

Ninth Major General Samir Sinha Memorial Lecture

The Role of Armed Forces in India's Foreign Policy* General Shankar Roychowdhury, PVSM (Retd)**

Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen! It is indeed an honour to have been invited here to deliver the Ninth Major General Samir Sinha Memorial Lecture at USI. I have also had the privilege of serving with Major General Sinha; of course, he was a Major General and I was a Lieutenant Colonel at that time. I have served with him on two assignments. One, when he was the Commandant of the Indian Military Academy and I was a Battalion Commander there and thereafter during the disturbed, confusing times in Bangladesh. We had an organisation no one knew about, no one was supposed to know about; perhaps no one knows about it. We called it 'Operation Jackpot'. It was kept in the shadows and we were often denied entrance into the confabulations of the Armed Forces when they were in uniform. I think we did a fairly good job and did contribute to our overall endeavours in 1971.

Now the subject that has been chosen for this lecture 'The Role of Armed Forces in India's Foreign Policy', is a subject of great contemporary importance which is increasing as the time moves on. The best definition of foreign policy and its connection with the armed forces that comes to mind is the one given by President Roosevelt of the United States of America, not President Franklin D Roosevelt, but his predecessor several generations ago, General Theodore Roosevelt and I have often quoted this in the Parliament, "Speak softly but carry a big stick". I think that sums up the essence of foreign policy and the intertwining between foreign policy and its legitimate conventional practitioners, the diplomatic corps and those who are in uniform. Foreign policy in a world that is ever changing has to be that of a velvet glove on an iron fist. Diplomacy is the velvet glove. It is meant to speak softly. It engages in interaction, structured dialogue to put across the Nation's foreign policy. Now foreign policy itself has many definitions. One of them which might suit the purpose for which we are here is - the projection, management and maintenance of the country's national interests in the international environment. Foreign policy is essentially the international management of national interests. The normal channel for this purpose is diplomacy of various categories: economic, cultural, social and technological, but an alternate option, generally left unstated or understated is use of the military as an instrument of foreign policy.

A highly idealistic foreign policy of non-alignment between the super-power blocs was articulated immediately after Independence by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, based on a moralistic Jeffersonian worldview of "friendship to all and enmity to none". Naturally, the Indian military as a policy option found no place in Pandit Nehru's perceptions, which was ironical, because with the passage of time India had to resort to use of the military as an instrument of foreign policy on a number of occasions in the subsequent years. As India came face to face with the reality of international relations, this high moralism was gradually replaced by realpolitik, and a belief in the perception of India as a regional presence. India's armed forces were leveraged as instruments of foreign policy. India's domestic and foreign policies became increasingly intertwined, on aspects of internal security as well as defence of the country's territorial and societal integrity against threats from externally sponsored proxy war. However, that notwithstanding, the Indian military were kept totally outside the ambit of national policy formulations even on issues of legitimate concern where they had a major stake. Institutional reforms to establish a higher defence organisation and synergise the military into the overall national security architecture were not undertaken until relatively recently when the National Security Council and its associated mechanisms of the office of the National Security Adviser, the Special Policy Group and the National Security Advisory Board were established in 1998. But that notwithstanding, politico - bureaucratic perceptions and attitude in the government have not changed to any appreciable degree, and the Indian military still finds little significant space at the formative levels of policy formulation in spite of creation of the National Security Council mechanism.

As the nation's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru was nevertheless personally dismissive of the Indian Armed Forces and impatient with their senior hierarchy if their professional advice diverged from his own perceptions. India's foreign policy towards China in the Nehru era is the most painful proof of this. Nehru's attitude towards the armed forces was reinforced after the assassination of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Khan in 1951 and the military coup in that country in 1953. Nehru deputed abrasive political commissars like VK Krishna Menon, to keep a check on the hierarchy of the Defence Forces, while for strategic inputs and advice he ignored the professional military and turned to shadowy eminences, with pseudo-strategic pretensions, like BN Mullick, the Director Intelligence Bureau, who also doubled as de facto National Security Adviser, much before the term gained currency. In the name of civil supremacy, Nehru fostered a system of bureaucracy which progressively excluded the Indian military command structure completely from the process of governmental consultation, a system which persists to the present day. Nothing exemplified this deep seated anti-military prejudice more than his denigration of General Thimayya, a distinguished soldier deeply respected throughout the Indian Army. In the long run, the political diminution of the Armed Forces and their legitimate concerns paved the way for national disaster waiting just around the corner in the Sino-Indian border war of 1962.

