

ACHIEVING UNORTHODOX DETERRENCE ABILITY BY BANGLADESH ARMY

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Introduction

According to PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), Bangladesh has the potential to become the world's 23rd largest economy by 2050, overtaking countries such as Netherlands, Australia, Spain, Thailand and Malaysia. PwC also predicted that Bangladesh would be the 28th largest economy by 2030, up from 31st in 2016. Because of its rapid and steady growth, World Economic Forum considered Bangladesh as the next 'Asian Tiger'. However, there are security implications of economic development as economic rise does not come alone and it brings security threats to the country along with it. Bangladesh being a potential economic power needs to have a robust military with credible deterrence so that its rise cannot be hindered by any impending threat. Present military posture of Bangladesh is essentially defensive which, in all probability, does not ensure enough credible deterrence ability for a rising economy like Bangladesh. A nation with strong economy needs a credible military not solely because it would fight, but mainly because it would deter. Present defensive postures of Bangladesh Armed Forces in general and Bangladesh Army in particular pose some kind of deterrence by denial that does not really promise to exact much enough prices from the enemy. Bangladesh desperately needs to have a credible Army that not only would deter by denial but also by punishment-punitive deterrence.

Though in most of the cases military power of states has been directly proportional to their economic development, yet geostrategic and economic realities do not suggest Bangladesh to get involved in any type of arms race in this regard. So next logical questions are: (1) how to deter

and how to make peace with potential adversaries? (2) how to deter an economically and/or militarily superior adversary without getting involved in an arms race? However, with the emergence of today's complex security environment, the very definition and application of deterrence have undergone a considerable change. Deterrence as defined after World War II and era of Cold War has undergone a massive change in 21st century. Recent outcomes of some asymmetric conflicts suggest that supremacy in military capability and economic power are not the only determinants of deterrence. Therefore, though geostrategic and economic realities do not suggest Bangladesh to boost its military arsenal to attain conventional deterrence ability, yet there might be window of opportunities open for Bangladesh Army to deter its adversaries without resorting to arms race. Thus, it demands a research to see if deterrence can be attained through unorthodox ways and means, or not. Keeping the many historical perspectives of winning big wars by small nations as basic premise, this paper tries to find out the possibility and viability of unorthodox deterrence options in present context.

Viability of 'Unorthodox Deterrence'

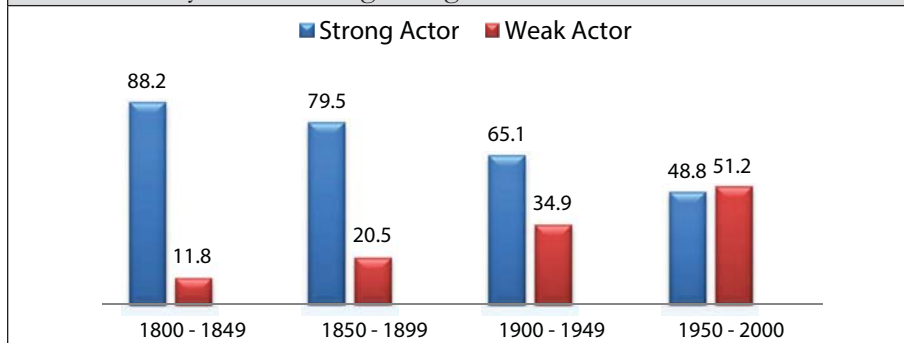
Basics of Deterrence. Deterrence is achieved when a potential attacker decides to abstain from a planned offensive because of the fear of undesirable punishment or denial of victory. Usually, in traditional deterrence relationship, calculations of national power especially military, economic, and diplomatic power are main factors of determining the degrees of deterrence effectiveness. During the cold war era, deterrence thinking used to mean mainly the nuclear deterrence only. However, after the Cold War, this idea started to experience some kind of changes. In 21st century, with the rise of post-Westphalian world order, aversion to suffering high casualties by western superpowers, introduction of asymmetric warfare, globalization and many other related factors, the scholars started to struggle to adjust the theories and vocabularies of deterrence, which was very different from the context in which deterrence theory, and policy had been developed earlier.

