

# Employment of Indian Armed Forces\*

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*"Success in war is determined by the political advantages gained, not victorious battles".*

*Niccolo Machiavelli*

## INTRODUCTION

India lies in the heart of a region plagued by border disputes, ethnic tensions, separatism and religious fundamentalism. These deeply affect its security and constitute a threat to its existence as an independent political entity. It is the primary duty of a government to preserve law and order within its boundaries and protect its citizens from external aggression. As Negendra Singh puts it "Defence has been a time-honoured function of government and an essential attribute of sovereignty ever since the birth of the political state. The standards relating to functions may have varied from age to age and from country to country, but it is indeed of the very essence that every state, since the earliest days of recorded history, has had an armed force to defend itself."<sup>1</sup>

There was a time when Indian military strategy was based on the assumption that its prestige as a non-aligned nation dedicated to peace would be adequate safeguard against external aggression. India got the lion's share of the erstwhile British Indian Army at the time of partition but, through a mixture of naivete and idealism, allowed it to atrophy within a decade. It took the severe humiliation inflicted by the Chinese in 1962 to bring home to the Indian rulers that a foreign policy which is not backed by military might is impotent. Fortunately, India once again has fairly large and modern armed forces. It is also on the threshold of emerging as a regional power. There is a requirement to see that the armed forces are used to the best advantage of the country.

The roots of violence in and around India lie in its geostrategic location and the socio-political and economic realities of the region. A further analysis shows that in the coming years the incidence of interstate and intrastate violence will continue to remain high.

The government of India's right to employ its armed forces is uninhibited

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and has been resorted to frequently since independence. At times their employment has appeared to be hasty and ill-conceived. It needs to be noted that though the armed forces should only be used in pursuance of the country's political objectives not all political problems can be solved by the use of force. The wrongful use of the armed forces could cause immense harm to the national interests. There is, therefore, a requirement to draw up a charter of duties for their guidance and enumerate the important factors which must be considered in each type of situation before they are employed.

### GEOSTRATEGIC AND SOCIO-POLITICAL REALITIES

India is the largest country in the Indian subcontinent and among the Indian Ocean littorals. It has a unique geographical location. Mainland India forms the core of the subcontinent with its smaller neighbours struck around its periphery. Both in terms of size and population it is larger than all the other countries in the Indian subcontinent put together. It has a large coastline both on the East and West and island territories well away from the main land which it must defend. Peninsular India juts into the Indian Ocean and dominates the East-West trade route which is also the major oil route from West Asia to the Far East.

The majority of the states in the South Asian and Indian Ocean region have a colonial background and each one of them is economically backward. In most cases, their boundaries are not the natural boundaries representing any geographic or ethnic divisions but are the legacies of their former colonial days. According to A Perlmutter, "The frontiers of the colonial states were defined by conquest and guaranteed by imperial powers, in accordance with the classical nineteenth century, balance-of-power concept. Once the imperial powers withdrew, the colonial boundaries did not prove to be viable. The struggle over the frontier was mainly internal - a struggle over central authority, ethnicity, cultural pluralism, and the control of the military establishment."<sup>2</sup> These unnatural boundaries have led to violence both at the external and internal levels. Externally, they have led to inter-state disputes about the actual alignment of the borders, territorial claims, distribution of river waters, sea boundaries, claims on off-shore islands, treatment of ethnic and religious minorities, influx of refugees and so on.

Internally, the arbitrary alignment of the boundaries has divided ethnic groups of population into citizens of two different countries, leaving alienated minorities on either side of the border. These minorities have become part of a political entity with which they have no ethnic, cultural or religious affinity. Many of them, as brought out by Perlmutter, have begun struggles against the central authority which, where not handled well at the political

level, have developed into terrorism and insurrection. Such movements may begin as purely internal affairs but they seldom remain that way; in most cases the neighbouring countries intervene, overtly or covertly. Inevitably the country's armed forces get committed, for no multi religious and multi ethnic state can allow any part of it to secede without facing the danger of breaking up completely. Foreign intervention does not stop with the neighbours either; ultimately the super powers also get involved. Morris Janowitz states: "Developing nations are subject in different degrees to external penetration; and even more to the point, each has a series of international linkages and is therefore responding to powerful processes of regional diffusion, especially in its management of the agencies of national defence and internal coercion. A nation's military leaders are self conscious men who come to recognise that the fate of their nation is related to regional and international developments."<sup>3</sup> The point that Janowitz is making is that in today's world a country's internal problems cannot be isolated from international power politics - that internal violence is seldom free from outside influences.

