contents

1. Nuclear Symmetry and Military Parity	3
2. Has nuclear deterrence made conventional war obsolete?	5
3. Nuclear Deterrence and a Proactive Strategy	5
4. Preconditions for a Proactive Strategy	7
• <i>Capability versus Capacity</i>	10
5. Are Escalation Control and Conflict Termination inhibiting factors for Punishment?	11
• <i>Escalation Control</i>	11
• <i>Conflict Termination</i>	11
6. Decisive Victory against Pakistan	12
7. How should one Organise for Conventional Deterrence?	15
8. The Execution of the Campaign	21
9. Punitive Actions under the changed Scenario	27
10. Conclusion	29

Pakistan

A Military Challenge In The Backdrop Of Nuclear Symmetry

Constant security threats to a nation impacts its societal development, national character, economic growth and territorial integrity. Holistic security can be ensured through military power which consists of coercive diplomacy, war and alliance using threats and force with the aim of coercion, deterrence and protection.¹ As a consequence, the role of armed forces in such an environment comes to the centre stage to fulfil the responsibilities and obligations towards the state. In his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech in 2009, Barack Obama said, “We must begin by acknowledging the hard truth that we will not eradicate violent conflict in our lifetimes. There will be times when nations – acting individually or in concert – will find the use of force not only necessary but morally justified”.² As violent conflict is unlikely to be eradicated, the nation’s armed forces must have the capability and capacity of credible military deterrence against conventional and sub-conventional threats under a nuclear overhang.

The late 1970s and early 1980s was the era of mechanisation of the Indian Army, led by the three generals: Gen Krishna Rao, Gen Sundarji and Gen Hanut Singh.³ This initiative was taken primarily to take conventional superiority beyond the reach and capabilities of Pakistan so that the Indian Army could concentrate and build dissuasive capabilities against China. But General Zia had different plans. While the Indian Army was preparing to establish conventional deterrence, Pakistan prepared a strategy to bleed India by ‘a thousand cuts’ through Operation Topac. This strategy of Zia has seen increased engagement of the Indian Army in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) since the late 1980s till date and confirmed Pakistan’s belief that this was a low cost war with very high dividends.

In 1998, India and Pakistan went nuclear. This led to a feeling of hubris in the Pakistani military-ISI complex, which launched the Kargil misadventure in 1999,⁴ and brought the two nuclear neighbours close to an all-out war. Two years later in 2001, the Indian Parliament was attacked by ISI-sponsored *jihadis* whom Gen Ashfaq Pervez Kiyani later called “strategic assets of Pakistan.” Since then, the attacks on Indian cities and the nation as a whole have not stopped. Another dimension to this proxy war was added on 26 November 2008 when Mumbai was attacked from the sea. Attacks using NBCR material, targeting ships on the high seas and attack from the air cannot be ruled out in future.

The events and the timings suggest that the orchestration of terror strikes and proxy war are part of a pre-planned military strategy to continuously bleed India under the shield of nuclear deterrence. The threat of conflict escalating to the nuclear level has been effectively used by Pakistan to dissuade India from taking any punitive action against the terrorists operating from Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) and other areas in Pakistan. India has so far refrained from crossing the line of Control (LoC) and the international border (IB) and has not carried out any punitive strikes against Pakistan. This has led Pakistan to believe that though India may have the capability to take military action, her focus on economic growth and sensitivity to public opinion will deter her from resorting to the use of force against Pakistan, given the latter’s nuclear capability. In the backdrop of the above, it appears that India’s conventional deterrence against Pakistan is slowly losing its relevance.

It is important to briefly examine what military deterrence is all about. Deterrence is a threat of punishment; it is a parameter to quantify or calculate the level of punishment that a nation is capable of bringing on its adversary if provoked. According to a study by the RAND Corporation, “Punishment-based deterrence may lack credibility in a limited conflict. An enemy that perceives that its stakes are high will be willing to bear greater costs and, therefore, will be less sensitive to threats of punishment.”⁵ In fact, maintaining deterrence is an ongoing military operation during peacetime to deter the enemy through the perception of serious consequences if he chooses to cross the red lines, whereas wartime operations are for conflict termination in one’s own favour. In spite of India’s conventional and nuclear superiority, if Pakistan still chooses to cross the red lines, there would be a need to re-

examine the overall deterrence matrix. In addition, India's inability to raise costs for Pakistan has given impetus to their efforts in continuing with the proxy war against India.

There are a number of questions that need to be answered to arrive at a plausible way ahead:

- Has nuclear symmetry brought military parity? If so, is proxy war a fall-out of nuclear deterrence?
- Is a 'proactive strategy' potent enough to impose conventional deterrence?
- Are escalation control and conflict termination inhibiting factors to take punitive actions against Pakistan?
- What could be a decisive victory against Pakistan in the backdrop of continued proxy war?
- Are Indian armed forces organised for conventional deterrence? If not, how best can the existing resources be catapulted to enhance deterrence capability?

Nuclear Symmetry and Military Parity

India's conventional superiority did not deter Pakistan from undertaking the Kargil intrusion, the attack on the Indian Parliament or even the heinous attacks on Mumbai on 26 November 2008. Pakistan was able to force a stalemate during 'Operation Parakram' without going to war. It is evident that such an outcome had much to do with Pakistan's nuclear capability. The underlying fact of Pakistan's nuclear policy is that it refuses to adopt the principle of "No First Use" of nuclear weapons in any form.⁶ In spite of international pressure and problems within Pakistan, provocation by *jihadi* elements is not only continuing but has become bold with each passing day. The proxy war in J&K commenced in 1989 by which time it is believed Pakistan had acquired nuclear capabilities with the help of China. Pakistan has since extended the proxy war beyond J&K, targeting mainland India as well as Indian missions abroad. When the Indian embassy in Kabul was subjected to terrorist attacks, India did not react to such provocation overtly or covertly. *Jihadi* elements are strategic assets for Pakistan and it will continue to provide them sanctuary primarily with the shield provided by nuclear deterrence. If Pakistan did not believe in the potency of this deterrence, Pakistani

establishments would not have allowed such bold terrorist actions against India. This suggests that the currency of nuclear deterrence will pay dividends to Pakistan as long as India continues to remain on the defensive. According to Mao Zedong, “Only a complete fool or a mad man would cherish passive defence.”⁷ Therefore, India needs to rethink its deterrence and methodology to raise costs for Pakistan for their continued proxy war.