The total disassociation of the military from foreign policy decisions were directly responsible for two of the post-independence India's major strategic catastrophes - Kashmir and the Peoples Republic of China. The root cause of the Kashmir issue that bedevils India today can be traced to the original sin of the precipitate referral of the Kashmir issue to the United Nations by the political hierarchy without consultations with the first generation of independent India's military commanders who were even then engaged in the process of clearing Kashmir of tribal lashkars, raiders sent by Pakistan and supported by the Pakistan Army. In respect of the Peoples Republic of China, the shame of 1962 can again be directly attributed to disregard of sound military advice from senior commanders of the Indian Army like Lieutenant General SPP Thorat who had strongly advocated a militarily defensive posture preparations along the Sino-Indian border to guard against a potentially adversarial China which was gathering strength after asserting their control over Tibet in 1950, and laying claims to border areas under Indian control along the newly activated Sino - Indian border along the McMahon Line and in Ladakh.

Kashmir and Pakistan are the next major areas of foreign policy where India's defence forces have played a vital but under-acknowledged role in supporting India's foreign policy. The baggage of history, and the events leading up to the partition of the country with the widespread communal violence it generated within both countries have made management of relations with Pakistan problematic. Independence on 15 August 1947, after the horrendous ethnic cleansing of the Partition, brought the first crisis of foreign policy in its immediate wake – the invasion of Kashmir by Pakistan sponsored Pashtun lashkars supported by elements of the Pakistan Army. It was a pattern with which India was to become increasingly familiar in the years to come. Presented with a military fait accompli, there was really no scope for conventional diplomacy for India, and the response obviously had to be in kind – unless India was willing to surrender Jammu and Kashmir to Pakistan. Diplomacy and dialogue failed to stem Major General Akbar Khan's "Raiders in Kashmir" and The First Kashmir War 1947- 48 between India and Pakistan commenced in September-October the same year. Indeed diplomacy was on the backfoot throughout the initial stages of the Kashmir process. Efforts in this direction can be said to have commenced on 1 January 1948, when Pandit Nehru played along by duplicitous British advisers like the Viceroy Lord Mountbatten and the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army General Sir Roy Bucher; and without consultations with the rising new breed of competent and patriotic Indian military commanders like generals Cariappa, LP Sen, Thimayya, Kalwant Singh and others, took a major non-military initiative and referred the Kashmir issue to the UN. At the same time, Nehru directed the Indian Army to continue operations to evict the raiders from Kashmir, mutually contradictory directions, neither of which could have had a happy ending. Nehru's misplaced and impetuous idealism was seriously mistimed. It placed India, militarily the superior protagonist, at an operational disadvantage by setting a restricted time frame for achievement of the strategic objectives.

In eagerly approaching the UN, Nehru grossly underestimated Pakistan's skill and capability for diplomatic filibustering in the UN, generating a procedural quagmire which perpetuated a status quo without arriving at any satisfactory resolution, leave alone one favourable to India. With a UN mandated ceasefire operative from 1 January 1949, hostilities ended with India's military objectives only partially achieved, leaving Pakistan in proxy control of large areas of Jammu and Kashmir, dividing the state along a Cease Fire Line (CFL) demarcated by the position of the frontlines at the end of hostilities. Pakistan's attempt to settle the Kashmir issue right at the very outset by a military coup de main under cover of the post-Partition chaos carried the professional stamp of military planning, though it faltered in execution. The First Indo-Pak War in Kashmir 1947-48 also highlighted the contrasting approaches of the governments of the two countries – Pakistan far more aggressive and uninhibited, allowing much more latitude and support to its military, India keeping its commanders under much tighter civilian control and scrutiny. In effect, this set the pattern for future Indo-Pak confrontations as well. There is enough evidence that elements of Pakistani regular soldiers, whether recently demobilised or "sent on leave," played a role in imparting the tactical leadership to the invaders (a pattern which would again be repeated in the 1980's with the Taliban in Afghanistan). Fortune might indeed have favoured the brave - in this case the Indian Army - but in the words of the Duke of Wellington after his victory at Waterloo, the First Kashmir War of 1947-48 was nevertheless a "damned close run thing" for India.

