

Soldiers' Role in Peace Making

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With the advent of globalization and general diminution of national boundaries, the armed forces of the nation states have an emerging role for shaping the stable and peaceful world. The primary duty of the armed forces will remain to deter aggression and defend their country. However, in the civil society when the wars no longer confine their devastation to national boundaries, armed forces would be required to assume the higher goal of peace building and peace keeping. The armies would still be achieving the political goal by assisting their nations in resolution of disputes without or with much less violence.

History has innumerable, unforgettable and unforgivable instances of armies having become insane and attacked on humanity much more than the demand of the military situation whether they were Sythians, Huns, Turks, or Mongols. In the name of religious fervour, Islamic Armies and Christian crusaders slaughtered and plundered the 'non-believers.' In same way the Aryan rulers also had different rules of conduct when they fought with Non-Aryan enemies.

In the cotemporary civil societies high human casualties are not acceptable. This involves responsibilities on armed forces of rival countries to support wider political goal of shaping peace in their nation, region and in the World at large. The armed forces have direct stake in peace making as it is they and their kin who face the brunt of the war. The managers of state power amplify the sentiments of nationalism or religion and even organize suicide groups to achieve their narrow political gains. It is not to advocate that armies should refuse to accept the lawful commands from their political masters but that the role of higher leadership of the armed forces is not only to defend their country but to act responsibly for facilitation of resolution of disputes without war and if it becomes inevitable reduce the devastation as much as possible.^[1]

India and Pakistan since their attaining independence in 1947 from the British rule of more than 200 years have fought more than four wars over Kashmir with each other. About twenty thousand soldiers have been killed and many more injured. In the violence in disturbed state of Jammu and Kashmir more than 80,000 civilians have lost their lives and many more have been injured in shoot-outs and in minefields. Thousands of families have lost their bread earners and unemployment is rampant. India and Pakistan are among the biggest spenders in their defense in the World. According to the recent data compiled by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, India and Pakistan defence expenditure as percentage of GDP is 2.3 and 4.5 respectively. The comparison of defense expenditure of few countries is given below:

Table 1

Defence Expenditure as
% Of The GDP

China	2.1
India	2.3
US	3
Russia	3.8
Pakistan	4.6
Turkey	5
Israel	8.1
S.Arabia	13.2

Source: *World Bank Indicators (World bank Data Base, 2003)*

The defense spending during the 1990s has shown tremendous increase in both the countries. In India, between 1998-2002, an interval of four years, there was a 37% increase in defense outlays as can be seen from the next table.

Table-2
Military Expenditure
(In \$ Million At Year 2000 Prices)

Year	India	Pakistan
1990	8051	2636
1992	7209	2997
1994	8109	2917
1996	8565	2961
1998	9387	2833
2000	10900	2867
2001	11837	3071
2002	12882	3176

Source : SIPRI Estimates 2003

The defense expenditure exerts burden on the resources of the Government. According to comparable World Bank data, military expenditure as percentage of total Central Government expenditure was 14 per cent in India and was much higher in Pakistan at 23 per cent. The above analysis points out that military expenditure has affected spending in social sectors, notably in education and health. This is reflected in World Bank data for 1999 the latest year for which information is available.

Table-3
Defence vs. Education and Health as % of GDP

Country	Public Spending in
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	Public Health	Education	Defense
India	0.91	4.1	2.3
Pakistan	0.9	1.8	4.6

Source : *World Development Indicators Data Base*, World Bank 2003

A well known economist, Arr Jean Dreze has pointed out that India's defense spending is more than the combined Central and State Govt. expenditure on health.² South Asia has some of the worst indicators in health and education, yet the two countries clearly prefer to spend more on defense. It is the poor people of the subcontinent who are carrying the burden of eternal conflict.

The aim of this presentation is to evaluate and emphasise the proactive role which the armed forces of two countries are required to play for making peace in the subcontinent in the light of present day geo-strategic realities and strong will of the people for peace. Indian and Pakistan armed forces are disciplined forces and have fought valiantly for the defence of their respective countries. Though their countries are poor but they are privileged to obtain a lion's share from their national budget depriving expenditure on social sectors. Now since both countries are moving towards the path of reconciliation, it is also responsibility of the armed forces to contribute towards this peace process. The measures suggested in this presentation are much beyond the confidence building measures (CBMs) which is a concept adopted from the experience of the east-west confrontation after second world war. In the case of India and Pakistan the countries share religion, culture, language, history and know each other well. The countries who have less knowledge of each other are more inclined to follow the CBMs in letter and spirit. In case of India and Pakistan we are aiming at higher level of good-will and mutual respect towards each other and not hatred and jealousy. In the past many agreements have been signed and flouted. We have to create good will with each other particularly at governmental and military level to make those agreements really effective.