The foundation for Pakistan’s nuclear programme was laid in 1974, when in response to India’s nuclear tests, Pakistan’s Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto announced:

“If India builds the bomb, we will eat grass and leaves for a thousand years, even go hungry, but we will get one of our own. The Christians have the bomb, the Jews have the bomb and now the Hindus have the bomb. Why not the Muslims too have the bomb?”⁸

Lieutenant-General Khalid Kidwai, former head of the nuclear Strategic Plan Division (SPD) had said, “The nuclear weapons are aimed solely at India.”⁹ Pakistan has outlined four nuclear thresholds for a first use of nuclear weapons against India: space threshold (loss of a significant portion of territory), military threshold (considerable destruction of armed forces), economic threshold (economic blockade) and political destabilisation or large-scale internal subversion. Pakistan is aware that regardless of the weapon system they choose, India’s response will be extremely devastating. Pakistan’s first strike will hence be aimed in such a manner as to neutralise a potential second strike by India. India, therefore, needs to assess its capabilities with respect to the safety of its arsenal, delivery means and command and control infrastructure. Therefore, ‘no first use’ has to be part of a strategy and not as part of India’s national character or Gandhian philosophy. It is imperative to pronounce the ‘end state’ of the nuclear conflict if initiated by Pakistan. There should be no doubt in the minds of the Pakistani civilian and military establishments that the very existence of Pakistan will be in question if they venture to use nuclear weapons on Indian military or civilian targets. The politico- military leadership of India should thus be unambiguous about the timing and the retaliation required to make Pakistan pay the price for commencing a nuclear war.

Has nuclear deterrence made conventional war obsolete?

The unpredictable response of *jihadi* elements in Pakistan has increased the probability of a conventional war under nuclear overhang since the last decade. Operation Parakram and 26/11 were the triggers which could have escalated into conventional war. After the Kargil conflict, the then Defence Minister Mr George Fernandes declared 'The Kargil conflict has shown that the nuclearisation of India and Pakistan has not made conventional war obsolete; rather, it simply imposed another dimension on the way warfare could be conducted'.¹⁰ In the Indian context, conventional war still remains a potent deterrent, provided India is prepared to use the full might of its conventional superiority in retaliation against grave provocations such as the 26/11 attacks. Whether such a response is to be restricted to the LoC (Line of Control) sector or allowed to spill across the IB is a point of debate. Options do exist and either restricted or full spectrum war is possible in the emerging scenario. Thus, the conventional forces must remain prepared at all times, operationally and logistically for a limited or all-out war under nuclear overhang. A strong India should be able to decide on its own whether it would engage in war or not without looking over its shoulders for a nod from the international community.

Pakistan will continue to take advantage of divided opinion in India about the use of force, but the time for tolerance and patience is over. A clear message needs to be sent across that further Pakistani provocation will be met by a firm response within minutes of the establishment of culpability of the Pakistani military or ISI in terror attacks on India. No longer should India succumb to nuclear blackmail by Pakistan.

Nuclear Deterrence and a Proactive Strategy

A proactive strategy is the by-product of the 'as is where is' strategy of NATO. Proactive strategy will imbalance Pakistan's military especially in the Sindh and Punjab provinces of Pakistan and would be good enough to maintain conventional deterrence for a certain period of time. But no strategy is infinite for all periods of time and situations. Thus, there is a need to liberate it from the past legacy and move to a new strategic environment.

A proactive strategy is predicated on three terms of reference: reduce mobilisation time, cater for delay in political decision-making both before

and during the war, and seize and maintain surprise and momentum throughout, in all theatres. This, the army believes, shall produce the results in terms of territory, attrition and prisoners, while keeping the war within the nuclear threshold level.¹¹ This strategy should be demonstrative in action and intent. The question comes up why, then, is India unable to unleash this strategy even after grave provocation by Pakistan? Is it due to nuclear deterrence that India doesn't want to respond with massive conventional retaliation even under extreme provocation? If the answer is in the affirmative, then Pakistan has achieved its aim of nuclear deterrence and achieved military parity with India. It is interesting to note that Pakistan has been able to sell the theory of irrationality of its actions. This is in fact a facade enabling Pakistan to use this irrationality syndrome as a tool of deterrence - a clever move to conceal 'rationality' under the garb of 'irrationality'. Therefore, it is imperative that India's execution of its new war doctrine must be integrated with nuclear warfare plans, both defensive and offensive.¹² The ideas of active defence and a proactive strategy are still wrapped in the fog of uncertainty and there are a few important questions that remain unanswered. These are:

- Is it a doctrine or strategy? Strategies perform will be scenario/situation specific and must change with the change of overall scenario and circumstances. Doctrines, on the other hand, are more permanent in nature. They may be modified when changes in technology necessitate an adaptation or if the doctrine is obsolete due to changes in the capabilities and capacity of the adversary.
- Is the political leadership prepared to take a decision to launch a pre-emptive offensive, thus risking war and being labelled the aggressor? This is debatable. Though the political leadership has restrained itself in the past, it is not necessarily a default condition resulting in similar response to future provocations.
- Can India achieve the destruction of Pakistan's war-waging capability through this doctrine/strategy? India has to be clear about the objectives of war. Decisive victory through limited war against a nation having nuclear symmetry is contentious. The destruction of the Pakistani Army or its war-waging capability is unlikely unless India resorts to massive retaliation by targeting critical areas in depth or in the heartland of Pakistan.

- Can India achieve its objectives through limited war? This remains a possibility, provided it is executed with speed, lethality and surprise, to cause shock and dislocation of the Pakistan Army and its command and control infrastructure. Limited wars may be limited in terms of use of nuclear weapons, time and space. But this theory should not be an inhibiting factor for the use of conventional forces. As per Joseph Farah, 'limited wars produce limited results'.¹³ The fear is that a proactive limited war could make field commanders defensive due to the underlying fear of the conflict escalating to nuclear exchange.
- Will the capture of shallow strips of land be considered punitive actions against Pakistan and will it deter it from wrongdoing in future? An injury must be unbearable to force a warrior to flee the battlefield. The capture of small strips of land without threatening the strategic lines of communication or key towns in the hinterland will be considered as a stalemate by Pakistan. Thus, there is a danger that the injury through limited war (proactive strategy) may neither be psychological nor physical. Such an adventure may not deter Pakistan from wrongdoing. Rather, it will give credence to Pakistan's nuclear deterrence.