Kashmir 1947 was also indicative of future trends in Indo-Pakistan relations, and provided a preview of Pakistan's preferred military doctrine based on pre-emptive offensives and proxy wars featuring Pakistani irregular and regular forces operating in tandem, motivated with the ideology of permanent Jihad against India, a consistent pattern encountered in 1965, 1971, Kargil 1999; and the permanent proxy-wars since 1989. India's responses, even in rapidly developing crises, would be set in a more deliberate, often pedantic and pontificating pattern which would delay any involvement of the military, and generally surrendered the initiative to the adversary.

Indeed, Pakistan's aims to covertly intervene in India's internal affairs at any opportunity had manifested itself earlier as well, in Junagadh and Hyderabad. In 1947-48, the princely rulers of Junagadh in Saurashtra and Hyderabad in the Deccan, wished to accede to Pakistan, even though their decisions were contrary to the popular will of the people. There was a substantial Pakistan connection in respect of both these states, including support to the activities of Sydney Cotton, an Australian mercenary pilot ferrying arms to Hyderabad through a fairly rudimentary Indian aerial blockade. Matters again proved impervious to solution by dialogue and all attempts at political or diplomatic interaction failed. Ultimately, the incorporation of Hyderabad had to be secured by an armoured division of the Indian Army under Major General (later General and Chief of Army Staff) JN Chaudhuri, while Junagadh required a smaller subsidiary operation with a show of military force.

Pakistan's entry into the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) and the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) in 1955 introduced the dynamics of the Cold War into the subcontinent and intensified the tensions on Kashmir. CENTO and SEATO were collective security pacts sponsored by the USA against the Soviet Union, and baited with free handouts of military hardware and training for its members, which constituted the prime motive for Pakistan's participation – even though its primary fixation was never the Soviet Union but India. As a result, Pakistan could build-up and modernise its armed forces with substantial inputs of military equipment received from the USA which qualitatively transformed their combat capabilities. In April 1965, elements of these refurbished, upgraded Pakistani armed forces were launched against India for the first time, initially as a kind of reconnaissance-in-force in the Rann of Kutch to test and assess the capabilities of the Indian Army, whose military reputation had been substantially downsized in the aftermath of 1962. The Indian Army absorbed the Pakistani onslaught but chose not to respond in kind under the adverse conditions of terrain and logistics in the Rann, but awaited a more favourable opportunity. The Pakistan Army misconstrued this lack of reaction as signs of military demoralisation and demotivation. This time, launching an offensive by infiltration with an armoured brigade in Jammu and Kashmir, in an effort to force the pace of formal diplomacy by presenting a military fait accompli on the Kashmir issue. Once again, India's foreign policy responses hinged mainly on military options, and the country did so in kind, taking an unexpected initiative with a counteroffensive across the international border in Punjab to bring the war home to Pakistan.

The Indo-Pak War of 1965 ended with honours generally even, with Pakistan's advances in the Chhamb Sector of Southern Kashmir compensated by India's seizure of the strategic Haji Pir bulge and some dominating heights in Kargil. Active hostilities ended in September 1965, and were formally ratified by the Treaty of Tashkent brokered by the Soviet Union in 1963. Territories captured during hostilities were mutually exchanged, but the relative strategic benefits from such a transaction were never professionally analysed or advice taken. India's rather plaintive protests to

the USA and its surrogate the UK regarding the employment by Pakistan of CENTO and SEATO equipment in this conflict produced more amusement than any serious consideration or redress, pushing India in turn to take the next initiative in exploiting Cold War dynamics for its own benefit by approaching Soviet Russia for weapons to counterbalance the Pakistani stockpile.

