

Abul Hasnat Mohammad Mahmud Azam

COMPLEX DETERRENCE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: BANGLADESH ARMED FORCES PERSPECTIVE

Abstract

The 21st century is an era of massive, rapid and all-encompassing global changes. Changes are taking place in almost all spheres of international systems, ranging from international relations to politics and from trade to security. Amid these significant changes around the world, the classical concept of deterrence has experienced a big change and transformation. Once the classical deterrence used to mean that superiority in only military, economic and diplomatic power of nations should determine the deterrence effectiveness. However, the same is not the case today. Because of a host of reasons, in the last seventy years, a steady decline in the ability of stronger actors to effect coercion has taken place in asymmetric conflicts. It has been observed that defeating the weaker actors became difficult whenever they had not fought according to the terms set by the stronger one and had used ingenuity to adopt an indirect and unconventional strategy. In this backdrop, this paper examines the possibilities of achieving credible deterrence by Bangladesh Armed Forces in light of the changing and complex nature of deterrence in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: Deterrence, Security of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Armed Forces, Defence, Asymmetric Warfare

1. Introduction

“Do not press a desperate enemy”
—Sun Tzu

Scholars and practitioners alike have already identified the changing nature of deterrence. They have challenged the conventional or mainstream deterrence theory and conducted a good amount of research works in this regard.¹ They have expressed a single idea that deterrence in the 21st century is different and much complex than that of the previous era and its complexity and uncertainty necessitate a reexamination of conventional deterrence framework.² With the end of Cold War,

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¹ Few of the mentionable writers in this regard are Patric M. Morgan, Frank C. Zagare, D. Marc Kilgour, P. K. Huth, Vesna Danilovic, T.V. Paul, Arreguin-Toft and Alex S. Wilner.

² T. V. Paul, Patric M. Morgan and James J. Wirtz (eds.), *Complex Deterrence Strategy in the Global Age*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009.

the policymakers, scholars, and strategists, who used to be confident about the feasibility and reliability of deterrence as a critical component of peace and security for the international system, got the first shock and with the beginning of 21st century, they experienced the second shock. The 9/11 terror attacks in 2001 at the heart of the United States (US) and succeeding extensive introduction of “War on Terror” made the scholars further sceptical and somewhat confused about the traditional theoretical framework of deterrence.³ Since then, the viability and perpetuity of traditional theory of deterrence have been facing uncertainty and challenges. Confusions arose over few core premises: (1) whether the conventional theory of deterrence is still valid in the absence of superpowers rivalry and nuclear war⁴, (2) whether in reverse order, rogue states/ non-state actors / weak powers are becoming more capable of deterring the stronger power, and (3) whether it is at all possible to deter the non-state actors or not.

Asymmetric conflicts after World War II saw several seemingly paradoxical events where weak actors did not allow strong actors to coerce them with violence or the threat of violence. It seems that today’s weak powers/actors are no more underdogs. Of late, in many cases, they have won over the stronger ones by adopting different unconventional strategies. Adoption of indirect and unconventional strategies made it possible for the weak actors to “put up a better show” while defending them against their stronger adversaries. Therefore, weak actors might find it easier to deter the strong actors from intervening in their affairs even when the disparity in material power is very large.⁵ Thus, the complex and unprecedented security environment of the 21st century suggests that while “compellence” (threatening an adversary to do a certain act) is supposed to be a difficult proposing for a weak actor, achieving “deterrence” (threatens an adversary from doing any unacceptable act) might not be an unrealistic possibility.⁶

The present deterrence ability of the Bangladesh Armed Forces should be studied in light of the new developments in the security environment. Deterrence as a whole is a critical and somewhat complex issue for Bangladesh. Unarguably, the

³ Frank C. Zagare, “Deterrence Is Dead. Long Live Deterrence”, *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Peace Science Society, Vol. 23, Issue 2, 2006, pp. 115-120.

⁴ According to Verghese Koithara, “... viewed logically and strategically, nuclear weapons are unusable weapons”. See, Verghese Koithara, “Nuclear Weapons in India’s Defence Policy”, in Harsh V. Pant (ed), *Handbook of Indian Defence Policy*, Routledge, 2016, p. 387. Also see, T. V. Paul, *The Tradition of Non- use of Nuclear Weapons*, California: Stanford University Press, 2009.

⁵ Ivan Arreguin- Toft, *Complex Deterrence Strategy in the Global Age, Unconventional Deterrence*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009, p. 204.

⁶ According to Rekasius Mindaugas, “compellence is harder to achieve than deterrence, because, most argue, it is more difficult to get somebody to do, re-do, or stop doing something, than it is to motivate someone not to do that same something”. See, Rekasius Mindaugas, *Unconventional Deterrence Strategy*, California: Naval Postgraduate School, 2005, p. 6.

present military posture of Bangladesh is essentially defensive. It though provides some kind of deterrence by denial, yet in all probability, this type of deterrence is not enough for a rising economy like Bangladesh. Because, deterrence by denial does not promise to exact big enough prices from the enemy. Hence, the present deterrence ability of Bangladesh seems not credible enough for the next “Asian Tiger”⁷ and leaves plenty of room for improvement. Recent studies suggest that the rising economy of Bangladesh would make it an economically stronger nation in the foreseeable future. According to PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), Bangladesh has the potential to become the world’s 23rd largest economy by 2050, overtaking countries such as the Netherlands, Australia, Spain, Thailand and Malaysia. PwC also predicted that Bangladesh would be the 28th largest economy by 2030.⁸ Sustainable economic rise of a nation calls for an unhindered secured environment, for the realist approaches (that regards world politics as a system of states, in which there is a continual conflict of interest and periodic wars) are still valid even in today’s post-Westphalian era. Even from the time immemorial, there has been security implications of economic development, as economic rise does not come alone; rather, it brings additional security threats to the country along with it. Therefore, Bangladesh, being a potential economic power, needs to pose a credible deterrence so that its economic rise is not hindered by any impending threat.

However, achieving a credible deterrence ability is a complex issue for Bangladesh. In case of the approaches to managing insecurity, Bangladesh can neither fully rely on the liberal policies of collective security and trade liberalization nor the realist policies of so-called “balance of power”. In one hand, (in most of the cases) enhancing military elements of national power usually go hand in hand with the economic development. However, host of factors, such as constitutional provisions and foreign policy of Bangladesh⁹ and its continuous commitment to the causes of ‘The Conference on Disarmament at the Palais des Nations in Geneva’¹⁰ neither allow Bangladesh to go for an arms race nor suggest it adopting a militarily offensive posture. On the other hand, achieving credible deterrence is a necessity for Bangladesh because it only ensures a safe environment for the economic development, but also not guarantees peace with the other actors. As the adage of

⁷ “There Could be a New Asian Tiger, Here is Why”, available at <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/04/bangladesh-could-be-a-new-asian-tiger-heres-why>, accessed on 09 March 2018.

