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FUNGIBILITY OF MILITARY POWER AND IMPERATIVES FOR SMALL NATIONS

Abstract

The power of a nation state emanates from her political, diplomatic, informational and military might. All these powers are fungible to some degree. However, the symbiotic relationship between the military and the other instruments of power is worth examining as it undergirds the total national power. The general perception that military power is only for war coupled with its misuse by dictatorial regimes in many small states have hindered the growth of military power in right direction. But, states remain in peace more often than war and military power, particularly in case of small nations, is crucial to preserve and protect peace through its fungible nature. Thus, a critical analysis of the fungibility of military power during peace and war is warranted to derive the imperatives for small nations. The paper contends that small nations need to build and maintain a sustainable military power and maximize its implicit use. Internally, it could serve to strengthen the political will and unitary character of the state and contribute in various developmental activities; externally, the deficit of the military power of small nations could be addressed by strengthening the UN and building alliance.

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I. Introduction

The quest for power has been eternal both for individual and state. The acquisition of power in all its forms and magnitude has prevailed as an inherent motivation for the civilizations to grow. Human passion for power has been theorized by many scholars and thinkers since long. While intellectuals like Hobbes connects the ‘brutish human nature’ with their quest for power, Machiavelli manifested it as the ‘ambition of the Prince or of a Republic’ that drives a Prince to extend his Empire. It is with no apathy that both recognized the immoral human nature for the quest for power as Hobbes argued: “...and therefore if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to their end endeavour to destroy or subdue one another.”¹ The Machiavellian thoughts go much further in asserting that ‘...nature has so created men that they are able to desire everything but are not able to attain everything : so that the desire being always greater than the acquisition, there results discontent with the possession and little satisfaction to themselves from it.’² The collective quest to create a balance of power is also manifested by the nation states through their behaviour in international system. The absence of a central overriding authority in international environment, as the realists argue, breeds anarchy and acquisition of power becomes crucial to the survival and stability of a nation state. The fact that the ‘growth of Athenian power and the fear that it caused in Sparta’ made the Peloponnesian War inevitable (in 431 BC) epitomized the power game which has its relevance even today. Thus the quest for power for individual as well as for the state is enshrined in either the anarchic environment or the ambition that may exist at both levels.

Though it is the military power that is more often pronounced and dissected, it is however, the political and economic powers of a nation that have found to be the major driving force for a country to survive and prevail over others in the final analysis. Interestingly though, the relationship between the military power and the political and

¹ Hobbes, Thomas. *The Leviathan*, available at: www.orst.edu/inst/1302/hobbes/leviathan-contents.html.

² Machiavelli, Niccolo, *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livy*, available at: www.constitution.org/mac/disclivy.txt.

economic power of a nation is often symbiotic. One cannot grow and sustain without the other. Historically, a country with a strong economy and good leadership has mostly been successful to make best use or build its military potentials to safeguard its interest both during peace and war. Such relationship becomes possible because of the fungible nature of military power. Arguably, military power becomes fungible at certain stage and its spill over effect can work as a strong undergird that would fuel the other instrument of state power to protect and preserve its vital interests.³ Thus it would be tempting to conclude that the stronger nations have a monopoly of exploiting the fungibility of military power, as they have the most potent military armada. In such a context of international environment, what are the options and imperatives for small nations? Does the fungibility of military power apply for the small nations too? How can a small nation's military power achieve fungibility and thereby effectively contribute to strengthen the other national powers? These are the basic questions that this paper seeks to answer.

This paper attempts to reveal the fungible nature of military power and show how its ripples are felt in the other domains. Firstly, it analyzes the military as an instrument of national power and shows that it is used more in peace than war. The analysis is strengthened from a realist perspective that embraces the present international environment. The paper also shows the interlinking of the other instruments of power with the military to establish its fungible nature. Finally, the paper examines the fungible nature of military power and outlines few imperatives in the context of small nations.

³ As Paul Kennedy, emphasizing the connection of military and economic power, writes, "... the fact remains that all of the major shift in the world's military-power balances have followed alterations in the *productive* balances." (*Emphasis in original*). *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*, Army Education Press, Lahore, p.567.