India too has several external and internal problems because of the borders that it inherited from the British. It has had territorial disputes with Pakistan and the dispute over Jammu and Kashmir still persists. Currently a warlike situation exists in the area of the Siachen Glacier. With Bangladesh there is the dispute over Farakka barrage. There is also the problem of both countries claiming New Moore islands. The border dispute with China is well known and erupted into a war in 1962.

The border alignment has also caused internal problems for India. The people of Jammu and Kashmir are not yet reconciled to being a part of India. In the North East, there are secessionist movements off and on because the people there feel no particular affinity with the rest of the country. In all such cases there is an involvement of an external power.

Apart from these situations, brought about by imposed frontiers, India has many other areas of violence also. The disease of communalism had already eaten into the fabric of society by the time India became free and it has since spread rapidly. City after city has been rocked by communal violence and large scale killings forcing the government to call out the armed forces. Punjab is still in the grip of terrorism. Hardly has the Gorkhaland agitation died down in West Bengal than one for Bodoland has started in Assam. Naxalite violence is continuing in Andhra Pradesh and the movement for a Jharkhand state in the Central regions of India has a potential for great violence. Every now and then scores of people are massacred in caste wars in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The list is endless. Several religious and sectarian movements are now raising armed militias under various guises. There is a

feeling in India, and quite justified too, that the government only pays heed to violence. The potential for internal violence is therefore unlimited.

Economic frustration is another reason for internal violence. Here a quote from Gavin Kennedy is apt. "The aspiration levels of the various social groups, peasantry, proletariat, middle class, ruling elite and the dispossessed have risen faster than their competing claims can be satisfied. The minimum tolerable levels of per capita consumption press on the actually achieved levels, and the result is a continual frustration, a feeling of alienation from yesterday's liberators and widespread cynicism at the open corruption of the political elite. There is a continual struggle between competing ideologies to guide the country out of its predicament."<sup>4</sup> There could hardly be a better summing up of the social and economic causes of tension in India except that Kennedy could also have mentioned the uneven distribution of the fruits of growth.

Lack of democratic rights for some or all sections of the people is another cause of internal violence in some of the countries in which India could be drawn in indirectly. There are very few countries in the Indian subcontinent and Indian Ocean region which are genuine democracies and where the power actually rests with the people. A few are monarchies while others are dictatorships. Even in some of the so-called democracies various constitutional ruses have been used to deprive the people, or at least the minorities, of their rights. Popular movements which are launched for the rights of the people are crushed by force resulting in a flow of refugees across the border. Events along these lines have taken place in our neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in the past. The inflow of refugees from the erstwhile East Pakistan resulted in the Indo-Pak war of 1971. Thousands of Chakma refugees from Bangladesh are presently in India causing tension between the two countries. The Sri Lankan problem has of course developed into something far more serious. Several banned Nepali Congress leaders from Nepal have taken shelter in India leading to some misunderstandings between it and Nepal. Such struggles could take place in our neighbouring countries in the future also leading to a large scale influx of refugees into India and possible violence between the countries.

The Sri Lankan problem is a very good example of how India could be drawn into the internal problems of other countries against its will. Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka who had crossed into India after the ethnic riots there were becoming an economic and social burden to the country just like the Bengali refugees from East Pakistan in 1971. The treatment of Tamils in Sri Lanka was also causing anxiety to the Indian Tamils, many of whom had family ties with them. The situation was ripe for a foreign power, which could

have been one hostile to India, to offer assistance to the Sri Lankan government and thus acquire a foothold on India's doorstep. To preempt a situation which could at a later stage threaten its security, as well as to satisfy Indian Tamils, India had to step in and the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord was the result.

