

# **Inexorable Proxy War By Pakistan**

## **Need for Change in Strategic Perspective**

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# Contents

1. General	1
2. Fabian Strategy	3
3. Dogma to Deal with the Proxy War by Pakistan	8
4. Conclusion	22
Notes	23



# Inexorable Proxy War By Pakistan: Need for Change in Strategic Perspective

*If we return evil for evil, in which there is no sin, for it is necessary to pay a wicked man in his own coin.*

— Chanakya

## General

The subcontinent is passing through a delicate period. West Asia is going through turmoil, and the stability of regimes is a far cry. Peace and stability are still eluding the Af-Pak region, and to make matters worse, South Asia is emerging as a home to the component of modern instability. Proliferation of small arms and the nexus between narco-terrorism and the expanding empires of non-state actors make this region volatile. India has its own share of disturbances in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), heartland India [Left Wing Extremism(LWE)] and the northeastern region. In spite of the turbulence, India continues to grow, economically and militarily. Nevertheless, inimical forces will leave no stone unturned to set in motion balkanisation and instability in India. As a consequence, India will have to deal with Pakistan and its strategic assets with a strong resolve and a sound strategy to contain and deter any misadventure or experimentation with proxy war. I must also caution that peace and security must go together as India deals with Pakistan. Therefore, the Indian leadership must acknowledge that India is not dealing with one Pakistan—there are many Pakistans, with several constituents willing to pursue the path of cooperation,<sup>1</sup> and many wanting to continue to pursue the path of extreme enmity.

The time has come to introspect about the strategy to deal with the proxy war unleashed by Pakistan in J&K and abetment of terrorism across the country. Proxy war, for the first one decade, was restricted to J&K, but the success of Pakistan's strategy to bleed India by a thousand cuts made the perpetrator of this unethical war bolder by the year. The battleground extended from J&K to the rest of India, with a fair degree of success. The

Kargil intrusion, the attack on the Parliament, and Mumbai 26/11 saw new trends and the unrestricted use of state sponsored non-state actors to bleed India. The intensity has been kept up by repeated attacks along the Line of Control (LoC), which include hacking of Indian soldiers; ambushes deep inside Indian territory and regular intrusions along the LoC with much greater periodicity, without fear of retaliation. There is no state in the world, which has put up with so many acts of aggression without responding.<sup>2</sup> One can conclude that our strategy of counter-infiltration and limiting operations along the LoC has not deterred or prevented Pakistan from its proxy war. In the backdrop of the above, continuation of the present strategy to fight this war on Indian soil needs rethinking: the time has come to alter the strategy and take this war to the very spot where it originates, gets energy and intensity. The question is whether India should continue to fight this unethical war by adopting the moral high ground, ethical rule book in hand, or fight an unethical war in the same way as the adversary has chosen to unleash it. The answer is that unethical and unrestricted war has to be fought in a manner which hurts the Pakistan Army with equal intensity and lethality—if it means being dirty and immoral, so be it.

The biggest predicament is that the strategy to deal with the proxy war is wearing out and has become predictable. It is now showing signs of fatigue and is appearing tired. This phenomenon occurs, firstly, when the conflict is protracted and the adversary constantly changes the strategy but own strategy remains near constant. Secondly, due to the rising pressure of the public and government, the security forces are not allowed to continue with the proactive approach. Thirdly, when the military leadership refuses to disobey conventions that limit its response. However, the changing nature of conflict warrants that the strategy should be “paradoxical in nature” and continuously evolving in the overall scheme of things, and national efforts must be directed to achieve “positive ends”. Wass de Czege had described it thus: “A strategy must endeavour the possibility of taking advantage of a new security environment to create conditions for long-term peace”. Interestingly, Pakistan is offering that opportunity: the internal security environment within Pakistan and its neighbourhood gives India an opportunity to terminate this proxy war in an attainable objective, provided India is prepared to take

advantage of the turmoil within Pakistan and use this situation as leverage, should Pakistan not carry out course correction in its behaviour towards India. It will not be incorrect to say that this conflict may be reaching a “tipping point” if not terminated now.

### **Fabian Strategy**

The Fabian strategy is an approach to military operations where one side avoids large, pitched battles in favour of smaller, harassing actions in order to wear down the adversary through attrition. Generally, this type of strategy is adopted by smaller, weaker powers while combating a larger foe.<sup>3</sup> A detailed analysis suggests that Pakistan has put this strategy in place because it knows that time is not a factor and it can control the events for a prolonged period, without serious consequences to its own security. Pakistan has adopted this strategy to bleed India for a protracted period, without limiting it to a short spell. It has discarded moral and ethical codes that normally govern conflict and dovetailed its strategy to unleash a “dirty war”<sup>4</sup> to kill thousands of Indians by deceptive and manipulative methods for political and military objectives. Pakistan so far has been able to prevent large scale conflict by maintaining the intensity from low to high, and then bringing it back to low so that it does not spiral out of control.

