

Military Strategy

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LINKAGES : MILITARY STRATEGY, OPERATIONAL ART AND TACTICS

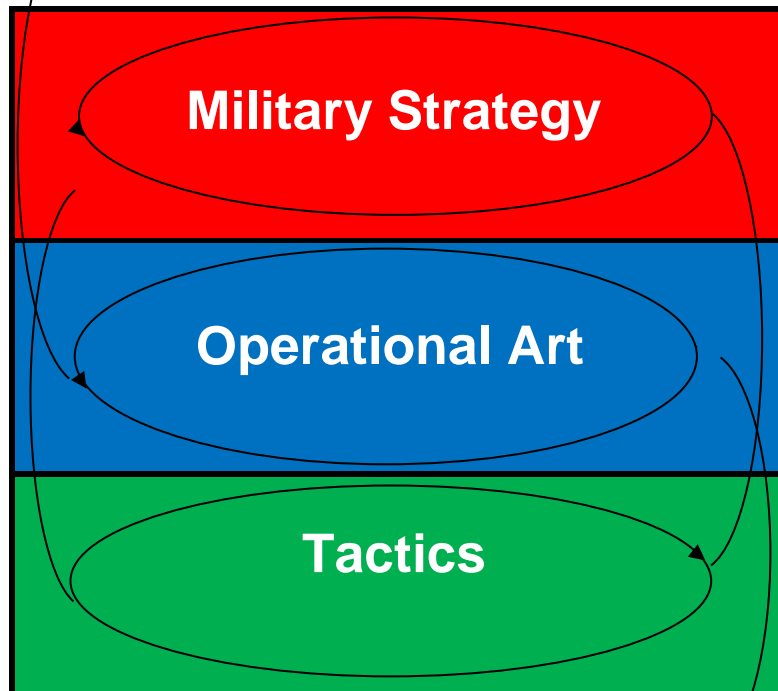
The **domain of combat** is driven by Military Strategy at the apex, conceptual level and tactics at the lowest level of execution. Operational Art is the critical link between the two. The salience of each of the links in the value chain of combat cannot be over emphasized.

Military Strategy deals with the overall plan and design of war, about availability of forces and resources, their allocation and positioning. Antulio J. Echevarria, has defined it, 'as the practice of reducing an adversary's physical capacity and willingness to fight, and continuing to do so until one's aim is achieved'¹. A deeper examination clearly brings out two critical facets, viz, the physical and the moral. Reduction of the adversary's physical capacities begins in peace time by creating an asymmetry of capabilities in one's favour and thence, exploitation of the asymmetric advantages in war through superior application of forces to achieve the set goals. The moral dimension, on the other hand, seeks to create a favorable environment shaped not only by military strategy, but also through skillful leveraging of the economic, diplomatic and informational metrics. Righteousness of the cause (jus ad bellum) reinforces the moral dimension further.

Operational Art is the critical link between military strategy and tactics. In the nineteenth century, Field Armies grew to unmanageable levels as technology extended lines of command and the range of firepower also increased. War no longer remained a two dimensional chessboard between massed forces. Even the time dimension got enhanced from merely, 'a day' to, 'days and months'. The challenges of commanding and controlling such forces and synchronizing military actions between the tactical and strategic levels, led to the development of the intermediate level of war, viz, the operational level. The need to conduct operations at this level with military adroitness propelled the development of Operational Art as a domain.

Tactics deals with the actual conduct of battle and war fighting at the lowest level. It deals with employment of men and material, using a combination of firepower, movement and maneuver to attain specified objectives and secure critical spaces. In the process, tactics also delivers the destruction of the adversary's war waging capacities - both, men and material resources.

A schematic representation of the linkages between Military Strategy, Tactics and Operational Art is as under :-



Tactics is rooted largely in Military Science while Operational Art shapes the formulation of Military Strategy

OPERATIONAL ART

Overview

US Army Field Manual (FM100–5) describes operational art as the employment of military forces to attain strategic goals in a theatre of operations, through the design, organization and conduct of major operations.² Operational art thus devolves around fundamental decisions about when and where to fight and whether to accept or decline battle.

The Soviets were the first to articulate the connect between strategy and tactics in written form in the 1920s. The Soviet Army's Field Regulations of 1936 (issued under the watchful superintendence of Field Marshal Tukhachevsky) outlined the tenets of deep battle, continuity, momentum and synchronization of operations, to defeat the enemy progressively, through successive battles, rather than in one, big battle. This was later developed into the theory of deep manoeuvre through envelopment and encirclement including the creation of Operational Manoeuvre Groups (OMGs). The German Blitzkrieg in World War 2, drew greatly from the Soviet concept while the US Air-Land Battle concept aligned it to superior technology and used it to great effect in the two Gulf Wars.