⁸ “Bangladesh can become 28th Largest Economy by 2030: PwC”, available at <http://www.thedailystar.net/business/bangladesh-can-become-28th-largest-economy-2030-pwc-1358260>, accessed on 07 March 2020.

⁹ Article 25 of the Bangladesh Constitution on “Promotion of international peace, security and solidarity” states that the state shall ‘strive for the renunciation of the use of force in international relations and for general and complete disarmament.”

¹⁰ “Bangladesh Assumes Presidency of Conference on Disarmament”, available at <http://unb.com.bd/category/Bangladesh/bangladesh-assumes-presidency-of-conference-on-disarmament/55967>, accessed on 27 August 2020.

Hermocrates of Syracuse goes, “when there is mutual fear, men think twice before they make aggressions upon one another”¹¹—deterrence should help ensure peace.

In this backdrop, this paper examines the possibilities of achieving credible deterrence by Bangladesh Armed Forces¹² in light of the changing nature of deterrence in the twenty-first century. To that end, the paper begins with a discussion of the basics of conventional deterrence. It then turns to explore the complex deterrence in the 21st century and the effect of asymmetric warfare on deterrence. Finally, it sketches the future of deterrence of Bangladesh Armed Forces given the complex and changing nature of deterrence in the 21st century.

2. Basics of Deterrence

In practice, deterrence is as old as human civilization. From the ancient era of Alexander the Great or Hannibal Barca or Julius Caesar to Genghis Khan or the Napoleonic era, deterrence shaped the tactics of battlefield and strategy of the security environment. However, as a theory, it is a new concept. Not considering deterrence to be a part of the war, modern military theorists like Clausewitz or Jomini had seldom even bothered to mention it in their works. Perhaps Clausewitz could never even contemplate that someday there would be a kind of (nuclear) weapon whose only rightful function would be to deter war from breaking out. Though deterrence as a tactic or strategy is much associated with the military, the military theorists or academic scholars never mentioned it before the 20th century.¹³ Thus, the time tested, “ancient” and perpetual “deterrence” actually started to appear as a new 20th century concept in the works of political scientists and scholars.

In strategic studies, deterrence is defined as deliberate management of the behaviour of others through conditional threats. Deterrence is about the role of force in international affairs, and in particular threats of force, intended to stop others acting in harmful ways.¹⁴ In other words, it ensures the status quo by manipulating fear of the enemies to prevent unwanted action. Deterrence is successful when a potential attacker decides to abstain from a planned offensive because of the fear

¹¹ Thucydides, translated by Richard Crawley, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Book IV, available at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0105%3Abook%3D4%3Achapter%3D1>, accessed on 15 October 2020.

¹² Achieving deterrence is not an exclusive preserve of the Armed Forces of any country. Thereby, a country should employ all of the elements of its national power for deterrence. However, in this regard, Armed Forces traditionally plays the role of the main stakeholder, and thus, this paper focuses on the Bangladesh Armed Forces only.

¹³ F. C. Zagare, op. cit.

¹⁴ Lawrence Freedman, “Deterrence: A Reply”, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 28, October 2005, pp. 789-801.

of undesirable punishment or denial of victory. It refrains leaders of belligerent states from direct military conflict against other countries. Deterrence has been and will continue to be a human issue. It constitutes a fundamental human relationship that pertains across culture, time and space,¹⁵ and the logic of deterrence always holds true irrespective of the nature of the enemy. Usually, in traditional deterrence relationship, calculations of national power (especially military, economic and diplomatic power) are considered as the main factors of determining the degrees of deterrence effectiveness.

2.1 *Historical Failure of Deterrence*

Despite being elegant, deterrence theories received considerable criticism for their weakness when examined in light of case studies of the actual decision situation.¹⁶ While enjoying the probability of defeat or annihilation, strong states frequently fail to deter weaker adversaries. In many cases, deterrence did not work the way it had been perceived or theorized by the theorists. Defying all deterrence calculations, militarily and economically less powerful states initiated wars against relatively strong states. One scholarly study suggests that in the last century, approximately 30 per cent of conflicts were initiated by the weak with an attack on the strong.¹⁷ Japanese carried out offensive in Russia (in 1904), and they attacked Pearl Harbor (in 1941). The Chinese initiated war in Korea (in 1950) and the Egyptian dared to carry out offensive in the Sinai (in 1973). Even being a nuclear superpower, the United Kingdom (UK) could not deter the Argentine from invading the Falkland Islands (in 1982). Because of a host of reasons, the political or state leaders act contrary to deterrent theories. Regime insecurity and psychological biases, such as wishful thinking, groupthink and misperceptions can upset deterrence calculations as well as outcomes. Highly motivated leaders can challenge deterrent threats even without expecting victory¹⁸. Thereby, lesson learnt is that despite possessing military, economic and material superiority, deterrence will not always work according to the desire of the deterrer.

2.2 *Variants of Deterrence and Deterrence Postures*

Theoreticians have categorized deterrence into many different types. Apart from two widely analyzed types of deterrence, i.e., conventional and nuclear deterrence, there are some more categorizations of deterrence theory. Posture wise,

¹⁵ F. C. Zagare, op. cit., p. 116.

¹⁶ T. V. Paul, et al., op. cit., p. 3.

¹⁷ Adam Lowther, "Framing Deterrence in the Twenty-first Century: Conference Summary", Deterrence in the 21st Century, Proceedings of Conference held on 18-19 May 2009, sponsored by RUSI, King's College.

¹⁸ T. V. Paul, et al., op. cit., p. 3.

deterrence can be of two types—General and Specific. In General deterrence, as the name implies, opponents do not expect imminent threats from each other and thus, maintain their military forces for future contingencies with the implicit understanding of their use in the time of crisis. State's capability, credibility and reputation to retaliate determine its General deterrence ability. For example, nuclear-armed states can always pose General deterrence against its adversaries. The strategic maxim “don't invade Russia” pre-dates the nuclear age is another expression of General deterrence, as Russia (with or without nuclear weapons) is a state not to be messed with.¹⁹ Whereas, Specific or Immediate deterrence is scenario-dependent. In this case, a credible retaliatory threat becomes instrumental in preventing war initiation when a crisis arises or the prospects for war are high. It relates to a particular actor and a particular act that one wishes to deter—for example, Syrian use of chemical weapons or an Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands.²⁰ In this case, the threat of retaliation is to be tailored to specific circumstances. Extended deterrence involves the protection of an ally by a stronger state using retaliatory threat. Deterrence by Denial is obtained by convincing an opponent that it would deny politico-military victory, while Deterrence by Punishment is obtained when an enemy forgoes an attack fearing unacceptable punishment.²¹