In Western perceptions, these military arrangements put India firmly in the Soviet camp, and further accentuated the pro-Pakistan tilt in American foreign policy. Lal Bahadur Shastri, the Indian Prime Minister who had succeeded Nehru in 1964 and held office during the Indo-Pak War of 1965, died of a sudden heart attack on 11 Jan 1966, the day after signing the protocols of the Tashkent Treaty. He was succeeded on 24 Jan 1966 by India's own Iron Lady, Mrs Indira Gandhi.

Mrs Gandhi understood the use of power and all its instrumentalities, including military force. Her world view on the place and stature India must aspire to attain in the international community was clear, and she directed Indian foreign policy towards these ends. The Indian "Doctrine of Regional Security", which gained popular currency as the Indira Doctrine is ascribed to her, though never formally acknowledged or articulated. It was a muscular perception of India's interests in South Asia and its "near abroad" extending into the Indian Ocean, though its panorama was essentially subcontinental and did not extend beyond the Himalayas, where China was now in total control of its own outer marches in Tibet and Xingiang.

The Indira Doctrine (to use its unofficial name) considered South Asia to be India's natural sphere of influence, and also tried to connect up in some way to the earlier doctrine of Panchsheel of Jawaharlal Nehru's time, but was of course vastly different in range and scope. Its salient points were that, though India had no intention of intervening in the internal conflicts of any South Asian country, but it would not tolerate any other foreign intervention in these countries either, especially if there was any implication hostile to India. In the event, if any South Asian country asked for external military help but excluded India from it, it would also be considered as an anti-Indian move. More importantly, the Government started taking measures to develop the Indian military into a strong and effective instrument in support of foreign policy - a credible iron fist under the velvet glove, and a strong 'big stick' for the soft speaker.

Relations with the Soviet Union were traditionally excellent, and, after the earlier rebuff by the West about reigning in Pakistan after the 1965 Indo-Pak War, the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc became the chief sources of weapons as well as training at deferred rates of payment, to build-up the Indian defence forces and restore the balance of power in the subcontinent. Soon, the Indian Armed Forces were almost exclusively equipped with Soviet origin equipment. But, though by now Soviet equipped and selectively trained, the military doctrines and organisations of the Indian Armed Forces still remained western-oriented. It was a paradox, but it worked well.

Indo-Pak relations retained their habitual hostility, the essential manifestation of which remained centred around Kashmir. In March 1971, the predominantly West Pakistani power elite of the country, including the crafty Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, refused to countenance a duly elected Awami League Government to take office in the Centre, with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as Prime Minister. This triggered off violent large scale civil disturbances in East Pakistan which led to a military crackdown on Bengalis by the largely West Pakistani Army, and a large scale exodus of refugees, especially Hindus, for sanctuary in India. Without going into detailed exposition of the situation, it was a strategic opportunity to downsize Pakistan, and Indira Gandhi seized it with an exquisite sense of timing. The events to follow were an almost cold blooded demonstration of a well coordinated "preparation of the battlefield" to achieve the overall strategic objective, synergising diplomacy, politics and military force, each in its respective sphere of influence with almost text book precision. Concentrated and imaginative diplomacy abroad focused on the UN and elsewhere to explain India's hapless position as sanctuary for over ten million homeless refugees fleeing military atrocities, thus creating a positive world opinion favourable to India. An Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Co-operation in August 1971 was separately crafted with a supportive Soviet Union with its veto power in the Security Council, to call upon should need arise, while public support within the country was intensively mobilised for a war against Pakistan, which looked increasingly inevitable.

Finally, the Armed Forces were allotted the primary executive role in the entire scheme of things, and unlike on previous (and subsequent occasions), were allotted sufficient time to deliberately plan, concentrate, equip, train and prepare for war. The decision to create and support an Awami League Bangladesh Government in exile, was another stroke of politico - military genius which paid rich dividends in the form of active support of the Mukti Bahini to the Indian forces when the war broke out. The Mukti Bahini supplemented the Indian offensive with covert insurgency and terrorist operations on its own against the Pakistan armed forces as also civil establishments in East Pakistan. Needless to say, the war in East Pakistan, when it did come, and in spite of some initial and quite unnecessary hiccoughs at some places, generally functioned as planned, and ended in a classic victory. But merely winning the war is not enough - winning the peace that follows is equally important, sometimes even more so, as the USA is discovering in Iraq. After the dismemberment of East Pakistan in a well publicised surrender ceremony of Pakistani forces in Dhaka on 16 December 1971, and the establishment of the new republic of Bangladesh, the Indian forces did not overstay their welcome.

