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**Golden Jubilee Commemoration of Indo-Pak War, 1965 is a Befitting Tribute to Gallantry & Sacrifice of our Soldiers
- Vice President**

The Vice President of India Shri M. Hamid Ansari has said that the “**Golden Jubilee Commemoration of the India-Pakistan War 1965**” is a befitting tribute to the gallantry and sacrifice of our soldiers and the resoluteness of our then political leadership in successfully defending India against invasion by a neighbour. It is also an occasion to introspect and to draw lessons from the experience undergone. Delivering inaugural address at the “Tri-Services Seminar to commemorate the Golden Jubilee Commemoration of the India-Pakistan War of 1965” here today, he has said that the genesis of events which led to war lay in Pakistan’s obduracy and the fallacious belief in its establishment that it could use force to alter the geography and political realities of the sub-continent.

He said that even though our forces were taken by surprise by this menacing move, they fought back strongly and the Pakistan plans soon lay in ruins. The political leadership, led by Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, responded with vigor and determination. To relieve the pressure on Akhnoor, it was decided to expand both the ambit and the geography of the conflict. Pursuant to it, air power was deployed and a new front was opened by crossing the International Border in Punjab, threatening Pakistan’s primate city- Lahore. The conflict continued till September 22. The diplomatic efforts to respond to it shed useful light on the interests and assessments of the interested global powers, principally the United States, the Soviet Union, China and the United Nations.

The Vice President concluded that in the final analysis, the war was a costly military and political misadventure for Pakistan. The failure was camouflaged; even the announcement of ceasefire was described as *fire bandi* rather than *jang bandi*. Finally, and in a wider political perspective, some general conclusions that impact on decisions to initiate hostilities may be drawn. In the first place, purely bilateral wars are unlikely in our times. The decision to initiate hostilities may be an autonomous one; thereafter, however, all warlike conflicts tend to draw in concerned and interested players. The end of the conflict, therefore, can rarely be calculated with any degree of precision.

Following is the text of the Vice President’s inaugural address :

“I am happy to be here today to inaugurate the tri-services seminar to commemorate the golden jubilee commemoration of the India-Pakistan War of 1965.” This is a befitting tribute to the gallantry and sacrifice of our soldiers and the resoluteness of our then political leadership in successfully defending India against invasion by a neighbour. It is also an occasion to introspect and to draw lessons from the experience undergone.

The genesis of events which led to war lay in Pakistan’s obduracy and the fallacious belief in its establishment that it could use force to alter the geography and political realities of the sub-continent.

Much has been written about this conflict by Indian, Pakistani, and third-country military and civilian experts. My objective today is to draw attention to some international aspects of the matter and the manner in which they influenced the course of events.

The chronology of the conflict is relevant. Pakistan set in motion its stratagem on 5 August 1965 under the name ‘Operation *Gibraltar*’. It involved infiltration into Jammu and Kashmir by trained ‘irregulars’ assisted and guided by its armed forces. Its mission was to carry out wide spread acts of sabotage and arson and also to garner local support leading to the proclamation of a war of liberation and a ‘Revolutionary Council.’ Its objective, according to a credible Pakistani account, was to “defreeze the Kashmir problem, weaken Indian resolve, and bring her to the conference table without provoking a general war”. The effort failed because the people of Kashmir chose to resist it; instead, they informed the local police and our security forces about their location, movement and intentions.

The failure of Operation *Gibraltar* forced the enemy to activate the second phase of its plan. This consisted of a direct attack on September 1, 1965 by Pakistani army on Indian forces along the Chamb-Akhnoor-Jurian salient with the aim of taking the strategic town of Akhnoor where the International border ran into the cease fire line. The aim was to sever the main communication link between India and the Kashmir valley.

Even though our forces were taken by surprise by this menacing move, they fought back strongly and the Pakistan plans soon lay in ruins. The political leadership, led by Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, responded with vigor and determination. To relieve the pressure on Akhnoor, it was decided to expand both the ambit and the geography of the conflict. Pursuant to it, air power was deployed and a new front was opened by crossing the International Border in Punjab, threatening Pakistan’s primate city- Lahore.

The conflict continued till September 22. The diplomatic efforts to respond to it shed useful light on the interests and assessments of the interested global powers, principally the United States, the Soviet Union, China and the United Nations.

The United States took the first diplomatic initiative as soon as the hostilities began. Given the alliance relationship, it was tilted towards Pakistan. It urged India and Pakistan to allow the UN Secretary General to resolve the issue. Secretary of Defence Dean Rusk informed the US Ambassador in India that “*the highest level decision taken here is not to engage in direct pressure on either Pakistan or India for the time being, but to place primary reliance on the UN*”.