Preconditions for a Proactive Strategy

There is a need to understand the preconditions that must be met before this doctrine/ strategy can be put into practice. To make this strategy a success, operations should be launched with zero warning. Certain preconditions which are imperative for the success of such a doctrine are as given below:

- **Decision to go to war:** The timing of such a decision is critical. Should the decision be taken to "cross the Rubicon" after a grave provocation by Pakistan or should the government take the decision now and give the mandate to the armed forces that the next provocation will warrant military action even if it leads to an all-out war? If the decision is taken after the incident, it may be too late as Pakistan would have sufficient time to take defensive countermeasures. If the decision is predetermined, the armed forces should be directed accordingly with the politico-military aim 'sealed in envelope'. Thereafter, action can commence once the link between the Pakistani establishment and *jihadi* strike is established.

- **Readiness profile of the Armed Forces:** What is the readiness profile needed to go to war by adopting this doctrine/strategy to achieve the desired objectives? A report in DNA, “Indian Navy’s Submarine Fleet in Shambles” quoting a CAG report states that the submarine fleet is 48 % operational and by 2012, 63% of vessels will complete their operational life.¹⁴ One can safely assume that the condition of other vessels is not likely to be any different. Similarly, the air force is authorised 39^{1/2} squadrons, where as they are holding 32 squadrons. In addition, the MIG 21 is an obsolete aircraft that needs to be replaced at the earliest. Likewise, there is a need to carry out an audit of operational readiness profile of the army. Notwithstanding the above, the minimum readiness profile needed to go to war with zero warning must be laid down if a proactive strategy is to be endeavoured.
- **Status of War Reserves:** Even if war is limited in terms of space, terrain, and resources, one can’t predict with certainty the level of conflict escalation, whether such conflict will graduate to nuclear exchanges or whether it will escalate to more than one front. War reserves thus need to be carefully worked out. Whether 100% war reserves are good enough or if there is a need to increase reserves to a higher holding level needs to be examined.
- **Logistic Build-up:** Logistics will be the limiting factor for launching swift operations inside Pakistani territory. Contours of operational limits are dictated by logistic support. Operational logistics must have mobility, flexibility, efficiency, interoperability, integration and logistic intelligence. Therefore, one needs to take a holistic look into the logistic chain to support mobile operations along a wide frontage. The logistic support system must enable the tenets of rapid planning, rapid provisioning, rapid response and rapid distribution. The concept of logistic support which are essential for such operations are ability to recoup, survivability, direct delivery (rather than following the chain of logistic support), accountability (logistic units accountable for logistic support), feed forward (relieve field forces from the burden of logistic build up), all weather all terrain capability, dispersed and mobile to survive. A multiple logistic transportation system is essential for timely and guaranteed uninterrupted logistic support. Similarly, at the tactical level, the concept of logistic brigade could be introduced for more efficient and reliable logistic support.

- **Force Projection and Deep Battle Capabilities:** It is imperative to ensure control of sea and air in addition to capability to project force through sea and air, and projection of force “from the sea and space”. This is essential to exploit vulnerabilities and offset force ratios of the adversaries. It is vital to build this capability to make the proactive strategy a success, since there may be a need to commence the war by opening the campaign from unexpected directions - by projection of force by sea or air. “Deep battle” must be an all arms joint effort.¹⁵
- **Preparation for Second Strike:** There is a particular time frame needed for mating of the nuclear warhead and the delivery system. That must be taken into consideration because an adversary may exercise the nuclear option in the earlier stages of conflict if heavy losses have been suffered during the initial stages of war. Therefore, the following needs to be ensured:
 - Nuclear weapons must be ready for delivery when the decision to go to war is taken. This entails a decision by the highest authority to choose the type of nuclear weapon to be used, the delivery system, and the protection of these weapon systems from conventional and nuclear strikes.
 - Command and control infrastructure needs to be protected from any first strike by adversaries. In addition, an alternative command structure and nuclear command authority needs to be put in place for speedy decisions.
- Proactive strategy is based on rapid mobilisation and prepositioning of battle groups. Since the most significant aim of the new war doctrine is to strike offensively without giving away battle indicators of mobilisation, it is imperative that all strike formation headquarters, armoured divisions and armoured brigades are relocated from their existing locations in Central India and in depth in Punjab to forward locations. All such formations should be moved forward to the general line of Barmer-Jaisalmer-Bikaner-Suratgarh from their present locations in the interior.¹⁶ Similarly, air and naval forces should also be prepared in the same time frame, if not earlier. It would take time before such infrastructure is built and formations are relocated close to the international border.

In the overall analysis, there are many advantages to the proactive strategy. First, the quick massing of firepower together with deep air and naval strikes will deliver a punishing blow to the enemy and degrade his war-waging potential without damage to the population and other civilian centres. Second, given the force structures, the operations are likely to remain shallow and within the perceived nuclear thresholds, thus, denying any credible justification for nuclear sabre-rattling. Third, the multiple thrusts are likely to significantly enhance the challenge for the enemy's limited intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets to pinpoint Indian offensives, thereby increasing the chances of tactical and operational level surprises. And lastly, with increasing effect-based capabilities, it will be possible to degrade the enemy's centre of gravity through what the Chinese call key point strikes.¹⁷

Capability versus Capacity

A fine balance of capability and capacity needs to be laid down. If the state has the capability but not the capacity, it will fall short in its objective. Capabilities in terms of reach and lethality, and capacity in terms of sustaining the reach and destruction for prolonged periods, are a must. For the proactive strategy/doctrine to succeed, it must meet the basic tenet of a doctrine that is aimed to "defeat the strategy rather than defeating the military." An offensive with battle groups should be used as an opportunity to prevent Pakistan from regaining defensive balance and to prevent the adversary to bring to battle its full combat potential. It is recommended that strike corps by and large should be employed concentrated for deep penetration and destruction of the enemy's strategic reserves, and the onus to start the nuclear war should rest with Pakistan. In case, India adopts the proactive strategy/doctrine as the only way to circumvent nuclear deterrence, it may give credence to the notion of nuclear deterrence and will make India's conventional superiority meaningless. In the present form, the proactive strategy is defensive in nature, where the content is offensive but the intent is defensive. It appears that the proactive strategy is not aimed at a decisive victory but to punish Pakistan and cause excessive degradation to its war-waging capability. Therefore, there is a danger that the outcome of the war may be inconclusive. Nuclear deterrence, therefore, should not be a compelling reason to adopt a more defensive military strategy/doctrine.

Are Escalation Control and Conflict Termination inhibiting factors for Punishment?