Lastly, in the Indian Ocean India's dominant position also imposes upon it certain responsibilities which it cannot shirk without detriment to its security and national interests. The fact that foreign presence is increasing in the Indian Ocean and that super powers are looking for bases in the area makes it all the more incumbent on India to take steps to see that the littoral states are not subjected to undue foreign pressure and that local and regional disputes are contained before outside powers can take advantage of them. This may involve the use of force. Admittedly this sounds like India taking on the mantle of the regional policeman, but India cannot barter away its national interests to stifle such criticism. It is its destined role. Although peace loving idealists may not like to admit this, but India's geo-strategic location and developing economic strength will compel it to assume a role of growing importance in the Indian Ocean and South East Asia. Historically, these roles are analogous to those of Britain east of Suez in the nineteenth century . . . ”<sup>5</sup>

## CHARTER OF DUTIES FOR THE ARMED FORCES

### GENERAL

It is universally accepted that the military power of a country is an important adjunct of its foreign policy. Armed forces should therefore be used only for political purposes to promote the country's national interests at home and abroad.

The role of the armed forces, as laid down at the time of independence, is to defend our borders against external aggression and to assist the civil authorities in the maintenance of internal law and order when called upon to do so. This role is too generalised and encompasses almost every conceivable situation within the country, on our borders, and even overseas. No country's armed forces can be equipped, organised, and trained to meet all the varied situations with equal efficiency. There is therefore a requirement to further analyses, at least in broad terms, the types of situations that the armed forces might be engaged in and work out a design and charter of duties for their guidance.

There is little doubt that given India's geostrategic location, its socio-political compulsions and economic problems, the armed forces will frequently

be called upon to execute the tasks inherent in the roles laid down for them. "The State depends for its very existence as an independent entity upon its ability both to preserve order within its territory and protect its citizens against external attacks".<sup>6</sup> The military must assist the government in protecting the political order from external and internal threats. The Indian government which is responsible to preserve order within the country has therefore kept open to itself the option of calling out the armed forces in aid of the civil authorities also. There is nothing unusual in this and even the constitution of the United States empowers its President to use the armed forces against domestic violence.<sup>7</sup> It is altogether a different matter that their use in this role in the developed countries has been extremely rare. The Indian armed forces could thus be used against foreign forces on the country's borders, in a neighbouring country or further beyond its borders, or within the country itself on internal security duties. The situations could be anything from a full scale war to a border incident and from organised insurrection to rioting in the streets. It is necessary to further examine the likely circumstances of their employment in order to arrive at a charter of duties and decide upon the factors that should affect their employment.

#### DEFENCE AGAINST EXTERNAL AGGRESSION

The term 'defence' when used in the context of the role of the Indian armed forces has a very wide connotation. It is not merely meeting a physical attack by an aggressor but in a larger perspective is, in the words of a former Defence Minister, "to shield India's economic and technological developments from the pressures arising out of the play of international forces."<sup>8</sup> Seen in this light defence against external aggression could involve the employment of the armed forces anywhere in the world, be it the country's immediate borders, in a neighbouring or regional country, or well away across the seas. The guiding principles in every case is national security.

Let us first take the case of a full scale conventional war on our borders involving all the three services. This is the most important contingency and all the three services plan, organise, equip and train with this in view. Paradoxically, it is also the least likely in the present circumstances. It presumes a proper conventional attack on us by a neighbour or vice versa. A full scale conventional war is only possible between India and either Pakistan or China because the other neighbouring countries are too small to fight India in this manner. Even with outside help they cannot take on India because of their geographical location. With Pakistan and China also, this type of a conflict is unlikely. The terrain on the India-China border and the physical distance between the two countries by sea will not allow any conflict between them to go beyond the stage of a limited war. Besides, China is already a nuclear

power. These constraints do not apply where Pakistan is concerned but Pakistan is unlikely to initiate full scale hostilities with India because not only is it a much smaller country than India but India also has a clear edge over it in the size and composition of its armed forces, specially the Navy and the Air Force. India, on the other hand, does have the military capability to initiate a full scale war against Pakistan provided it has the political will to do so. It will, however, lose this option as and when Pakistan acquires nuclear weapons. A full scale war beyond India's immediate frontiers is not likely because there does not appear to be any area in the region where such a contingency could arise. Nor do the Indian armed forces have the capability for it.