Apart from these, theoreticians have coined many more variants of deterrence: Tailored Deterrence, Comprehensive Deterrence, Internalized Deterrence, Perfect Deterrence, Unconventional Deterrence, Modern Deterrence, etc. All of these deterrence theories are based on three core premises: (1) successful deterrer should have sufficient capability, (2) its threat should be credible, and (3) it should be able to communicate the threat to its opponent.²² Deterrence strategy is a coercive social logic aimed at dissuading the use of violence. It rests on premises that actors (1) are rational; (2) have common knowledge (of the rules and social logic of the game); (3) engage in tacit and explicit communication (understood as the exchange of information rather than efforts to arrive at collective understandings); (4) accurately assess the risks, costs, and gains of strategic games; (5) can control their emotions; and (6) hold normative assumptions about the appropriateness and proportionality of military actions.²³ According to Glenn Snyder, “essentially deterrence means discouraging the enemy from taking military action by posing for him a cost and risk outweighing his prospective gain.”²⁴

¹⁹ Jeremy Stocker, “Joint Air & Space Power Conference 2017, Deterrence in the 21st Century”, available at <https://www.japcc.org/deterrence-in-the-21st-century/>, accessed on 11 August 2020.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ T. V. Paul (ed.), op. cit., p. 24.

²² Ibid, p. 250.

²³ Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960, p. 182.

²⁴ Glenn H. Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense: Toward a Theory of National Security*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961, p. 126.

Though compellence and deterrence are both forms of coercion, they are different from each other. While deterrence is all about preserving the status quo, compellence is meant for breaking the status quo. Deterrence threatens an adversary from doing any unacceptable act and compellence threatens an adversary to do a certain act. American economist Thomas C. Schelling first coined the word in his book “Arms and Influence” in 1966. He described compellence as a direct action that persuades an opponent to give up something that is desired. Compellence is all about getting a hostile actor to behave in a preferred way. For example, the prelude to the 1991 Gulf War when the US, the United Nations (UN) and coalition members tried to get Saddam Hussein to change his actions was a compellence strategy. In the same way, the Western alliance’s strategy to compel Serbia to stop abusing the human rights of Kosovar Albanians and to withdraw its military forces from the region was also a compellence strategy. In international relations, compellence is the nation state’s ability to coerce another nation-state into action, usually by posing a threat of punishment. Compellence is more provocative, and thus it is more difficult than materializing the deterrence for any state.

3. Complex Deterrence in the 21st Century

3.1 *Changing Nature of Deterrence*

Deterrence has long been a cornerstone of international relations and a powerful strategic tool of the strongest nation-states around the world. However, with the end of “Cold War” and the beginning of “War on Terror”, the effectiveness of conventional deterrence has come under criticism. The rise of transnational non-state actors, the proliferation of new forms of warfare (such as unrestricted, hybrid, asymmetric, 4th generation warfare, etc.), emergence of post-Westphalian era, 4th industrial revolution, ubiquitous presence of internet-based media platforms, etc., have changed the security landscape of the 21st century. The anarchical apolarity in the 21st century is a competitive system of trans-national nature that is no longer shaped exclusively by territorial integrity and state sovereignty but by a dynamic interaction between state and non-state authority across and beyond the boundaries of states.²⁵ Amid these worldwide phenomenal changes, the traditional concept of “deterrence” has also been changing. Thus, with the change of the security landscape of the world, the characteristics of deterrence have also been transforming continuously. Once the classical deterrence used to mean that military, economic and diplomatic power of nations should determine the deterrence effectiveness. However, the same may not be the case today. The dawn of 21st century saw different

²⁵ Andreas Krieg and Jean-Marc Rickli, “The Context of Neotritarian War”, in *Surrogate Warfare: The Transformation of War in the Twenty First Century*, Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2019, p. 41.

types of threats, such as transnational terrorism, environmental degradation, mass migration of populations, drug, small arms and human trafficking, the proliferation of weapon of mass destruction, etc., that have made the security environment more complex. Thus, the deterrent theories and related policies that were developed in the Cold War nuclear context have started to lose its relevancy in today's complex security environment.

Scholars have already responded to the need to reassess the relevance of deterrence as both theory and policy in light of an increasingly complex global political setting. There is also speculation about the relevancy of deterrence theory in confronting the opponents who are not easily deterrable, such as terrorists, rogue states, fanatical ethnic or religious movements and intensely insecure smaller states.²⁶ There is fear that these opponents will possibly be irrational and difficult to understand. They are likely to take high risks and pay a high price in pursuit of their goals. As a result, deterrence will not work well against them, if at all. On the other hand, another group of scholars seems more confident about applying deterrence theory in counterterrorism scenario by thinking up new ways to expand and apply deterrence theory to the emerging and evolving security environments.²⁷ While describing the relation between rationality and deterrence, some scholars opine that rationality actually depends on an individual's, a group's or a state's underlying assumptions, perceptions, beliefs and values.²⁸ Therefore, these factors are to be considered while directing deterrence posture against potential deteree. The success of asymmetric and hybrid types of warfare inspired another group of scholars to conceive a very new kind of deterrence where weak actors deter the stronger ones.²⁹ This unique phenomenon was coined as Unconventional Deterrence.

Contemporary scholars have been voicing concerns over the feasibility of deterrence in the changed international context. Their huge works on the relation among deterrence, modern-day conflict and changed scenario of international relations are paving the way to carry out future research on deterrence theory and policy. A very important but largely unexplored area is the factor of "rationality" of the non-state, rogue state and terrorist outfits in deterrence discourse. While discussing deterrence, there are scopes to carry out research to examine the extent of irrationality among these actors. Are they really irrational or irrationally rational? When it comes to terrorism, a big unanswered question is whether the terrorists should at all be considered in deterrence discourse or not. Since preserving the

²⁶ Patric M. Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. xvii.

²⁷ Alex S Wilner, "Contemporary Deterrence Theory and Counterterrorism: A Bridge too Far?", *NYU Journal of International Law and Politics*, 2015, p. 440.

²⁸ Jeremy Stocker, op. cit.

²⁹ Rekasius Mindaugas, "Unconventional Deterrence Strategy", Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, USA, 2005; Ivan Arreguin-Toft, "Unconventional Deterrence", op. cit.

status quo is an objective of the deterrent, “deterring terrorism” means state actors are satisfied with the existence of terrorists so long those outfits do not do any harm. So, should terrorists be deterred only or be eliminated fully? This paradoxical situation has so far been inadequately explored.

