

Soldier and the State

In international and domestic politics, military is the most visible instrument of State power and its last resort. The power of the State is a mix of strategic, military, economic and political strengths and weaknesses. It is determined, according to Ray S Cline, not only by the military forces and the military establishment of a country but even more by the size and location of territory, the nature of frontiers, the population, the raw material resources, the economic structure, the technological development, the financial strength, the ethnic mix, the social cohesiveness, the stability of political process and decision-making and finally, the intangible quantity usually described as national spirit*.

The employment of state power as an instrument of internal or external strategy, therefore, is not limited to the visible spectrum, but also spans a vast area which is outside the soldier's domain. Hence, national security interests of the state, like territorial integrity, economic security, favourable regional and global environment, and promotion of core values, can be preserved only if the state employs its different instruments of power, in a graduated and flexible response, to challenges, and does not rely on the soldier, too often. The vast array of police and para-military organisations, still proliferating, must be trained and equipped and clearly told to shoulder their responsibility; otherwise their maintenance by the State would be a total waste. Armed Forces are structured to face external threat and their use in internal security tasks, though justified by law, is bound to reduce their capability for the main role.

This calls for immediate introspection. It is also necessary, for the security management of the State, to involve all concerned with the decision making process, including the military leadership which is, today, highly professional and patriotic. This would provide the interaction between the soldier and the politician.

For this, the reactivation of the National Security Council formed in 1990 - with some changes in its organisation - would provide the interface between the soldier and the rest of the security apparatus of the state. In this issue of the Journal, Lt Gen AM Vohra, a former Vice Chief of the Army Staff, and an internationally well-known security analyst, brings his deep knowledge of the higher defence management and keen insight into its short falls. Several other articles in this issue also call for a restructuring of our system for management of national security. Can we do this before it is too late?

* Ray S. Cline, *World Power Assessment 1977*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1977) pp. 33-34.