**An Act of War:** Brahma Chellaney has said that water is flowing from India to Pakistan and terrorism is flowing from Pakistan to India.<sup>5</sup> India should have treated this proxy war as an act of war as early as 1990. The unchallenged aggression on Indian territory has led Pakistan to believe that it can do business as usual, in spite of open war with India within and on the borders. India’s current strategy is based on a defensive mindset where infiltrators are intercepted after they come into our territory and then are dealt with through force.<sup>6</sup> A review of this strategy is imperative, and a befitting reply to every aggression is a must. It will certainly escalate the tension in local areas but is unlikely to escalate to a full spectrum war. The present state of affairs comprise an everyday war for Indian soldiers, with the Pakistani counterparts sitting pretty, having no fear of retaliation. In fact, an escalation will affect the Pakistan Army and will make only a marginal difference to the Indian soldiers, since they are anyway, in a state of war, day and night. In my opinion, the posts along the launch pads should have ceased

to exist after the repeated infiltration bids over a period of time. For every Indian soldier martyred, two Pakistani soldiers must be killed. This is not an emotional outburst, but a logical military reaction to an act of war.

**Pakistan has Breached Ethical, Moral and International Norms:**

Ethical rule books and norms of engagement suggest that it is unethical to kill even soldiers without declaring a war against another nation. Moreover, it is “immoral and unjust to kill civilians, even in war”.<sup>7</sup> Whereas Pakistan has cast away morality in the diplomatic, political and military spheres by launching an unjust and unethical war against India and its people, while expressing innocence and helplessness. The actions of Pakistan do not even fit into the “doctrine of double effect” where normally the intent is good but the impact is bad. Here, the intent is bad and so is the outcome. Being morally correct has not achieved any visible gains for India—rather, it has made our security apparatus more vulnerable and led to the persecution of own population. History shows that there are just and unjust wars. All wars that are progressive are just, and all wars that impede progress are unjust.<sup>8</sup> The actions of Pakistan are neither in accordance with just war, nor a war for the collective progression of humanity. Therefore, it is in order that the response to an unjust war should be proportional, relevant and effective.

**Fighting Proxy War in Own Territory an Inefficient Strategy:**

Praveen Swami argues that “sub-conventional wars cannot be fought with conventional means.”<sup>9</sup> Especially when the adversary is engaged in the unrestricted use of state sponsored non-state actors and religious fundamentalists to justify the use of terror on both the civil population and combatants. In the backdrop of the above, total reliance on conventional forces to deal with unconventional war appears to be incompatible and that is why the security forces get maligned for human rights’ violations and use of excessive force. The “Fabian strategy” adopted by Pakistan has succeeded because it has been able to restrain India by creating the facade that the proxy war is beyond its control and that Pakistan itself is a victim of such terror acts—therefore, further escalation of tension along the borders is not desired. It is desirable that tension between two the nations should be eased, but this cannot be at the cost of the lives of millions of Indians. My argument is that Pakistan is fighting a low cost, low risk and high dividend war on Indian soil, without being penalised for war and terror crimes. Realistic assessment

suggests that if the proxy war continues the way it has gone so far, there will be serious implications in the future for India as well as for Pakistan, and will cause turbulence even for the subcontinent. The following arguments suggest that the existing policy or strategy to deal with proxy war has outlived its utility and it will be a bad idea to pursue this strategy which I consider is tired and will fall short to achieve the end state. The prevailing operational philosophy reveals the insufficiency in the strategy and the deficiency of options. The violence may have come down, but the “Fabian strategy” of Pakistan seems to be succeeding, as the indicators given below suggest:

- **J&K is being used as the Pivot for Planning and Launching Terror Attacks Across India:** The planning and execution of a large number of terror attacks have their roots in J&K. One of the biggest acts of war against India was the attack on the Parliament in 2001. The planning and logistic support came from J&K, and Afzal Guru, an overground worker, was the key conspirator of this attack. Similarly, the linkages among the Lashkar-e-Tayyeba, (LeT) Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) and Indian Mujahideen (IM) transit through Kashmir. If Pakistan is allowed to continue without being penalised for its crimes, it may become self-sustaining at some point in time, but as we look at this nexus today, the roots continue to remain embedded in J&K. The biggest threat is that there is a pool of modules available in J&K which can be directed to undertake acts of terror in any part of the country.
- **Continuation of Proxy War Unhindered:** There has been no let-up in the proxy war in J&K. The intensity between 2007 to 2012 had gone down primarily because the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and Pakistan Army were involved in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Swat and Baluchistan. Lashkar Chief Hafiz Sayeed declared this in a recent *India Today* interview, saying, “Full-scale armed *jihad* will begin soon in Kashmir after American forces withdraw from Afghanistan.”<sup>10</sup> It is no secret that if Pakistan is not made to pay for its deeds, it will intensify the *jihad* and make all possible endeavours to remove the Indian footprints from Afghanistan, and a policy of recapture Kabul and cripple Kashmir<sup>11</sup> will be put in place. In case Pakistan decides to continue to fight the proxy war in India, India should keep its options open to fight from the west of the Durand Line and even from the areas which are

favourably disposed towards India. India, therefore, must prepare the battleground to fight the proxy war elsewhere to contain the activities of the ISI and make the Pakistan Army pay for it.