3.2 *Decoupling of “21st Century Deterrence” from “Nuclear Deterrence”*

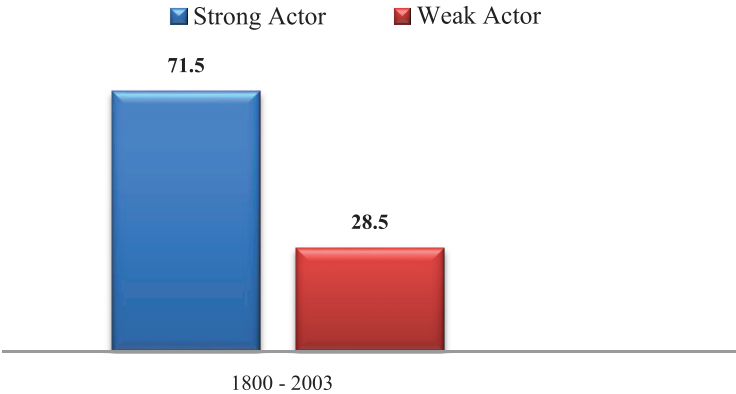
The conventional theory of deterrence used to revolve around superpowers rivalry and nuclear war. There was an amalgamation of deterrence theory with the nuclear doctrine and because of its intertwined relationship with nuclear weapons during the Cold War era, deterrence received prominence as a new concept in the parlance of international relations. Scholars started to correlate it with the nuclear weapon so much so that both (nuclear and deterrence) became almost synonymous to each other. Thus, the broad scope of deterrence was confined inside a narrow and restricted domain of nuclear doctrine. Generally, deterrence used to mean nuclear deterrence only. Deterrence thinking was mingled with the theories of nuclear deterrence to such extent that people used to perceive that absence of nuclear confrontation among great powers meant the demise of the importance of deterrence in international relations. While many initially associate deterrence strategy with nuclear or Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD), they are not the same. Significant shifts in the strategic environment (asymmetric and urban warfare for instance) call into question regarding the appropriateness of a solely nuclear-based deterrence posture.³⁰ However, with long non-use of nuclear weapons by any of the nuclear superpowers and more importantly with the demise of the Cold War, the association of nuclear weapon with deterrence waned and the traditional theory of deterrence has lost its elegance.

3.3 *Asymmetric War Phenomenon—Underdogs are Not Always Weak*

Examination of wars of the last two centuries shows a seemingly paradoxical situation where coercing power of the stronger nation-states has increasingly been less effective against the weaker ones. Professor Toft Ivanarreguín, in his book “How the Weak Wins Wars” stated that among all the asymmetric conflicts from 1800 to 2003, the ratio of victories between strong and weak actors is 71.5 : 28.5. That means, in most of the conflicts in the last two hundred years, the stronger actors won against the weaker ones.

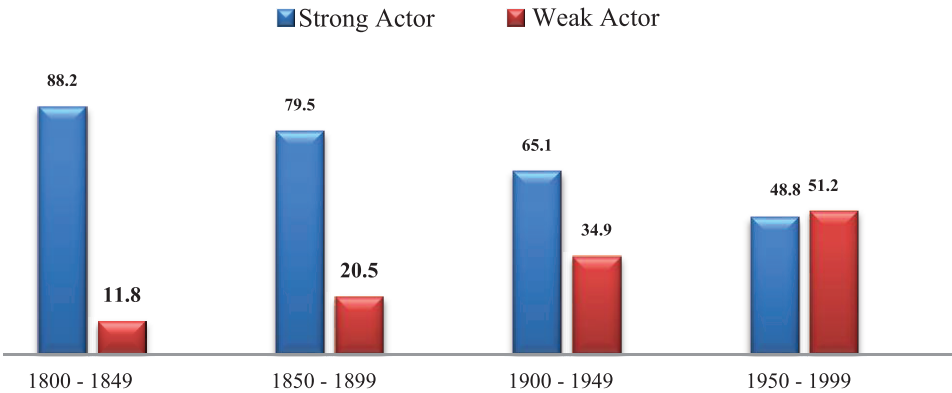
³⁰ Jenna E. Higgins, “Deterrence and Strategy?”, in Nathan K. Finney (ed.), *On Strategy: A Primer*, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2020, p. 179.

Figure 1: Victories in Asymmetric Conflict in Last Two Centuries³¹



However, when these two centuries are divided into four sub-periods (fifty-years each), a surprising model emerges: weak powers have been winning more over time. Though from 1800 to 1849 (in the first of the four periods) strong powers won nearly 90 per cent of the time, in the most recent period (from 1950 to 1999), weak powers won a majority of such asymmetric wars (51.2 per cent). Power, as commonly understood, has not correlated with the expected outcomes.³² This simple comparison suggests a powerful message that weaker nations or actors are increasingly becoming less prone to defeat.

Figure 2: Victories in Asymmetric Conflict in Four Fifty-Year Periods³³



³¹ Ivan Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars, A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict*, Cambridge: CambridgeUniversity Press, 2005, p. 3.

³² Ibid, p. 4.

³³ Ivan Arreguin- Toft, op.cit., p. 3.

It was not that the failure of military might in achieving victory over the weak actors happened without any logic and rationales. Because of a host of reasons, the steady erosion of the ability of “killing power” of the stronger actor to effect coercion has taken place in asymmetric conflicts. It has been observed that defeating the militarily inferior actors became difficult whenever they had not fought according to “the rule of the game” set by the stronger one and showed the guts to follow indirect and unconventional strategy. The Peninsular War, the Algerian war (1954-62), the Vietnam War (1964-73), the Afghanistan War (1979-89), the Lebanon war (1982-83), the Chechnya War (1994-96), the Second Iraq War of 2003, Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, recent War in Syria, etc., bear the testimony to that statement. In all of these cases, despite winning many battles, the stronger sides had to face ultimate defeat because the militarily inferior ones could be able to deny the stronger adversaries’ ability to use their advantages in technology, materiel and numbers to obtain expected political objectives. In asymmetric warfare, they could successfully respond from different platforms and deny the militarily stronger powers from realizing their aim and, thus, ending the war to their terms.

On the other hand, weaker actors lost the war whenever they used a similar strategy and fought according to the term of the stronger ones. In 1914, Belgium tried to give resistance to Germany using known strategy and lost in seventytwo hours. Adopting conventional military strategy, Argentina irrationally captured the Falkland Islands but could not hold it against mighty England. Likewise, Iraq adopted conventional defence against the USA led coalition forces and faced quick defeat.

4. Deterrence for Peace: Bangladesh Perspective

4.1 *Threat Assessment and National Security of Bangladesh*

Before embarking on the argument about the relationship between peace and deterrence in the Bangladesh context, this paper assesses its future threat and analyzes other security concerns to examine its relation with its potential adversaries. While the growing concept related to human security tends to broaden the security discourse and tries to get it beyond the confines of the state-centric national defence, the nation-state will continue to be the prime agency to deliver and ensure security to its citizens in the foreseeable future. Even the Covid-19 crisis has strengthened the Eurosceptic nationalists’ claim by creating emerging conventional wisdom among many citizens of the countries of European Union (EU) that nation-states are still the most viable political entity that can ensure the best possible security

and protection of its citizens.³⁴ Thus, in pursuit of its national interest, the state will not fully refrain from following the unitary principles of nationalism soon. Security dilemma will continue to influence the foreign policies and relations among the states. This is true that few of the very important non-traditional security threats such as transnational terrorism, drug trafficking, climate change etc. will compel nation-states to cooperate in an increasing manner. No nation can solve these problems singlehandedly. However, the traditional threats, such as invasion, proxy war, annexation, etc., will not cease to have a deep influence on the national defence policies and strategies around the world. Ever rising global military expenditure and even the recent annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation bear the testimony to that statement. Thus, ensuring human security and preparation for the national defence are not mutually exclusive goals for the modern nation-states. Modern nation-states will have to ensure both.