Defining ‘Unorthodox Deterrence’. Simply put, this is a kind of deterrence where weak actor deters the strong one. Deterrent theories, policies, and force structures developed in the Cold War nuclear context might not always hold good in today’s complex security environment. Every nation, be it powerful or weak, big or small has its own critical weaknesses/vulnerabilities. Correct determination of those weaknesses and/or vulnerabilities and then attacking those to neutralize/annihilate/destroy would hurt them the most. Though without enjoying superior military capability and adequate economic back up it is very difficult to attack the critical vulnerabilities of threat nation, yet history is abundant with examples where underdog or weak won over the strong by applying unorthodox approach. When this capability of unorthodox approach is made credible enough and communicated well to the adversaries, it will strike terror into their hearts. Thus, in case of unorthodox deterrence, a new dimension of deterrence theory emerges where (unlike conventional/nuclear deterrence) weak nation becomes the deterrer.

Asymmetric War Phenomenon - Weak Deterring the Strong. Post World War II era saw string of asymmetric conflicts where weaker nations did not allow strong actors to coerce them with violence or the threat of violence. This seemingly paradoxical phenomenon has a host of reasons like rise of nationalism and indirect strategy (like guerrilla warfare) that made it possible for weak actors to defeat their stronger adversaries. Thus, the costs of coercing weak actors have risen since World War II, yet the benefits have declined. With perceived benefits in decline and costs high or increasing and with weak actors more apt to defend themselves, combat power of strong actor becomes irrelevant. Weak actors will therefore find it easier to deter strong actors from intervening in their affairs even when the disparity in material power is very large. Even the diminishing trend of coercing/killing power of stronger nation has been observed in last two centuries. Following the end of the Napoleonic Wars in Europe, in the next two hundred years of conflict whenever strong actors fought wars against weak actors, strong actors won a clear majority of such wars. In an average, the overall success rate of strong powers was 71.5 percent. Yet when these two centuries are

divided into four fifty- year sub-periods, a surprising model emerges: weak powers have been winning more over time. In the first of the four periods (1816–49), strong powers won nearly 90 percent of the time. In the most recent period (1950–2000), weak powers won a majority of such asymmetric wars. Power, as commonly understood, has not correlated with expected outcomes. In sum, conduct and result of war after WW II, cold war era and especially after September 11 saw dramatic changes which suggest that weaker nation or actor are now more capable of winning wars.

Chart 1: Complex Deterrence Strategy in the Global Age, Unconventional deterrence” by ToftIvanarreguin5 .gm



Source: “Complex Deterrence Strategy in the Global Age, Unconventional Deterrence” by ToftIvanarreguín.

From 1950s to early years of this millennium, small or asymmetric wars waged against weak actors resulted in very different kind of outcomes where world’s superpowers had difficulties in realizing their aims and, thus, ending the war. The Peninsular War, the Algerian war of 1954-62, the Vietnam War of 1964-73, the Afghanistan War of 1979-89, the Lebanon war of 1982-83, the Chechnya War of 1994-96, Second Iraq War of 2003, Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, War in Syria etc bear the testimony to that statement. For the vulnerability like aversion to suffering high casualties, US also had to withdraw in Vietnam. Superpowers failure to win asymmetric war in such a way proves that weak actor is no more that underdog – providing a scope of a new kind of unorthodox deterrence. ‘Body Bag Effect’ has been shaping up the public opinion in an increased

manner. In present context, unconventional deterrence supposed to work and will become more prominent overtime because the stronger actor's power to destroy, coerce and deter will be outweighed by its increasing casualty sensitiveness.

Credibility of Unorthodox Deterrence. Asymmetric and fourth generation warfare are coming to the forefront of modern day conflicts. Domination of future wars by these types of low intensity conflict means a kind of demise of conventional warfare. Again, demise of conventional warfare means irrelevancy of military might of superior force in front of the inferior ones. Thus, in present day context, military might is not enough to attain political objectives. Following are the areas that would make unorthodox deterrence credible and viable:

- Strong actor's increasing tendency of a version to suffering high casualties in war is a critical vulnerability. By exploiting this critical vulnerability, weak actor would be able to coerce the strong for maintaining status quo.
- The weak state would be able to deter the strong state by showing a distinctive posture that strong actor would be denied of acquiring its political objectives till the end of the conflict.
- Imbued with the spirit of nationalism and a strong belief that self-sacrifice in war is the most heroic action, military forces and citizens of weaker nations might get defeated in many battles but would never let the strong nation to win the war. On the other hand, it is a well-established fact that (in present day context) citizens from most of the strong nations while being motivated by fear of violent death would place emphasis on values such as self-preservation. With this type of motivation, they will be more subjected to deterrence by the weak.