The next likely employment is a limited war on the country's borders. The word 'limited' has different connotations in different contexts. In the global context it means a war other than a world war. In the regional context, however, it is a war with a limited objective, or a war limited to a particular area of the border, or one that is limited in the use of forces by the adversaries, say the use of ground forces only. Once again such a conflict is unlikely with our smaller neighbours though Bangladesh could sustain a limited war for a very short period to make a point in international fora. It is, however, a live possibility both in the case of China and Pakistan. A limited war beyond India's immediate borders does not appear to be a possibility. India's capability in this regard is also doubtful.

Another area of employment, away from mainland India but technically on our borders, is in defence of our island territories. Considering the location of these islands and the capabilities of possible adversaries, the employment is likely to be against a small opposition. Nevertheless, it will have to be a properly organised operation involving all the three services. The Navy and the Air Force could also be involved in minor actions to protect our off-shore assets or clear encroachment on our exclusive economic zone.

Other possible employments on our immediate borders could be minor border incidents, hot pursuit of terrorists and guerrillas across the border, covert assistance to guerrillas and alienated groups in neighbouring countries, and training of refugees in handling of weapons and subversion. It could also be a show of force in the form of a build up of ground forces, an air attack, or a naval presence.

The independent employment of our armed forces beyond our immediate borders can only be against limited or no opposition from the ground, air or sea in view of their present strength and composition. Thus, the armed forces could be landed by air or sea in friendly territory to assist a friendly government

or friendly forces, occupy a lightly held area as a base or as a preemptive measure, or as a show of force. The quantum of troops, specially ground troops, that could be sustained would however be limited.

#### EMPLOYMENT WITHIN THE COUNTRY

In their secondary role, the Indian armed forces can be employed within the country on internal security duties. Their use in this role has been a recurring feature since independence and it has been estimated that in the four years between 1983 and 1987, the armed forces were called out for internal security duties many more times than in over two centuries of British rule.<sup>9</sup> Much as the armed forces may resent this, it is a legitimate task and is inevitable in a developing society. "In a developed society the pluralistic conflicts are constrained and within limits reinforce the stability of the society; in the developing world, the pluralistic conflicts are factionalising and keep the state off-balance."<sup>10</sup> A clue to the extent to which the incidence of internal violence has increased in India is given by the fact that the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament reported that government expenditure on paramilitary forces had increased 52 times between 1950 and 1974.<sup>11</sup> We are all aware that it has increased many times more since then.

The situations in which the armed forces may be called upon to assist the civil authorities in the maintenance of law and order fall broadly into three broad categories. First, there is the rioting, disorder and arson brought about by a popular disaffection of the masses and indulged in by unarmed leaderless mobs. Violence is not preplanned but spontaneous and the targets of violence are all symbols of the government like government offices, vehicles and policemen. The armed forces, however, are regarded as friends by the public and they achieve their aim merely by their presence. The use of force on such occasions has been very rare.

The second category is communal riots. On earlier occasions these too were spontaneous but some of the recent ones appear to have been well organised. Stores of arms, ammunition and explosives have been discovered, indicating preplanning and organisation. The target in this case is the rival community and its houses, shops and property. Killings of rivals and settling of old scores also takes place. Once again the mere arrival of the armed forces tends to bring the situation under control because they enjoy the reputation of being non-partisan. There is no direct intervention of foreign forces though it may be in the form of agents provocateurs, subversive literature, and a deliberate effort to aggravate conditions by spreading rumours and disinformation in the world media.