II. CONCEPTUALIZING THE POWER OF STATE

The most obvious definition of power is perhaps 'the ability of A to get B to do (or prevent from doing) X.'⁴ Following this definition, one may infer that when a bigger power concedes to a smaller power, the later is more powerful than the former. This, however, would be too simplistic a conclusion. While the example signifies the existence of power with both the parties, it however does not capture the situational and contextual pretext in which this power game might have taken place. The contextual complexity at a given time may compel a bigger power to concede to the demand of a smaller power (For example American withdrawal from North Vietnam). However, a superior nation's willingness to resolve issues with the small nations could also be argued as an 'act of benevolence'; but it has long been seen that in international politics, state behaves more out of interest than simple benevolence, and power (or the quest for gaining more power) remains central to the furtherance of state's interest. Thus power in international system is more of a qualitative concept as it includes relational, contextual and highly dynamic situational parameters.

Arguing from a societal and individualistic context, futurist like Alvin Toffler termed power as an 'inescapable aspect of every human relationship.'⁵ He contends that 'in its most naked form, power involves the use of *violence, wealth, and knowledge* (in the broadest sense) to make people perform in a given way (emphasis added).'⁶ The first two variables of Toffler's trinity of power (violence and wealth) can easily be equated with the military might and the economic power of a nation in traditional sense. However, it is the third variable, 'knowledge' that Toffler terms as the 'high quality power' that would matter amidst the astonishing changes of the twenty first century. He goes much further by terming knowledge as the most 'democratic source of power.' Indeed, as the argument follows that like bullet (i.e. military power) or budget (i.e. economic power), knowledge does not get 'used up' and might be available to the rich and the poor at the same time. Toffler's argument does not run

⁴ Barry B Hughes, *Continuity and Change in World Politics : Competing Perspectives*, Third Edition, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1997, p. 79.

⁵ Alvin Toffler, *Power shift*, Bantam Books, New York, 1991, p.3.

⁶ *Ibid*, p.14.

contrary to our understanding of the importance of the military power. Because, even in knowledge based society the sublimated tool of violence in the form of ‘law’ is closely escorted by the ultimate threat of violence as the final guarantor. Indeed as Toffler writes “...behind every law, good or evil, we find the barrel of a gun.”⁷ Thus, notwithstanding the fact that the power of knowledge remains central to the ultimate game of power, its attributes can play a greater role in amplifying the military power irrespective of rich and poor, east or west, left or right in a realist world scenario.

Power is also one of the four premises of realism.⁸ The realist world view considers the balance of power as a main theme of statecraft⁹ and the currency of international relations. The tools of statecraft fall generally into the categories of diplomacy, economic instrument, and the use of force. Realist however put a great deal of emphasis on the military power as some believes that the states are inherently hard-wired with this *animus domanandi*.¹⁰ Power, with its inherent coercive and attractive components, can influence the successful prosecution of the tools of the statecraft in achieving state interest. Again, power potential of a country is the product of many inputs like population, geography, natural resources, industrial capabilities, military capabilities, leadership, diplomacy, will, and perception. Taking into account the power potentials and the tools of statecraft we could describe and categorize the application of power through four instrumental areas: political/diplomatic, economic, informational, and military. These instruments of power (IOPs) stay at

⁷ As tersely put by former French President Charles De Gaulle, “the law must have force on its side.” *Ibid*, p.39.

⁸ The other three main premises of realism are: *state* is the unitary actor; States are rational in the pursuit of their *state interests*, primarily security and autonomy and the state system without central authority is a world of *anarchy* as such there exist a security dilemma. Even good individuals, in an anarchic environment, act from self-interest in ways that may endanger the interest of others. See for details Hughes, *Ibid*, pp. 47- 49.

⁹ Statecraft, as defined by Hughes is “the artful application of state power, guided by an understanding of the contemporary state system and a vision of desired change in it.” Hughes, *Ibid*, p.58.

¹⁰ Amongst others, the most prominent realist to propagate such idea is Hans J. Morganthau. See for details, “The Balance of Power,” in Phil Williams, Donald M Goldstein and Jay M. Shafritz (ed), *Classic Readings of International Relations*, Harcourt Brace College Publisher, New York, 1994, pp.203-205

the top of the statecraft’s triangle (figure 1) and a carefully synthesized grand strategy engaged through these instrument of powers can meet the national objectives by protecting the vital and important interest and thereby ensuring security and prosperity of a nation.