Lessons Learnt from Lebanon War 2006 and Vietnam War

Lebanon War 2006 and Vietnam War bear the testimony to the fact that adoption of noble and unorthodox strategy might ensure victory for the weak actor and thus, might be useful in deterring the strong actor. Though the contexts of these wars are somewhat different from those of Bangladesh and might seem little off topic, yet the strategy and philosophy of war fighting of Vietnam and Lebanon would provide useful insights for Bangladesh.

Lebanon War 2006. In this war, primitive and cheaply made Katyushas made the devastating air power and modern state of the art aircrafts of Israel irrelevant. Hezbollah indeed produced a vast amount of strategic thinking both on the strategic values of its missiles and on the practice of psychological warfare. For instance, metaphor used by Hassan Nasrallah, back in 2000 by portraying Israel as “a spider’s web” due to its aversion for protracted conflict explains the strategy of Hezbollah. There is explicit linkage in the Hezbollah literature between this idea of Israel being a spider’s web and its rocket strategy. Specifically the arsenal plays a role, which transcends mere warfighting purpose; it is part of a mental bargain with Israel. In other words, it is a tool of deterrence. Hezbollah’s supposed success furthered a growing notion that a strong high-end asymmetric warfare defense could make a country a poison pill for foreign intervention.

Vietnam War: Deterrence by Denying Political Objective. US won numbers of battles in the Vietnam War but in the end had to withdraw without realizing its political aims. US did not win the war and made another example of big nation losing small war. The Vietminh never fought on the enemy’s terms, i.e., in large-scale engagements. The American forces could seldom make their overwhelming firepower to be effective against the Vietcong. By dispersing in jungles and using extensive tunnel systems, the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Vietcong guerrillas made the US large-unit, search-and-destroy missions chiefly futile. Thus the Vietcong and NVA retained initiative and forced the US and South Vietnamese

troops to fight on the guerrillas' terms. Air strikes against the Vietcong were also not much decisive. It was estimated that for each Vietcong to be killed US had to "cost" hundreds of bombs and artillery shells. By 1967, the U.S. had dropped more bombs on Vietnam than the Allies dropped during WWII. High Vietcong body counts led many to believe the U.S. was winning the war. However, Vietcong and North Vietnamese allies could protract the war against a superior enemy by making USA's military superiority irrelevant to a great degree. Thus, USA was precluded from achieving a quick and decisive victory because of gradual erosion of political capability to persist in war. Guerrilla warfare strategy was proved to be potent enough to protract the war and in turn, could wear down the US political will.

So, the takeaways of these two wars can be summarized as follows:

- Hezbollah could correctly identify that Israel's extreme sensitivity to the lives of its citizens and aversion to suffering casualties of soldiers are its critical vulnerabilities and they exploited those.
- Rocket arsenal like shorter-range Katyusha was a proper example of asymmetric response that offered Hezbollah the ability to hold Israel's northern territory at constant risk. In one sense, it offered even more deterrence to Israel than Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) because ICBMs could be tracked and knocked down but Katyusha enjoyed virtual impunity.
- Vietnam War is a classic example where underdog won not by winning battles but by denying the strong their political objectives.
- In case of Hezbollah, it was deterrence by punishment (rocket campaign) and for Vietnam it was deterrence by denial (denying the political objectives). It proves the argument that the weak can be capable of deterring the strong both by punishment and denial.

- Above mentioned two wars contend that the balance of military power is not always the overriding determinant in deterrence. Rather unconventional warfare strategy might allow the weak to achieve Unorthodox Deterrence ability. By adopting a strategy that makes the aggressor's military superiority irrelevant to a certain degree, an inferior opponent may hold deterrence despite having overwhelming imbalance in military capabilities.