The third category is the one that is the most important for the armed



forces. This is the situation where an alienated minority is agitating for a cause and political and administrative mishandling has turned it into an insurrection. The movement is characterised by fanatical motivation and unconventional style of violence like terrorism and guerrilla warfare. Here the armed forces are the 'enemy' and the active targets of the guerrillas. More often than not, the insurgents in such cases have the support of some foreign power. This is the type of task for which the armed forces are not trained but which they must carry out and the commitment could last for years. The solution to the problem has to be political but the armed forces are required to create the conditions for a political dialogue.

#### CHARTER OF DUTIES

Having seen the circumstances of employment of the armed forces in various contingencies, a possible charter of duties can be evolved. Primarily, the armed forces must be prepared for a full scale conventional war in the plains on the Western border and a limited conventional war in the mountains. They should be organised, equipped and trained accordingly. In addition they must also be prepared for minor actions like border skirmishes and show of force on our immediate borders. They should also be capable of providing covert assistance to friendly troops beyond our borders involving training and supply of arms and ammunition.

The Indian armed forces should also be prepared to be employed beyond our immediate frontiers and within the Indian Ocean region with limited forces in support of a friendly foreign government or friendly forces. They should also be capable of showing the country's naval presence in the Indian Ocean.

Within the country, the armed forces should be prepared to assist the civil authorities in the maintenance of law and order when called upon to do so. They must also be prepared to combat insurgency and terrorism which may or may not have foreign support.

In short, the armed forces must be prepared to be employed across the whole range of conflict spectrum from a full scale conventional war to border incidents to local or foreign inspired insurgencies. In fact, the likelihood of employment in unconventional conflicts like counter insurgency and counter terrorist operations in the future is likely to be far more frequent than in conventional wars. "It may well be that unconventional conflicts - small wars (in which special operations forces are important) and counter terrorist operations will assume far more important roles in any strategic equation."<sup>12</sup> Yet the suggested charter of duties requires the armed forces to be prepared

primarily for a conventional conflict and tailor its doctrines, organisation, equipment and training for it. This is so because it is not possible to have a different set of armed forces for use in each type of situation. Forces which are prepared for conventional conflicts can more easily adapt themselves for unconventional conflicts than vice versa. They can shed their sophisticated equipment and heavy weaponry and with a little training be ready for unconventional operations. The reverse is much more difficult. That is the reason why, even though the likelihood of unconventional conflicts is much more, all countries basically organise, train and equip their forces for conventional wars.

#### FACTORS AFFECTING EMPLOYMENT OF ARMED FORCES

Immediately after independence, India was an innocent in the realm of power politics. While it freely used its own military power to safeguard its national interests as in Junagadh, Hyderabad, Kashmir, and Goa, it believed that where power against it was concerned diplomacy alone could be an adequate safeguard. It took the trauma of the events in 1962 to bring home to the Indians what is common knowledge to the practitioners of power politics - *that a country's foreign policy is as weak or strong as the armed forces backing it*. Today, India has the fourth largest army in the world and is the strongest military power in the region. It has, therefore, sufficient military backing for pursuing its national interests provided that the armed forces are employed after careful consideration. It is therefore essential that all the relevant factors affecting each situation are carefully considered before they are employed.

The charter of duties for the armed forces covers a very wide spectrum. The armed forces cannot be equally ready to face all the likely contingencies at all times. They must be employed after careful consideration and under the most favourable conditions if they are to achieve the aims laid down for them. It is therefore unfortunate that in spite of our large and modern armed forces and their extensive employment in support of our political objectives over the years, we have yet to evolve a decision making body at the highest level which has the inbuilt capacity to consider all possible facets of a situation, analyse the various options and their implications, and ensure that they are employed in the best interests of the nations. Much has been written about the requirement for such a body and hardly any writer has ever dissented. It is enough to emphasise here that the need is urgent and without it the employment of our armed forces will always have an element of adhocism about it. It is this body which must consider all the relevant factors and render its advice to the government before the armed forces are committed anywhere. Some of the factors to be considered are of a general nature

applicable to most situations while others are specific depending on the nature of the task and the type of situations. In discussing these the routine military factors have not been touched upon. It has also been assumed that the various non-military options available to the country have already been discarded.

