**Leading from the front**

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The concept of leading from the front is most relevant to armies that are engaged in active operations. Wars are fought and won only when led bravely by military commanders. Pakistan has, ever since its independence in 1947, been engaged in active operations, may it be a war against India, engagement on the Line of Control, a war against terrorism, or international peacekeeping. Pakistan Army is blessed to have professional and courageous officers and men who never shy to put their lives in the line of duty. Our officers’ corps is a proud custodian of valour and the lofty tradition of leading from the front. As many as 560 young officers of the Pakistan Military have embraced martyrdom to date in the war against terror. According to the international index on the Troops to Officers’ Casualty Ratio (TOCR) of militaries around the world, the TOCR of the Pakistan Army has always been very high.

Before the war on terror, it was as high as 1:12 i.e for every 12 soldiers they lost an officer. Now it has risen to 1:9. Every officer’s and soldier’s story is a story of unprecedented courage, sacrifice and love for their country. The highest standard of training and motivation has made our soldiers fearless. Patriotism and integrity are their hallmarks. Fear is the most destructive emotion in the presence of the mind, but it thrives on the unknown, which lets our imaginations run wild. They have learned to confront and overcome the fear of the unknown, hesitation, and being on the battlefield.

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By deliberately putting yourself in situations where you have to face fear, you familiarise yourself with it and your anxiety grows less acute. Having spent 4-5 years, at the average by every soldier and officer in the operation area, has made our soldiers the most battle-hardened army in the world. Senior commanders including Army Chief’s motivation and regular interaction with troops keep their motivation high. Our young officers have written new chapters of valour and sacrifice for their motherland. Officer to soldier ratio of martyrdom in this war is the highest in military history. Ours is not a missionary Army. They are the soldiers of Pakistan. They live and die for Pakistan. Another factor of motivation for our soldiers is the pride and sense of honour belonging to an Army which is globally renowned for its rich traditions of valour. Our officers and men will never give in to fear. They would never lose their presence of mind in war.

In a recently published book on international peacekeeping, the writers have thrown in-depth light on the professionalism of our troops while serving under the UN flag. A case study of UN peacekeeping operations in Rwanda (1994), Srebrenica (1995), and Somalia (1993) brought out a response of various armies in difficult conditions. An internal UN report, in 1999 stunned the world with UN failures leading to the deaths of thousands of Bosnian Muslims under its protection in Srebrenica in 1995. The report highlighted policy failures, command and structural weaknesses, and squabbling within the Security Council itself which led to the fiasco. Most of these errors could have been avoided if timely decisions were taken. The mandate of UN peacekeepers was to keep and maintain peace amongst the warring parties in Bosnia, but the action of the Dutch soldiers underpinned their complicity in the Srebrenica genocide.

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The Dutch Supreme Court belatedly held its own government liable for 10 percent of the damage caused due to the inaction of its soldiers to prevent the massacre of hundreds of Muslim men in Srebrenica by rampaging Serbian soldiers in 1995. Another shocking report about the failure of the UN mission to prevent the genocide of half a million Rwandans in 1994, is a testimony to an unsuccessful peacekeeping operation. The post genocide report was highly critical of the conduct of the UN and two principal UNSC members (the US and Britain) over their careless and casual response to the prescient warning of a looming genocide. Belgian soldiers’ withdrawal by the UN from the area resulted in the deaths of thousands of Tutsis. The UN instructed them to withdraw to save the lives of white UN workers. It was an act of cowardice.

In contrast to Srebrenica and Rwanda, Pakistani troops proved highly professional and dependable peacekeepers in Somalia. The US had formally requested help from Pakistan, to rescue their marines when they became trapped after their abortive mission in a hotel in downtown Mogadishu on the tip-off of a suspected meeting of Somali leadership on October 3, 1993. Pakistan Army troops demonstrated unwavering gallantry in rescuing American soldiers. In all three cases narrated above, while troops of two other countries (Belgium and Netherlands) have stains on their national emblems for failing to save lives and eventually causing the unforgettable genocidal events, the disposition of Pakistani peacekeepers in Somalia is a true representation of successful peacekeeping diplomacy.