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Here is a view from a person with military/intelligence background and is not the institutional view of SAAG. Director

The Nation is Forgetful: Four years ago at this time the Indian Army was battling on the rocky and glacial terrain stretching from Zoji-La Pass to the Siachen Glacier to evict Pakistan's perfidious aggression in this high altitude sector.

As the fourth anniversary of the Kargil War goes past one hardly noticed the Indian public paying homage in remembrance to the approximate one thousand Officers and Jawans of the Indian Army who laid down their lives to uphold India's honour and dignity.

India must learn from the British how to honour their war dead. A nation, which does not year after year honour its war-dead, cannot become a great nation. On Remembrance Day each year, the British conduct official ceremonies at War Cemeteries, even in far away lands to honour the nations heroes and those who fought for them. Even in far off Japan at the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery, one witnessed while as a Defence Attache in Japan, such ceremonies. One had to participate along with a Hindu Priest and a Muslim priest to honour the Indian soldiers whose ashes were buried there.

India's political leaders and so also the media were conspicuous by the absence of any remembrance homage to the Kargil War heroes.

Even the retired Indian Armed Forces Officers associated with the Ex-servicemen's Cells of different Indian political parties seemed to have failed to advise their political masters of the necessity of such homage.

India is today what it is, because the Indian Army has never flinched in sacrificing its lives for defending the Indian Republic from both external and internal threats.

The poignant words inscribed on the Kohima War Memorial should be a fitting reminder to the Indian nation. It is inscribed:

“ When you go home

Tell them of us,

And say.

For theirs Tomorrow, We gave our Today.”

Four years after the Kargil War, India seems to have been forgetful about its war heroes like it has been, after every war.

This is also an appropriate occasion to reflect on India's war preparedness, as the root cause of Pakistan's military adventurism in Kargil arose from Pakistan's assessment of perceived weakness in our war preparedness.

Surveillance and Defence of Strategic Choke-points: Kargil was an elongated-strategic chokepoint extending from Zoji-La Pass and all the way to Kargil. India's lifeline to Ladakh along this stretch lay under direct observation and interference from Pakistan Army posts overlooking this road. India's pre-occupation in fighting the Pakistan sponsored proxy war in the Kashmir valley distracted proper attention to the surveillance and protection of this elongated strategic choke-point.

India has a similar elongated strategic choke-point i.e. the Siliguri Corridor, extending from Siliguri and running upto Rangiya. China's and Bangladesh salients point like daggers at this narrow corridor. The Southern reaches of Bhutan are havens of anti-India insurgent groups.

Has India learned the appropriate lessons from Kargil War in terms of surveillance and protection of this Eastern Strategic choke point through which runs India's sole rail and road link to the entire North East? Also India's vital oil pipeline. No indications are available in terms of raising of additional Army units and formations for this task.

On a conservative estimate at least two Army divisions require to be raised specific for this task.

Border Management: India's border management continues to be archaic and with divided responsibilities. The defence of India's borders is the responsibility of the Indian Army. And, if that be so then the essential operational principle that emerges from it is that all forces including Border Security Force, Assam Rifles, ITBP, SSF and even State Armed Police function under the operational command of the Indian Army when on such deployment.

Border management in India is not like managing 'soft borders' in Europe where police forces perform this task. India's borders on all its peripheries are 'hot borders' where effective management for security and defence can only be done by the Indian Army.

The constitution of the Border Management Task Force after the Kargil War reflected this deficiency, as it was predominantly composed of police officers.

India's Intelligence Agencies- Lack of Coordination and Synergy: A task force was set-up by the Government after the Kargil War to go into this aspect. Once again it was predominantly composed of officers from intelligence agencies, who in any case could not bring a fresh approach to the problem. Inter-agency rivalries continue to plague the intelligence establishment and thereby hampering the operations against Pakistan's proxy war in J & K. Their spilling out in the public domain reflects the lack of coordination and synergy amongst India's intelligence agencies.

In advanced countries, a National Intelligence Estimate is prepared at the highest level for the ensuing year. Intelligence objectives are unambiguously spelt out and tasking done clinically to ensure accountability at the end of the year. There is no need of a National Intelligence Adviser. This task can be performed and should be performed by the National Security Adviser.

India's intelligence agencies cannot be allowed to become repositories of bureaucratic minded, dyed-in-the-rut officers of a few services. Intelligence agencies need 'bright sparks' with vivid imagination, clinical analytical skills and with a capacity for lateral analysis of issues and events.