In March 1972, after a ceremonial farewell parade on the 14th, the Indian forces pulled out of Bangladesh, their task fully accomplished. Accomplished too was the overall national strategic task - the downsizing of Pakistan once and for all through synergised operation of foreign policy; the velvet glove removed to expose the iron fist, and covered up again when the task was done. It would be entirely correct to say that the victory in Bangladesh, military as well as diplomatic, made India, Independent since 1947, ultimately a nation in the fullest sense of the word.

However, it must be mentioned that India nevertheless failed to draw out the fullest benefits of the tremendous victory in Bangladesh, even with a leader as astute and capable as Mrs Indira Gandhi - then at the height of her glory. The 93000 Pakistani prisoners of war (PW's) in Indian captivity were the most powerful of trump cards in the peace negotiations at Shimla between the Prime Minister of India, and Mr Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the new Prime minister of Pakistan, to extract and impose whatever terms were necessary on a defeated Pakistan. In this case, it should have

been the formalisation of the Line of Control (LC) in Jammu and Kashmir into an international boundary. But here, the astute Bhutto gave the slip to even such an astute and ruthless practitioner of realpolitik as Mrs Gandhi herself, and managed to evade the entire issue. There is enough anecdotal evidence on record by now to show that it was indeed verbally discussed between the two leaders and agreed upon, but once sidestepped, it was never to be, and it continues to this day as such. Truly speaking, Shimla Agreement was a major diplomatic setback for India, which lost on the negotiating table what had been won on the military battlefield.

In respect of the Peoples Republic of China, an autonomous Tibet had always been a buffer zone to the north and northeast between the British Indian Empire and earlier incarnations of the Celestial Kingdom. The Younghusband Expedition had been sent in 1904 with “bayonets to Lhasa” to establish Tibet as an autonomous principality within the British sphere of influence. This was followed by the Treaty of Lhasa in 1914 under which the Indo-Tibetan border in the eastern region was aligned along the McMahon Line. However, in the immediate post-Independence stresses of Partition and its aftermath, including the First Kashmir War and the simultaneous “police action” in Hyderabad, not too much attention could have been spared towards examining the implications of the civil war in China raging between the Communists and the Kuomintang (KMT) which reached its climactic intensity precisely during this period. On 21st October 1949, just two years after India’s Independence, the Peoples Republic of China was established after the final victory of the Chinese Communist armies over the KMT forces, forcing the latter to abandon the mainland and take refuge on the offshore island of Taiwan.

On assumption of power, amongst the earliest declarations of the new Chinese Communist government was its firm intention to reassert central authority over all the traditional territories of China, including Tibet. This took place in 1950, when the Chinese 18th Army under Commissars Wang Qi Mei and Zhang Guo marched into the Chamdo region of the country. Tibet was eliminated as a buffer state between India and China, and the two countries came into physical contiguity for the first time in the recorded history. This created apprehensions and uncertainty in the Himalayan kingdoms of Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim, all opening across the Himalayas into the Indian heartland, their security having a direct bearing on that of the Indian state.

