

# Letters to the Editor

I

Dear Editor

Colonel PK Vasudeva in his article on 'China's Dams in Tibet and Diversion of Brahmaputra' (USI Journal, April- June, 2012) has pointed out that future wars are more likely to be over water. In this connection, the warning issued by the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon that high population growth and poor water management posed significant threats on water availability and could be 'a potent fuel for war', is relevant. Also a recent report on Global Water Security released in the USA, based on the assessment of Federal Intelligence Agencies, has highlighted the possibility of wars on water in the coming decades. Hence the author has rightly brought out the concerns arising out of China's unilateral decision to divert waters of the Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra) ignoring the protests of downstream riparians like India and Bangladesh.

Though China has been insisting that it has no such plans, the author has quoted various responses from Chinese experts and authorities on the issue and also about the interest shown by their hydropower lobbies in this regard. Hence he has stressed the need for India to be alert since if the Chinese implement these plans, we would be at their mercy for our water needs during the dry spell and for protection from floods during rainy season. According to the author, India and Bangladesh should jointly take up the matter with China and if the negotiations fail, the issue should be raised at the UN Security Council to safeguard our interests.

For the past many years, China had been frequently assuring India that it would not do anything that would harm our interests, but now it has constructed many projects in Tibet region, like the Senge-Ali project on the Indus, a project at the Zada gorge on the Sutlej; and is now constructing the Zangmu project on Yarlung Tsangpo. Also, from the construction activities going on at the

Metok site situated at the Great Bend of the Brahmaputra and from the map of the Grid Corporation of China for 2020 showing the power generated from the Great Bend area as connected to the rest of the Chinese power supply, it can be inferred that the mega project at Metok for diverting the Brahmaputra to Gobi desert is going to be a reality in the near future.

The Chinese projects on the Brahmaputra could pose threats to India since if they divert the lean season flows, our existing hydro-projects have to be shut down for want of minimum river flows. If they release heavy flows during rainy season, vast areas would be devastated, as it happened in Arunachal Pradesh and in Himachal Pradesh in 2000. The sad experience of the co-basin states of the Mekong Basin due to indiscriminate operation of upstream Chinese projects should be a grim reminder to us in this regard.

The author has rightly pointed out that China is not bound by any treaty on water sharing with us. The Joint Declaration made in 2006 between the two enables only sharing of hydrological data, which is not adequate to meet our concerns. Hence while we take up the issue with the UN, we should also be prepared to face situations in the meanwhile, if and when the Chinese projects start operations. The available option is to take-up and construct the large storage project already identified in the Siang (Brahmaputra) to absorb flood flows from upstream. Such a storage would also help to even out river flow fluctuations, to protect our downstream projects. Similar projects identified in the Sutlej also should be taken-up for construction on top priority to meet the likely threats from the liquid bombs ticking away in Tibet. Hence, instead of remaining complacent with the Chinese assurances, let us get ready with various options as above to face the consequences of China's projects for river diversion.

*Yours Sincerely*

*MS Menon,  
Former Chief Engineer,  
Central Water Commission*



## II

Dear Editor,

This is in reference to the article 'Evolving Military Strategy' by Lieutenant General PC Katoch (Retd) in the April-June 2012 edition of the USI Journal. It was indeed a pleasure to read this article as it reinforced many views that I personally held with regard to the policy paralysis and the lack of a strategic culture in our country. During my study of Strategy as a subject, I found the apathy shown by our politicians, who are rightfully the masters of the military set-up in a democracy, is alarming. There seems to be no urgency to address any of the issues that General Katoch has so rightly pointed out.

Our political strategic guidance and military preparedness are increasingly being called 'humiliating'.<sup>1</sup> Why is it that we remain in denial of a need for joint ethos in war fighting as has been extremely well articulated in the article? Jointness is not an option anymore.

We are probably living in a few years of relatively low insurgency because Pakistan is presently besieged with internal problems. Come 2014, when International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops pull out of Afghanistan and leave the future of that country to its neighbourhood, we may find renewed insurgency into India. As Mumbai 2008 demonstrated, we were caught unprepared. We did not have enough confidence to be able to provide a swift retaliatory strike against the perpetrators of the attack and yet we are no better off today than we were in 2008. The 'Cold Start' doctrine has not been discussed by the political masters and yet the Services remain disjointed and independent in pursuing individual agendas based on their individual doctrines.

The General has written about evolving a Military Strategy despite speaking of a lack of National Strategy guiding the formulation of that very military strategy. Is it possible for the military in this nation, being as subservient to the politicians as it is, to articulate a military strategy without discussing it with the political masters? It seems to me, in my limited experience that we

are planning and procuring for wars that we may never fight. We are practising concepts that the politicians will never have the stomach to authorise. Can any nation of our size function in such a strategic vacuum?

USI is an ideal forum which raises issues of major significance and has an eminent panel of senior serving and retired officers who have experienced these logjams first hand. It would indeed be a service to our nation if USI can take a lead role in bringing awareness about this strategic vacuum within the political class especially with high level committees like the, Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), National Security Committee (NSC) and the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB). We cannot talk about surgical strikes without having the capability to carry them out. We cannot carry them out unless we have a joint plan for it. Most importantly we cannot afford to be unable to act against another Mumbai style attack while hiding behind the facade of strategic restraint. We need a National Security Strategy and we need an articulated National Military Strategy to guide us so that every man in the Armed Forces knows what we are preparing for and what we may be expected to do.

**(Endnote 1.** Ashely Tellis, as quoted in Tom Hundley, 'Race to the End', *Foreign Policy*, September 2012 accessed on [www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/09/05/race to the end](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/09/05/race_to_the_end))

*Yours Sincerely*

*Lieutenant Commander Digvijaysinh Sodha*

III

Dear Editor,

The paper of Rear Admiral Menon, is very realistic and futuristic – both for our national and international implications. Hence, to safeguard our security, necessary modifications and implementation are the crying needs of the time. Deployment in Space should also receive attention.



A copy of his paper needs be sent to both, the Prime Minister and the Defence Minister.

*Yours Sincerely*

*Lieutenant Colonel Baldev K Sodhi (Retd)*

### **Editor's Note**

This is to inform our readers that the USI journal is being regularly sent to The President of India through the Military Secretary, Honourable Defence Minister, Minister of State for Defence, National Security Adviser, Chiefs of Staff of the Army, Navy & Air Force, and the Foreign Secretary.

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