Above-mentioned analysis should influence the present and future threat assessment of the Bangladesh Armed Forces. While this paper attaches due importance to different aspects of the non-traditional security issues of Bangladesh, the scope of this paper restricts it to sketch the traditional threat perception only. There is no denying that the security environment of the nation-states in South Asia has not always been characterized by peaceful co-existence since World War II. It is also true that the security of Bangladesh is inextricably mingled with the overall security environment of the South Asian region. In fact, security in South Asia is evolving. Latent irritants and disputes such as water sharing of major rivers in a future global warming context,³⁵ the rise of religious-nationalism, claims and counterclaims of illegal immigrants, dynamic inter-play of the influence of the world superpowers, etc., have the potentials of flaring up. So long these irritants are contained and managed they do not turn into a crisis. However, their turning into violent conflicts may not always be a very distant possibility, because security cannot be taken for granted by any state in the present world.

Bangladesh is neither by size nor by population a small country. By population, Bangladesh ranks 8th in the world³⁶ and contrary to popular belief,

³⁴ Ivan Krastev and Mark Leonard, "Europe's Pandemic Politics: How the Virus has Changed the Public's Worldview", available at https://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/europes_pandemic_politics_how_the_virus_has_changed_the_publics_worldview.pdf, accessed on 27 August 2020.

³⁵ Nick Whigham, "The Wars of the Future will be Fought over Water Not Oil", available at <https://nypost.com/2018/10/19/the-wars-of-the-future-will-be-fought-over-water-not-oil/>, accessed on 27 August 2020. The article states, "often referred to as the water wars thesis, it suggests that growing water scarcity will drive violent conflict as access to water dries up for certain communities. Analysts worry that people, opportunistic politicians and powerful corporations will battle for dwindling water supplies, inflaming tensions."

³⁶ "Top 10 Most Populous Countries", available at <https://www.census.gov/popclock/print.php?component=counter>, accessed on 27 August 2020.

Bangladesh is bigger than many of the developed countries of Western Europe.³⁷ With its skyrocketing economy, geo-strategic location, a substantial percentage of young population and other positive indicators, Bangladesh has the potential to be a strong actor in this region. Even during the Covid-19 pandemic, when many of Bangladesh's South Asian peers and other countries around the world are in negative growth or lower growth than projections, Bangladesh has recorded an impressive 5.24 per cent Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in the FY2019-20.³⁸ If everything goes right, Bangladesh will be the next Asian Tiger. The rising economy will logically make it a rising power, and that is the point that the paper intends to emphasise while perceiving its future threats. A future Bangladesh that aspires to be an economically developed one should be aware that economic rise has its own security implications. Because more wealth naturally necessitates more arrangements of protection and wealth accumulation only makes sense when it is protected, and its process is unhindered. From a realist point of view, the nation-state can have neither permanent friend nor permanent foe; rather, it is only the national interest on which the country's international relations should revolve. Thus, the above-mentioned arguments suggest the necessity of achieving credible deterrence by Bangladesh Armed Forces.

4.2 *Complementing Peace by Deterrence*

The word “deterrence” has its root in Latin verb “terrere”, which means “to frighten from or away”.³⁹ Though the root meaning is in stark contrast with the word “peace”, yet deterrence has been instrumental for the nation-states around the world in managing and containing conflicts. It has been possible because deterrence can help preserve the status quo. According to Thomas Schelling (American economist and professor of foreign affairs and winner of 2005 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences for game-theory analysis of conflict), “deterrence is a win-win situation in which an adversary opts to lose what it can acquire through the application of force and instead gives it all up to avoid any foreseeable damages or risks”.⁴⁰ Deterrence ensures and promotes stability and peace. Thus, deterrence has long been a cornerstone of interaction among states. It encourages a potential attacker to decide to abstain from a planned offensive because of the fear of undesirable punishment

³⁷ Available at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/AG.LND.TOTL.K2?end=2017&start=1961>, accessed on 27 August 2020. With an area of 130,170 km² Bangladesh is even almost 3.5 times bigger than Denmark (41,990 km²) or Switzerland (39,516 km²). Yet, it is considered relatively small because of its two giant neighbours – India (29,73,190 km²) and Myanmar (653,080 km²).

³⁸ “Bangladesh Economy to Recover Faster than Others”, available at <https://www.dhakatribune.com/business/economy/2020/08/16/bangladesh-defies-expectations-posting-a-5-24-gdp-growth>, accessed on 25 August 2020.

³⁹ Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy: A History*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 157.

⁴⁰ T. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, Cambridge, MA: Oxford University Press, 1960, p. 131.

or denial of victory. Since time immemorial, deterrence has ensured peace by influencing the human relationship in different societies and civilizations. It has been shaping human behaviour, dictating social interaction and forming international relations. Achieving the power of deterrence ensures maintenance of the status quo by increasing the resistance ability against potential aggressors. Failure of deterrence might be the trigger point of conflict and breach of peace. Thus, peace and deterrence with almost two opposite meanings are complementary to each other.

4.3 *Why should Bangladesh Achieve Deterrence to Ensure Peace?*

Bangladesh is a peace-loving country with economic development being its present topmost priority. Fighting war of any kind and resorting to arms race cannot be its main focus. However, as the ancient adage goes that *Si Vis Pacem, Para Bellum* –if you want peace, prepare for war, it expresses an idea at the heart of the concept of deterrence. In one sense, much of strategic thought, theory and practice are counter-intuitive and somewhat paradoxical. Because, put simply, though only arms can fight a war, yet arms are also required to prevent war.⁴¹ This is because of deterrence. The threat perception, as discussed above, posits that given the volatility of geopolitics in this region, Bangladesh cannot take security for granted. Thus, to maintain the most sought after status quo, Bangladesh needs to have adequate national power to deter its potential adversaries. It needs to achieve deterrence to such an extent that it should convince others not to carry out any of their intended actions because of the costs and losses those actions would incur. Thus, the deterrence would promote mutual fear among the belligerents and that mutual fear is good for peace because it restricts aggressions and does not let latent conflict to turn into a violent one.