The Indian Army describes the operational level of warfare as synergizing successive battles into cohesive operations to achieve military-strategic aims. Operational Art requires a commander to answer three fundamental questions :-

- What military conditions must be achieved to attain military - strategic aims ? **(Ends)**.
- What sequence of actions is most likely to achieve that condition ? **(Ways)**.
- How should the metric of force be applied to accomplish thesequence of actions? **(Means)**.

Operational level objectives could be terrain related, force related or even psychological -the latter often an affect produced by a combination of the first two.

- **Terrain Related Objectives**. Could be domination of critical space, vis a vis enemy's centre of gravity, or it could be related to seizing or threatening high value targets or territory. The aim is invariably, to create a paralyzing shock effect on the adversary and force him to react as per own strategy or design.

- **Force Objectives.** Would aim to create strategic imbalance by destruction of major combat potential of the enemy. They would also aim to tie down enemy strategic reserves away from the critical battle space, by posturing/countervailing as a threat in being, and finally by launching counter stroke(s) at a critical time to turn the tide of battle.
- **Psychological Objectives.** Are often the essence of operational art and aim to unhinge the enemy and unnerve the higher leadership. The result would invariably be psychological paralysis in decision making at critical junctures, and often an acceptance of defeat even when the ground situation is not so bleak.
- On the modern battlefield, with **hybrid warfare** increasingly becoming the instrument of choice, operational level objectives are often diffused and multiple in nature. This not only makes their identification difficult, but also restricts the after affects of their destruction/ neutralization.

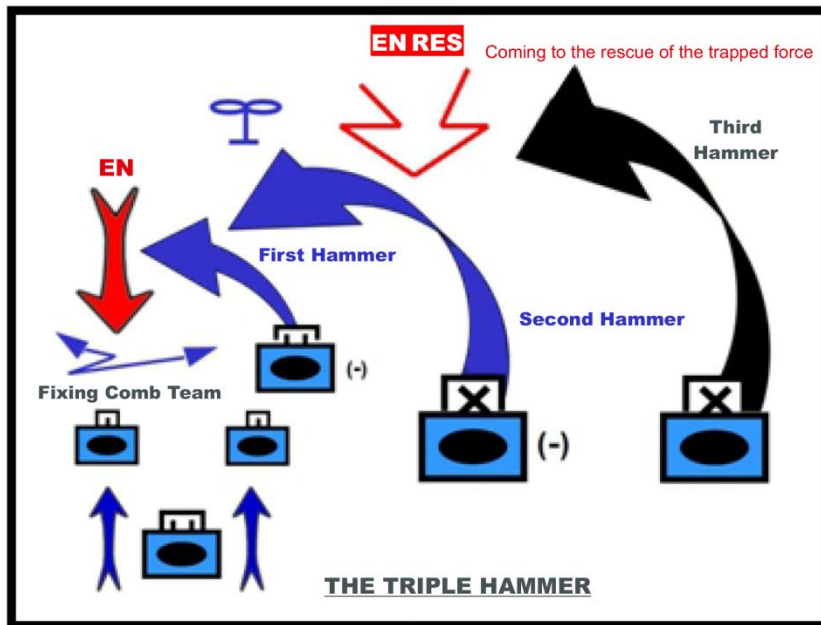
Operational Manoeuvres.

These are mostly offensive maneuvers but could also be based on an offensive defence strategy. Most relate to **threatening critical space(s)**, which could be defined as that area/space/key terrain objectives, which, if occupied, would threaten the enemy's centre of gravity, thus forcing the enemy to react as per our design. Its correct identification is therefore crucial and its early occupation/ domination essential to the success of the operational maneuver. Prominent variations in operational maneuvers are detailed in succeeding paragraphs.