Making Unorthodox Deterrence Achievable for Bangladesh Army

Bringing Aggressiveness in Defeat Mechanism. To achieve effective and credible deterrence ability from the outset, land force should not wait like a bystander when enemy missiles and air force would show their power by bombing the logistic bases, cities, command and control centers etc. At this point of time, Bangladesh army's retaliation should be guided by the principles of deterrence by punishment. The deterrence would make sense if Bangladesh Army can have the ability to retaliate right from the beginning of hostility. Hezbollah Chief Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah's televised offer (al-Manar TV) to Israel in August 2006 should be mentioned here where he asked for firing Hezbollah rockets in exchange for an end to Israeli air strikes in Lebanon. In case of Bangladesh, it has to be also borne in mind that if enemy's combat air operations are allowed to continue unabated, it would attempt to dictate the trajectory of all unfolding events of the battle. It will then try to paralyze morale of ground troops by applying 'Shock and Awe' tactics like the way US air force did in Gulf War. Thereby, to achieve a credible deterrence, land force of Bangladesh should be capable enough to deliver operational fire deep into the enemy's territory as a retaliation to any threat air or missile offensive. Adversary must be in fear that there will be punitive retaliation of all of their actions. Only deterrence by denial will not work and it has to be deterrence by punishment. In sum, deterrence by punishment should be central to the defeat mechanism of Bangladesh army.

Operational Fire Capability as Deterrence. Rockets/missiles have been a potential source of coercive leverage for many countries irrespective of their strong or weak status. These have been the symbols of deterrence and instruments of rhetoric by head of the nation states ranging from Chinese leader Xi Jinping to North Korean leader Kim Jong-un to Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. All these suggest that possessing rockets and missiles would make Bangladesh Army a credible deterrent force. Populations of big and powerful nations are increasingly becoming casualty sensitive and more susceptible towards body bag effect. Bangladesh Army would be able to exploit this critical vulnerability of big nations by using the rockets and missiles. It would be a classic example of deterrence by punishment. Moreover, as it was seen in case of Hezbollah, stockpile of rockets has to be adequate in number to make the deterrence credible. The deduction is that attaining required degree of deterrence ability would require Bangladesh Army to have enough stockpiles of rockets and missiles. Army's arsenal should not only be comprised of medium range tactical missiles but there should be small, man-portable and unguided surface-to-surface artillery rockets. Possessing adequate number of short-range rocket and medium range missiles by Bangladesh Army (like the Hezbollah in Lebanon war 2006) would give it an edge and, thus would enhance its deterrence capability.

Guerrilla Strategy as Deterrence. Not allowing superior enemy to realize their political aim is the key here. In order to do that inferior force will protract the war by adopting guerrilla strategy. When a weak actor uses an indirect and unpredictable defense strategy, the leadership of the stronger state finds its killing power irrelevant because the costs of war would exceed the benefits. Besides Vietnam, same were the cases in Indo china, Algeria and Afghanistan where the weaker party were able to deny the stronger side its political objectives, and forced the stronger side to give up eventually. Perhaps Bangladesh Army is one of the exceptional conventional forces, which officially embraced 'blending of conventional and unconventional warfare' doctrine as its battlefield imperatives. Basing on this tenet of army operation, it develops its other doctrinal literature.

This strategy, if executed properly, would be instrumental in denying the stronger adversary its political aim. Because, when conventional warfare is blended with unconventional warfare and high-end asymmetric tactics, it would become a very unpredictable strategy that would enable a weak military to challenge a stronger one. This would be the deterrence by denial. Historical examples prove that the forces, doctrines, and technologies of big power, which are appropriate for high intensity conventional combat, tend to be counter productive when used in unconventional conflicts. Moreover, asymmetric wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Algeria, Syria and many more showed that firepower-centric militaries that had engaged guerrillas generally stimulated more resistance from guerrillas than they could eliminate them. Central to Bangladesh army's doctrine of resorting to Total People's War is the idea that scope of waging and sustaining war will be enlarged and taken beyond the confines of conventional dogma. This is the strategy of protracting the war and not allowing big power to realize political objective. This might deter the big adversary by denying its objective to be achieved.

Cyber Attack as Deterrence. Cyberspace is becoming as rich a domain of warfare as land, sea or air. The uniqueness of cyberspace is that it has no boundaries. Ubiquitous access makes the defence against it extremely difficult. Anybody can exploit the opportunity to attack a system from anywhere in the world. It has brought a new window of opportunity for the weaker nation or actor in the realm of warfare of 21st century. Because, the playing field is almost level in this case. It does not require mammoth sized or highly sophisticated military hardware; rather it needs talent and brain. Good opportunity for weak nation is that talent and brain are not exclusive preserve of big and developed nations only. With adequate sponsorship from state, any weak actor would be able to reap benefit out of the fleeting opportunities. Gradually the modern world will be more and more interconnected with internet. With technologies like Internet of Things (IOT), Machine to Machine (M2M) etc, they will thus be more vulnerable to cyber-attack. Ranging from domestic utility like electrical grids, e-commerce or systems that facilitate financial transactions,

transportation system, water and gas supply to national assets like Global Positioning System, nuclear power plant etc – all will be susceptible to cyber-attack. Bangladesh Army should also be able to enter into the domain of cyber warfare. This is a great fleeting opportunity that must be exploited by Bangladesh Armed Forces and army can play a vital role in this case. It is logical to assume that a potent force with strong cyber-attack capability would be instrumental in deterring any adversary. In 21st century, this might be a perfect domain, where Bangladesh Army will be able to achieve unorthodox deterrence.