- **Pan-India Jihad:** There has been no let-up in terror related incidents because Pakistan backed *jihadi* groups are well entrenched in J&K and spreading the network across India. The blasts, in Mumbai, Bangalore, Pune, Guwahati, Delhi, Hyderabad, Jaipur and Malegaon are some of the examples which have established that a pan-India *jihad* structure is in place and non-state actors can reach every doorstep in India. The agenda of the ISI and Pakistan Army is to encircle India from all directions; therefore, India must gain control of the situation before it reaches a point of no return.
- **Support to Other Groups:** The ISI is working overnight to establish linkages with other separatist organisations and insurgent groups. It has been revealed that United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) commander Paresh Barua played a key role in bringing the ISI and the Maoists in direct contact.<sup>12</sup> This operation is being undertaken by the ISI from Bangladesh. ISI operative Mohammed Aslam, who mainly operates from Chittagong and Dhaka, has been given the task to stay in touch with the top Maoist leadership in India<sup>13</sup> to provide moral and material support. Similarly, the ISI is in the process of establishing firm ground in Nepal so as to use the porous border for infiltration of terror groups, and to forge linkages with the Indian Maoists through the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) (Maoists).
- **Sense of Insecurity Across India:** The ISI and non-state actors have managed to create an environment of insecurity in India. Major festivals, and the Republic Day and Independence Day all remain under the shadow of the terror threat. Each year, the government is adding an additional layer of security. Any additional security layer means an encroachment upon public liberty. The security situation prevailing in India has left hardly any private space in the lives of the citizen. Public space will keep shrinking if Pakistan is allowed to conduct the proxy war unhindered.
- **Endeavour to Make Insurgency Self-Sustaining in India:** Insurgency and terrorism are fast becoming self-sustaining in India,

thanks to moral and material support by Pakistan. Creation of *jihad* modules under organisations such as the SIMI and IM has added a new dimension to the proxy war. Chanakya had said that a war abetted by an external power and executed by local people is the most dangerous war to combat. In the time to come, this will be one of the biggest challenges, along with LWE.

- **Zero Infiltration Along Borders Near Impossible:** No border fence/ obstacle has been able to hold back a determined enemy. Mao had said, “The will of a man cannot be stopped by the barrel of the gun”. The Great Wall of China was breached; the wall dividing the two Germanys was breached, and, similarly, the the fence along the LoC, is being breached with rapid frequency. It is a trip wire which provides the Indian Army a counter-infiltration position, but to assume that it will prevent infiltration completely is being economical with the truth. Therefore, India should not just sit back and feel happy about it. The negative impact of the fence is that it has also led to the creation of a sense of limit of operations for own troops.
- **Alternative Bases for Mounting Proxy War:** Having achieved a fair degree of success, the ISI has been very active in Nepal and Bangladesh for quite some time now, especially along the borders. The rise of LWE groups in India and Nepal has further served its purpose and they will not hesitate in providing moral and material support to these groups.<sup>14</sup> This offers the ISI the opportunity to mount a proxy war from multiple locations as well as making India’s neighbourhood insecure to sabotage Indian interests in the region. The ISI will be more than willing to provide weapons and war-like stores to these organisations. It is established fact that the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HUJI) and Al Qaida have already established their bases in Bangladesh and this will allow the ISI to mount terror or proxy war from the east. The ISI is making efforts to coordinate the activities of the other insurgents and terror organisations from the northeast, LWE and SIMI/IM to mount an unethical/unrestricted war against India. In fact, Bangladesh territory provides the ISI with multiple ingress routes to these sensitive Indian states.<sup>15</sup>
- **Persecution or Alienation of Kashmiri Awam:** By and large, the Kashmiri people live in perpetual fear of a gun battle between the security

forces and the terrorists in their backyard. As a result, people do not like the idea of having gun-toting *jihadis* among the civil population. During my tour of duty, most of the people, irrespective of their leaning, asked me why India can't fight this proxy war in Pakistani territory and spare the Kashmiri *awam* from this bloodshed. Except a few anti-social elements who help terrorists to infiltrate for financial and other benefits, by and large, the Kashmiri *awam* don't want terrorists to come and disturb the peace in the Valley. It impacts the lives, business, agriculture, tourism, education and freedom of the people of Kashmir. Taking the war to the enemy's backyard is in the interest of the nation and in line with the desire of the people of Kashmir for lasting peace.

### **Dogma to Deal with the Proxy War by Pakistan**

There are no set rules or doctrines in place to deal with the state sponsored proxy war by Pakistan. Before realigning our strategy to deal with this, what first needs to be understood is that the problem is not the non-state actors or the people of Pakistan—the real problem is the Pakistan Army and Pakistan as a state. People on both sides want peace and harmony, but the state of Pakistan and the Pakistan Army want to keep the pot boiling. Allowing Pakistan to continue with the unprovoked proxy war, without responding in kind, gives an indication that India's Pakistan policy has a lost sense of direction. It has emboldened the Pakistan Army to carry out multiple acts of aggression across the Line of Control, without fear of Indian retribution.<sup>16</sup> The reaction from the Indian side to unprovoked aggression is either total inaction or the rhetoric of war. War is the last tool of state policy, and the last tool cannot be the first tool. Gen GD Bakshi (Retd) says that there are options short of war which have not been exercised by India so far. This trend can only be reversed if there are leverages in place and acts of aggression are responded to adequately, through a well-articulated doctrine. The irony is that there is no credible stated doctrine to deal with the proxy war from Pakistan. Air Cmde Jasjit Singh, had stated, "We need to ask ourselves whether we have evolved a credible doctrine to successfully counter Pakistan's strategic doctrine of sub-conventional war (through terrorism) under the nuclear umbrella acquired by 1987".<sup>17</sup> In my opinion, dogma should deal with two aspects: first, a defence mechanism to

break the strategy of Pakistan and minimise the impact of proxy war. The second aspect is developing the capability to respond effectively. Both these issues are inter-related and are not to be applied sequentially.