- **Envelopment and Encirclement.** Envelopment could be single or double. While a portion of the Force engages and pins down the enemy frontally, the larger force, mostly mobile, envelops the enemy's main position from one or both the flanks, making it untenable. Where the enemy's flanks cannot be enveloped or broken through, there are only two options : either one takes recourse to vertical envelopment if the battlefield situation/resources permit, or resorts to a penetrative breakthrough to open a breach in the defences and then breakout with mechanized forces to take the battle to the enemy's depth areas. Encirclement is an adaptation of double envelopment and is usually undertaken with reference to large forces to isolate and surround them. At the operational level the encircled force cannot be resupplied or reinforced, thus making its position untenable and at the tactical level there is an all round threat of attack. The only recourse for the force is to either be relieved from outside or attempt a fighting breakout or fight to death or surrender. Some military experts also favour leaving an escape route for the

beleaguered force, but this is a debatable proposition and not in accord with the original strategy of encirclement. The Soviets were the masters of this manoeuvre, there being numerous examples in World War 2, the most notable being “**Operation Uranus**”. This was a strategic operation launched by the Soviets in November 1942 to encircle the German 6th Army, two Romanian Armies and part of the German 4th Panzer Army in and around Stalingrad. The operation is an interesting study not only for what happened, but also for what did not manifest, due to political meddling, principally by the Germans.

- **Turning Movement.** It is a mobile manoeuvre from the weaker flank to hit the enemy's vulnerable objectives in depth, like command & control centres, fire support and logistic bases or occupation of that critical space which threatens the enemy's centre of gravity. Turning movement differs from envelopment in terms of the depth of penetration and the objectives, which are way in depth and not directly linked to the enemy's main defences. In fact this manoeuvre aims to turn the enemy's main defensive position, making it redundant and forcing the enemy to fight at a time and place of own choosing.
- **Counter Stroke.** This manoeuvre is akin to a counter attack, undertaken at the operational level, where the objective is force related rather than being a terrain objective. It is crucial to launch the counter stroke at an appropriate force objective at the right moment. It is preferable to avoid the head or the main force, as this may result in an attrition oriented action. A counter stroke which hits the softer follow on echelons is likely to have a more devastating affect and could compel the main force to recoil.
- **Riposte.** This is an offensive defence manoeuvre at the operational level, applied against the enemy's main offensive with the aim of forcing him to recoil and abandon the offensive, because of the threat that has manifested against the shaft or rear areas. The launch of the riposte is a calculated strategy, with specifically earmarked or recreated reserves, though not without risks. It needs a bold operational commander to thus commit his main reserves, against pressure to play safe and depend on a purely defensive strategy. It differs from a counter offensive mainly in its area of application, which has a direct bearing on the enemy's main offensive. It has the potential, if successful, of turning the flow of battle in the defender's favour.
- **The Triple Hammer Concept.**



- ✓ The triple hammer increases the scope from a meeting engagement to destruction of the enemy's mobile reserves.
- ✓ It could be adopted either as a progressive step after the initial engagement, or could be generated as part of the Tank Vs Tank battle conducted from the safety of Pivot(s) of Manoeuvre. It is predicated on getting sufficient intelligence after initial contact of a larger enemy force (sectoral / theatre reserves) which are following the lead elements.
- ✓ Once this is confirmed, all efforts and combat energies should be directed towards destruction of this force by using multiple manoeuvres. The triple hammer could be developed with a shallow hammer from within the Combat Group that is involved in the meeting engagement, with the immediate aim of getting on to the flank(s) of the enemy and denying him tactical advantage.
- ✓ The second hammer should be from within the combat command and aimed at the rear of the enemy, entrapping en's immediate reserves and destroying his command, control and fire support means.
 - ✓ Transparency of the battlefield is a vital component to ensure that there is no loss of tempo while applying the hammer in a tactically acceptable timeframe.
 - ✓ The three hammers could all be delivered from one direction, or from different directions, depending on the terrain and operational dictates.

- ✓ The first and second hammers are generally applied within artillery supporting distance.
- ✓ A third hammer with another Combat Command or Independent Armoured Brigade / RAPID Armoured Brigade provides the destructive punch, and should be delivered well to the rear of the enemy, aimed at enemy's mobile reserves/other forces coming to the aid of the trapped enemy.

MILITARY STRATEGY

Key Premises

- In broad terms, military strategy can be either offensive or defensive (with an inherent offensive content). The military strategy planner should be very clear about the aim of the proposed strategy, the obtaining environment and terms of reference articulated by the political principal. A few key premises are as under:-
 - Military strategy should be proactive and even where reactive, should be anticipatory in nature.
 - The planner should be very clear as to the desired end state that is to be achieved.
 - An environment scan should clearly highlight the strengths and shortcomings of the adversaries.
 - The military strategy should seek to appropriately balance the ends, ways and means.
 - The strategy must draw guidance from the politico-military aims and objectives.
 - Risk is inherent in all strategies. It is for the military hierarchy to weigh the risks at various stages and optimize.
 - Whilst dealing with asymmetric threats and hybrid warfare, the desired end state should be clearly defined and a suitable exit strategy planned. In its absence, there is danger of being sucked into protracted operations, which may well suit the design of the adversary.