Escalation Control

One often grapples with the idea of how to control escalation under nuclear symmetry. To that, one may well ask, is there a need to control the escalation? The following options are available for escalation control:

- Control of escalation by military inaction to adversary's provocation- India's restrained military response post 26/11.
- Control of escalation by deterrence (conventional and nuclear).
- Control of escalation by not crossing the threshold. One good example is the Kargil conflict.
- Control of escalation by massive punishment.

Depending upon the will, capabilities and capacity, a nation is obliged to decide how it wishes to control the escalation. If war-waging capability is destroyed to a great extent, escalation control will be in the hands of the losing side. But if the premise of starting the war with Pakistan is defensive in nature, with one eye on escalation control, one will achieve same result that was achieved in 1965 conflict. That, in fact, will be a moral victory for Pakistan. If India is determined to resolve its problems with Pakistan once for all, escalation should not be controlled. Rather, one should let the destruction of the enemy be the control of the escalation itself. War is an extraordinary situation and needs national efforts. Thus, military doctrine should lay down the requirement of massive punishment, so that the war-waging capability of the adversary is degraded considerably. That can only be ensured by not looking at an escalation clock. The punishment should control the escalation.

Conflict Termination

No one starts a war—or rather, no one in his senses ought to do so—without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it

— Carl von Clausewitz

Conflict termination should be done at one's own terms; the deterrence capabilities of the enemy must not become the baseline for conflict termination and management. A conflict once started, ideally, should not be terminated without achieving political and military objectives. Conflict termination should be part of the overall strategy and must be brought into effect as soon as the objectives of war are achieved. Tools for conflict termination are:

- Conflict termination by punishment (Gulf War -I).
- Conflict termination by complete annihilation (The Second World War).
- Conflict termination by objective (Indo-Pak War 1971).

India needs to be clear whether conflict termination should be based on the level of punishment to Pakistan or to allow the conflict to continue till laid down objectives are achieved. Does India want to punish Pakistan for the proxy war that it has unleashed or does it wish to destroy the terror network of *jihadis* in POK and Pakistani territory or does it desire the destruction of war-waging capability of Pakistan? Conflict termination should be decided by a combination of three factors; punishment to deter and raise the cost for proxy war; achieving the objectives of destruction of the terror network; and establishment of conditions for stability and peace.

Decisive Victory against Pakistan

If, in conclusion, we consider the total concept of victory, we find that it consists of three elements:

- *The enemy's greater loss of material strength.*
- *His loss of morale.*
- *His open admission of the above by giving up his intentions.¹⁸*

— Carl Von Clausewitz

Before one discusses the aspects of decisive victory, it is imperative to examine two important aspects - the flank of decision and vital interests. It could be argued that India's conflict with Pakistan is not in the Punjab and Sindh provinces of Pakistan but is confined to POK where it has vital interests which have to be defended both militarily and diplomatically. Some arguments in support of treating the state of J&K as our vital interest and flank of decision are:

- Capture of territory across the IB is unlikely to put pressure on Pakistan to close down militant camps. It may hurt their pride but is unlikely to prod Pakistan in halting the proxy war.
- Terrorist activities and camps will continue to operate from occupied territory year after year even if decisive victory is gained across the IB with no significant gains being made in POK.
- One of the demands of the Kashmiri people is the unification of Kashmir and that can only be done if India reclaims the occupied area from Pakistan. This will also reduce one of the major irritants among the people of J&K.
- The flank of decision is where the conflict is. To defeat the strategy of Pakistan, one has to deny him that piece of land that gives him the space, opportunity and cannon fodder to fight their war on Indian soil and make India bleed. That is J&K. Whatever territory India gains, she is not bound by UN or international conventions to return it.
- It will be a moral and physical defeat of both separatists and Pakistan if Kashmir is united under the Indian tricolour. Design and belief of *jihadi* elements to take over Kashmir will be buried forever.
- By regaining lost territory, India will be able to cut the umbilical cord between Pakistan and China (Karakoram Highway). Strategic importance of Pakistan to China will reduce and India's land border with Afghanistan will enhance India's strategic position in the sub-continent. India will be closer to Central Asian oil reserves. China's strategic investment in Pakistan will be reduced to naught if the Karakoram Highway is threatened or comes under Indian control. Likely Chinese reactions will have to be catered for and suitably addressed at multiple levels.

Is disruption and Prevention of Proxy War a Decisive Victory? A glance through sub-continental history would be enlightening. Pakistan illegally occupied Kashmir by sending armed infiltrators in 1948. They continue to make India bleed through the very same soil, which they occupied illegally. They claim the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir and have attempted in 1948, 1965 and 1999 to take over the state by force. The state of J&K acceded to India in 1947 but India has desisted from taking by force the territories illegally occupied by Pakistan. India also did not use the opportunities offered

by the situation in 1948, 1965, and even in 1999 to achieve military gains. India could have used the Kargil conflict as an opportunity to regain the substantial lost territory. Had it done so, it could have deterred, disrupted and probably prevented the proxy war emanating from POK. Two options now exist for India. One, to negotiate and prevail upon Pakistan to stop the proxy war and dismantle *jihad* factories inside POK intended to unleash terror on India. The second option is to take back the substantial territory militarily if POK and Pakistani soil continues to be used for attacks on India. In such scenarios, Pakistan will have no moral right to use the nuclear option since they are using that very land for abetting terrorism and proxy war. Moreover, it will be difficult for Pakistan to justify to the world their right to use WMDs.

There is a school of thought which states that the destruction of war-waging capability of Pakistan and capture of maximum territory would be a decisive victory for India. But the question still remains: can India achieve prevention and disruption of proxy war against it by capture of substantial territory across the IB and by considerable degradation of Pakistan's war-waging capabilities? The answer is probably no. Pakistan considers the Kashmir issue as their victory against India and they continue to attach pride to their success in the proxy war. The best way to hurt their pride is by disruption of the proxy war and capture of substantial territory in POK. It is certainly true that in case of conventional war with Pakistan, without engaging the Pakistani Army in the Pakistan heartland, convincing defeat and destruction of their forces in J&K Sector may not be possible. To achieve decisive victory, the Indian Army has to threaten critical space well in depth to force strategic reserves to come to battle, but to ensure destruction, there is a need to concentrate and amass superior force and firepower in depth. A proactive strategy does not give the liberty of threatening depth areas and concurrently amassing superior force to cause destruction of strategic and theatre reserves. Therefore, one should endeavour to enhance one's capabilities to defend vital interests that, at the moment, are under constant threat from the proxy war as well as military adventurism from Pakistan and China combined. Though Pakistan has not endeavoured any such campaign in the last 10 years, but this calm is not a guarantee against any future incursion or tactical posturing in connivance with China or independently.