Bangladesh's aspiration to become a big economy is a logical sequence of its exponential economic growth. Bangladesh is going to be an economically stronger nation in the foreseeable future. Strategic reality is that its sustainable economic growth necessitates the ability to pose credible deterrence so that no external threat can destabilize and hinder its economic development. Bangladesh, with its aspiration of becoming a developed country, is not supposed to be easy prey for the powerful ones. Singapore is a glaring example in this regard. They say, "whatever you can't defend doesn't belong to you". Words of the seventh president of Singapore Tony Tan Keng Yam must be taken into consideration—"In the economic sphere, if things fall apart, you will still have opportunities to rebuild, and to prosper again. We will not get a second chance if we cannot defend ourselves. A security threat could mean the loss of lives and the end of Singapore."⁴² The concept of a strong military to achieve

⁴¹ Jeremy Stocker, op. cit.

⁴² "Singapore: National Security Strategy 2000", available at <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/156809/Singapore-2000.pdf>, accessed on 12 August 2020.

deterrence ability has been ingrained in Singapore since it gained independence from Malaysia in 1965. Singapore has consistently spent significant amounts on its defence (even during the Covid-19 crisis, its defence budget is US\$10.77 billion in 2020) and possesses one of the most capable and modern militaries in the Southeast Asian region.⁴³

By the same token, it can be said that Bangladesh also needs to achieve credible deterrence ability so much so that its steady economic growth is not hampered by any unexpected events in the future. It needs to achieve credible deterrence to ensure enduring peace and stability with other actors in the region. To give “peace a chance”, Bangladesh should be capable to “deter” its potential threats. However, unlike Singapore, achieving conventional deterrence is not an easy option for Bangladesh. Because conventional deterrence calls for acquiring superior military hardware and equipment leading to an arms race with the adversaries that are at odds with the present development strategy of Bangladesh. Though Bangladesh is a potential economic power that needs to have a credible military power, yet it must not fall into the trap of unnecessary arms race. Therefore, point to ponder is that in one hand, Bangladesh needs to have credible deterrence and on the other hand, resorting to the huge military build-up with offensive posture is again not a viable and pragmatic option. Therefore, deterrence, being one of the important pillars of Bangladesh’s defence strategy, should be revisited in light of the changed security situation around the world. Considering this reality, a new kind of deterrence is to be figured out so that Bangladesh can deter its adversaries without resorting to the arms race and thus, not falling unnecessary into the trap of security dilemma.

4.4 *How should Bangladesh Achieve the Desired Deterrence to Ensure Peace?*

Being an all too human endeavour, driven or at least shaped by contingency, war and its strategy cannot be studied scientifically—certain and thoroughly reliable knowledge of war is not obtainable by any methodology.⁴⁴ Though victories by militarily inferior actors are a paradox for realism, yet combat power alone does not always ensure victory in war, and therefore, the balance of military capabilities should not always be an overriding determinant in deterrence. The changing nature of deterrence in the 21st century and the militarily weak states’ increasing ability to successfully denying the stronger powers from realizing their aim or ending the war

⁴³ Prashanth Parameswaran, “What Does Singapore’s New Defense Budget Say About the Country’s Security Thinking?”, available at <https://thediplomat.com/2020/02/what-does-singapores-new-defense-budget-say-about-the-countrys-security-thinking/>, accessed on 12 June 2020.

⁴⁴ Colin S. Gray, *Strategy and Defence Planning: Meeting the Challenge of Uncertainty*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 163.

to their terms suggest that it would be possible for Bangladesh to achieve the desired credible deterrence. To that end, the defence policy and strategies of Bangladesh Armed Forces should focus on three key areas.

First, a combination of adoption of unconventional military strategy and tremendous “will to fight for the survival” by the people of Bangladesh would help make the stronger actor’s coercive power less relevant. In case of most of the asymmetric wars (where weak did not allow the stronger to achieve political victory), it was experienced that the Centre of Gravity (COG)⁴⁵ of the weaker forces was never anything physical in nature (like Armed Forces). Those were actually people’s “resolve” and “will to fight” centric moral strategic COGs, which could not be destroyed by kinetic forces. Understandably, these COGs are intangible and difficult to grasp. The importance of Moral COG is so much so that unless it is well identified and undermined wholeheartedly, no amount of physical destruction and subjugation would ensure victory at the strategic level. In the case of the Vietnam War, the US failed to fathom the amount of resolve and will to fight of the people of North Vietnam as to how many casualties they could sustain before giving in. As if no number of deaths could coerce the North into accepting a divided Vietnam. Almost the same was the case in other asymmetric wars also. That means possession of people’s “high resolve” and “will to fight” centric moral strategic COGs by Bangladesh would be instrumental in making stronger forces strength irrelevant. Because one of the important features in all asymmetric conflicts is that while none of the vital interests of the stronger nations remains at stake, in case of the weaker one it becomes a matter of survival where its very existence remains at stake. Thus, this extraordinary situation results in “high resolve” of the weaker actors.

The adoption of indirect and unconventional fighting strategies, “will to fight” for survival and high resolve by Bangladesh Armed Forces would make the tremendous coercive power of the stronger nations less relevant. Though without enjoying superior military capability and adequate economic back up it is very difficult to defeat the stronger nations, yet history is abundant with examples where underdog or weak won over the strong by applying indirect strategies and unorthodox approach. Indirect strategies include implementation of non-linear battlefield environment, unorthodox, unconventional and asymmetric fighting strategy by Bangladesh Armed Forces, which will make it difficult for the stronger sides to achieve any decisive results in the battlefield. This will eventually lead to political defeat for the stronger nation-states against Bangladesh. Even if a stronger

⁴⁵ According to AAP-6, NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions, Edition “V” Version 2, the COG refers to those characteristics, capabilities, or localities from which a nation, an alliance, a military force or other grouping derives its freedom of action, physical strength or will to fight. Popularly it is also known as the hub of all power and movement.

nation-state finds it easier to wage war against militarily weaker (materiel power-wise) Bangladesh, with the adoption of indirect strategy and possession of high resolve to fight until the end, Bangladesh would make it difficult for the stronger one to find a victorious exit from that war. When this credibility of imposing sufficient costs to force strong opponents to reconsider the expected benefits of victory is well communicated to the stronger adversaries, Bangladesh will be able to achieve a credible deterrence by denial. Communicating Bangladesh's capability of adopting unorthodox approach and people's resolve to fight until the end to the stronger nations will refrain the adversaries from breaking the status quo. Consequently, the phenomena of not achieving politico-military victory over Bangladesh would deter the stronger ones. Bangladesh would thus find it easier to deter strong actors from intervening in its affairs even when the large disparity in materiel power exists.