- The consolidation phase – post conflict termination – should form part of the military strategy.

Aims / Objectives

Military Strategy could be aimed at destruction/attrition of adversary's combat potential or capture of territory, and more often than not, a combination of the two. Whilst capture of territory would force a fight on the enemy and may lead to his attrition, a strategy based on destruction would lay enemy's territory/value objectives bare, for capture /domination as a consequence.

As Sun Tzu highlights, ideally, military strategy which aims to gain material and moral advantage, should ensure that a battle is won even before it is fought. The moral dimension plays an important role in achieving the war aims. The physical dimension, apart from high costs, has inherent limitations on the 21st century battlefield, where hybrid threats are not easy to pin down or reduce in capacity through instruments of force alone.³

Military strategy could be based on a direct attrition oriented approach, or it could be **an indirect approach through dislocation**. The German blitzkrieg through the Ardennes in the Second World War is a classic example of the dislocation strategy, where both sides were evenly matched and an attrition oriented strategy would have resulted in large casualties/stalemate. The German offensive chose to break through the (thus far considered impassable) Ardennes forest, and hence lightly guarded by the allied forces. The Panzer Armies through relentless momentum reached the coastline of the English Channel in ten days, completely turning the flanks of the defensive line and making it redundant.

The indirect approach or strategy of dislocation, while easy to articulate, requires great expertise and matching wherewithal in all arms and services. But most importantly, it requires capable operational leaders to plan and execute. Such expertise cannot be built overnight and requires a well thought through doctrinal approach and a matching operational philosophy.

DISSUASION, DETERRENCE AND COMPELLENCE

An understanding of three critical sub-sets – dissuasion, deterrence and Compellence – is a sine qua non for comprehending the essence as also the deeper nuances of military strategy.

Dissuasion

It is a strategy to discourage a potential or existing adversary from acquiring capabilities or initiating action(s), which will be detrimental to our interest. It can be termed as a combination of diplomatic, economic and military pressure applied through a velvet glove, not crude threats of war. The primary means of implementing dissuasion is not to engage in conflict on a battlefield, but to impose one's will/ persuade an adversary at relatively lesser cost to oneself as also by sensitizing the adversary to the adverse costs of belligerent activity.

Writing in the Journal of Military and Strategic Studies, Glen M Segell, Director of the Institute of Security Policy states, "The measures advocated to implement dissuasion are first and foremost discussions or negotiations. Advocated in such diplomacy is the necessity to negotiate from a position of strength and credibility."⁴The 2001 Quadrennial Defence Review (QDR) of USA states that "Dissuasion influences the nature of military competition, channels threats in certain directions and complicates military planning for potential adversaries."⁵Furthermore, the 2005 National Defence Strategy(NDS) of USA advocates, "We will work to dissuade potential adversaries from adopting threatening capabilities, methods and ambitions, particularly by developing our key military advantages."⁶ The elusive hybrid threats of the 21st century have brought dissuasion to the fore, as the limitations of deterrence and compellence have been exposed in such an environment.

Deterrence and Compellence

Deterrence aims to persuade the adversary not to initiate action through fear of punishment. It conveys imposition of unacceptable costs on the adversary should he not be deterred. It is a conservative strategy which seeks to protect the status quo, a defensive strategy, essentially a waiting game: the opponent has to move before a reaction is triggered.

Compellence aims at compliance and seeks to persuade/force the adversary to stop short of his goal, undo the actions taken by him or withdraw from the disputed land or objectives. Success of compellence is easy to measure as it seeks the reversal or halt to ongoing actions or behavior. It is an active strategy as it seeks to change the current situation. As in any offensive strategy, it necessitates initiative and engagement of the opponent, until the latter relents.

There is a Roman axiom- "If you desire peace, be prepared for war."⁷ This axiom best illustrates the strategy of deterrence, where to deter an aggressive design or hostile action from an adversary, you must have the requisite capability to defeat the opponent or atleast be able to impose unacceptable costs on him. It therefore follows, that both for deterrence and compellence, the threat of your capabilities should not only be credible, but also so

communicated, leaving the adversary in no doubt. Political will, therefore, forms a very important ingredient of the strategy of deterrence and compellence.