**Deterrence by Punishment:** The proxy war unleashed by Pakistan is indeed driven by the fact that, firstly, nothing remains constant in any conflict; secondly, to succeed in a “dirty war”, it must be dynamic, making it extremely difficult for the defender to fight. At the same time, Pakistan has been able to give it a facade of staying clean by projecting it as a “just war” for self-determination by the people of Kashmir. It is indeed hard to fight such wars by orthodox strategies. Deterrence by punishment must contain both conventional and unconventional methods. The actions must range from direct responses to indirect ones. A direct response is primarily employment of conventional forces for punishment, even if it means a physical attack or a pulverisation of rogue posts and launch pads along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) by long range vectors and physical assault by Special Forces. But caution must be taken to ensure that such response is in relation to a rogue act along the LAC such as infiltration by terrorists, hacking of soldiers along the LAC or an unprovoked act of aggression. Whereas the indirect approach need not hit the adversary at the point of conflict—it should hit the adversary where it hurts most as a reminder of reach and capability. The indirect approach could be spaced in time and distance. Aspects of deterrence by punishment and deterrence by denial must be put in place. Defensive and offensive measures must be updated periodically to remain ahead of the adversary. Pakistan in the past had given two opportunities where India was justified in taking direct action: the first was the Kargil intrusion. This had certainly given India an opportunity to hit the bases of terrorist camps in depth areas since the Pakistan Army had denied its involvement and put the entire onus on the *jihadis*. The second was the 9/11 attack in Mumbai, which had established the culpability of both the Pakistani state and non-state actors. Both these instances were certainly acts of war and a response would have been justified.

**Breaking the Strategy of Pakistan:** The strategy of Pakistan can be broken by adopting the following philosophies:

- **“Bait and Bleed”:** Pakistan’s internal security scenario has presented an ideal platform for executing the strategy of “bait and bleed”. India

need not abet or incite any internal conflict, but parties in conflict with Pakistan should be supported, and there is no harm in doing so. However, what is important is that this policy should be consistent and once chosen, such parties to the conflict must not be abandoned midway. Multi-polarity is part of this strategy and India must support more than one party among those that appear to be fighting for a just cause. This strategy would reduce the manoeuvre space for Pakistan to a great extent and result in exposed flanks which otherwise are being exploited today by Pakistan.

- **Create Friction in the Secondary Trinity: People, Army and Government.**<sup>18</sup> There is a need to create friction between the rational and irrational forces within Pakistan. The fragile democracy, fragmented society, military hegemony, with token control of the government over the Army and the shrinking public space provide an ideal platform to cause friction among the secondary trinity in Pakistan. The wedge among the people, Army and government is imperative to undermine the strategy of proxy war. The people and communally fragmented demography/ society comprise the centre of gravity to cause friction in the trinity. Pakistan has already been divided on communal or ethnic lines primarily due to the agenda of *jihad*. On one side is the military, which has used non-state actors to pursue its agenda and, on the other side is the civilian government, which is proclaiming “democracy” but without civil control.<sup>19</sup> Its people need to be made aware that there is neither democracy, nor economic empowerment of the people, in Pakistan. It is required to be articulated that the prosperity of the people is more important than the development of the ideology of *jihad*. A jasmine-like revolution, driven by the indigenous people, is a perfect example of creation of friction in the secondary trinity. If Baluchistan, Sindh and Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) are unhinged, Pakistan as a nation state will become unsustainable. The Army, government and people will be at the cross-roads with each other. It is a difficult manoeuvre, but not impossible.
- **Pronouncing POK as an Integral Administrative Part of India:** Gilgit, Baltistan, Diamir, Ghizer and Ghanche are the five main districts of POK. India must announce that these districts are an

integral part of the administrative districts of J&K and the welfare of citizens of these districts is the prime concern of the Government of J&K and India. Therefore, the following must be ensured to raise the sentiments of the people of POK:

- A separate Commissioner to be nominated for POK. The District Magistrate (DM) of Ladakh and Kargil should be nominated as the DM of Gilgit Baltistan; similarly, the DMs of Kupwara, and Baramulla could be nominated the DMs of other districts. A token budget for development purposes should be earmarked even if it is not expanded. Schemes for health, education, infrastructure should be announced, and the budget allocated for these.
- The people of these five districts to be given the status of Scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) or backward class.
- A token number of seats for the students of these districts should be reserved in the educational institutions and some students should be allowed to come over to pursue education, including higher education.
- There is no harm in recruiting, after due deliberation, men into the police and some Para-Military Forces (PMF), as a token. These aspects indeed are path-breaking but there is no harm in adopting this strategy to coerce and cause friction among the different ethnic communities in POK.
- India must object to the Chinese companies operating in POK and, similarly, the visits of Pakistan's Prime Minister/President to POK should be objected to.

