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National Security: A Review

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Introduction

I feel honoured to have been invited to deliver the Foundation lecture of the Administrative Staff College of India, this evening. During the long period of forty eight years of its existence, the College has contributed in substantial measure, towards developing high grade managers and leaders in the Government and in the Corporate sector. It has attained such reputation, that even foreign countries and Associations have been taking advantage of its multi-disciplinary functioning. I take this opportunity to congratulate all those who passed out of this reputed Institution of the Country, as well as the Staff who planned and guided them in their efforts. The College is trying to visualise its future role, and I have no doubt that it will further enhance its reputation, in developing management and leadership of even a higher order.

National Security about which I shall be talking to you, is a complex, but vital subject, which attracts the attention of everyone during a war, but is deeply neglected during peace time. Many leaders who have distinguished experience in other matters, have not measured up to the requirements of this subject, and in fact, have failed their nations. Some of

the important requirements at the highest level are comprehension, vision, sagacity, preparedness, equanimity, soundness in decision making and will to win. A few examples will illustrate the vital need for these requirements. For instance, Napoleon made a grave blunder in invading Russia, Hitler assumed that he could gain control of the whole of Europe by starting a Second World War, and so on. On the other hand, leaders like Churchill and Roosevelt ensured that not only their countries, but the World at large waged a hard struggle and regained liberty and democracy lost earlier by many nations.

Historical Background

As far as India is concerned, a brief review of the Historical Background before Independence, will give you an idea of why this Country has been invaded, conquered, subjugated and ruled for long periods by alien conquerors, many a time. The main reasons for this phenomenon, apart from others, were the absence of nationalism, lack of unity, weak leadership, maladministration, technological backwardness, treachery, and inadequate military capabilities. A brief insight into some of these aspects would help in better understanding the reasons for our inability to resist foreign invaders. Our history is replete with instances where, due to a lack of nationalistic spirit and internecine quarrels between the different rulers on the Sub-continent, foreign invaders took advantage and fully exploited the weaknesses. Apart from a few great Emperors, such as Chandra Gupta Maurya, Ashoka, Samudra Gupta, Harsha and Akbar, who brought under their rule the better part of the Country, most of the others that followed them, could not hold the Country together and, in fact, dissipated it by internal feuds, wars of succession and even collaboration with the invaders. The successors of the Mauryas after Ashoka, the Guptas after Skanda, the Kanauj Empire after Harsha, the Afghans after Ferozeshah, the Moghals after Aurangzeb, all lost their

Empires because of internecine conflicts, and foreign invaders exploiting the situation. Similarly, because of weak and ineffective leadership of the rulers and their generals, who were themselves required to lead their forces in battle, they were defeated by alien conquerors. The defeats suffered by Prithviraj in the battle of Taraori, Ibrahim Lodi in the first battle of Panipat and Rama Raya in the battle of Talikota, are some apt examples of this aspect. Equally, due to mal-administration and discontentment among the people, many an Empire disintegrated. Owing to technological backwardness and inadequate military capabilities, Indian Forces were defeated time and again by comparatively very small but more advanced and effective armies, and by better strategy and tactics. Alexander was able to defeat Porus, Babur defeated Lodi, Ahmed Shah Abdali defeated Sadashiv Rao and, in later years, the British defeated several Indian Rulers for this reason.

India gained freedom after a protracted struggle and great sacrifices. However, the struggle was basically of a nonviolent nature; and there was no bloody revolution or a major war of Independence, as it happened in the case of certain other countries. Perhaps, this is one of the main reasons for the people not realising adequately, the value of free dvm, as is evident from the various adverse developments that have been taking place in the Country, particularly during the last two decades or so. While in times of war, our people have shown a proclivity to unite and face the aggressor, in times of peace, all kinds of divisive and even secessionist tendencies manifest themselves. The composite culture and the tradition of unity in diversity that we inherited over a long period, appear to have been forgotten by a number of people. This is a dangerous attitude, as there can be no guarantee that if the adverse peace time tendencies persist and escalate, the people would unitedly face an adversary, in the event of a future war. This could become all the more grave, due to the fact that the threats to the Country, both external and internal, have not only not

mitigated, but appear to be escalating. Needless to stress, internal unity and strength will enhance our capability to deal with external aggression.