Deterrence has proved most successful in the nuclear realm, where mutually assured destruction and related strategies have ensured that such destructive weapons have not been employed post second world war. Nuclear deterrence, however, pre-supposes rational behavior on the part of adversaries, and struggles to succeed against rogue states like Pakistan and North Korea, who also happen to be the greatest proliferators of nuclear technology. Pakistan has tried to turn nuclear deterrence on its head, by claiming negation of conventional space for an Indian response, even while it dangerously pursues sub conventional options/ proxy war against India. This is a dangerous assumption, and when India's threshold is breached, Pakistan may have to pay a steep price. This aspect is being dealt with separately in a later chapter on "Nuclear Backdrop."

Both these strategies can also be applied in an escalatory continuum. The danger is that fine tuning or calibrating your response to an anticipated response from the adversary can go wrong at times, giving the enemy the chance to seize the initiative, particularly when he is predetermined to escalate the situation. Therefore, adopting a strategy on an escalatory continuum necessitates thorough wargaming and preparation for possible contingencies that could unfold. The aim should be to keep the enemy on the backfoot, posing a dilemma to him with likely costs that could follow, should he chose to escalate further. The key to success will be firm Political and Military Wills, backed by requisite capabilities and preparation. A limited war/conflict may also have unintended consequences of escalation, therefore, it may be prudent to be prepared for the full range of contingencies while initiating a limited conflict.

Brilliantly summed up by Antulio J. Echevarria, where he writes, "In sum, deterrence and coercion (compellence) constitute the proverbial opposite sides of the same coin. Making adversaries choose not to do something is closely related to making them elect to do something else. Both strategies require similar conditions for success: reliable knowledge of one's opponent, credible military power, active monitoring and some shared communications and expectations. Without the latter two specifically, both deterrence and coercion are vulnerable to unanticipated events. Certainly the conditions for success are not always present, and either strategy could lead to an escalatory spiral."⁸

CONFLICT IN THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY

Connotation of Military Victory

Till the later part of the 20th Century, the connotation of military victory was quite unambiguous – a decisive defeat for the opponent and victory for self. However, even then, there were shades of grey too ie preserving the status quo/ holding the line etc. With the advent of 4th and 5th generation warfare, and most importantly, terrorism as a potent tool used by non-state actors, the connotation of victory has undergone a profound change. Wars which were earlier fought away from the population centres are today being fought amongst the people, with collateral damage emerging as a great risk factor. The examples of Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria are a pointer to the changes that have come about in the past 2-3 decades.

All of the above leads to a conclusion, that in the violent and interconnected world of the 21st Century, a decisive victory may be more a mirage than a reality, though it cannot yet be discounted totally. Therefore, the connotation of victory is increasingly being seen as, “Having the resources and ingenuity to avoid defeat or maintain the status quo, or at best, a limited victory without commensurate strategic payoffs.”

Constraints in Application of Military Power

Identifying the correct threat/target in a diffused environment is a major challenge, when the battle lines/front are not clearly drawn and operations are being conducted amongst the populace. The risk of collateral damage restricts the use of force by the security forces, but a similar restriction does not apply to the non- state actors, who often use this as an effective tool to defame the security forces.

The risk of high casualties is an important factor in military appreciation and achieving objective at least cost is the new norm. Body bags arriving home under live media glare impose a great psychological constraint. The suicide bomber is the ultimate challenge, with security forces still grappling to find an acceptable answer, often leading to nervous trigger outbursts. The media, an important and omnipresent watchdog, combined with the power of social media networks does impose considerable constraints on the application of military power. Last but not the least, is the considerable extraneous pressure on the political hierarchy that prevents it from taking a clear position that the military hierarchy seeks for developing effective military strategy.

Evolution of Military Strategy Post Independence

Military Strategy, both on the Western and Eastern Fronts has undergone select changes over the past decades. The 1962 Indo China conflict was a huge wake up call, leading to the creation of the Mountain Divisions, though without the full wherewithal that was required to complement the dissuasive military strategy planned. Till 1965 we were an attrition oriented Army, focused at the tactical level, where we got the better of Pakistan as in Khemkaran, Hajipir and other places.