**Countering Proxy War:** Proxy war has no defined lines or battle space—it is amorphous and seamless. The enemy is invisible till he surfaces to execute an operation, and then melts away. Rogue organisations directly involved in it are within and outside the territorial boundaries. They operate as decoys for deception, use bait to create hypnotic patterns (creating a pattern to make the adversary believe otherwise) and craft a web of shadows within shadows. The dichotomy is that there are no set rules or operational philosophy to deal with such a paradoxical adversary. Therefore, the following are imperative to deal with this manoeuvre of the adversary:

- **Synergised Integrated Approach:** The proxy war unleashed by Pakistan is not entirely a military problem. It is, indeed, a dogma which needs a comprehensive strategy and integrated approach. On one side, Pakistan has so far lived in denial, but on other, it is continuing with its unprovoked aggression. Military and non-military options are required to be employed in a synergised manner. The turn of events and the trajectory on which Pakistan has embarked, suggest that another partition of Pakistan may be unpreventable in the near future. There is a need for India to understand that prosperous and united Pakistan is dangerous for India. It may be advantageous to have an economically, demographically and politically fragmented Pakistan rather than a united Pakistan. India must play a bigger role in ensuring that the forces in Pakistan, which are favourably disposed towards India, are supported and those that are inimical, must be fragmented so that such forces are not allowed to join hands against India, even if it means third country operations. What India should do at the moment is put in place an integrated strategy and a joint task force to deal with the proxy war. The task force should consist of a military component, diplomacy, the secret services, an economic bureau, including an economic offences investigation wing and an information warfare component (military and civil wing). The strategy and policy, thus, need to be enunciated all over again to terminate this war.
- **Denial of Exposed Flanks:** The security forces have to succeed to foil all terror attempts, whereas terror organisations have to succeed in only one in 100 to make an impact and their presence felt. The strategy of denial is the most effective one in this proxy war. This assumes significance once the nation has decided to respond adequately. Denial of targets, denial of space, denial of manoeuvre space, denial of opportunity, denial of financial support and denial of information are the most important aspects of fighting a proxy war. This is the domain which has to be handled by the intelligence and other government agencies in a synergised manner. There will be slippages but these can be handled provided there are multi-tier security filters. For example, a module would need local support for identification of targets, safe havens to plan and execute operations, financial support, information of targets, an

opportunity and lucrative attainable targets. If all the agencies are active, and vulnerable targets can be made more elusive and difficult for the adversary to engage, that will make the task of the terror module more difficult.

- **Strengthening Procedural and Legal Security:** There are adequate forces on the ground to handle the threat. The following are important to strengthen the procedural and legal aspects of security:
  - The capability to monitor demographic shifts, ascertaining the location of citizens and foreigners, restriction of movement of those who are *persona non grata* (data bank to monitor movement of people from one place to another) and automatic identification of people at a given point in time as and when the security agencies require this. It will willy-nilly involve tagging almost every citizen and every human being in the territorial boundary.
  - Legal frameworks must be amended to put the onus on the individual, who has been caught or arrested with arms, explosives and war-like material/equipment to prove his innocence, rather than on the government to prove his culpability.
  - Confiscation of property and stoppage of all government schemes to all members of the individual's family. Benefits which are given under various statutory provisions to be suspended when an individual is charged, and terminated when culpability is established by the court of law. This will act as a deterrent and persuade family members to prevent their children joining the terror organisations.

**Timing of Response:** Traditional adversaries, LWE, northeast insurgents and transnational non-state actors are components of modern instability that will keep India busy for the next couple of decades. No nation, big or small, rich or poor, can afford to fight multi-front small and big wars simultaneously. It is a bad idea to fight on multi-fronts—a more pragmatic approach is to terminate one war before a nation embarks upon the next war. India's defensive and restrained response will encourage other players to join the party. Time is running out, and India will be facing multiple challenges ranging from traditional to non-traditional threats, with much greater intensity in the near future. As a result, unending and unfinished wars will add to the burden

on the nation and the security forces, which will definitely have serious implications for national security. The question is whether we should change the strategy now, and prevent a major security dilemma in the future, or wait for the threshold to be crossed and pay a higher price and then deal with a situation such as the Kargil War later. It is strategically wise to fight and win small wars at a time of your own choosing rather than fighting a full spectrum war later at a place and choice of the adversary. To sum up, it is now or never: if we let Pakistan off the hook now, the damage will be irreparable.

**Creation of Leverage and Options:** It was not too long ago that Gen Kayani, who is engaged in an unethical war with India, was talking of demilitarisation of Siachen when Pakistan lost more than 100 soldiers in an avalanche. At the moment, Pakistan is not paying any price for the proxy war in Kashmir and the acts of terror in the hinterland. The Pakistan Army has managed to present itself as the victim, and has strategically remained on the sideline, even while its so-called strategic assets have been acting with no fear of retribution from India. The proxy war in Kashmir can only be tamed when it starts pinching the Pakistan Army. The second issue is that the argument that India does not have any other option or leverage, is unfounded. Pakistan is as vulnerable as any other state which has a fractured society and restive countryside. Yes, war is not the ultimate solution or option and, therefore, should not be considered at this stage. At the same time, to sit back and be morally or ethically correct is also a regressive step. When we look at other options, it is evident that the prevailing conditions in Pakistan offer multiple options, ranging from economic to secret wars to deal with the proxy war. In my opinion, there is nothing unethical in developing the capability to set in motion coercion, attrition and demoralisation of the Pakistan Army and its establishments.