Wars after Independence

5. As you know, after Independence, India had to fight four major wars, and the threats from adversaries continue to persist. It would be profitable to review the performance of the Country in these wars and see what we can learn from these.

(Z) The 1947-48 war was thrust upon India by Pakistan.

While Pakistan initially used irregular forces to seize J&K, at a subsequent stage, regular formations were brought into action. After securing about two thirds of the territory of J&K, India agreed to a ceasefire, in the hope that the problem would be fairly resolved by the United Nations. In any case, continuation of a war would have meant the war extending across the international borders, which would have created intricate problems to the Country in the light of the difficulties inherited from the partition. It has also been coming out from documents released by the British, of the dubious role played by certain officers at the highest level with a bias in favour of Pakistan. It is well known that Pakistan never implemented the UN resolutions, due to which even the Secretary General of the UN has declared that they have become irrelevant. It may be mentioned that this 15 month long war fought by Indian Armed Forces (Army and Air Force), and that they acquitted themselves creditably in this. The political decision to send troops in time was also commendable. East Pak was not involved in this war. After this war, the Armed Forces were not built up for the tasks that they might be called upon to undertake in the future.

- (b) The 1962 War against China was badly mishandled both at the political and military levels. Intelligence failed miserably, and forward policy adopted was totally unsound. The subsequent orders given to

the Army to throw the Chinese out, were incapable of being successfully implemented, as the Army did not have the capacity to do so. Further, there was politicisation, due to which unsuitable commanders filled crucial higher Ranks, and failed the Nation when the test of war came. Groupism was encouraged and morale was shattered. The Air Force was not used in this War. One belated advantage of this war was that it compelled the Armed Forces to concentrate on professionalism. Further, the betrayal by the Chinese and mistrust in them continue to adversely influence the Nation even now.

(c) The 1965 War did not give the Indian Army sufficient time to reorganise itself after 1962. This war also started with massive infiltration into J&K, of which the intelligence had little idea. Subsequently, it escalated into a regular conventional war. Pakistan thought that, with the divisive activities going on in India after Nehru's death, and with its own build up with American help, it could take advantage of the disturbed situation in the Country. In this War, a sound decision was taken on the advice of General Chaudhury, the Chief, to launch a counter-offensive across the international border. However, owing to very limited superiority available, and the possibility of Chinese collusion with Pakistan, the war ended more or less as a draw. Air support to the Army's operations was considered inadequate in this War. The vital need for effective deterrence capability stood emphasized in this war.

(d) In the 1971 War, sound political and military decisions were taken under the sagacious functioning of the Prime Minister and the brilliant leadership of General Manekshaw; and the Armed Forces performed admirably, particularly in the East. The Chief had strongly resisted pressures to launch operations prematurely in view of a likely Chinese threat and time needed to develop the infrastructure; and the Prime Minister fully understood and supported him. The adversary was

decisively defeated, a new Country was created, and a war has been prevented for a number of years. It may be mentioned that in this war also, the enemy had initially used infiltration on a large scale in several areas in the West. Equally, the Mukti Bahini's activities in the East proved to be useful to India. Generally, leadership displayed at the field level in this War by India was of a high order. Equally, there was much to learn from Pakistan's mistakes. The co-operation and co-ordination between our Services was excellent. The Government intended to bring about greater integration after this war, but this was sabotaged by vested interests.

Peace Keeping Operations and Insurgency

6. Apart from the conventional wars, the Army undertook operations in Sri Lanka and also while on UN peace keeping-missions such as in Congo and Somalia. In the case of PKF, again intelligence was poor, initial planning did not cater for the situation turning violent and certain diplomatic mistakes were made. Even subsequently, due to perhaps over confidence, forces were committed piecemeal. Further, there were some constraints too, such as the Armed Forces not being able to use their major fire power. In the end, the objectives remained unachieved. However, in the case of UN operations elsewhere, the Army was fully prepared and acquitted itself very well. It brings out the need for proper intelligence and thorough planning, as in the case of any other conventional operations.
7. (a) As far as insurgency is concerned, in the North East, the Army has been more or less permanently committed, as proper measures have not been taken by the civil administration, to attend to the root causes which are in many cases genuine. Further, agreements arrived at have also not been fully implemented. In handling the NSCN, which was kept well under control earlier, more problems appear to be arising, as in the case of Manipur. It has to be realised that the aim of the NSCN is to get greater Nagaland and thereafter continue the struggle for sovereignty. In dealing