The soldier's role for peace building in the above context can be described with the help of a model, which was originally made by UN Secretary general Boutros Boutros Ghali in 1992 in a little different context. Indian and Pakistan military establishments are pivotal players in making these measures successful. They are the direct beneficiaries and should have stake in peace but presently they do as they find expedient. The positive role could be summarised in the following phases, the involvement increases as the conflict intensifies, but which need not be in that order:

(a) Phase-I: Prevention of Conflict

(i) *Peaceful deployment along the border*: The author himself has served in Kashmir along the LoC between India-Pakistan and in Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh and on Sino-Indian borders. There is daily firing and shooting on borders with Pakistan till recently when the cease-fire was implemented. Every commanding officer wants to outperform his counterpart across the border in aggressive spirit. The casualties from artillery firing on both sides are shocking but they do not deserve even a single story in the media. Winning a cricket match by the other side or each other's independence days were sufficient reasons for display of bravado with considerable damage to civilian population. The author, an artillery officer in Kashmir himself, is witness to such incidents. On the other hand, on Sino-Indian border since 1987 not a single shot has been

fired across the border. It is a good example where though the borders are disputed but militaries live in peace. Few years back at Chinese post opposite Nathula outpost in Sikkim there was a young proficient Chinese soldier who used to entertain us and the visitors to our post. He would stand on roof of his bunker³ and perform karate and other physical antics. In fact he had become a tourist attraction.

(ii) *True and effective military advise* to respective leadership on correct military capability of their country against their adversary and the true requirement of the minimum force for accomplishment of the objective. This would prevent political leadership in aiming at the lofty goals, which they may foolhardily envisage, for securing votes. The civilian intelligence does not have as much stake in the war and has tendency to inflate the leadership with unachievable national goals. We may quote the example of Field Marshal Manekshaw's advice to Mrs. Indira Gandhi, which was against the civil intelligence recommendation, to postpone the war in East Pakistan by few months in 1971. This resulted in quick victory in a short and a decisive war.

In India Pakistan stand off after terrorist strike in Indian Parliament in December 2002, the full potential of both countries were on eye ball contact with each other for nine months causing innumerable lives lost in mine related accidents. A slight fuse could have resulted in war. In fact political leaderships on both sides were threatening to use nuclear weapons. These are the examples of soldiers refraining from true and effective advise to their political masters. Did Russia secure warm waters of Arabian sea after Afghan misadventure. What India got from Sri Lankan misadventure against LTTE, or China from supporting Naga rebels? History has number of examples where wrong advice mostly to serve vested interests and not in national interests which have led Govt. to misadventures, causing mass sufferings and huge expenditures. I see the militaries of the future in their true role of saviour of national interests and wellbeing of the people.

(iii) *Building Nuclear Confidence*: The international community is keenly awaiting progress on this front which nuclear neighbors are poised to deliver. India and Pakistan have been making the fissile material (nuclear explosive) for their weapons for decades. They already have enough material for several dozen nuclear weapons. A total of 2.9 million deaths are predicted if India and Pakistan use only five of their weapons each, with additional 1.5 million severely injured.⁴ The recurring India Pakistan military crisis during 1986-87, 1990, 1999, and in 2001-02 have resulted in international perception that the subcontinent is the most likely place where nuclear weapons could be used. At Lahore in February 1999, India and Pakistan had signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) which included nuclear risk reduction measures, like notification of missile flight tests, bilateral considerations on security concepts and nuclear doctrines, establishment of communications to notify each other accidents or unauthorised incidents that could be misconstrued by the other side and add to military/nuclear tension. India and Pakistan had successful dialogue on 20 June 2004 at New Delhi wherein they decided to put in place a dedicated and secure hotline between their foreign secretaries. They also exchanged technical parameters on pre-notification of flight testing of missiles. They have decided not to test nuclear weapons unless in the national interests it is necessary. What is more important is that they have decided to continue the bilateral consultations.

(iv) *Avoid False Propaganda*: False propaganda often tends to inflate passions. Armies can refrain from calling opponents in degrading manner in exercises and war games like Narak (Hell) and Chandal (Devil) forces. Just naming Blue and Red forces should meet the requirement.

(v) *Timely disclosure of intent and content* of major exercises to neighbors. Ex Brass-Tack and Ex Checker Board conducted by India in 1986-7 had almost brought the neighbors to the threshold of a war and mobilisation even in Tibet in the year.

(vi) *Frequent use of hotlines* for crisis management: The lines exist but are rarely used. In November 1990, Prime Ministers Chandra Shekhar and Nawaj Sharief met at Male and had decided to activate a hotline between the Foreign Secretaries and Directors of Military Operations(DGMO). Late Mr. J N Dixit, former Foreign Secretary India and former National Security Advisor, reports in his book India Pakistan in War and Peace that hotline conversations between the DGMOs remain a routine affair while the Prime Ministerial hotline has been seldom used as has been the hotline between the foreign secretaries.