The Chinese advance into Tibet was really a no-contest between the experienced Chinese forces of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) on the one hand and the archaic Tibetan troops on the other. Appeals to India and other members of the world community by the Tibetan Parliament for assistance and intercession went unanswered. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who presumed on his standing as an international statesman, attempted to intercede with China on behalf of Tibet but his peacemaking efforts were cavalierly dismissed by the Chinese. Pandit Nehru, though privately indignant did not venture to make an issue of it. In the meanwhile, the Indian government, though now conscious of its intrinsic military weakness vis-à-vis Communist China, and somewhat chastened by its failed diplomacy in respect of Tibet, nevertheless tried to edge its relationships with China forward. Accordingly, on April 29, 1954, after interaction and dialogue, India and China signed the “Agreement Between the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of India on Trade and Intercourse Between the Tibet Region of China and India”. This was the best India could do to maintain some sort of a token satisfaction over Tibet. India expressed much pride in the formulation and enunciation of this treaty, but though papered over in the acceptable language of diplomacy, it was clear to the discerning observer that India was very much the junior partner in these negotiations. The prominent feature of the Agreement was the official declaration of Sino - Indian doctrine of Panchsheel or the Five Principles as evolved by Jawaharlal Nehru and Zhou Enlai : respect for mutual sovereignty and territorial integrity; non-aggression; non-interference in internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful coexistence.

This was the high noon of “Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai,” a tidal wave of euphoria which was to turn exceedingly sour within a decade. Amidst all the display of enthusiasm, a small whisper emanating from Indian intelligence and military sources that the Chinese were making a road in the desolate Aksaichin region of Tibet-Ladakh-Xingiang, which was claimed by India, was lost in the general optimism of the period. The first major step of the downslide in relations between India and China started in March 1959, when the Dalai Lama, apprehensive of the intentions of the Chinese Army, fled from Lhasa and crossed over into India, where he was accorded asylum by Jawaharlal Nehru. Simultaneously with the departure of the Dalai Lama, a major revolt of the local population against the Chinese broke out in many parts of Tibet, including the Kham and Amdo regions in the East, which was put down with extreme ruthlessness with heavy casualties amongst the Tibetan people, but the remnants of the revolt dragged on almost till 1970. The grant of asylum to the Dalai Lama by India annoyed the Chinese considerably and resulted in heightened tensions along the Indo-Tibet border.

Discordant relations beginning with Tibet were slowly but inexorably exacerbated on issue of the Indo-Tibetan border alignment, where China, confident of its military strength and capabilities, denounced the McMahon Line in Arunachal Pradesh as the result of an unequal treaty, as well as in respect of the Aksaichin Plateau in the Ladakh-Tibet region, and Barahoti in UP/Tibet border region. China also offered diplomatic meetings with India at the highest levels to discuss these issues, but India turned it down because it historically considered all these as its own territories and disputed the Chinese claims strongly. There were a series of summit-level visits and meetings between Nehru and Zhou, but to no effect. The Indian leadership failed to understand the psyche of the Chinese leadership, who were conditioned by conflict and fully prepared to go to war on issues of territory. The Indian political culture was more for diplomacy, dialogue and compromise, and the leadership was not psychologically attuned towards conflict even though it too was not prepared to compromise on what it considered to be national pride. The two were mutually incompatible, and given the actualities of relative strengths between the militaries of the two countries, Jawaharlal Nehru would perhaps have done better to swallow his personal pride and agree to discussions as proposed by China. In the event, the only Indian political direction in the intensifying conflict was manifested in a “forward policy” based on a child-like game of Chinese checkers (no pun intended!) played under the control of the Director Intelligence Bureau BN Mullick, revelling in his role of National Security Adviser, by siting, moving and resiting small border posts off small scale maps, to try and face down similar Chinese border detachments (Operation “Onkar”).

Given India’s basic military weakness, this only resulted in exacerbating the situation. As a result of orders emanating from sources far removed from reality, there were a series of incidents between border forces of both sides at Longju, the Kongka La and the Galwan Valley in 1959 in which Indians suffered casualties. Carried away by the

volatile rhetoric of Krishna Menon, and the misinformed miscalculations of BN Mullick in this game of one-upmanship by remote control, the political leadership in India, directed the unprepared and ill equipped Indian Army to move forward and secure a chain of penny-packet posts in highly inaccessible terrain and defend them. Attempts by competent and experienced Indian commanders like Lieutenant General SPP Thorat to tender professional advice were summarily disparaged and dismissed by an ill informed political leadership as not being adequately aggressive. The so-called "Thorat Plan" recommending forward military build-up towards the borders in sound and sustainable defences located only as far forward as the existing system of roads could handle, and thereafter patrol forward with the necessary support from these bases right up to the Indian line of alignment found unresponsive audience with political charlatans like the Defence Minister VK Krishna Menon. This period of growing Sino-Indian tensions lasted for over a decade, but unfortunately, even at this critical stage of a failing foreign policy, there were little or no efforts to develop India's military capabilities with assistance from the western countries who were willing to assist, of course on their own terms and at their own price.

