

## Changing doctrines

A doctrine can be defined as 'the best way of doing a thing'. Thus reviewing a military doctrine should ideally suggest to military reviewers, the correctness of the methods and techniques employed by them to meet the threats faced by the state and not the category of the enemy and the seriousness of the threats and challenges posed by them. The entire nation knows who was hurting the Pakistan Army at the tactical and operational level of the war over the past decade or so. Why has the army taken so long to shift its prioritisation of the threat? The level and measure of the enemy's threat is not related to its promises or intentions but to its military capability with which it threatens. Unless there is a substantial decrease in the force deployment and the military capability of the enemy on our eastern front, the Pakistan Army cannot unilaterally claim to have reassessed the threat through the pages of its Green Book; the threat perception will only change when there is change in the allocation of resources from one front to another. One does not see that happening in the near future.

Does reviewing the military doctrine mean that the Pakistan Army will shift its military strategies soon? There is obviously going to be no sudden end to the army's erstwhile 'India-centric' defence policy. Such a shift can only take place under a strong, democratic government that has the will and ability to create the enabling political conditions, as well as the security environment, for the military to make such a choice.

All those who have studied military strategy know that it is all about setting priorities and not all your enemies can be your top priority. Yet, giving the right priority to the enemy helps counter it at a sustainable cost. If countering the threat posed internally by the militants is now the top priority of the army, then it should also be willing to rationalise its resource allocation. Unfortunately for us, both the political leadership, as well as the army has been unwilling to make tough decisions to carry our nation to a military victory against the militants. War against the militants was never unwinnable, so why we don't look like winning it is because fighting and winning this war has never been a top priority of our politicians and the military. Talking and securing peace should only precede military ascendancy over the militants. We must fight and win the war first before we decide to negotiate with the militants. In the last few months, the army has shown no substantial gains against the militants. Under such circumstances, it is the militants who would participate in any dialogue from a position of strength. It is in this context that the army's Green Book gives us hope that the army is finally ready to combat the threat that is its own creation.

I would rather have wished that the army had shown its willingness to fight militancy and the internal threat without equating it with the external threat posed by India. This because the strategy employed by the army to meet the two threats is entirely different. On the eastern front, our army employs the doctrine of 'deterrence through denial'— designed to convince the enemy that it cannot achieve its objective, so there is hardly any point in trying. On the western front, the army does not know exactly where to find the enemy or how it is positioned. All it can do is employ the doctrine of 'deterrence by punishment', which is designed to persuade the enemy that it may be able to achieve its objective, yet it may suffer so much as a result that all its anticipated costs will eventually outweigh its gains. Unfortunately for the nation, this doctrine has not been effectively employed for fear of retaliation by the militants. It is only hoped that the army has been able to overcome these fears. Lastly, there is no requirement for the army to publicly declare and substitute one enemy for another for it is its job to meet the threat posed by each of them with a strategy that will guarantee success.

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