Conclusion

As the Roman proverb goes, *Si Vis Pacem, Para bellum*: If one wants peace, prepare for war - from that perspective Bangladesh must be prepared for any future war. Moreover, economic growth of Bangladesh will have its own different security implications. However, though Bangladesh being a potential economic power needs to have a credible military so that its rise cannot be hindered by any impending threat, yet it must not fall into Thucydides trap. So in one hand Bangladesh Army needs to have credible deterrence and on the other hand resorting to huge military built up with offensive posture right now is again also not suggested. Thus, considering this reality, a new kind of deterrence is to be figured out so that Bangladesh can deter its adversaries without resorting to arms race.

The idea of ‘Unorthodox Deterrence’ is a largely unexplored area in the domain of deterrence theory. Though there have been many works done on asymmetric warfare and irregular warfare, thought on this different kind of deterrence were much unknown. It is no denying the fact that the deterrence framework itself has become much complex in the new international security environment that has emerged since the end of the cold war. Aversions to suffering high casualty in the battlefield and casualty sensitiveness have now become the critical weaknesses/vulnerabilities of strong nations, which are exploitable by weak actors. In present day context,

citizens from most of the strong nations while being motivated by fear of violent death would place emphasis on values such as self-preservation. With this type of motivation, they will be deterred by the weak more easily. Thus, it can be deduced that the weak actors will be able to deter the stronger ones by applying unorthodox approach. When this capability of unorthodox approach is made credible enough and communicated well to the adversary, it will strike terror into the heart of them. Thus in case of unorthodox deterrence a new dimension of deterrence theory emerges where (unlike conventional/nuclear deterrence) weak nation becomes the deterrer.

The Peninsular War, the Algerian war of 1954-62, the Vietnam War of 1964-73, the Afghanistan War of 1979-89, the Lebanon war of 1982-83, the Chechnya War of 1994-96, Second Iraq War of 2003, Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan – all these contend that combat power does not always ensure victory in war. Thus, the balance of military power will not always be the overriding determinant in deterrence. Rather unconventional warfare strategy might allow the weak to achieve Unorthodox Deterrence ability. If the weak can deny the political objectives of the strong (Vietnam War) or can punish the strong to a certain extent (Lebanon War 2006) by adopting a different type of strategy, it would be reasonable to suggest that the threat of adopting that type of warfare/strategy can also be used as a deterrent.

Cyberspace is going to be the battlefield of 21st century. It has become the fifth domain of warfare, after land, sea, air and space. Given the increasing ubiquitous presence of Internet, future warfare will be dominated by cyber centric attacks. Thereby, this will be another achievable domain of unorthodox deterrence in future. Possessing a potent cyber force would enhance the deterrence ability of Bangladesh Armed Forces in future.

Recommendations

To achieve unorthodox deterrence ability by Bangladesh army, this paper recommends following options:

- Bangladesh army should have standoff firepower with the means of rockets/missiles so that increasing coercive pain can be inflicted on adversary. Induction of short and medium range SSM and rockets as operational fire platforms by Bangladesh Army would increase the deterrence ability.
- Employment strategy of SSM and rockets should be included as retaliation against adversary's air/missile threat. Adversary's air/missile offensive should be responded immediately right from the onset of hostility.
- Body bag effect, casualty sensitivity and aversion to suffering high casualties are likely to be the critical vulnerabilities of a rational state actor in 21st century. Exploiting these vulnerabilities should be factored in, in the planning criterion of deterrence strategy of Bangladesh army.
- Hybrid warfare strategy with high-end asymmetric strategy ranging from guerrilla tactics to cyber warfare should be adopted in the defence strategy of Bangladesh army.
- 'Blending of conventional and unconventional warfare' and 'switching over to Total People's War'- these two strategies should be institutionalized, practiced, exercised and well communicated to the potential adversaries.

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