

Wars – destructive for humanity

War



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It involves mass killing without humane feelings even if short and swift. Our recent experience with Kargil, which was not even not even a full-fledged war, reopened the sordidness of military action.

Wars, when prolonged like the World Wars, result in human brutality, mass extermination of races and intolerable atrocities on innocent civilians. All rules are kept on the backburner and what matters is victory or defeat. The 21st Century has seen the development of weapons, controlled by computerized systems, with pin-point accuracy and a million-fold increase in powers of destruction compared to our previous wars.

Weapons and tactics have undergone total transformation in the last millennium but no deterrent has managed to quell human conflict. It may look totally different has managed to quell human conflict. It may look totally different for the war-mongers but no the common man it gives the same results – death and destruction. The totality of wars since 1945 right from Nagasaki and Hiroshima to Iraq and Afghanistan continue to grow without respite. The irony of the new millennium is that improvement in technology and scientific advancement have given us more options, leaving us with our major drawback, our primitive human failing – the fear of the other.

The core reasons for fighting wars are about proving superiority, hegemony, competition for dominating the region or the world and for economic survival. The recent wars, to preserve the efficacy of the democratic system, may be a phase which is temporary.

The US military historian and analyst Colonel Macgregor states this explicitly, “ We did not fight Hitler just because he was a Nazi or the fight against Stalin
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was not because he was a Communist.” Similarly the US ambassador to NATO asserted, “ Our shared values of freedom, democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights are themselves every bit as much worth depending as our territory”. This may be applicable for the war on Iraq or Afghanistan but vital interests are of primary importance. Otherwise why has NATO kept allot from Kashmir, Africa, Chechenay or Algeria inspite of terrorism and absolute human suffering. Examples of Bosnia, Kosovo and East Timor are now exceptions but do raise our expectations for intervention in cases of upholding human rights.

The situation has drastically changed today with hand-held missiles capable of bringing down aircraft. The US faced this situations in Somalia and Afghanistan. Even very back in 1993, the US experienced the result of new weapons, in the hands of hurriedly formed mercenary and militia. The ragged, underfed and ill uniformed militia was capable of bringing down helicopters and kill marines, wrecking a super-power campaign in Somalia. The civil war in Somalia was further intensified due to their intervention. The bloodshed in Algeria continued in 1998 but the NATO and other super-powers including France just sat back and twiddled their thumbs.

Serbia also proved a point by creating a human crisis which could not be solved by the forces of NATO, It had to find its own solution to the problem. Intervention in Yugoslavia or Iraq has not been able to subdue the rulers there and even after carpet bombing and unleashing their might the NATO powers could not reach a conclusion.

From these results, it has been proved that self-imposed political limitations on the amount of force to be used, can simply leave problems unresolved. The future holds more terror with smaller States like North Korea going in for nuclear weapons and States like Pakistan passing on technology to other Islamic states. Lybia under Colonel Gaddafi had been seeking this technology at any price and the day is not far off when Islamic militants will be able to get together a makeshift weapon. Major powers will be facing the paradox of yet more asymmetric warfare by small adversaries wielding outsize weapons capable of atomic explosions and chemical warfare.

India had this situation at Kargil when they faced a few hundred mercenaries, terrorists and Pakistani militia, entrenched at the heights. The result was that it took us 50 days of all out effort leaving us with 407 dead and 584 wounded, with six missing. It was only after the Air Force was put into substantial use that we succeeded in our efforts to recapture the god-forbidden heights.

Air campaigns alone today, can bring about drastic results and with precision air power alone serve as an effective and peacemaking lever. The surrender and demise of the Taliban Government in Afghanistan was activated by the non-stop aerial bombing by US fighter bombers. The terrain and the weather would have made any other mode a long drawn process with casualties shooting sky high.

Experts are of differing opinions on the strategy to be adopted in the face of threats from rogue States and fanatical groups like Islamic fundamentalists as well as peacekeeping tasks that stop short of full-fledged war. In today's

context, arms proliferation has speeded up. ‘ The right computer chip in an adaptable missile aboard an off-shore trawler or a pick-up truck, makes a formidable weapon of mass destruction, launched by a small but implacable foe.’

The call by US today of a space shield and an anti-missile defence are prompted not by fear of a superpower like the erstwhile Soviet Union, but countries like Libya, Iraq, North Korea or the master of all terrorists – Osama Bin Laden. The latter could not be cowed down even after near destruction of Afghanistan. All the US monitors and technology could not stop the 9/11 terror of the towers being destroyed. The pace of war between nuclear powers has receded, but these terror annihilations by groups. Can they be stopped? It’s a different kind of war now, but as destructive or even more than earlier, for humanity.