The time has come to end the debate whether a strong Pakistan or a weak fragmented Pakistan is better for India. It must be remembered that Pakistan has never lost an opportunity to attack India overtly or covertly. Three conventional wars in 1948, 1965 and 1971, and an ongoing proxy war along with the Kargil intrusion need no further elucidation. Therefore, it does not matter whether Pakistan is strong or weak - it has always followed the policy of a 'hate India' campaign. Therefore, a weak and fragmented Pakistan is far better than a stable and strong Pakistan. However, India will have to build mechanisms to prevent the spill over of radicalism into India. It also brings one to the assessment that the weakening of Pakistan politically and economically is a necessity for stability in Kashmir.

It is essential to examine whether limited war under a nuclear overhang will yield results or remain inconclusive as the 1965 war was. The scales of victory, as visualised by the author, are as given below:



How should one Organise for Conventional Deterrence?

The strategy of deterrence must revolve around India's capability to raise costs for Pakistan. Conventional and nuclear deterrence is meaningless if it is not capable of deterring Pakistan against its policy of exporting terror to India. So far India has not been able to evolve a strategy which can send a signal to Pakistan; rather its response has been reactive. This is contrary to the theory of deterrence. Threats must be backed by actions and if need be, direct and indirect /covert and overt actions are required to be taken to raise the cost. To be fair to Pakistan and the world community as a whole, India

must make it known that there is no scope for military inaction to any future provocation. But the bigger question is: can Pakistan be subjected to punitive actions the way Indian armed forces are currently organised? If not, is there a need to change the structure to suit the combined arms response for credible conventional deterrence? This is what the Kargil Review Committee had to say in the executive summary submitted to the government:

“An objective assessment of the last 52 years will show that the country is lucky to have scraped through various national security threats without too much damage, except in 1962. The country can no longer afford such ad hoc functioning. The Committee, therefore, recommends that the entire gamut of national security management and apex decision-making and the structure and interface between the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces Headquarters be comprehensively studied and reorganised.”¹⁹

Importance of exterior manoeuvre for comprehensive deterrence cannot be ignored. India is well placed to create vulnerability from Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics. Though it should not be stated or articulated but definite signals must emanate from time to time to make Pakistan realise the capability of India to use the Lily Pads for its advantage as and when situation so demands. Therefore, it brings us to the fact that India must continue to create assets and goodwill on ground, including northern areas to be used at critical time as leverage.

Conventional forces should be organised in a manner that the response to external threats and provocation by proxy war is speedy and lethal, to cause shock and destruction beyond expectations. Therefore, there is a need to have a politico-military consensus on the use of military force and the conditions under which it can be employed. In such a situation, the decision to respond should be pre-determined and modifications, if any required, could be taken after consulting service headquarters, regarding specific details.

It is interesting to note that Pakistan has been able to create parity by optimum utilisation of conventional forces, use of terrain and nuclear deterrence in northern areas, the plains of Punjab and the desert sector:

Northern Sector: Three reasons for Pakistan not being deterred by India in this sector and continuing to wage proxy war are:

- Absence of mountain offensive forces capable of threatening militants' bases/ launch pads and strategically important places in POK such as Mirpur, Kotli, Muzaffarabad, Gilgit, Chilas and Skardu.
 - Pakistan's capability to tie down large forces for protection of rear areas by employing non-state actors.
 - Abetment of proxy war without any fear of retaliation; sponsored terrorism going unpunished.
- **Plains of Punjab:** Network of obstacle system (natural and artificial) and employment of conventional forces in an astute manner has willy-nilly precluded major loss of territory in this sector.
 - **Desert Sector:** The weakest link for Pakistan in the entire frontage is the desert sector. However, Pakistan has been able to turn this weakness into its strength by keeping this area as a window of opportunity for the use of nuclear weapons on their side of territory to terminate the conflict / limit the loss of territory.

Organisation for Deterrence: Military matters should not be subjected to the vagaries of consensus or joint leadership. Once the decision is taken, there should be single point contact between the government and armed forces. Robert Greene in 'The 33 Strategies of War' stated, "Divided leadership is dangerous because people in groups often think and act in ways that are illogical and ineffective."²⁰ At the moment, the government issues directions through Ministry of Defence to service headquarters. Separate directions are issued to all the three services. One may recall that during the Kargil conflict, the theatre commander was not able to use the air force in the initial stage of war when it was required the most. Then Chief of Army Staff, Gen VP Malik, had to seek the government's approval to use the air force and air operations commenced only on 26 May whereas ground operations had commenced on 11 May. In an ideal situation, once a task is given, the armed forces in a particular theatre should be able to use all the resources, other than nuclear and strategic weapons, without the specific sanction of the government, in a synergised manner.

All-Arms Theatre Commands. It is imperative that India adopts the system of theatre commands for a swift synergised combined arms response during war and operations other than war situations. These commands should be headed by a four star general/air marshal/ admiral and all tri-services assets should be placed under the operational command of a theatre commander. They may continue to have separate commanders for land, air and naval forces wherever applicable but under the overall command of a theatre commander. This will ensure synergised employment, swift and appropriate response by the best suitable means of delivery of deterrence. This system is adopted by most modern armies of the world including the US and China. As a suggested model, India may have separate theatre commands for Pakistan and China under two four star generals from the army, theatre command IOR under an admiral of the navy, strategic command and aero space command under an air chief marshal. In addition, internal security command, cyber command and special forces command under three star generals of the army should be established. With this arrangement, conventional deterrence can be delivered effectively and efficiently. The scope of delay and debate is precluded and a process of single directive and common operational plan can be put in place. This will give teeth to the conventional deterrence and a signal can be sent across that armed forces mean business. To ensure single point contact with the government, all the theatre commands should be placed under the command of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS).