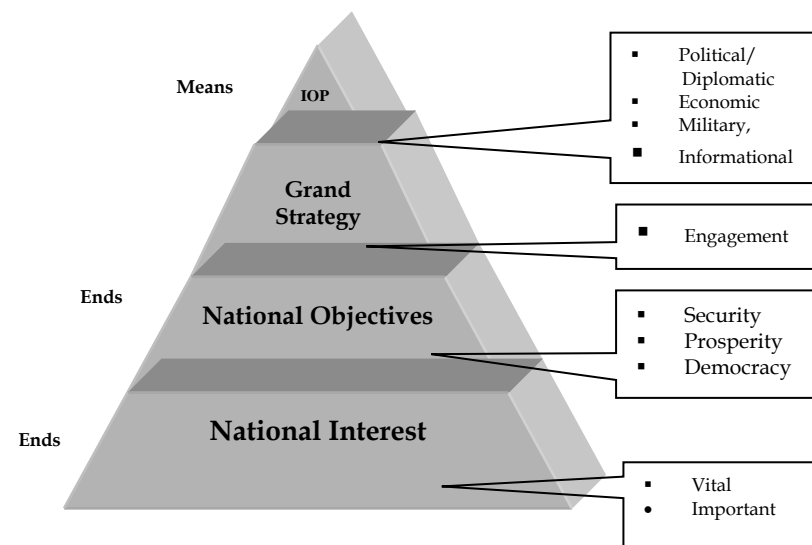


Fig 1: Higherarchy of Statecraft Triangle

With these understandings, let us now examine how the military instrument of power becomes fungible and influences the other instrument of power.

III. FUNGIBILITY OF MILITARY POWER

Fungibility Defined

Fungibility, though not synonymous with pervasiveness but encompasses most of its virtues. It also implies the notion of versatility. A power can be called fungible when its direct or indirect effect can be felt in other fields as well. Much like a liquid, a power when attains fungibility, swaps, spills over and gravitates to shape things beyond its own domain. In that sense all powers are fungible to

some degree. However, our focus here is the military power and its versatile nature that can affect or shape events in the non-military domain. It would be too naive to propose that the military power is the pivot and most fungible of all the instruments of power. In fact, it is not.¹¹ The orientation of military power being the pivot of national power is a thing of the past. Until the middle of the 20th century, military power enjoyed the pre-eminence above all other powers. Perceptions of national security of any particular nation used to be measured by the military prowess of the country - its long standing army, naval armada and so on. However, that has changed with the industrial revolution and the economic power has been and still for many analysts has become the main yardstick for judging the power of a nation.

Economic Power is Symbiotic to Military Power

The economic power of a nation surely merits greater attention, as it underlines the competitive advantage of a country. It is also the vehicle that drives a nation state to acquire the required military power to rise. The empirical evidence of the symbiotic relationship between the military and economic power had captivated many scholars to theorize the issue as Paul Kennedy's writes in his famous book *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*: "It was clear to a Renaissance prince as it is to the Pentagon today that military power rests upon adequate supplies of wealth, which in turn drive from flourishing productive base, from healthy finance, and from superior technology."¹² Thus, not surprisingly, the Gross National Product (GNP), Gross Domestic Product (GDP), per capita income etc. of a country is the preferred sound bites now-a-days to grade a nation in any power index. Following the WW II, the remarkable economic progress of the big (like Germany and Japan) and small nations (like Switzerland and Sweden) are often cited to validate the economic power as the most dominant element of the national power structure.

¹¹ 'Money' (i.e. economic power) and 'political skill' is considered as the two most liquid assets. Most analysts agree that money is most fungible of all powers as Baldwin argues (to which Robert J. Art agrees) that "no political power resource begins to approach the degree of fungibility of money. See note 3 in Robert J Art & Kenneth N Waltz, *op cit*, p.22.

¹² Paul Kennedy, *Ibid*, pp. 566-567.

What remain un-examined though are the 'role of chance' and the contribution of the other instruments of power to achieve the remarkable feat of these countries. For example, Switzerland and Sweden (both small nations) were among the very few European countries that came out unscathed from the devastation of the WW II. Their neutral policy (through the use of the diplomatic and political instrument of power) during the War meant that most of their industries remained intact and the countries were in a position to satisfy the demand of the other nations surrounding them.¹³ Had they been engulfed in the WW II, for which the military power would have been essential to survive the onslaught, the story could have been different. The compulsory military service in Switzerland is also a catalyst for the rapid industrial growth of that country as Michael Porter notes, "Many Swiss cite this (i.e. the compulsory military training) as a strength for industry. Nearly all Swiss citizens receive some military training and are taught discipline."¹⁴