**Strategy of Balance:** India is an advocate of the abolition of war: “we do not want war; but war can only be abolished through war, and in order to get rid of the gun, it is necessary to take up the gun”.<sup>20</sup> Every intrusion by Pakistan along the LoC has to be treated as an act of war and dealt with accordingly. Pakistan has gained immensely by employing the low cost option with high dividends. As Brahma Chellaney says, ironically, each act of aggression has been responded to with inaction and stoic tolerance.<sup>21</sup> Being ethically correct, India has become a soft target and opened the avenues for

other inimical forces to dig holes in our security apparatus with impunity, which is a dangerous trend. Brahma Chellaney, during a recent TV debate, said that when India was economically and militarily weak (1970s and 1980s) the neighbours did not mess around with India. The reasons were that India maintained a balance of military power, balance of strategy, and consistency in policy. Which, perhaps, is no longer the case today. Thus, the time has come to rebalance the strategy and consistency of policy for the application of power where it becomes mandatory.

**Secret Wars More Effective than Open War:** A serious threat to our security in the immediate future<sup>22</sup> would emerge from secret wars, whether state sponsored or initiated by non-state actors. The US, Russia, Israel and China have elaborate systems in place to either initiate or to deal with secret wars. In 2011, the total defence budget of the USA was \$ 872 billion, and \$75 billion (close to 10 percent of the total budget) was meant for the intelligence agencies.<sup>23</sup> Undertaking of intelligence based operations is here to stay and should be part of the national security strategy. It has been historically proved that an unconventional adversary can be dealt with only by unconventional forces. The best antidote for the Pakistan backed proxy war is a secret war by faceless soldiers and unstructured organisations. The preconditions and important aspects of secret war are as under:

#### **Preconditions of Secret or Covert War**

- A bold political and military leadership is required, which is capable of taking decisions and responsibility.
- There are neither territorial boundaries nor limitations on the use of the medium of secret war.
- Secret war can manifest threats from the physical, virtual and amorphous domains.
- There is nothing unethical about secret wars as long as the objective is achieved and the adversary is made to pay the price for his actions.
- Secret wars are expensive and need much greater specialisation and confidentiality.
- Such operations should be conducted by unidentified men and unspecified organisations.
- Secret wars are an important component to support conventional forces engaged in conventional or sub-conventional operations.

## Capability Building and Methodology of Covert Operations

- India may not be able to develop such capability overnight, but it is high time that this capability is put in place. It is imperative that a task force consisting of domain specialists of a very high order be part of this organisation.
- Training, equipping, operating procedures, and the command and control system have to be worked out in detail. This would also need the allocation of a separate budget, and it must operate under the highest authority.
- All secret/ covert operations are not violent. These operations could cause fractures in the societal fabric, isolation or elimination of super empowered leaders, passive and active discreet operations to neutralise the rogue elements, discredit individuals, and sabotage, and initiation of proxy war. In fact, even the misinformation campaign could be orchestrated through covert operations.
- Covert operations, by and large, are organised by funding, provision of war waging equipment / weapons to non-state actors, provision of mercenaries, moral support and ideological abetment.
- In our context, there are four different means, which can be adopted to execute the covert/ secret operations: by outsourcing as a contract for specific operations; through proxy, jointly with a strategic partner; and, finally, execution directly by own agencies.

**Operational Autonomy Must:** It is prudent to say that the bond between the people and the military in this country is intense and no self-respecting citizen of the country would question it if Pakistan is made to pay the price for transgression of the LoC, the attack on the Parliament and the acts of terror such as Mumbai 26/11. When the threat crosses the threshold of diplomatic and political confines, the military must assert itself and exercise all options in both less than war or war-like scenarios. India has a history of accepting military dissent, and the political leadership has given a fair amount of operational autonomy for execution of military operations. Field Mshl Sam Manekshaw had expressed his dissent prior to the 1971 War with regard to the preparations and timing of operations which was accepted by the then Prime Minister Mrs Indira Gandhi. She gave complete operational

autonomy to the Field Marshal to execute the war in a manner which would ensure complete military, political and diplomatic victory. Thus, if the military leadership has to alter the military strategy, in all fairness, it will be accepted by a mature political leadership in the best interest of the nation. Operational autonomy for the use of force, methodology, time and location is imperative. Restraint too is required upto a limit, but inaction is avoidable.

**Redraw Area of Influence:** The time has come to redraw the strategy and area of influence to build up leverage against Pakistan. Pakistan is an unstable plateau, which, if allowed to continue to go ahead with its policies of “stabilisation of the internal situation by destabilisation externally,” will have serious consequences for India. Pakistan has committed certain cardinal mistakes which should be exploited by India. The first is that Pakistan started third country operations against India; the new war zone was opened in Afghanistan, where the Indian Embassy and Consulates have been under constant attack. In my opinion, Pakistan has given an opportunity to India to take the war beyond the geographical confines. India must seize this opportunity and use it as a tool to redraw the area of own influence and reduce the influence of Pakistan from across the immediate neighbourhood. The second is Pakistan’s dabbling in the proliferation of nuclear technology and terrorism. This has brought to the fore Pakistan’s role in destabilisation of the present power equation and the internal security of a large number of regional and extra-regional countries. The third comprises the economic offences: Pakistan’s facilitation of unrestricted proliferation of fake currency. This has eroded the country’s stature in the international community. Today, Pakistan can only offer limited consumer markets, cheap unskilled labour, export of agriculture produce and textiles. But it has neither monopoly nor technology to excel in any sector. There are other countries which are in a position to replace Pakistan in these sectors. In a nutshell, the economy and internal security situation in Pakistan are both extremely fragile. India must seize this opportunity and work in consonance with other nations and forces favourably disposed to India to encircle Pakistan economically, militarily and diplomatically.