Force Structure: Force structure should be threat-cum-capability based. It must take into consideration the emerging strategic partnerships, geopolitics, and the need for cooperative security organisations. The Indian Army needs to take a look at the four different sectors separately, i.e. the entire mountainous region, including J&K, developed terrain, desert sector and Indian Ocean region. Thus, the force structure should be such that India is able to create asymmetry and vulnerability in all four sectors without impinging or causing imbalance in other sectors. It assumes significance in the light of the fact that there is a possibility of conflict being limited to a geographical area (the Kargil intrusion is a case in point). India is well placed as far as desert and plains sectors are concerned, but needs to build the capabilities for mountainous sector and IOR. Therefore, it is imperative that the following be considered:

- **Mountain Strike Formations:** Offensive formations in the mountainous sector are assuming significance in light of the fact that sanctuaries and *Jihad* factories for proxy war are primarily located in POK and disputed areas existing in mountains bordering China and Pakistan. The message of threat can only be sent if India possesses the capability to amass both forces and fire power with equal potency in all three sectors (deserts, plains and mountains). The answer is building mountain warfare capability through 'Light Mountain Offensive Corps' designed for speedy mobilisation. These formations should be structured to operate effectively in all terrain.
 - Mountain strike corps if raised should not be region-specific as is the case in strike corps tailor made for plains/deserts. These formations should be so configured that they can be employed in mountainous and semi-mountainous terrain across the entire Eastern and Western Himalayas.
 - To begin with, the Indian Army needs three light mountain offensive corps - two for the Western Himalayas (one each against Pakistan and China) and one for the Eastern Himalayas in addition to one mountain division for offensive in the central sector.
- **Mountain Artillery Divisions:** Precision artillery is potent in mountainous terrain to cause isolation and dislocation. Therefore, each of the mountain strike corps should have a long range precision artillery division which is integral to its order of battle.
- **Cyber Command:** Enough has been written about cyber command and needs no further emphasis.
- **Rapid Response Force:** Multirole forces are required for power projection/intervention operations in the Indian Ocean Region for benign, constabulary and military role. The force structure should be organised for rapid response to a crisis during war and operations other than war.
- **Special Forces - "Bigger is not better":** Future of the armies belongs to those which are "fast and fluid". Special forces have the capability to tilt the balance in one's favour. Ideal forces to deal with hybrid war are special forces. Therefore, India must convert some of the conventional forces into special forces to operate on land, sea and from the air as well against state and non-state actors.

Joint Doctrine: Future wars will be fought under nuclear overhang and information technological domain. Capt Prem Singh, in his book, Future War and Future of Battle-space mentions that the “concept of operations will revolve around amassing of fire rather than forces”. Battle-space may or may not be contiguous but the capability of a nation to amass fire power will prove equally potent to weaken the will of the adversary. Therefore, synergised efforts are required for the destruction of war-waging capability by causing both hard and soft kills. In such a scenario, the guiding principle for the conduct of war should be laid down in a joint military doctrine. No single service will be able to dominate the entire spectrum of conflict. Roles will be overlapping; thus, all three services will have to look for a flat organisation for the conduct of war at the national level. Present water tight compartment organisation is not suitable for the conduct of higher direction of war. A proactive strategy/doctrine cannot be applied in isolation till the two other services and strategic forces also come on board and have a common understanding of this doctrine/ strategy.

- Principle of simultaneity and non- linearity be adopted to engage entire battle- space by simultaneous tactical manoeuvre, deep battle and force projection through sea and air. The campaign should open with massive retaliation by a series of missile and air attacks. The policy of graduated response should not be considered; the impact should be deafening to ensure dislocation and paralyses of complete command and control establishment. The domination of the entire battle-space should be the objective – which means control of sea, air, space and cyber space to cause positional, psychological and functional dislocation of the adversary. It is pertinent to mention that separate ground campaigns and deep battle campaigns should be undertaken under a single theatre commander.
- To conduct synergised combined arms operations, the theatre commander should be assisted by a ground offensive commander and a deep battle commander (air force commander). Present command and control set up at operational and theatre levels do not cater for the requirement of deep battle. In addition, a separate organisation needs to be created under a three star general, who can undertake cyber and IW.
- The joint command structure has inherent disadvantages and military operations by and large should be unified. Napoleon had once said,

“Give me allies to fight.”²¹ Allies always remain divided and the worst kind of leadership is divided leadership. It is also called groupthink and decisions are neither forceful nor clear. These aspects further highlight the requirements of a single operational commander in a theatre.

Single Operational Plan: Future conventional war with Pakistan is likely to be short, swift and intense. Thus, there is a need to formalise a single operational plan/ joint operational plan to deal with the threat from Pakistan and also to carry out punitive military actions with massive retaliation. The need is felt to engage the entire battle- space, which may or may not be contiguous. Therefore, all three services are required to synergise their efforts to deliver the combat power with speed and simultaneity. Though some critics may call it inflexible but if formulated in an innovative manner, it is a powerful method of waging war with the least amount of bottlenecks and seamless coordination and cooperation between three services. This plan should contain:

- Political directive to undertake punitive military actions against Pakistan. It could be limited to a theatre, or total war restricted only by the use of nuclear weapons.
- Employment of combined arms to open the campaign, thus simultaneously engaging the entire battle-space on land, sea, air, space and cyber space.
- Neutralise the enemy’s capability to conduct nuclear attacks.
- Blunt the enemy’s ability to build combat potential in a theatre or TBA.
- Retard the enemy’s ability to build combat potential in a theatre or TBA.
- Degrade/ destroy/ paralyse the enemy’s command and control infrastructure.

The Execution of the Campaign

Whatever is not new is not likely to succeed. Similarly, operations which are planned on natural lines of expectations are likely to produce negative results.²² More often than not, one has been conventional in the approach and the process of planning has been low risk. As a result, yield is low and operations are predictable. Predictability syndrome can be broken by employment of technology in an innovative manner (to be made available

at cutting edge level), and bold employment of tactical forces. Some of the methods which can achieve the above are given in succeeding paragraphs:

Tactical Level: The success of a tactical commander lies in his ability to control and deny space by amassing firepower and forces concurrently at vulnerable points. Amassing of this combat potential should be where the enemy is not expecting to be attacked during the initial phase of the campaign. The question is: which area should be controlled and which area should be denied? The area which is essential to fight a coordinated offensive and defensive battle at tactical and operational levels should be controlled, and the area which creates vulnerability should be denied and subsequently, endeavour be made to control it as soon as possible. The vulnerabilities of the enemy which should be controlled and denied are as under:

- Vulnerabilities of the adversary:
 - Lines of communications (astride the Indus and bridges over it).
 - Unoccupied critical areas in depth.
 - Key strategic areas where operational and strategic reserves are likely to concentrate.
 - Areas where command and control infrastructure is likely to come.
 - Key geographical locations which can be used to disrupt or degrade IW and EW spectrum.
 - Areas likely to be used by long range artillery or tactical missile bases.
 - Logistic bases.