Though different, the case of Japan and Germany, that faced the brunt of the war, does not defy the symbiotic relationship between the military power and economic power. This has been most emphatically argued by Major General Vinod Saighal in his article 'From Economic Intelligence to Strategic Intelligence':

*"The examples of Germany and Japan could be misleading. Both these countries were anchored firmly in some of the strongest military pacts that the world has ever seen. As a hypothesis, just for a moment, lift Germany out of its NATO anchor and Japan from under its US umbrella and position these countries, one each in Africa or the Middle East. In these new locations, especially during the periods of turmoil of the last half-century, could anyone really say that they would not have had to give almost equal weightage independently to their military security."*¹⁵

The General goes much further by depicting the relationship of different variables of national security. He argues that in present

¹³ Michael E. Porter, *The Competitive Advantage of Nations*, The Free Press, New York, 1990 pp. 328 & 352.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.320.

¹⁵ Major General Vinod Saighal, *Restructuring South Asian Security*, Manas Publication, New Delhi, 2000, pp. 36-37.

context (1998), the Crude Military Might (CMM) of a country features almost ¼ of the pie of national security perception (figure 2). He, however, contends that a strong and independent UN institution in the future may significantly reduce the requirement of the state's CMM in a global stability model while the reverse would be true in case of UN becoming less powerful or irrelevant (figure 3 & 4). In both the cases the economic power will increasingly become more essential ingredient and will dominate the perception of national security.

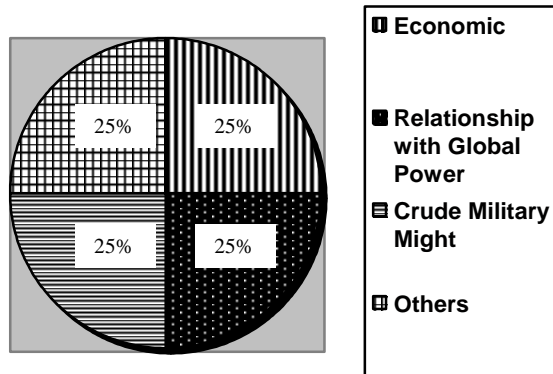


Figure 2: Perception of National Security Today

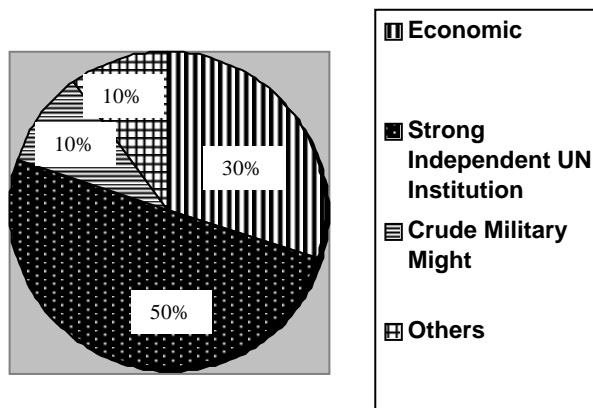


Fig 3: Perception of National Security likely to obtain around 2050 (Global Stability Model)

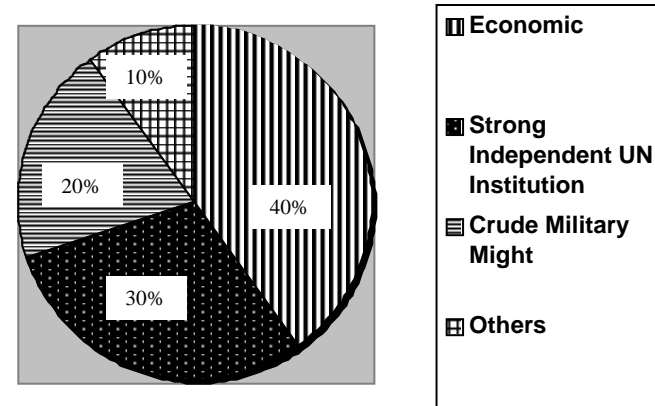


Fig 4: Perception of National Security likely to obtain around 2050 (Global instability Model)

Source: Major General Vinod Saighal, Restructuring South Asian Security, p.38

One significant fact that can be deduced from this, as Saighal argues, is that a strong independent UN institution may pay the required peace dividend that would significantly reduce the requirement of military power of individual states. Presumably, such assertions are based on the understanding that the collective security need would be taken care of by the UN in a more robust and comprehensive manner easing out the pressure on the individual nations to concentrate more on economic emancipation of its people. In either case, the relationship between the military power and economic power and their interdependency is well captured. In sum, in metaphorical term, the economic power and the military power of a nation is like twin brothers, one feeds into the other to be stronger while the other acts as a protector of the former.