**Control the Surrounding:** Pivots of geography give an added advantage to India to control the region. The question is: how far India does wish to exert its influence and military capability? Pakistan has geographical and

demographical predicaments which make it vulnerable. Internally, Pakistan is divided into two separate parts; one is reasonably stable and affluent; and the other is restive, vulnerable, socially and politically fragmented. Overall, Pakistan suffers from an inherent lack of geographical depth, inadequate resources to support such a large population, and lack of social integration. The restive Pashtun belt and Baluchistan are leverages which can allow India to control not only the surroundings but also the heartland of Pakistan. To be merciful to Pakistan is allowing the guilty to go unpunished. Encirclement of Pakistan will give India leverage to control the surroundings and the trajectory in which India wants Pakistan to head. But the irony is that instead, Pakistan has been able to control the security situation in J&K and is expanding its sphere of influence through non-state actors. Chanakya had said, "If a nation does not take advantage of the vulnerability of its adversary, even God cannot come to the rescue of such an inopportune nation". Acumen in statecraft lies in ensuring that the adversary is not allowed manoeuvre space to cause harm to own security, and, at the same time, wisdom lies in controlling the surroundings and events to ensure that the enemy is denied options to pursue his agenda.

**Curtail the Diplomatic and Economic Reach of Pakistan:** Its unexplained restraint is leading to the shrinking of strategic options for India. Diplomacy should always create new options, and the economic and military domains must exploit those. There has to be synergy in actions and consistency in policy, both of which which at the moment seem to have lost a sense of direction. Needling by Pakistan must not be accepted or absorbed as a compulsion for regional or national security. A comprehensive strategy to encircle Pakistan economically, politically, diplomatically and militarily is long overdue. India is in a position to handle economic turbulence, but Pakistan is not. Economic encirclement is a potent instrument and the aim should be to cripple Pakistan's industry, paralyse its economic growth and capture its markets. The ambushing of export markets is another area which must be explored. China has effectively turned asymmetrical trade into another instrument to prevent India's rise as a competitor.<sup>24</sup> Today, a large number of small scale industries in the rural areas have shut down and cheap Chinese goods have flooded the markets, literally killing the small scale industrial sector. Similarly, India must use its financial and business clout to cripple Pakistan's

economy. The Chinese quarantine authorities reportedly blocked hundreds of container vans of Philippine bananas from entering Chinese ports, claiming that the fruit contained pests.<sup>25</sup> This had a huge impact as far as Philippine's fruit export to China and even to other countries was concerned. Similar measures need to be discreetly put in place, either directly or through a third party. These leverages are required to be put in place in short spells and shift from one area of economic activity to another. However, this must be put into effect after detailed research for short and long term impacts. The timing of the employment of such a policy is important. The spade work and conducive conditions to unleash this strategy have to be prepared by a task force. Such strategies are rarely effective if used in the stand-alone mode.

**Military as Leverage:** George Washington famously said, "If we desire to avoid insult, we must be able to repel it; if we desire to secure peace—one of the most powerful instruments of our rising prosperity—it must be known that we are at all times ready for war."<sup>26</sup> Academia or peace doves may differ with my logic but the military problem has to be dealt with by military acumen best suited for a particular situation. Military means are adopted when other tools of statecraft become ineffective. The military leadership must utilise the best possible strategy, even if it means differing with the larger public and government views. Militaries the world over have differed with their civilian masters and counterparts over the use of force and the timing of application of force to deal with a military problem. Strategic wisdom says that military leaders must do plain speaking even if this means being impolite or politically incorrect. It may be out of context, but it is imperative to clarify that military leaders must express their opinion when a tired and fatigued strategy start hurting the command and "core interest areas of national security". Gen Sir Richard Dannatt, Chief of the General Staff (CGS) of the British Army from August 2006 to August 2009, while still in service, went public about his disagreements with Prime Minister (PM) Gordon Brown over the resourcing of the military missions in Iraq and Afghanistan,<sup>27</sup> going so far as to accuse the PM of violating the military covenant (the bond between a nation and its military) while earning the sobriquet of being the most outspoken British Army Chief in decades.<sup>28</sup> It is high time that maturity dawns on the political, bureaucratic and military fraternity to

energise and give an impetus to fight the proxy war in the best possible manner and make the Pakistan Army pay for its misadventure. The lead force in this complex war certainly should be the armed forces, but more appropriately what is needed is a composite task force to make Pakistan and the Pakistan Army pay the price of the proxy war. Mature democracies welcome military dissent on issues relating to national security. Because it is the military which faces the consequences of the failure of diplomacy and lack of will of the political leadership. The ultimate cost has to be paid by the soldiers and, thus, it is the duty of the military leaders to act in the best interest of the nation and their command.