(vii) *Military to military ties* are crucial for peace in the region. Pakistan is a military dominated society. In India military is respected by general public and would not be accused of any sell out. They can create good will and adopt less combative attitude on the borders if they interact on wider plane with each other. Indian and Pakistan armies revolve around infantry battalions and armored regiments. These units were assigned to India or Pakistan depending on their religious composition. Many new units were raised. These regiments owe their identity, customs, dresses to old pre-partition regiments. A formal programme of good will visit to each other regiments would be a good beginning. It would be wonderful if some men and officers as an organized program visit each other's parent units and participate in *Bara Khanas* (big meal with troops) and also mess functions. In India and Pakistan military life is based around mess rituals which are followed in letter and spirit.

A scheme of retired officers to visit each other units on raising days and regimental reunions will reaffirm the common heritage. The military to military contact would lead to creating a vested interest for resolution of disputes and improvement of atmosphere for peace and reduce violence on the borders on flimsy pretext. It may lead to redeployment of troops from Siachen glaciers where both armies are facing the common enemy of weather which causes most of the casualties. It will have positive effect on the politicians and bureaucrats specially in Pakistan where military is very powerful.

(viii) *Cooperation in disaster relief* by even by token presence of medical personnel and equipment and ambulances etc. There was a good opportunity for a token gesture in massive earthquake in Kutch.

(b) Phase II:

In Conflict Situations

(i) *Adherence to international code of warfare* which include avoidance of civilian targets, national assets, hospitals. The armed forces of India and Pakistan have generally followed the

code. “Wars between India and Pakistan have been closely controlled by both sides to ensure minimum damage to civilians, social infrastructure, limited financial loss and return to status quo as quickly as possible.”⁵ The record of restoring the situation in India Pakistan context is exemplary. After 1965 war Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri returned back to Pakistan 15000 ft Hazi Pir salient in Kishen Ganga Range of Kashmir which was in Pakistan hands since 1948 and was captured with considerable sacrifices by Indian troops. There was popular resentment in public and within armed forces but the government kept its word. After 1971 war, 93000 Prisoners of war of Pakistan captured by Indian Army after liberating then East Pakistan were released only with verbal assurances of border settlement following Shimla accord. No formal resolution of Kashmir issue was sought.

(ii) *Use of minimum force* with a view to neutralising and not destroying human lives and the properties.

(iii) *Adherence of Geneva Conventions* for treatment and exchange of war prisoners. In this context refusal of Pakistan to return about 58 Indian prisoners of war missing since 1971 war does not set a good example especially when India had returned more than 90,000 POWs after keeping them in India with dignity, strictly following the Geneva Conventions.

(iii) *Short wars.* The wars between India and Pakistan have been of short duration. This is mainly due to economic reasons. In 1965, war was confined to 22 days as Pakistan was left with only five days’ logistics. The cease-fire was declared in 1971 unilaterally by India, after 14 days, as soon as the Indian objective was achieved. India did not want to pursue the war further with West Pakistan though the situation was militarily favourable. The capture of territory in West Pakistan was not their aim. In 1948, India accepted UN sponsored cease-fire in Kashmir even when its troops were advancing. Indian Army accepted the tremendous disadvantage.

(c) Phase III: Peace Keeping:

(i) *Ex-soldiers and women are best suited* for non-government initiatives for peace. The unique role, which India Pakistan Soldiers Initiative for Peace (IPSI) is playing, even during the period of growing animosity between the two neighbours, is a good example. This unique initiative by retired soldiers of India and Pakistan under the noble leadership of an eminent Gandhian, Ms Nirmala Deshpande, is building peace by people to people contacts. IPSI has a chapter in Delhi with Admiral L Ramdas retired Indian Chief of Naval Staff as the President and Lt. Gen Nasir Akhtar heading the Lahore Chapter. IPSI consisting of about more than 100 members on both sides of the border has had number of exchange of visits and interacted with students, journalists, politicians and academicians and retired soldiers and has received good response. In June/July 02 when the war clouds were hovering over the subcontinent after the terrorist strike on Indian Parliament, the retired soldiers marched on the streets of Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay, Lahore and Karachi and campaigned for peace and restraint. IPSI delegations also met the political leadership of respective countries and pleaded for restraint and argued that war would not solve any issues between India and Pakistan when as it was a no-win situation for both.