- The most difficult part of tactical operations is to create vulnerability which means breaking the crust and threatening the critical areas essential for fighting a coordinated tactical battle. Hence, pitching strength against strength should best be avoided. The answer lies in attacking the enemy from unexpected directions by adopting an indirect approach. This can be achieved if a commander is bold and prepared to take risks, and that can be done by placing special forces behind the enemy lines (survival of special forces would depend on their ability to be fast, fluid and linear) to sustain and strike with speed and surprise. Fredrick the Second had said, "Three men in the enemy's rear are more valuable than 50 at his front"²³ and this maxim is still as potent as ever. Therefore, we could consider

opening up a campaign with Special Forces prepositioned in depth/critical areas. Difficult, yes, but not impossible. Most of the armies of the world have done it. So it can and should be done.

Operational Level: Planning at the operational level should be to create asymmetry in forces (at a time and place of engagement), vulnerabilities, decision dilemma, and dislocation of the enemy's combat potential. The endeavour of the operational commander should be to create windows of opportunity and deny the enemy the time and space advantage. As soon as vulnerabilities are created, it is thus prudent to concentrate forces in depth areas to exploit the vulnerabilities and force the enemy to employ his operational and strategic reserves in a graduated manner. This can only be done if we are in a position to beat the enemy in time and space by swift manoeuvres to occupy the critical space. In the overall analysis, the operational commander must endeavour to prevent friction to own combat potential and increase friction to enemy forces by the synergised employment of all combined arms. The next step is to create reserves and maintain logistic balance. Therefore, amassing of fire power at extended ranges is vital to prevent the enemy from bringing to battle his combat potential. At the operational level, the following needs consideration:

- **Control and denial of space by manoeuvre:** Space can be controlled and denied by physical occupation and/or by amassing fire power. The most difficult part of this process is to break the crust of the enemy's forward line. There are two options to break the crust - by hitting strength against strength or by adopting the indirect approach, i.e. manoeuvre by land, air and sea and placing forces behind enemy lines. Further, is there a need to take huge force behind enemy lines or can defences be turned around by a small force? The answer lies in a force which is fast, fluid, linear, lethal and capable of sustaining itself in standalone mode till a link up is established by the main strike force.
- Dislocation of enemy combat potential:
 - Prevent the enemy from bringing to battle his combat potential by denying manoeuvre space on land, air and sea. This can be best done by employing artillery.

- Prevent concentration of forces (separate to survive and concentrate to fight).
- Isolate combat arms from logistics.
- Causing decision dilemma and paralysing command and control set up before and during combat.
 - Create information vacuum by causing complete electronic blackout.
 - By denial of engagement.
 - By pre-emption.
 - By prepositioning of forces and denial of critical area to enemy.
- Synergised employment of artillery, air, operational fires and surveillance to achieve dislocation of enemy.

Theatre Level: The theatre commander must set a goal and work out a holistic operational plan. This means thinking in terms of a campaign, not individual battles.²⁴ Success of operations will lie in the capability of a theatre commander to simultaneously engage TBA and the entire battle-space. Therefore, apart from air and sea campaigns, deep battle campaigns also need to be undertaken concurrently with operations in TBA. Options are to adopt the air land battle concept to isolate TBA or to launch deep battles independent of tactical operations to cause collapse of war-waging capability by striking at both sources of energy and critical vulnerabilities (centre of gravity) of the enemy. Deep battle needs rapid positioning of forces and fire power for maximum effects. The areas of conventional deterrence which need to be given due attention are as under:

- **Force Projection Capability:** Future battle-space is going to be non-contiguous and non-regular. Such a battle-space cannot be addressed until or unless an army prepares to enhance its reach and capabilities. To do that, the nation will have to build capability and capacity to project power beyond its shores. India, at the moment, has very modest force projection capabilities through air and sea. To create vulnerabilities and pose a multidimensional threat to Pakistan, there is a need to enhance the force projection capabilities as a tool of deterrence. In addition, India as an emerging regional power should be able to project force from the

sea so that Pakistan feels threatened not only from the land but also from the sea. Thus, a credible amphibious, air assault and sea-based capability needs to be built to put an end to the race of conventional parity beyond the reach of Pakistan. India also needs to build another dimension of force projection through cyber and space to cause paralysis of command and control as also to speed up the collapse of Pakistan's war-waging capability.

- **Employment of Operational and Strategic Fires:** Theatre commanders should utilise operational and strategic fires/missiles/air force to prevent concentration of forces, separation of logistics from the combat forces and to cause positional, functional and psychological dislocation of the enemy with a view to cause decision dilemma and defeat the enemy before he is able to bring to battle his entire combat potential.
- **Employment of Special Forces:** Employment of special forces continues to be an area of concern. Special forces have the potential to achieve hard and soft kills at strategic and operational levels. Special forces have not been able to achieve spectacular results because 'they refuse to disobey the conventions' and success lies in the ability of special forces to disobey conventions and logic. These strategic assets have the potential to achieve spectacular results provided they are employed to shape the battlefield and create suitable conditions for the employment of tactical forces to achieve swift gains. The Kargil conflict was an ideal platform for the employment of special forces in an innovative manner. However, since the decision was taken by the government not to cross the LOC, it precluded the employment of these force-multipliers behind enemy lines. The other category of special forces (Laptop Warriors) who are capable of fighting the war remotely and can paralyse and cause the complete collapse of command and control network of adversaries by sitting thousands of kilometres away needs to be developed rapidly. Such laptop warriors have the potential to inflict unbearable losses on the enemy, which can be difficult to restore in time and space. Therefore, there is a need to take a holistic view of the identification of areas and scenarios for the employment of special forces for both hard and soft kills.

- **Cyber warfare and information warfare:** Simultaneous dominance of electromagnetic spectrum should precede the air/ ground campaign. This is a potent method of causing information blackout to disrupt and dislocate enemy forces. This will not only hamper the movement of entire offensive and reserve forces but will also degrade Pakistan's ability to retaliate. However, due care must be taken to ensure own forces are protected against any potential retaliation of like nature by the enemy.
- **Exterior manoeuvre as a weapon:** To defeat the enemy psychologically, the moral warrior has a huge role to play. This aspect needs a careful study and should be put in place without the enemy even knowing it. It has to be very subtle and should be done from the enemy territory through its own people, media and institutions. "It takes place in its own space, its own moral terrain."²⁵ Exterior manoeuvre must start much before the war and should be used all through the period of conflict. There is a need to hire psychologists/ intellectual warriors to undertake exterior manoeuvre for effects.
- **Defeat the enemy's strategy rather than his army:** There are three broad methods to achieve this.
 - **Sever the Roots:** This means not permitting the enemy to link up with logistics and his reserves, denying communications, preventing commanders from exercising command and control and isolating the enemy both physically and psychologically. The Indus River offers an opportunity to sever the roots and isolate/ separate the forces north and south of the Indus by denying crossing places over the river.
 - Indirect Approach. The enemy is prepared to fight a war on natural lines of expectation; what he is not prepared for is to fight an adversary who adopts an indirect approach.
 - Destroy cohesion of forces rather than the forces themselves. This would need both manoeuvre and attrition to ensure cohesion of forces is achieved to ensure collapse of enemy military power with bloodless victory.