The second one is all about using unrestricted methods⁴⁶ (such as internet-based media, trade, commerce, psychological, cyber, etc.) of waging war. Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, in their famous book *Unrestricted Warfare*, provided many examples of this type of warfare.⁴⁷ The Battlefield Operating Systems (BOS)⁴⁸ in the 21st century are not confined in the conventional military domain only. Today's BOSs include international online financial system, manipulation of big data, outer space, artificial intelligence, epidemic, biotech, info-tech, etc. These necessitate Bangladesh Armed Forces to formulate a new set of Principles of War⁴⁹, which will no longer use "only the kinetic forces to compel the enemy to submit to its will," but rather use "all means, including armed force or non-armed force, military and non-military, and lethal and non-lethal means to compel the enemy to accept its interests."⁵⁰ If "giving pain" to the enemy is considered to be one of the purposes of war (so that it submits to one's will), then proxy war, information war, trade war, financial war, cyberwar, etc., will not be less destructive than the traditional war. Besides the traditional warfare, Bangladesh Armed Forces will also need to adopt Unrestricted Warfare that would involve several other means and methods to fight an unprecedented non-military type of war. With so many unrestricted means and ways to achieve the ends, Bangladesh will probably play the role of an "irrationally

⁴⁶ Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, February 1999.

⁴⁷ Examples of Unrestricted Warfare are psychological warfare, smuggling warfare, media warfare, drug warfare, network warfare, technological warfare, fabrication warfare, resources warfare, economic aid warfare, cultural warfare, international law warfare, etc.

⁴⁸ Traditional modern battles are combined arms operations that involve synchronization of various BOS. When meshed together, their combined capabilities produce the battle-winning effect to achieve the decisive result. Example of traditional battlefield operating systems: manoeuvre, fire support, air defence, engineer support, electronic warfare, intelligence, deception, etc.

⁴⁹ Principles of War are broad precepts that influence the conduct of war. They can be termed as the "fundamental truths governing the prosecution of war", application of which ensures success in the battle.

⁵⁰ Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, op. cit., p. 7.

rational” actor, which would not follow any set rule to wage wars. Deterrence is ultimately in the eye of the beholder - the adversary decision-maker and adversary’s perceptions are the focus of all deterrence efforts. Therefore, communicating the ability to wage this type of Unrestricted Warfare to the potential adversaries would allow Bangladesh to achieve a different type of deterrence. Though it is true that this type of warfare will necessitate whole-of-the-government centric holistic effort, Bangladesh Armed Forces should naturally be the main stakeholder in this regard.

The third area is related to the exploitation of critical weaknesses/vulnerabilities of the stronger nations. Every nation-state, be it powerful or weak, big or small, has its critical weaknesses/vulnerabilities. Correct determination of those weaknesses and/or vulnerabilities and then attacking those to neutralize/annihilate/destroy would hurt them the most. Ability to attack these types of critical weaknesses/vulnerability of the potential enemy would enable Bangladesh Armed Forces to achieve the desired credible deterrence. For example, one of such critical weaknesses/vulnerabilities of the stronger nation-states in the 21st century is that most of their citizens have become tremendously casualty sensitive. Aversion to suffering high casualties is a critical vulnerability of the stronger nations now, which might be exploited by the Bangladesh Armed Forces. Today’s generations of stronger nation-states are very much sensitive to the fear of violent death and comfortable self-preservation. They make big warships, awe-inspiring modern fighter planes, state of the art battle tanks and many more military arsenals only to ensure their most sought after “comfortable self-preservation”. Thus, they do not accept casualty of any sorts, not even the casualty of their soldiers in the battlefields. For example, casualties of the battles in World War I or World War II were counted in millions. Only the first day of the Battle of Somme on 01 July 1916 saw 19,000 British soldiers killed and another 40,000 wounded.⁵¹ However, having experienced only a casualty of around 4,500 members of the US armed forces in Iraq War that started in 2003, a study in 2013 found that the majority of the Americans had considered sending troops to fight in Iraq to be a mistake.⁵² The emerging phenomenon of “Surrogate Warfare”⁵³ in 21st century conflict bears the testimony to that fact. The notion of minimizing the casualty of not only the civilian citizens but also the soldiers has led the powerful nation-states to go for externalization of the burden of warfare. To that end, they opt for the excessive use of airpower and drones, artificial intelligence powered lethal autonomous weapons, local armed non-state actors, proxies, etc. The citizens of stronger nations do not tolerate any small casualty of their soldiers during

⁵¹ Yuval Noah Harari, *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*, London: Jonathan Cape, 2018, p. 160.

⁵² “Number of U.S. Soldiers killed in the Iraq War from 2003 to 2020”, available at <https://www.statista.com/statistics/263798/american-soldiers-killed-in-iraq/>, accessed on 08 October 2020.

⁵³ Andreas Krieg and Jean Rickli, “Surrogate Warfare: the Art of War in the 21st century?”, *Defence Studies Journal*, Vol. 18, Issue 2, 2018.

any conflict against weak nation-states. For example, the US faced this problem in Vietnam in the 1960s and Somalia in 1993. Somali clan leader Mohamed Farah Aideed did not have to carry out big military operations to neutralize the US military might. Only by televising the scene of the dragging of few captured US soldiers on the streets of Somalia, he could exploit the critical vulnerability of the US - an aversion to suffering high casualties. That paid him off tremendously because the US had to change its entire campaign plan after this incident. Thus, “No Boots on the Ground” by the superior nations has become a common strategy in the conflicts of the recent past. This is one of the unorthodox dimension of deterrence for which the present-day US and Israel, though being such enormous military and economic powers, were deterred from engaging in a land war in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon respectively. “Body Bag Effect” has been shaping up the public opinion in an increased manner and has not only outweigh the stronger actor’s power to destroy and coerce but also is providing space for the weak actors to deter their stronger opponents. Bangladesh Armed Forces would achieve credible deterrence ability by embedding the destruction of this critical vulnerability/weakness (i.e., casualty sensitiveness) of the stronger states in its defence policy and strategy.

The key areas posited above are neither all-inclusive nor necessarily mutually exclusive nor provide a specific prescription to achieve credible deterrence by the Bangladesh Armed Forces. These are only three broad options that would be useful for Bangladesh Armed Forces in formulating future defence policies and strategies and encourage future research in this regard.

5. Conclusion

Deterrence has long been a cornerstone of international relations and a powerful strategic tool of the nation-states around the world. With the integration of nuclear weapons by the superpowers in their arsenal after World War II, the idea of deterrence as a full-fledged concept and theory saw an increased rise. It had become one of the leading theoretical and policy frameworks upon which the theory of international relations and military strategy started to revolve. In 1985, philosopher Anthony Kenny could confidently assert that deterrence was “the key concept for the understanding of the strategy and diplomacy of the age.”⁵⁴ However, since then much has transpired in almost all spheres of global politics, economics, science, technology and international relations. Since the turn of the new century, the global political setting has been getting complex at a continually increasing rate. The 21st century is being considered as an era of massive, rapid and all-encompassing global changes. Changes are taking place in all most all spheres of international systems ranging from international relations to

⁵⁴ Frank C. Zagare, op. cit. p. 1.

politics and from trade to technology. Amid these significant changes around the world, the classical concept of deterrence has experienced a big change, and its characteristics have also been transforming continuously.