with such secessionist organisations, foresight and firmness is required; and the demonstrated loyalty of the people in the mainstream and the elected governments, should not be forfeited for an illusory *objective* of cooperation of such separatist elements. While it is the job of the police and Para Military Forces to deal with insurgency, they have not been effective enough, and hence the Army is continuously involved. If any thing, there has been an increase in its involvement. Pakistan's continued assistance to the insurgents aggravates the problem.

(b) **In** the case of Punjab also, there was considerable deployment of the Army, without whose help the police could not have succeeded. Ultimately, when the police became more effective, considerable complaints of Human Rights violations, flooded the state. Again in Punjab, the basic problem was political, and once this was reasonably attended to, things had settled down. There are efforts to revive militancy, and this needs careful watching.

(c) **In** the case of J&K, militancy succeeded to a considerable extent, mainly because of ineffective governance, corruption, unemployment and rigging of elections. Pakistan took advantage of the alienation of the people, fully exploited the situation and almost succeeded. Due to mishandling by India, it had got out of control. However, after adopting a multi-pronged approach in 1993, comprising vigorous antimilitancy operations, revamping of the administration, reviving political activity and befriending the people, the situation was brought under control, elections were held which were well participated in, and democracy was restored.

Kargil

Restoration of democracy in the State meant a defeat for Pakistan in the Proxy War, as it was proved that Kashmiris were very much with India, and that Pakistan was rebuffed once again. After this, Pakistan

was in jitters for sometime and was in a quandary as to what to do, as evident from not only intercepts but also their own newspapers. It is difficult to say how far the State of J&K and the Centre succeeded in their efforts to bring back full normalcy and maintain the requisite grip. As per reports, the people have been alienated once again, their expectations not having been met. Pakistan took advantage of the situation and staged a number of major incidents, including attack on military Camps, using increasing number of foreign mercenaries and suicide squads. However, finding that even recrudescence of such depredations had not brought about a substantial change in the situation, Pakistan resorted to the serious Kargil intrusion, in the hope that she would compel India to negotiate for Kashmir. Strangely, this was taking place, while a Lahore Accord was being reached.

In the Kargil area, Pakistani forces occupied certain unamanned heights in the gaps between Indian piquets, over an area of about 150 Kilometers, perhaps to isolate Ladakh. Initially, it took some time for the local forces to realise the gravity of the situation. According to Pakistan, they had planned the operation in October 1998 and occupied the heights in February 1999. However, the intrusion as such, was discovered only in May 1999. Requisite forces had to be inducted and operations launched over a period to clear the aggression, but at considerable cost. The Kargil Review Committee brought out certain lacunae and lessons, such as failure of intelligence, inadequate vigilance, deficiencies in weapons and equipment, ineffective management of National Security, and so on. It should be realised that Pakistan is determined to secure J&K by any means, and, therefore, very competent handling is required. In particular, unity of effort, greater co-ordination and cooperation, more effective intelligence, a firm attitude in putting down militancy, and more effective governance, are important.

8. The Kargil incident was followed by a Civilian Coup and a Military Counter-coup in Pakistan in October 1999. At the instance of the Pakistani Supreme

Court, some guided democracy was brought in, where the self imposed President General Parvez Musharraf remains in uniform and changes Prime Ministers as he likes! Irrespective of this, it has to be realised that in Pakistan, the Military held, and will continue to have, overriding influence, whether there is democracy or not. In fact, they have established a National Security Council, dominated by the Military, which is superior to the Central Cabinet!