He noted, in a classic exercise of feigned impartiality, that “*India and Pakistan allowed the matter to escalate very fast on both sides, contrary to the advice that was being given to them by the US. So in effect we shrugged our shoulders and said, well, if you’re going to fight, go ahead and fight, but we’re not going to pay for it.*”

This approach saw the UN Security Council, with tacit support from the United States, trying to play an active role in the matter. Security Council Resolution 209 of September 4, 1965 called for immediate ceasefire and withdrawal of all armed personnel of the two sides to its side of the CFL. Two days later, on September 6, Resolution 210 reiterated this, expressed its “deep concern”, decided to keep the matter “under urgent and continuous review” and asked the UNSG to strengthen UNMOGIP. Pursuant to this and on US prompting, Secretary General U Thant visited India and Pakistan but failed to evolve a consensus on the terms of a ceasefire.

Faced with this impasse, the Security Council's language underwent a change. Resolution 211 on September 20 *demanding* a ceasefire by 0700 hours GMT on September 22 and *decided* that once it is implemented the Council would consider what steps to take "to assist towards a settlement of the political problem underlying the present conflict."

Parallel to these developments, a provocative tenure, reflective of partisanship if not overt intent to interfere, became evident in official communications from the Government of China to India in August – September 1965 period. A "not very credible ultimatum" was delivered but was subsequently watered down by unilaterally announcing an extension of the time limit.

More positive was the Soviet approach. Apart from its support to the Security Council resolutions, Prime Minister Kosygin sent several communications to Prime Minister Shastri and President Ayub Khan offering good offices for settling the dispute. This move was supported by the United States and its rationale, spelt out by Secretary of State Dean Rusk, makes interesting reading:

"We encouraged the Russians to go ahead with the Tashkent idea because we felt that we had nothing to lose. If they succeeded in bringing about detente at Tashkent, there would be peace on the subcontinent and US would gain from the fact. If the Russians failed at Tashkent, then they would experience some of the frustrations that we have faced for 20 years in trying to sort out things between India and Pakistan."

This effort culminated in the Tashkent Agreement of January 10, 1966. A view subsequently emerged that while the Agreement brought the war to an end, it denied India the political advantage of its military successes because of pressure from the major powers and UN. Ironically, public reaction in Pakistan was similar, although for different considerations.

The 1965 war was a medium-scale, limited conflict. It was inflicted on India. The military and political assessments on our side, and the exercise of identifying shortfalls in strategy and tactics, are in the public domain and in no need of reiteration here.

According to his biographer, Prime Minister Shastri had briefed his service chiefs on September 3 on India's war objectives. These were threefold:

- To defeat Pakistani attempt to seize Kashmir by force and to make it abundantly clear that Pakistan would never be allowed to wrest Kashmir from India;
- To destroy the offensive power of Pakistan's armed forces; and
- To occupy only the minimum of Pakistani territory necessary to achieve these purposes, which would be vacated after satisfactory conclusion of the war.

The post-conflict picture on the other side was kept opaque. A secret air dash by the leadership to Beijing on the night of September 19-20 was not rewarding. The US ambassador reported that President Ayub Khan was "disenchanted with

Bhutto's reckless adventurism, grieved at Pak losses, strongly averse to entering Chicom association and open to a sensible compromise way out."

In the final analysis, the war was a costly military and political misadventure for Pakistan. The failure was camouflaged; even the announcement of ceasefire was described as *fire bandi* rather than *jang bandi*.

Finally, and in a wider political perspective, some general conclusions that impact on decisions to initiate hostilities may be drawn. In the first place, purely bilateral wars are unlikely in our times. The decision to initiate hostilities may be an autonomous one; thereafter, however, all warlike conflicts tend to draw in concerned and interested players. The end of the conflict, therefore, can rarely be calculated with any degree of precision.

Secondly, the instrumentalities available to the global community or to a group of likeminded countries to influence decisively the war-waging capabilities of participants in conflicts can upset initial calculations and thus act as a disincentive.

Thirdly, due note of international opinion and of the balance of forces in the Security Council would need to be taken when considering conflict-like eventualities.

Allow me to conclude by recalling a pertinent observation by the historian Paul Kennedy. He referred to the conundrum that has confronted strategists down the ages: "*To be a Great Power demands a flourishing economic base. Yet by going to war, or by devoting a large share of the nation's 'manufacturing power' to expenditures upon 'unproductive' armaments, one runs the risk of eroding the national economic base, especially vis-à-vis states which are concentrating a greater share of their income upon investment for long-term growth.*"

I once again salute the memory of those who participated in the war and wish the participants of this seminar success in their deliberations.

Jai Hind."

Sanjay Kumar/VPI/01.09.2015