In fact, it might lead to nuclear war which would be a catastrophe for both countries. In subcontinent the soldiers are held in high regards and when they talk for peace the impact is

greater. Our attempts to make peace have been making though small but significant impact. We had a long discussion at Lahore with leadership of “Al-badr” a militant outfit active in Kashmir. With revival of communications between the two neighbors the peace soldiers are again active. As a founder general Secretary of this initiative the author has been to Pakistan twice and found the response extremely positive for peace building.

(ii) *Pressure on respective leadership* for resolution of dispute by means other than war taking the ground realities into consideration. The continuous deployment of each others’ troops on full alert for long eleven months and continuous deployment at Siachen glaciers with more loss of human lives by nature than shelling by guns is another folly not seen in any part of the world these days.

The disciplined and patriotic armed forces of India and Pakistan have been generally exercising restraint, not bombing population centres, avoiding irrigation facilities and generally adhering to Geneva conventions on conduct of war and in treatment of POWs. India and Pakistan have fought one of the severest tank battles in 1965 and 1971 since British Eight Army clashed with Rommel’s Afrika Corps in the Maghreb. These have been called “gentlemen’s wars”. The same unfortunately is not the case with police and paramilitary forces whose conduct in war and peace has been regrettable. In 1947 the fleeing population of both countries felt secure when they were escorted by regular armies. The toll in 1947 carnage was about 8,00,000 dead while in 1947, 1965, 1971 and Kargil the combined loss of lives is said to be not more than 25,000 soldiers killed. In J&K so far more than 80,000 civilians have been reported to have lost their lives. While the overall conduct of the armed forces has been generally professional and patriotic, the same cannot be said about their role for peace building and conflict resolution which leaves much to be implemented.

It would also be necessary to mention about the conduct of armies in insurgency operations. These operations require highly selective and very discriminate use of force in spite of the gravest provocations. Massive applications of firepower or brutal force against innocent civilians do more harm than good. Force can be used more selectively if Government forces have precise information. Of all the nations beset with insurgency throughout 20th century only Britain has met with some sustained degree of success in Malaya in 1948-60, Oman in 1970-75 and recently in Northern Ireland. They understood fully well that a political solution by dialogue only could bring about lasting peace.

Since Prime Minister Vajpayee’s visit to Pakistan in January 2004, there have been many positive developments. The subsequent Congress government has adopted the peace process well. During the last about one year, air, rail and bus links have been restored. The Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus route is now in operation. More routes are being considered for reopening across Indo-Pak border and across LoC as well. There is a strong desire for peace in the people of India and Pakistan. The author himself has witnessed massive good will and enthusiasm for peace which was given even to retired Indian soldiers of Indian Army in Pakistan during his recent two visits to Pakistan.

In the India-Pakistan context peace would return only after a negotiated settlement of Kashmir. The bulk of strategic elite in both countries are, however, not yet convinced in moving forward

from stated positions. “The governments are neither strong enough to weather criticism of a sellout nor weak enough to be pressurized into a negotiated settlement.”⁶ In the case of Sino-Indian relations normalisation process is proceeding well. Trade has increased 10 times in the last five years. It is on this basis that territorial issue concerning Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh can await resolution at appropriate time. One has to remember that thousands of lives have been lost and many more have become homeless during the last 16 years of insurgency. While it is true that the issue of Kashmir should be resolved at the earliest possible date, no time should be lost in creating and maintaining good will, mutual confidence and respect towards each other at the governmental level. All such hindrances, like cross border terrorism in peace process or alleged army excesses in Kashmir should be removed. The peace process should be prolonged. The soldiers can play a big role in this context.

Conclusion

Though the primary role of the armed forces would be to prepare for and conduct war, the most likely future role of the armed forces of the developed nations would be peace building and peace enforcement missions. In these the intensity of involvement would vary from country to country. The limited military operations would be political statements for enforcement of peace. The military victory will remain a tactical goal while strategic goal will be to establish lasting peace. These are new challenges and opportunities for the modern armies of India and Pakistan in the era of globalization and in current peace process.

References and Endnotes

1. Since time immemorial, the profession of arms has been a flair of nobles, chivalrous and brave. They had believed in the cause for which they fought. True soldiers have lived above the cruel aspects of large scale destruction, mayhem, wanton killings and uncalled violence. When I joined Indian Military Academy, alma mater of officers of Indian Army, after 1962 Sino -Indian war, we were called gentleman cadets, first to be gentleman before being a soldier. Keeping peace is as much the duty of a gentleman as is safe guarding the sovereignty of their motherland.
2. C Rammanohar Reddy, ‘India-Pak Defense Spending’, *South Asian Journal*, Issue 3 .
3. A fortified structure used for observation with holes for firing small arms.
4. ‘Next Steps for Nuclear Talks’ Zia Mian, AH Nayyar and others, *South Asians Against Nukes*, July 01, 2004.
5. Bharat Karnad, ‘Key to Peace in South Asia’.
6. Ibid.