All of India's intelligence agencies today need to be solely focused on "actionable military intelligence" and not engaged in political intelligence tasks. The overriding emphasis has to be on "actionable military intelligence" .

India's Strategic War Reserves of Military Equipment and Logistic Requirements: While no information on this aspect can be expected in the public domain, but the following inferred from press reports provides alarming reading:

- * Surcharge collected after the Kargil War for war preparedness has not been utilised by the Ministry of Defence for the said purpose.
- * Large amounts of funds allotted after the Kargil War have remained un-utilised and surrendered, due to bureaucratic

mismanagement and lack of vision.

* Induction of bullet-proof vests, surveillance equipment and night vision devices suffering again due to bureaucratic mismanagement, besides a host of other equipment

Evidently the bureaucratic machinery in the Ministry of Defence is not seized with the urgency and the imperatives of India's constant war preparedness.

It would need to be investigated whether the Defence Budget has a separate sub-head of "Strategic War Reserves Replenishment". If not there is an urgent requirement to constitute one.

Oil stocks, aviation fuel and shelf-life of ammunition need constant monitoring and surprise checks by senior officers and may be also as an element of personal monitoring by the Defence Minister.

Logistics more than operational brilliance of field commanders is the decisive factor in today's warfare. Logistics limitations impeded military operations even during the Kargil War and hence integration would be required of Indian Army's logistic requirements with the logistic lift capacity of the Indian Air Force. The transport aircraft and helicopters of the Indian Air Force are of more than twenty years vintage and require replacement to provide the cutting edge for Army's military operations.

Operation PARKARAM military deployments for nearly a year under combat conditions should provide valuable lessons in terms of Indian Army's war sustainability or otherwise. The political masters and their bureaucrats should ensure that such lessons are applied and remedial actions taken along with provision of additional funds. Bureaucratic chokepoints in the provision of weapons and equipment should be eradicated by ministerial intervention.

Indian Army's Manpower Requirements: This is a subject which never receives detailed scrutiny. Before the Kargil War, the then COAS, General Malik had planned a cut of 50,000 personnel and which subsequent events proved to be unwise.

India's terrain configuration, mountain warfare, high altitude warfare and combating Pakistan's proxy war do not permit the luxury of substituting technical equipment in place of increased manpower.

Post-Kargil War, a number of senior Indian Army officers have over-emphasised the requirement of technical gadgetry to explain the otherwise lack of proper surveillance. What must not be forgotten is that in our operational environment, it is the "Infantry man" who counts both for surveillance and subsequent tactical actions thereafter. Indian Army's operational environment dictate manpower-extensive requirements.

India needs to increase its Infantry/Mountain divisions by an additional 6-8 divisions at the very least.

Indian Army- The Imperatives of Regular Unit Training: Indian Army training especially at unit levels may have suffered due to the following requirements:

- * Enhanced commitments to combat Pakistan's proxy war in J & K.
- * Counter-insurgency operations in the North East.
- * Decreasing defence budgets in the decade before the Kargil War.
- * Extended operational deployments after the Kargil War.

This is a field in which the political leaders and bureaucrats do not come in. It is exclusively the field of the Chief of Army Staff and his Army Commanders who must devise imaginative solutions to ensure that Army units get at least three months in a year for unit training without any interruption whatsoever; even if it means withdrawing a division at a time to the rear areas for three essential training tasks: (1) Unit training (2) Battle inoculation training (3) Special training specific to area of operational deployment.

Conclusion: India's war preparedness has always been a matter of concern, as our nation has displayed tendencies to slip into complacency as soon as a war is over. Future wars would be at short notice and therefore would have to be fought with the forces in being at the start of a conflict and the weapons and equipment and logistics wherewithal available with them at that time.

Amplifying on the above in my recent book ' India's Defence Policies and Strategic Thought: A Comparative Analysis (SIMSID Books, NOIDA 2003) it stands emphasized that :

“ what the above signifies is that unlike in the past when long lead times were available for mobilization and preparation for war, the same luxury would not be available in future wars. The crucial deciding factor would be a vigilant state of defence preparedness both by up-gradation of military equipment and modernization Success in war in future would not necessarily go to nations larger in size, population resources and potential, but to the one prepared militarily at the outbreak of hostilities”.

India must therefore shed its illusions that in every war in future its size and military strength will prevail. War preparedness in its most comprehensive form as discussed above would be the deciding factor. And when it comes to the provision of financial resources for war

preparedness, India's military hierarchy seems to be kept out from the loop of decision-making.

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