In 1971 the focus was on the East and therefore operations on the Western front were restricted, again without any larger operational design. Our premier force, comprising Armoured elements was not committed to battle. Success in the Shakargarh Bulge was limited, against light opposition and the absence of obstacle clearing equipment was acutely felt. Though we got the better of Pakistan at the tactical level as in the battle of Basantar, absence of operational art was pronounced. However on the Eastern front the Indian Armed Forces displayed brilliant operational maneuver, to inflict a stunning defeat on Pakistan and help the creation of Bangladesh

Major changes in doctrine/military strategy were brought about in the early eighties through a combination: the induction of T-72 tanks & infantry combat vehicles(ICVs) with focus on deep operational maneuvers specially on the open flank. The next major change occurred with the creation of the Rashtriya Rifles(RR) to tackle the proxy war in J&K. It was a truly remarkable gambit and not many gave chance of success to this motley grouping. Over the years, the RR has proved its worth and is today our premier counter insurgency force. It can be optimized further if it is provided the full range of specialized equipment for its assigned role. The Kargil war brought to the fore the strategy of “Limited War”, where many costly lessons were learnt, though once again we got the better of Pakistan through grit and determination on the battlefield. The large scale mobilisation and prolonged face off with Pakistan during Operation Parakram in 2002, prompted the Indian Army to review its Operational Philosophy to ensure optimum application of its superior combat power in any future contingency. Pakistan in turn , has responded by undertaking major reorganisation and relocation of its forces to meet the perceived threat.

Over the years, the Indian Armed Forces have undertaken a number of studies to review their operational and equipping philosophies, organisation and logistics, with far reaching recommendations. The implementation has however been poor, with status quo prevailing. The landmark Transformation study by the Army in 2008-9 has met a similar fate. This has to change, if the Armed Forces have to remain dynamic and prepared to meet the multiple challenges of the 21st century in an era of budgetary constraints. The present hierarchy has its task cut out.

Operational Imperatives

India has unresolved borders on both the Western(Pakistan) front and the Northern / Eastern(China) fronts. India therefore, has multi front obligations and that too against a nuclear backdrop. The Indian Armed Forces also have a protracted engagement in sub conventional operations including a proxy war being waged by Pakistan in J&K. There are also enhanced expectations and obligations beyond our shores. Not being a member of any military /strategic alliance, India needs independent capabilities across the spectrum of conflict. This includes war prevention through full spectrum capabilities on both the western and eastern fronts, to include dissuasion, deterrence and even against collusive support. Apart from this, also required is capability for out of area contingencies, capability to tackle asymmetric threats including terrorism and other miscellaneous capabilities.

WESTERN FRONT

Operational Environment

The Pakistan Army remains fixated to a mindset of undiluted hostility towards India as a strategic fundamental and has waged a number of conflicts since 1947, including a proxy war in Punjab in the eighties and an ongoing proxy war in J&K. Taliban LeT, JeM and other terrorist outfits have been created and nurtured by Pakistan Army/Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) as strategic assets to be used against India, even at the cost of destabilizing itself internally. Pakistan perceives that its nuclear capability is a strategic equalizer to balance the extant power asymmetry, to deter India against a full scale conventional response, even as it continues to pursue proxy war in J&K. This presumption of Pakistan is flawed, mistaking Indian patience for weakness. It can only succeed if we deter ourselves and not call Pakistan's bluff. This aspect is being dealt with in a later chapter on "Nuclear Backdrop." There exists adequate space, including on an escalatory continuum to respond to Pakistan's provocations, using a range of capabilities and options available to India.

Jus ad Bellum/Justification

Latin for "right to war" is a set of criteria that are to be consulted for engaging in war. These include legitimacy, last resort, right intention etc. In practice, this justification has come to be viewed as right of the strong, as seen in recent conflicts in Serbia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria. As far as India is concerned, adequate justification exists for responding to Pakistan's continued provocations. We have a strong case to initiate appropriate response to convey our

intent to defend ourselves and punish the perpetrators. The right to self defence by targeting the source of the threat makes our case stronger.

Overall Military Strategy on the Western Front

Pakistan's hubris and misadventures have resulted in it being boxed into a corner, from where there seems no other way out, unless enlightened leadership takes charge and more important, gets their army on board, an increasingly difficult prospect, keeping in view Pakistan's internal dynamics. India has over the last many decades shown immense patience and maturity in dealing with Pakistan, even to the extent of appearing unwilling and soft in dealing with an errant neighbour. It seems incredulous that despite Pakistan's involvement with all shades of jihadis and terrorists, often hurting American lives the most, they have been given such a long rope. But their hopes have been belied, and we may be seeing a different, tougher approach by the United States.

Presently, there is an impasse in the Indo-Pak relations, with attitudes hardening on the Indian side. Should we allow such an impasse to continue? India being a mature and stronger power, should take the initiative to break this impasse one way or the other. The preferred strategy has to be a soft option for establishing peace, but it requires two to tango, the ball being squarely in Pakistan's court, to reciprocate India's quest for peace, a difficult but not impossible proposition. Of course if this does not work, there may be little choice left with India, but to exercise the hard option, which India has so far refrained from using, despite continuous provocations. Not many nations would have shown so much patience.