A change of mind-set is vital to impose deterrence on the adversary. There is a need to graduate from a "defensive campaign" to an "offensive

campaign”; a campaign from single service to joint services. There is a need to leave behind the war of attrition and graduate to decisive campaigns with a decisive first battle. The principle of mass to the principle of concentration of firepower needs to be adopted. No-contact war is an ideal war since it demonstrates the capability and will of the nation, and thus capability building is imperative. To achieve these new parameters, a change of mindset on the part of policy makers and the military leadership is imperative.

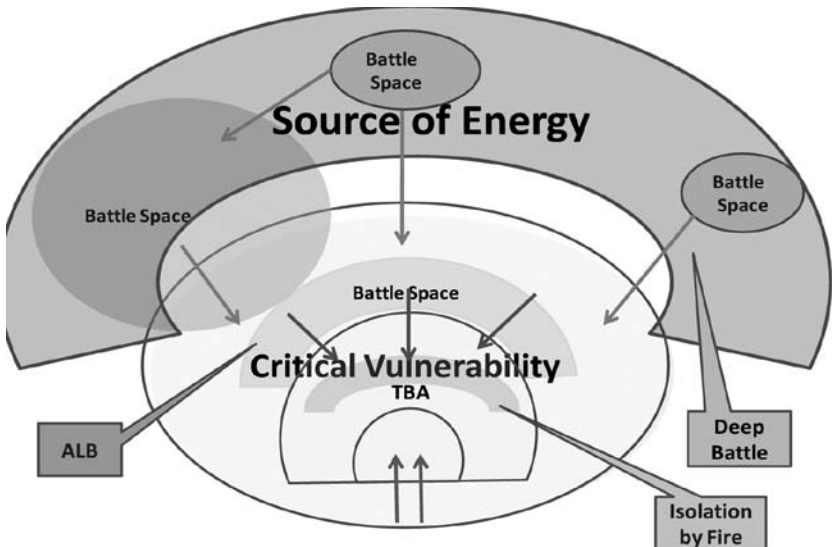
Punitive Actions under the changed Scenario

Until or unless Pakistan is made to pay for its evil designs, it will not stop exporting terror. Any future provocation should not go unpunished. The punishment has to be massive and one which will hurt Pakistan for many years to come. The Kargil intrusion and 26/11 were both opportunities which Pakistan presented to India but India allowed them to go unpunished and a legitimate window of opportunity to punish Pakistan was lost. Retaliation has to be unbearable for Pakistan, for which India should remain prepared and not start looking for options at the time of an incident such as 26/11. Therefore, it will not be out of place to suggest that India should adopt a strategy of massive retaliation rather than flexible or containment strategy. Suffice to say that the model and tools of punishment should be in readiness profile.

- Launch operations with speed and violence to defeat the enemy’s military strategy rather than his army; unleash combined arms to cause heavy destruction in the initial phase of operations to allow own land forces and strategic forces including power projection elements to cause dislocation of adversaries to paralyse his command and control elements.
- It is said that “victory is gained not by the number killed but by the number frightened.”²⁶ Surprise and deception are powerful weapons and can paralyse the enemy and lead to complete collapse of the army in fear and a decision dilemma. Thus there is a need for a multidimensional approach. Bloodless victory is what must be aimed and that can best be done by manoeuvre warfare and the innovative employment of technology, special forces and control of electromagnetic spectrum.
- Don’t start the war till forced, but if forced, finish the war for the enemy by destroying his will to continue. Aggression and destruction of the

enemy's military power is the key to achieve this philosophy and that calls for massive retaliation with conventional forces. The onus to go nuclear should rest with the adversary: to cause self-destruction by going nuclear or to forego the hostilities.

- Future battle-space is likely to be non contiguous. The source of strength and enemy vulnerabilities will be dispersed in the entire battle-space. The campaign thus must have the tenets of merging theatre, operational and tactical battles in such a manner so that source of strength is eroded by attrition and vulnerabilities are exploited by amassing of fire and forces. Therefore, it brings one to the fact that non-linearity and simultaneity are essential components to achieve the complete collapse of the enemy's will and war-waging capability.
- A pictorial representation of non-contiguous battle-space, critical vulnerabilities and source of strength is depicted in the sketch given below. Three tiers of engagement including tactical engagement/ isolation by fire, air land battle and deep battle engagement are shown to depict how the campaign is required to be conducted to ensure simultaneous engagement at theatre, operational and tactical level. This would ensure simultaneous collapse of enemy forces, will and war waging capabilities.



Conclusion

Two factors which emerge are that Pakistan is neither deterred nor dissuaded by India's conventional or nuclear deterrence. Therefore, the strategy and doctrine has to be evolved to send a clear signal of zero tolerance to provocation. Of course, the cost is heavy but there is no option but to undertake massive retaliation by combined arms, to meet these parameters. A proactive strategy should have tenets of punitive actions to ensure degradation of war-waging capability and a deterrence to disrupt and dissuade Pakistan from waging proxy war. But to be able to do that, India will have to build the capabilities and capacity needed to sustain and survive the friction of war. When a nation goes to war, the timeframe and escalation level should not be the limiting or binding factors. The limiting factor for conflict termination should be the objectives of war and nothing else. Whatever may be the means, whatever may be the methods, what must be definite is the certainty of punishment, to deter Pakistan from future misadventures.

The concept needs to be evolved into a short swift war to fight forward rather than luring the enemy deep into one's territory. The armed forces need to move forward from a war of annihilation to a war of manoeuvre to defeat the strategy rather than concentrating on the destruction of the army. Flexibility and resilience needs to be built to swiftly change from a "defensive campaign" to an "offensive campaign" without wasting time. In the end, it is imperative to remember what Sun Tzu had said, that no nation has benefited from war and certainly not from a protracted war.

Notes

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