Parliament Attack and Deployment of Forces

11. The attack on the Indian Parliament on 13th December 2001, was the most serious affair, as it was really an assault on Indian democracy, a system that the people chose for themselves on attaining Independence, and had been successfully sustaining it. Had the terrorists succeeded in entering the Parliament House, the damage they could have inflicted on the elected leadership of the Country and the Government in power, would be unimaginable. While the attack could have been prevented by better intelligence and a more imaginative security system, it had resulted in India taking the extreme but avoidable step of deploying its Armed Force for a possible war with Pakistan. I say avoidable, as it was contrary to our proclaimed policy of Panchsheel, and in any case, there was no threat of a war from Pakistan at that time. It would be interesting to know what advice, if any, was given by the National Security Council. Fortunately, after nearly a year, the troops had been withdrawn. Subsequently, the two sides declared a ceasefire and efforts are being made to have talks for improving relations.

12. It can be seen that both in the case of attack on USA on 11 Sept. 01 and India on 13 Dec. 01, the war against terrorism has not remained a low intensity conflict, but had assumed the proportion of a conventional war, or the likelihood of one. In the case of India, there is apprehension in some quarters that a conventional war could even lead to an ultimate nuclear confrontation. It should therefore be obvious that low intensity conflicts could escalate into the higher degree of military confrontation; and

therefore, the Armed Forces and the Government, should be prepared for all dimensions of the entire spectrum of conflict.

Finally, on the nuclear front, while India has declared that it will not be the first to use the nuclear weapon, Pakistan declines to make a similar commitment, but instead appears to have included the use of the nuclear weapon as part of its strategy against India. Being an irrational country, with no threshold of tolerance, this aspect needs watching. In this connection, I am happy that the Government clarified India's position very effectively, that it will not be the first to launch an attack. The talks should give priority to Pakistan observing similar restraint. Here, it needs to be noted that every time India had talks and come to agreements such as at Karachi, Tashkent, Simla and Lahore, it was Pakistan that frustrated these. Pakistan feels that bilateral talks with India would not fetch Kashmir for it, and keeps pleading for mediation by a third party, particularly by USA.

The Future Scenario

14. About 1,11,370 Square Kilometers of territory is under Pakistani occupation in Jammu and Kashmir and about 13,000 Square Kilometers of territory is under Chinese occupation in Ladakh. Further, Pakistan has made over about 4,500 Square Kilometers of territory to China in the Karakoram area, through which a major highway has been developed by China connecting Xinjiang with Gilgit. There are parliament Resolutions in the case of both Pakistan and China, which express the Indian resolve to retrieve these territories no matter how long it may take. Further, in both cases, it was Pakistan and China who committed the aggression and India was the victim and complainant. Both Pakistan and China display resolve to hold on to these territories; and not only that, they have advanced further claims on Indian territory. These aspects have to be kept in view, while considering any solution for the Kashmir problem, which should be honourable. It should not result in the old Arab and camel story!

Pakistan considers that Kashmir is the unfinished business of partition and is the core dispute between the two countries. Not only that, she has rejected any settlement along the line of Control. What she wants at the

least is the whole of Kashmir Valley and probably all the Muslim majority areas which include the districts of Poonch, Rajouri, Doda and Kargil. That would leave India in a precarious position from a strategic point of view, apart from the people not wanting to throw their lot with Pakistan. Pakistan considers a strong India as a constant threat and would like to see it fragmented.

16. As far as China is concerned, her Western Highway linking Tibet with Xinjiang passes through Aksaichin area. Apart from establishing itself in Aksaichin, she has claims on Arunachal Pradesh and certain small areas along the Northern border, does not recognise Sikkim as part of India and resents India's Defence Treaty with Bhutan. China is not even keen on delineating the Line of Actual Control, leave alone resolution of the border problem. She opposes India's seat for Security Council, although India supported China's entry into the United Nations. Further, she wants India to roll back its nuclear programme. China would not like India to be a strong rival and would like to see it weak and broken up. The nexus between China and Pakistan is well known.