In the realm of National Security and Foreign Policy, a singular position may be a recipe for failure. Hence, while pursuing the peace process with Pakistan, India should be prepared for adopting the hard option, if all else fails and Pakistan refuses to see reason. Our Strategy on the Western Front should be based on a clear enunciation of Political Will to convey to Pakistan and the rest of the world that terrorist/other violent acts against India will no longer remain cost free. This resolve should be conveyed strongly and without any ambiguity.

All elements of national power should be included to work out varied response options on the escalatory ladder. These options should be war gamed, rehearsed and the lead agency nominated. The Instruments of response could be non-military or military.

Non Military Instruments

- Diplomatic response in varying degrees from protests/demarche to recalling our high commissioner. This should be accompanied by an information campaign in various media including social media to put our case across to various stakeholders including other nations.
- Vigorous police/intelligence actions against subversive elements/ active collaborators within the country.
- Cyber response using various capabilities at our disposal.
- Economic response including withdrawal of various concessions offered to Pakistan over a period.
- Being an upper riparian state, we retain the control of rivers /water flowing westwards. Notwithstanding international treaty obligations, this is a powerful tool, and in extreme provocation cases can be used to raise the cost of continued provocative behavior.

Military Response

Incidents which could trigger a military response may range from high profile attacks like the earlier attack on Indian Parliament, to continued provocations on the line of control (LC) and hinterland, like serial bombblasts, hijacking/ hostage events, suicide attacks, targeting of senior leaders etc. Ingenuity, surprise and careful selection of the target, place, time and modus operandi is likely to be the hallmark of any future terrorist strike, aided and abetted by Pakistan in some form. These attacks are likely to be calibrated skillfully to ensure a degree of deniability. A radioactive/ chemical/biological attack, though remote, cannot be ruled out.

Overall the Indian Armed Forces have a distinct edge over Pakistan and this gets magnified once you take into account dual tasked forces that are likely to be shifted from the East. This gives our military planners a range of options for responding to continued provocative behaviour by Pakistan. The politico-military strategy should be proactive and the basic thrust offensive, optimizing the tri-service capabilities available. The desired end state should be carefully chosen, to put an end to the proxy war being waged from across the border.

THE NORTHERN FRONT

As far as China is concerned, there are issues of convergence, as also divergence. Despite the positive progress in Indo-China relations in the last three decades, unresolved border issues and mutual distrust still remains. Added to this is the repeated unpredictable behaviour of various organs of the state, specially Peoples Liberation Army (PLA), as reflected in various transgressions that continue to occur on the LAC. What also cannot be ignored is the massive development of dual use infrastructure in Tibet autonomous region and the related rapid deployment capabilities acquired by PLA. China ,therefore, remains the major long term challenge to our national security.

What should be our strategy towards China? It should be to engage China on multiple levels: trade, commerce, cultural and political engagement, but from a position of strength, both in terms of infrastructure along the borders and military capability development.

In the nineties the US army coined a term, VUCA (Violent, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous) to describe the type of environment they would have to operate in the future. Each word of that acronym since then has acquired a deeper meaning. This term holds true equally, if not more, for the Indian armed forces too. Thus, whilst at the surface and perhaps as a mindset the nation and our armed forces have found strategic comfort in being focused on Pakistan, Doklam triggered a reality check for security analysts and made them alive to the dangers lurking on our Northern borders.

Thus,two major strategic shifts are warranted in our higher defence mindsets; from Pakistan centric to China centric orientation and from sub conventional to conventional warfare preparedness. Counter insurgency operations have taken a yet to be fully analyzed toll on our preparedness for our primary role, i.e. conventional war. In the conventional domain, we need to further breakdown war scenarios into scenarios of skirmishes or limited/sector war, as against only an all-out war scenario. Strategies to deal with such scenarios calls for greater deliberation, as the Kargil conflict and the Doklam standoff have shown. Tri-Service re-orientation to our Northern borders is anaxiomaticfallout of these strategic shifts in our mindsets.