The Indian political leadership did not take steps to build-up the requisite military strength for the confrontation which was becoming increasingly inevitable in the foreseeable future. This was a grave lapse of judgement, and a display of extreme politico-military amateurism by the National leadership for which, as always, the Indian military would pay the price. When the military element was introduced to boost up diplomatic dialogue, it was under the classic contingency of "too little, too late" and launched unprepared into the tragedy of the brief but intense Sino-Indian border war in 1962, whose trauma still haunts the country and has generated an instinctive diffidence in the national psyche in dealing with China which persists even to this day. Pakistan seized the opportunity for a geostrategic follow up by entering into a Sino-Pak Treaty of Friendship with China in 1963, creating a common strategic front which posed a "two-front" threat against India from both western and eastern flanks. Subsequently, in what may well be a supreme act of either total and utter foolhardiness or incredible farsightedness China had decided around 1984 or so, that its national interests against India would be best served by upgrading Pakistan into a regional 'missile and nuclear weapon' power by illegally gifting it with working diagrams of nuclear warheads, even though China was a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. India has undoubtedly paid a heavy strategic price for totally ignoring any military input into its foreign policy formulations.

Meanwhile with Pakistan, diplomatic efforts for resolution of the Kashmir issue, including extension of the theatre of conflict into the Siachen region in 1988, have continued for over five decades both through the United Nations, as also bilaterally, but except for small incremental shifts, still remains totally snarled up to this day in a labyrinthine dialogue of the deaf. India-Pakistan relations have made very little progress through exercise of diplomatic options, but Pakistan has repeatedly attempted to force the issue by military means, resulting in five Kashmir-centric military conflicts so far between India and Pakistan, in which India has naturally had to fully employ its military resources. Four of these wars were in 1947-48, 1965, 1971 (which also created the independent nation of Bangladesh from what had been Pakistan's eastern wing), and the brief high intensity Kargil border war of 1999.

The fifth Indo-Pak confrontation is in a separate and special category altogether - an ongoing Afghanistan-type covert war of insurgency-cum-terrorism actively sponsored by the covert Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan since 1989 as an Islamic jihad in Kashmir and a Khalistani movement in Punjab. It is a classic "black diplomacy" option planned to bleed and ultimately dismember India by an extended low-intensity "war of a thousand cuts" initially in Kashmir, followed by Punjab (now resolved) as also on subsidiary fronts in India's North East through separatist anti-Indian insurgencies supported by the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) of Bangladesh. Successive military governments in Bangladesh of Generals Zia ur Rahman and HM Ershad, and subsequently the right wing Bangladesh National Party (BNP) government under Begum Khaleda Zia extended their tacit but full support to the Pakistani game plan. In addition, the jihad sponsored by Pakistan has now extended outside the earlier areas of direct confrontation such as Kashmir and into non-traditional hinterlands from Delhi and Uttar Pradesh in the North to Tamilnadu and Kerala in the South, and from Maharashtra and Gujarat in the West to West Bengal, Assam and the other adjacent states in the East. Both India and Pakistan are aware of the "deniability" of these operations, as also that it will be a very long haul. Low intensity warfare is a long-term low-cost option, where level and intensity of operations in the various regions fluctuates according to changes in internal and external political dynamics as well as local circumstances. The only pawns are the normal citizens, hopelessly trapped in a long unending night of terrorist violence and counteraction by security forces. In addition the LC in Kashmir witnessed daily exchanges of heavy gunfire and repeated clashes between Indian Army troops and Pakistani infiltrators attempting to cross over into Indian territory. These have now reduced in intensity. India has brought Pakistan's aggressions to the notice of the world community repeatedly but to no avail or reaction. In the meanwhile, with formalised diplomacy failing to achieve the desired results, India has reacted militarily to safeguard national interests and protect the territorial integrity of the country. However, dramatic changes in Indo-Pak relations occurred after the USA proclaimed its War on Terror following simultaneous airborne strikes on American soil by jihadi fidayeen on 9 September 2001 (9/11) in what became America's newest Pearl Harbour. The terrorist strikes at New York and Washington, synchronised as nearly as possible, demolished the World Trade Centre Towers and caused extensive damage to the Pentagon.