#### FACTORS COMMON TO ALL SITUATIONS

The most important factor to be considered in all cases is whether the employment of troops is in consonance with the nation's defence policy and will further the national interests. This presupposes that the country's national interests have already been identified, that the total threat perception has been taken into account, and that an overall defence policy for the country exists. Only then will it be possible to define the national objectives in that particular situation which must form the basis of all strategic and operational planning by the armed forces.

The next factor to be considered is the national and military objectives. A word of caution is necessary in defining the national and military objectives. The record of conventional wars in obtaining clearcut and lasting decisions, especially since the Second World War, has not been heartening. It is as yet premature to question the very utility of war as an instrument of policy but it has to be accepted that in modern warfare a definitive victory (Bangladesh was an exception) is very rare. It may therefore be wiser at the political level to limit the military objectives to only creating a situation in which a political solution can be feasible.

If the country is subjected to an open attack, or is under threat of attack, there can be no question but that the armed forces must be mobilised to meet that threat. The only point that really requires consideration is at what stage mobilisation should be ordered. A premature mobilisation might unnecessarily escalate into a war while a delayed one could expose the country to an unnecessary risk.

The factual position, however, is that war these days is not a clear cut matter. There is no declaration of war by any state and there is no clear dividing line between a state of peace and a state of war. A careful decision has therefore to be taken as to at what stage to commit regular troops in such a scenario. Where the initiative lies with us, the armed forces must not be hustled into acting prematurely. The Indo-Pak war of 1971 is a very good example where open hostilities were deferred till such times as the armed forces were fully prepared. Timing is therefore a crucial factor to be considered before employing troops.

In case the employment of armed forces is in the form of a show of

force or covert support to friendly forces across the border, the possibility of further escalation and its consequences has to be kept in mind. The duration of the involvement and its long term effect on our international relations must also be taken into account.

The government sometimes tends to take on too many commitments for the armed forces specially if their employment has led to positive results in the past. A large number of Indian troops are already deployed along the borders and too many additional assignment may not only affect their training but also their morale. This is another important aspect to be considered.

#### EMPLOYMENT BEYOND THE IMMEDIATE FRONTIERS

In this case also, the question of timing is very important. This is especially so when the nature of the conflict is unconventional and our own forces are not ready for it. A soldier is not a machine. Apart from physical preparations, he has to be psychologically prepared for a new type of war.

The likely duration of the conflict is very important. Not only is a long drawn conflict bad for the morale of the troops and detrimental to the nation's economy, but history shows that such a conflict on a foreign soil soon loses public support at home. Without popular support and the national will to win, the operation is unlikely to succeed. The Russians in Afghanistan and the Americans in Vietnam readily come to mind but few remember that even before the Americans, the French troops in Vietnam had also lost public support at home. It had become a forgotten war till the humiliation at Dien Bien Phu.

It might appear highly negative, but is essential to consider, even before the troops are committed abroad, as to in what way and at what stage it would be possible to disengage. The Americans in Vietnam and the Russians in Afghanistan faced this problem and we in Sri Lanka are facing it now. This factor itself may decide the manner in which the armed forces should be employed. It is for instance, far easier to disengage if the intervention is by the Navy or the Air Force than by the ground forces.

For an involvement beyond our borders in support of a friendly government or forces, the long term effect on the country's economy has also to be taken into account. "Military strategy is the servant of policy but policy must not lead a country to a situation which is beyond its strength and strategy to support."<sup>13</sup> Such an involvement is bound to be unpopular at home in the long run.

And lastly, the employment of the Indian Peace Keeping Force has

thrown up the question of command and control of the armed forces away from India. Currently an adhoc system is being followed. A proper system of joint command needs to be evolved if best results are to be achieved. Also there has been some controversy and differing interpretations about the command relationship between the Indian armed forces, the Sri Lankan armed forces, and the government of Sri Lanka. Such matters must be considered and decided before the employment of troops.