It has often been the military 's lament that the government of the day has not issued a formal National Security Strategy, in writing or otherwise. Even in a conflict scenario, the government may or may not issue a political directive in writing. Notwithstanding, as a professional military we need to formulate a military strategy based on the Raksha Mantri's Operational Directive and refine it further through regular interaction with the government of the day. The tri-Service capability development, acquisitions, force structuring and array of forces can be an ongoing process only if the military strategy is in place. To elucidate, the present hierarchy may share the belief of an all-out war breaking out being a remote possibility, though localized conflicts or

skirmishes remain a distinct possibility. If true, the military strategy must factor in this thought process and initiate a transformation of our forces. Further, technology today is gradually facilitating a shift from hard power to soft power. Thus, reliance has to shift from maximum boot power to technology predicated power; from hard kill options to soft kill options; from overbearing preponderance of firepower to significant leveraging of cyber power; from surface-based capability to space based capability. With defence budgets being downsized in real terms, despite loud protestations, we need to deliberate how to optimally face the challenges, especially on our Northern borders. There needs to be a clear postulation of our threats and challenges for the future, not past or present. There also needs to be a clear understanding and agreement amongst the tri- Services on the need to transform for the future and how to go about it.

Our military strategy needs to factor in all scenarios with an eye on the future, specially the technological challenges India is likely to be confronted with. Non- contact warfare, based on a combination of varying range missiles, cyber and space capabilities, along with psychological operations may produce a more lethal effect than even traditional application of force.

The six main pillars on which our military strategy for the Northern front needs to be premised on are, threats and challenges from China; higher defence management and decision making matrix in our country; Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capability; tri-Service combat capability, war waging and sustenance capability and strategic deterrence. Whilst threats and challenges have been discussed earlier and may need periodic review, the other five pillars relate to overall capability which needs to be developed based on a coherent military strategy.

Organising and Equipping the Armed Forces to Optimize Military Strategy

Presently there is a considerable mismatch between what we desire to achieve and what we are capable of, though let me state upfront, that the armed forces are capable of fulfilling their assigned role but need to be optimized further. While there are long term perspective plans, but they are an amalgamation of what individual arms and services desire without prioritizing. While there is little doubt that the allocations for defence need an upward tick, the Services need to prioritise their perspective plans to get the best out of the allocated defence budget. Concurrent structural reforms including for optimizing jointness cannot wait any further. The issue has been dealt with in a separate chapter. The Army's organizational structures are dated, manpower intensive and based on a layered hierarchy of headquarters. This mitigates against quick response to fluid situations on the 21st century battlefield. It is time we looked at potent all arms 'Brigade Combat Groups (BCGs)' which are strong in ISR and cyber capabilities. In addition, the structure of the Strike Corps also needs to be tailored to make them lighter, yet more potent, to

include major enhancement in ISR, cyber and third dimension lift and fire and manoeuvre capabilities.

Manpower intensive basic organisations at the unit level also need to be revised, creating not only agile, potent and responsive units, but also cutting down on manpower, which has become necessary to optimize the budget allocations. The concept of theatrisation needs to move ahead to optimize our capabilities, specially in air defence, aviation and logistics. Introduction of the territorial army (TA) concept in the field army should be tried out imaginatively, with the reserve liability being converted into TA, thus making available highly trained soldiers to tenet the TA vacancies. Most units, less those deployed or earmarked for first line deployment can absorb a certain percentage of TA personnel based on retiring trained soldiers.

Technology Infusion

In energizing our Military Strategy, apart from restructuring the field army, we also need to undertake a 'technology blitzkrieg'. The two critical domains of 'ISR' and 'Precision in Fire Power' merit our specific focus. We need dedicated military satellites and a major proliferation in the holding of drones. In the realm of firepower, more than numbers (the brick and mortar approach) we need quality – we must invest greatly in guided mortars, guided rockets and precision fuzes. Low hanging technology, of the kind that we need, is well within the capability not only of the DRDO, but also the formidable IT Network existing in the country. Now is the time to invest, proactively in Artificial Intelligence (AI), since wars in future will be fought at hyper speed – a special drive to fast forward investments in AI must be undertaken forthwith. Were we to tap / leverage the newly created 'Army Design Bureau' imaginatively, a technology blitzkrieg, to induct low hanging technology speedily into field formations, is well within the realms of possibility.

CONCLUSION

War is not the business of the armed forces alone, but will always be a National effort of multiple instruments of the state and support of the people. Incidents like Sunjuwan, Dokala and the recent crisis in Maldives, point to the sheer adversity in our strategic-military environment. It is of critical importance, therefore, that we think through and strategize with wisdom, if we are to address the challenges that line our security path. Requisite planning and operational

preparedness along with tri service synergy will be the key to success and victory. The Nation can surely rely on its armed forces to deliver, when the call comes. The thoughts articulated in this chapter may be of use.

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