The so-called elegant and parsimonious deterrence theory has received considerable criticism on many occasions. In several cases, it did not work and defying all deterrence calculations, militarily and economically less powerful states initiated a war against relatively strong states. As Keith Payne puts it, deterrence is an “uncertain art, not a precise science”.⁵⁵ Thus, the deterrent theories and related policies that were developed in the Cold War nuclear context have appeared to be less relevant in today’s complex security environment. Today’s international environment hold out a wide variety of contexts and opposing leadership against which deterrence policies may be called on to operate. In this context, the effective functioning of deterrence cannot be assumed.⁵⁶ Once the classical deterrence used to mean that military, economic and diplomatic power of nations should determine the deterrence effectiveness. However, the same is not the case today. Because of a host of reasons, in the last seventy years, steady erosion of the “killing power” of the stronger actor to effect coercion has taken place in asymmetric conflicts. It has been observed that defeating the weaker actors became difficult whenever the weak actors had not fought by the terms set by the stronger one and used ingenuity to adopt indirect and unconventional strategies. The successes of asymmetric and hybrid types of warfare by the weak states inspired the scholars to conceive a new kind of deterrence where weak actors can deter the stronger ones.

Complexity, uncertainty and volatility characterize the perceived security environment of the South Asian region. Issues such as dispute over water sharing of major rivers, claim and counter-claim of illegal immigration among the neighbouring countries, growing influence of big international rivals (i.e. China and the US), political unrest, rise of ultra-nationalism, trans-national terrorism etc. will continue to portray the security climate of South Asia in the near future. Security of Bangladesh will continue to be inextricably mingled with the overall security situation of South Asia. Amidst this security situation, interestingly, the reports of prominent international Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) like World Economic Forum or networks of firms like PricewaterhouseCoopers suggest that Bangladesh’s exponential economic growth will logically turn it to an economically developed nation-state in the foreseeable future. The rising economy will understandably make it a rising power. Though the idea that power transitions

⁵⁵ Jeremy Stocker, op. cit.

⁵⁶ Keith B. Payne and Dale Walton, “Deterrence in the Post Cold War”, in John Baylis, James Wirtz, Eliot Cohen and Colin S. Gray (eds.), *Strategy in the Contemporary World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 179.

could result in conflict with others is not always valid, yet power shifts or transitions are very important elements in a brew that endangers peace.⁵⁷ Even if the post-Westphalian world order manages to gain ground in the future, the realist approach of Morgenthau, Thucydides, Augustine and Hobbes (that characterizes international politics as a struggle for power) will continue to be valid. The world might see a lot of changes in the mode, domain, method, dimension and conduct of war and conflict in the future but the absence of these will never happen so long human being continue to survive. Thus, the realists suggest that a politically and militarily weak country can be easy prey for the powerful ones. Therefore, the strategic reality is that sustainable economic growth of Bangladesh demands the ability to pose credible deterrence so that no external threat can hinder its economic development. Since time immemorial, deterrence has been instrumental in ensuring peace by influencing the human relationship in different societies and civilizations. Because it has the potential to ensure and promote international stability and peace by maintaining the status quo. It stimulates mutual fear among belligerents, which is good for peace because it restricts aggressions and does not let latent conflict to turn into a violent one. Thus, it is logical to deduce that deterrence ability of Bangladesh would refrain a potential attacker from a planned offensive manner because of the fear of undesirable punishment or denial of victory. Because deterrence and peace though have opposing meanings, yet they are complementary to each other.

However, achieving conventional deterrence calls for acquiring superior military hardware, equipment, etc., and it leads to an arms race with the adversaries. Because of the present economic development strategy of Bangladesh, its constitutional provisions and continuous commitment to the causes of The Conference on Disarmament, economic and political reality, the engaging in an unnecessary arms race is not a viable option for Bangladesh. That means, on the one hand, Bangladesh needs to have credible deterrence and on the other hand, resorting to huge military built up with offensive military posture is again not a feasible option. Therefore, the strategy to achieve deterrence should be revisited in light of the changed security environment around the world. In this regard, the defence policies and strategies of Bangladesh should focus on three key areas.

First, is all about making the stronger actor's coercive power less relevant. History suggests that in several times weaker side won whenever they showed the guts not to follow the "rule of the game" set by the stronger side and embraced unconventional strategies. In these cases, despite winning many battles, the stronger sides had to face ultimate defeat because the weaker ones could deny the stronger adversaries' ability to use their advantages in technology, materiel and numbers to

⁵⁷ Steve Chan, "Thucydides' Trap: Caveat Emptor", S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, available at <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/CO19168.pdf>, accessed on 29 August 2020.

obtain expected political objectives. Thus, the adoption of indirect and unconventional fighting strategies, high resolve and will to fight until the end by the Bangladesh Armed Forces would make the coercive power of the stronger nations less relevant. In this regard, the indirect strategies include implementation of non-linear battlefield environment and adoption of unorthodox, unconventional and asymmetric fighting strategy by the Bangladesh Armed Forces. These will eventually lead to political defeat for the stronger nation-states against Bangladesh. Correct communication of this unconventional strategy and capability to the potential adversaries will help Bangladesh achieve a credible deterrence of denial.

Using unrestricted methods (such as internet-based media, trade, commerce, psychological, cyber, etc.) of waging war is the second area of interest. Bangladesh Armed Forces need to be capable of exploiting new types of BOS such as international online financial system, manipulation of big data, cyberspace, artificial intelligence, biotech, info-tech, etc. Though it will necessitate whole-of-the-government centric holistic effort, Bangladesh Armed Forces should naturally be the main stakeholder in this regard. To that end, Bangladesh Armed Forces need to formulate a new set of Principles of War that not only applying the kinetic forces to compel the enemy to submit to its will but also uses all possible means to wage the Unrestricted Warfare. Communicating the ability to wage this type of Unrestricted Warfare to the potential adversaries would allow Bangladesh Armed Forces to achieve a different type of deterrence.

Third is related to the exploitation and attacking of few of the critical vulnerabilities/weaknesses of the modern-day stronger states, such as aversion to suffering high casualties, the fear of violent death and the desire for comfortable self-preservation. Bangladesh Armed Forces would gain credible deterrence advantage if it can leverage its asymmetric ability to neutralize these types of critical vulnerabilities and weaknesses of the stronger nation-states. This unorthodox dimension of deterrence would discourage strong military and economic powers from engaging in conflict against Bangladesh.

Bangladesh Armed Forces neither aspire nor need to achieve compellence (threatens an adversary to do a certain act). Achieving credible deterrence (threatens an adversary from doing any unacceptable act) is the aim here. The suggested three broad options (which are neither all-inclusive nor necessarily mutually exclusive) would be instrumental in achieving the desired credible deterrence.