**Water as Leverage:** There is only one principle in war and that is to hit the adversary where it hurts him most. Water is an issue which hurts Pakistan the most. Nehru's assertion in the Lok Sabha on November 30, 1960, after the signing of the Indus Water Treaty with Pakistan was, "We purchased a settlement, if you like; we purchased peace to that extent and it is good for both countries".<sup>29</sup> However, the treaty could neither purchase peace nor do justice to the people of J&K. The time has come to link the water treaty with the proxy war. India must declare that any transgression by armed men into Indian territory is an "act of war" and as a natural fallout, during war all bilateral treaties could stand suspended. This is an argument and spin masters must employ it to put pressure on Pakistan as a tool of deterrence. According to the IPS News Agency, economic development in Kashmir is hindered because only 40 percent of the cultivatable land can be irrigated. This is primarily due to the unequal distribution of water. The next issue is that India is authorised to utilise up to 20 percent of the water as the upper riparian state, whereas actual utilisation is much less. It should act as a reminder to the present and future generations of leaders of this country that the Indus Water Treaty represents the most generous water-sharing agreement in modern world history, reserving 80.52 percent of the water, or 167.2 billion cubic metres annually for Pakistan.<sup>30</sup> Plans must be put in place to utilise the maximum of the entitled water to begin with. Pakistan's contentions on the Baglihar project have been rejected by the independent arbitrator. The Tulbul, Kishanganga and Wullar barrage projects that are in the pipeline must be completed with speed. There is no reason why India should not exploit 15,000 MW potential of power in J&K without

violating the water treaty with Pakistan. Moreover, the Kashmiri separatists' attachment for Pakistan can be undermined by raising the sentiments of the Kashmiri *awam* on water sharing with Pakistan. Even today, 20 to 25 percent of Kashmiris are living without electricity and 55 percent are without safe drinking water.<sup>31</sup> Pakistan is aware that as long as it can continue to fuel the proxy war in J&K on the name of self-rule / secession from India, the flow of water in the Indus will continue unrestricted. But if Kashmir is peaceful, the people will demand their rights as the upper riparian state. That will be the beginning of economic and social chaos in Pakistan. This is an important assertion and India must make all efforts to make the people of Kashmir aware of the true agenda of Pakistan. Indeed, the proxy war is a water war and, thus, this facade and the true intent of Pakistan needs to be exposed.

**Weinberger-Powell Doctrine:**<sup>32</sup> An aggressive strategy often gets muffled in the absence of an empirical study or a broad consensus. There is a process which should be adopted, as suggested by the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine: a list of questions have to be answered affirmatively before a military action plan or strategy is put in place:

- ***Is a vital national security interest threatened?*** In the instant case, national integrity and security are being jeopardised. This has the potential to push India close to full spectrum war and internal destabilisation.
- ***Do we have a clear, attainable objective?*** India should put a positive end to this protracted conflict which is in its third decade. India cannot be allowed to bleed for an infinite period.
- ***Have the risks and costs been fully and frankly analysed?*** Local escalation along the LoC may take place and Pakistan may be able to raise the violence level for a short period of time. But in the long run, Pakistan will have no option but to fall in line or destroy itself.
- ***Have all other non-violent policy means keep fully exhausted?*** India sacrificed its upper riparian rights to buy peace by allowing Pakistan to use the Indus water exclusively, offering Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to Pakistan, and improving people-to-people contacts. Even India's nuclear doctrine is one of No First Use (NFU). Whereas Pakistan has disregarded the concessions made by India.
- ***Is there a plausible exit strategy to avoid endless entanglement?*** India is a victim and, therefore, Pakistan has to adopt the exit policy from

this mess, since India is only responding to the strategy of Pakistan. Total disengagement is neither desirable nor advocated to maintain leverage against Pakistan.

- ***Have the consequences of our action been fully considered?*** Own reactions are directly proportionate to the actions of Pakistan. India is only responding, so there is no reason to believe that India is the initiator of the conflict.
- ***Is the action supported by the people of this country?*** There is a consensus that a solution be found to end the proxy war. The people support all measures short of full spectrum war.
- ***Do we have genuine broad international support?*** Support from the international community is variable, by and large, most nations being of the view that Pakistan is home to terrorism, and India is one of the victims of Pakistan sponsored terrorism. But no nation will support India if it goes in for a full spectrum war. Therefore, it is in the fitness of things that a consistent endeavour be made to carry out the exterior manoeuvre to drum up international support in favour of India.

## Conclusion

The wisdom of ages suggests that there are three ways of defending a fort: the first, is to surround the enemy's fort and lay siege to prevent him coming out of his fort. The chances are that even if some force is able to sneak out of the siege, it will not be adequate to cause a major threat to own defences or the fort. The second is to fight ahead of own fort, thus, effectively defeating the adversary before he can reach the fort. The third method is defending the fort by occupying positions on the rampart of the fort. One can hold the enemy outside the fort as long as the fort walls stand and the gate can withstand the repeated attacks. But, ultimately, the enemy will gain access and the fort will no longer be impregnable. Strategic wisdom lies in fighting the war in enemy territory to defend the fort and the time has come for India to choose one of the first two options. The third option is not only strategically irrational, but also regressive and defensive in nature. Pakistan has adopted the first option and India in the instant case has adopted the third option of fighting the enemy on own soil, literally from the ramparts of the fort. Pakistan as an adversary has an agenda to accomplish, its motive to

bleed India and has succeeded in restricting India to looking inward rather than looking to extend its strategic reach beyond the region. Pakistan so far has gone unpunished for its crimes, but the time has come to alter the strategy and make Pakistan pay for its misdemeanours.

## Notes

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