At this stage, I would like to explain to you that I have really covered the two of our traditional adversaries. But when we plan National Security, we analyse the entire international scenario of the future, and determine what threats could arise from any quarter, such as induction of 7th Fleet into Bay of Bengal in 1971, establishment of a base at Diego Garcia, and so on. I would also like to explain that I have dealt with only the military aspects of our threats. Other threats could also occur to National Security, such as diplomatic pressures, economic deprivation, denial of higher technology, destruction of ecological balance, smuggling of drugs, flooding of fake currency and so on, but these are outside the scope of my talk.

Review of National Security

18. The future of national security was really reviewed twice by the governments in power. Some time after the 1971 War, the Government felt

that Defence Planning was being done piece-meal, the international situation was under-going a significant change, the threats to the Country were escalating, Revolution was taking place in Military affairs, demands on defence budget were rapidly increasing, and that, therefore, defence preparedness to maintain the credibility of the Country in the World needed a comprehensive review. The other occasion was when Pakistan gave an initial bashing to the Country by occupying Kargil in 1998-99, a conflict had to be fought to retrieve the territory, many casualties had been incurred, considerable funds had to be spent, and even American help had to be obtained. I shall deal with these briefly, starting with the second development first.

As a result of Kargil conflict, the Government was compelled to constitute a number of committees to review the situation about National Security. Mr Arun Singh, by his persuasion and diplomatic skill, held a unique Conference of selected Chiefs of all the three services, and obtained our views on what the future defence policy and set-up had to be. As per our understanding, his recommendations were generally sound and would have contributed to reasonably effective National Security. However, the Government took decisions on some points and left out certain other important points; and in many cases even the implementation on the points decided is incomplete. For instance, a Chief of Defence Staff, and restructuring into a Theatre Concept, are yet to materialise. Unfortunately, the decisions on National Security that they took, were more to meet the requirements of a Presidential system such as creation of the post of a National Security Advisor. constitution of a number of Boards and Committees, such as National Intelligence Board, a National Security Advisory Board, and so on. In the Parliamentary system, it is the Cabinet that is responsible for National Security, and directly deals with the combined Chiefs of Staff system under a permanent Chief of Defence Staff for sound professional advice. All these Committees and Boards constituted are not required, and are indeed a luxury, leading to confusion and indecision.

20. In the case of the 1975 review, Expert Committee was constituted by the government, and a comprehensive report by the Committee, comprising future planning for twenty five years, was accepted by the Government. In fact, the then Defence Minister was all praise for the report, the Prime Minister accepted the major recommendations, some important issues were implemented in her time, but many remained pending due to non allocation of adequate funds for modernisation. In this connection, I would like to mention that consistent with our policy of Panchsheel, the Armed Forces were to develop strong defences in the strategic areas and effective Counter Offensive Capability, to be able to win the War. Further, the higher Defence set-up recommended by the Expert Committee, was for a Parliamentary system with even greater civilian control, but promoting higher cooperation, coordination and prompt responsiveness. In fact, this was brought to the notice of Mr. Arun Singh, and he reflected its importance in his report. Therefore, the National Security Organisation needs proper restructuring.

Apart from this, a Revolution in Military Affairs is taking place in the World, due to tremendous advances in Science and Technology. Create information technology, enhanced mobility, greater effectiveness of weapons, increased night fighting capability, better command and control, communications and intelligence, will dominate the future. If we are to attain the requisite deterrence capability, and if a war takes place, to win it, India has to keep abreast with the more advanced nations of the World. Our research and development need to improve much faster.

22. Yet another important aspect is leadership. With instantaneous information reaching constantly both us and the adversaries, assessments have to be made much faster, sound decisions have to be taken quicker, and execution has to be carried out more effectively and rapidly, if one is to win a war. The need for a very high quality of

practical leadership therefore becomes indisputable. The Services, particularly the Army, are extremely short and not getting the right type of leaders, although the potential is available in the Country. The Nation should be much more concerned and this problem must be resolved early.

Conclusion

Now, to conclude, the problem is first to restructure the system of National Security in a sound manner, as early as possible. It is hoped that the recent directions of the Prime Minister on 5 Oct. 04, to review the national Security system, will lead to thorough and practical reconsideration, establishment of a system that would result in effective National Security for the future, and in more faithful implementation of the policy. Other important issues such as keeping abreast with the Revolution in Military Affairs and Leadership, are equally vital.