

Musharraf's elusive 'no-win' scenario

President Pervez Musharraf wants to create a 'no-win' scenario with India based on what he terms minimum credible deterrence. Addressing a gathering of troops at Pano Aquil, he said it was critical for Pakistan to maintain a deployment of forces that would deny victory to India. Earlier, in an interview with the *New Strait Times* of Malaysia, he had said that Pakistan would maintain a "no-win situation come what may — this the world and India should know."

The president declared that Pakistan would 'counter' India's move to acquire Israeli Phalcon airborne radar systems. As evidence, he cited the recent induction of a few Al Khalid tanks and Agosta submarines and plans to develop the JF-17 fighter with China. Speaking to journalists at the Army House, he exuded confidence when he stated, "There is no danger to our borders; whether India keeps its forces at the borders for 10 months or longer."

While no one would argue with the logic of creating a no-win scenario, the pros and cons of entering into a costly and dangerous arms race with a country seven times bigger in size need to be considered. If Pakistan were a democracy rather than a military dictatorship, the army chief would be required to present his assessment before the defence minister who would then present it before parliament. The debate would encompass not only the

issue of force deployment and associated military expenditures but also the bigger issue of what grand strategy to adopt towards India. Parliamentarians would then vote on the proposal, reflecting their constituents' preferences. But since the president is simultaneously the army chief, such formalities are dispensed with in today's Pakistan.

Sidestepping this fundamental issue of due process in policy formulation, how effective has Pakistan been in maintaining any type of military balance with India? Not very effective, according to the International Institute of Strategic Studies in its just-released edition of *The Military Balance*.

Before reviewing the results, it should be stated that military inventories do not convey the full measure of a country's ability to inflict military harm on its adversaries. Factors such as the soundness of military strategy, the ability to achieve tactical surprise, the quality and training of the forces, terrain, dependence on arms imports and the quality of diplomatic relations play a decisive role in determining the outcome of wars.

An apocryphal story from the Nixon days illustrates the point. Frustrated by their failure to defeat the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong ten years into the war, US war planners fed the disposition of forces into a large computer

Military Balance, the armed forces of Pakistan comprise 620,000 soldiers, air-men and sailors. They are outnumbered about 2:1 by the Indian military's 1,325,000 uniformed personnel. Both nations also have sizeable reserve and paramilitary forces that complement their standing armies. Pakistan has 513,000 forces in reserve and paramilitary forces of 294,000. India has reserves of 535,000 and paramilitary forces of 1,090,000.

Pakistan's land forces of 550,000 soldiers are grouped into 21 divisions. They are equipped with 2,400 main battle tanks and 1,600 artillery pieces. The Indian army stands at 1,100,000. It is organised into 37 divisions and deploys 3,900 main battle tanks and 4,400 pieces of artillery. Admittedly not all of India's forces would ever be available for deployment against Pakistan because of other commitments. Probably about 75 per cent would be available for deployment against Pakistan. It is unlikely that Pakistan can deploy a greater percentage against India. Thus the effective force ratio remains at about 2:1.

The Pakistan Air Force employs 45,000 airmen, organised into 19 combat squadrons comprising 347 combat aircraft. However, only the 32 F-16s in the PAF inventory can be judged to be frontline aircraft. The Indian Air Force, with 170,000 airmen, has 744 combat aircraft. The IAF has a sizeable air transport capability and plans to lease four

long-range Russian TU-22 bombers. The IAF outnumbers the PAF by 2:1. But this ratio rises to about 6:1 if one focuses only on frontline aircraft. Frontline aircraft in the IAF include about 195 SU-30s, Mirage 2000s, MiG-29s and Jaguars.

The Pakistan Navy has a force of 5,000 sailors, 10 submarines and eight major surface combatants. The Indian Navy has a force of 55,000 sailors, 19 submarines and 29 surface combatants. It maintains an aircraft carrier and has a sizeable naval air arm. Another aircraft carrier is on order with Russia and there are plans to lease two Russian nuclear submarines.

In light of this evidence, any analyst would be hard pressed to say that Pakistan is in a position to deny victory to India. One would expect this imbalance to worsen over time, given India's plans to spend \$95 billion on weapons procurement over the next 15 years. Given the discrepancies in population and GDP between the two countries, and the faster growth rate of the IT-driven Indian economy, Pakistan is no position to match India militarily.

As Majeed Lodhi stated in a recent interview with the *Wall Street Journal*, "India's growing military strength poses new security challenges to Pakistan, which already is confronted with an asymmetry in air power with India." If left unchecked, she suggested these trends could 'lead to a strategic disaster'. It is not

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and asked who would win the war. In the blink of an eye came the answer: "you won ten years ago."

Nevertheless, measures of military strength are an essential ingredient in strategic analysis. According to *The*

just Pakistani analysts who are concerned about the growing imbalance in conventional forces. PR Chari of the Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies in New Delhi is worried that Pakistan will soon reach a stage where "nuclear weapons" will become their answer for everything.

Pakistan reportedly has 25 nuclear-capable missiles in its inventory and India about 60. One hopes the day will not come when the Ghauris and Agnis are fired in anger. On that day, grief on a scale unknown to man will descend on the subcontinent.

The National Assembly has been mired with thorny issues such as the president's uniform and the LFO. Other issues are being held at bay, including the recognition of Israel and the sending of troops to Iraq. But no issue can be more vital to Pakistan's national security than relations with India. The National Assembly should debate whether it is better for Pakistan to chase an elusive no-win scenario through military means or to construct an all-win scenario through negotiation and dialogue with New Delhi. This would capitalise on the goodwill created by Yashwant Sinha's offer of a dozen confidence building measures.

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