Chinese support for its strategic surrogate Pakistan did not translate into active operational assistance in the Indo-Pak wars of 1965 or 1971. On both occasions, China had issued verbal notifications, but made no active attempt to open any second front against India. For India, the decisive defeat of Pakistan in 1971, including the complete severance of its eastern wing did not bring about any noticeable stabilisation of the strategic environment on the subcontinent either. Rather, the desire for revenge for the loss of East Pakistan made Pakistan more determined to increase the tempo of conflict in terms of covert sponsorship of proxy war warfare in Kashmir and Punjab to inflict maximum damage and losses on the Indian military forces as well as civil infrastructure with the long term objective of detaching Kashmir from India as a symbol of retribution. Cross border terrorism became the new buzz word for this process of covert warfare, which in effect continues to the present time. Of course, it has not succeeded, nor indeed will it ever - the Indian state and its military apparatus is much too strong to be overcome by such methods.

In another but equally important context, one of the major planks of India's foreign policy has been a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. India's claim is based on its increasing international relevance as a

significant participant in world affairs and a rising economic power. “Peacekeeping” and “peacemaking” or peace enforcement are major politico-military activities in the UN, where a substantial military staff has been created in its Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO) for management of military operations under Chapters VI and VII of the UN Charter. Indian Armed Forces have participated in forty three UN peacekeeping operations (out of a total of sixty three such operations) and it is no exaggeration to state that their consistently high professionalism and superb operational performances have enhanced India’s diplomatic leverage in the world body in support of India’s claims.

The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has traditionally been off centre from the focus of foreign policy until relatively recently. But what is perhaps India’s biggest foreign policy misadventure occurred in this very region in Sri Lanka, where after the failure of Indian and Indian brokered diplomatic efforts, the military option of dispatching an Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) to the island was exercised, to maintain and if necessary enforce the peace between the warring Sinhala and Tamil communities. This became known as Operation Pawan (1987-1990), and is definitely not one of the more glorious chapters of post-Independence India. But though totally mismanaged politically and militarily - no fault of the troops and formations on the ground - Operation Pawan, coupled with the highly successful Operation Cactus in the Maldives islands in 1988, bringing succour against a coup d’etat by Tamil mercenaries of People’s Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), can perhaps also be visualised positively in a larger strategic sense as a tentative curtain raiser for India’s aspirations in the IOR. India’s interventions in Sri Lanka and the Maldives have perhaps succeeded in conveying the appropriate signals, which are now being further reinforced by the extremely effective anti-piracy campaign of the Indian Navy against Somali pirates in the Arabian Sea and the Western Indian Ocean.

The military are the country’s ultimate agency for management and control of internal and external conflict. Military force and diplomacy have historically been synergistic, their equation analogous to the iron fist under many layers of velvet gloves. Diplomacy is the velvet glove, to manage international opinion through structured engagement and dialogue. The defence forces are the iron fist, normally latent, to be unveiled and displayed or actually committed as the option of last resort. The American President Theodore Roosevelt, succinctly summed up the military- diplomacy interface with his celebrated remark “Speak softly, but carry a big stick”. Diplomacy speaks softly, the military is the big stick.

The Twentieth Century ended with Kargil, while the Twenty First began with the Mumbai terrorist strike of 26 Nov 2008. The beginnings of the new era have been inauspicious, and while diplomacy remains the primary conventional channel for foreign policy, it would be wise to always keep options for military backup within easy reach.

*Text of the talk delivered at USI on 25 May 2011 with **Shri MK Rasgotra, IFS (Retd)** in the Chair.

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