#### INTERNAL SECURITY

The most important factor to be considered when employing troops for internal security is whether at all it is absolutely essential to employ them. Too often in the past have troops been deployed as a result of panicky reaction by the civil administration. Apart from the fact that the presence of troops tends to lose its pacifying effect if called out too often, the legitimacy of the government itself is undermined if it appears to be propped up by armed might. This is especially so if the disturbances are caused by a popular movement against the party in power. The use of the Chinese army in Tiananmen Square recently is an example.

An added reason for avoiding calling up troops is that historically the soldier lacks interest in domestic affairs and despises internal security duties. Besides he cannot distinguish between a political problem and a police problem and by his very training regards any problem as amenable to a direct solution. It may thus be that the employment of troops in a delicate political situation could make the situation worse than it was.

Internal security duties may have a deleterious effect on the armed forces themselves. The armed forces personnel too belong to some community or the other and discipline can keep them non partisan only upto a point. Beyond that, as a result of long term involvement in law and order tasks, the armed forces themselves may get factionalised. And worse, notwithstanding their apolitical nature, in the process of propping up an ineffective or unpopular government, they might end up in the role of being the arbiters in politics.

Where insurgency and terrorism are concerned, a few more factors have to be considered. First, the armed forces should be used only after it is abundantly clear that paramilitary forces cannot do the job. The question of command and control involving the armed forces, the para military forces, the police and the civil administration also must be decided in advance and unity of command must be aimed at. The physical and mental preparation of troops is very important. They should be properly trained for the job, and even more important, be psychologically prepared.

Counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism are thankless jobs which place

the armed forces in a non-win situation and expose them to allegations of atrocities. Such operations are conducted against misguided citizens of our own country who have to be brought on the correct path but in the process the people in general must not be alienated. The success of an insurgency or terrorist movement depends on the local popular support it enjoys. If, therefore, in the process of crushing the movement, the sympathy and support for it is enhanced, the action is self-defeating. All these aspects have to be borne in mind. Also, the long term effects on the psyche of the soldiers, specially those belonging to the same ethnic or communal group as the insurgents must be considered. It is almost axiomatic that an insurgency or a terrorist movement today will have foreign involvement. There may even be foreign troops masquerading as local insurgents. In any case terrorists and insurgents would be finding safety across the border. The borderline between external aggression and internal insurgency is therefore quite blurred. To what extent our troops should be allowed freedom to pursue the terrorists or insurgents across the border or take preventive action along the border will have to be decided at the highest level taking into account the international implications.

#### CONCLUSION

It is sometimes said that a nation's geography often decides its destiny. India's size and geostrategic location has imposed upon it the role of maintaining stability in the Indian subcontinent and the Indian Ocean region. Its actions are bound to evoke accusations of expansionist and hegemonistic tendencies from its smaller neighbours. We must try and allay their suspicions without being dissuaded from our goals. We must also learn to accept such criticism for as Jaime Benitez has said, "The best that a great power can hope for is to be loved by its own, understood by its friends, and respected by those with whom it deals."<sup>14</sup> India is not a great power and some even question its regional power status; few however doubt its potential.

The security situation in India, both internal and external, has never been so bad. As far as possible we must use diplomacy and avoid violence in resolving interstate disputes. But the armed forces are the country's iron fist inside the velvet glove of diplomacy. They represent power, the capability to defend, to coerce and enforce by military means the nation's will. Armed might continues to remain the currency of power in the Third World inspite of all the gloss and veneer put on it by modern day civilisation. It must, however, be used in a subtle manner after careful thought and consideration.

The threat of internal violence in the Indian context is far more than external violence. It is very much the right of a government to use the armed forces for quelling domestic violence. But here, armed might can have the

opposite effect, and after the initial shock effect, end up in further reinforcing the determination of the people to fight the government. Careful consideration is, therefore, necessary before calling upon the armed forces because the issues are generally politically sensitive and the exercise can be counter-productive.

The ultimate aim is to employ our armed forces to promote our national interests. All the relevant factors pertaining to a situation must be carefully considered to make sure that their employment will result in promoting the country's political objectives. Employed thoughtlessly, and in a casual manner, they could turn into an expensive burden for the nation.

#### NOTES

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