Military Power Undergirds Political and Diplomatic Power

The interrelationship between military power and political power needs to be viewed in the context of both war and peace. If war is ‘an instrument of politics,’ as Clausewitz asserted, military power is the tool to wage war. In fact, since Clausewitz’s time the primacy of politics in the use of military power has been effectively underscored recognizing ‘war’ as just ‘another expression’ of the political power. Indeed as Clausewitz so wittily questions “...Is war not just another

expression of their thoughts, another form of speech or writing? Its grammar, indeed, may be its own but not its logic.”¹⁶ Thus the relationship between politics and military power during war seems inherently indivisible. But we need to establish more than just the connection of politico-military power to validate the fungibility of military power during war. What we need to establish is that a military-to-military confrontation can bring more than just military results. Robert J. Art opines that this is often achieved through the ‘spill over effect’ as he puts:

*‘Military-to-military encounters do not produce only military results ... They also bring about political effects that significantly influence events in other domains. Military power achieves much of its fungibility through this effect: the political shock waves of a military encounter reverberate beyond the military domain and extend into the other policy domain as well. The exercise of successful deterrence, compellence, or defence affects the overall political framework.’*¹⁷

It is not difficult to find the examples of how the ‘political shock waves’ of military encounters work. Arguably, the dramatic U turn of Libyan aspiration for nuclear weapon and weapons of mass destruction owes much to the US adoption of the policy of preemption and the prosecution of war in Iraq. Notwithstanding the fact that the US and her allies are far from calling the war in Iraq a success, the very conduct of the military invasion has caused new alignment in international politics, compelling the Chinese to rethink their military strategies and modernize their military and raised concerns in Syria and Iran.¹⁸ Interestingly, such spill over effects could be either positive or negative based on the perception, context and capacity of the actors. Some scholars have argued that the US strategy of preemptive military

¹⁶ Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, Edited and Translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1984, p. 605.

¹⁷ Robert J. Art, “The Fungibility of Force”, in *The Use of Force Military Power and International Politics*, Robert J Art and Kenneth N. Waltz ed., Fifth Edition, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers New York, 1999, p.14.

¹⁸ Both the Iraq wars and wars in Kosovo and Afghanistan had profound ‘spill over’ effect at regional and international levels particularly so in case of China for its force modernization as well as future outlook. For more see Paul H.B. Godwin, “China’s Defence Modernization: Aspirations and Capabilities”, in *Asian Perspectives on the Challenges of China*, National Defence University Press, Washington D.C. 2001.

strike may work more as an incentive for some small nations (particularly those which are not an allies of the US) to acquire the weapons of mass destruction as their only deterrence against the whims of a superpower.¹⁹ Thus the spill-over effect of a military-to-military encounter also embodies a negative connotation that may complicate the security environment.

Nevertheless, war is not a rule but exception. Military power is *more often used in peace* than war as countries remain in a state of peace for more duration than war. Thus to analyze the fungibility of military power only from its war time application would amount to missing a whole lot from the total picture. Incidentally, the interpretation of the versatility of military power in peace time is much more complex and daunting as Art says, ‘used peacefully, military power is held at the ready and its exact influence on political outcomes becomes more difficult to trace.’²⁰ It is difficult because much of its influence is ‘less decisive’ and often does not stand out alone. It is also difficult because rarely the military option is spelled out during any peaceful engagement of national interest. It is rather left out as an implicit element to keep the other party guessing. That is why we have hardly seen responsible countries making explicit threats of using military power against a potential adversary in international politics during peace time. Implicit, rather than explicit use of military power in peace time, though adds to the complexity of assessment, is often more effective particularly for small nations, as will be examined later.

Arguably, military power finds its most implicit use in the permissive environment of diplomatic realm. Diplomacy²¹ is often stated as the ‘first line of defence’ and it is particularly true in case of

¹⁹ See for more in Kenneth E. Sharpe and William M. LeoGrande, *Small Nations’ Last Defense those threatened by U.S. pre-emption seek a shield in weapons of mass destruction*, available at <http://www.collegenews.org/x2349.xml>.

²⁰ Robert J Art & Kenneth N Waltz, *op cit*, p.3.

²¹ Diplomacy is “the process by which policies are converted from rhetoric to realities, from strategic generalities to the desired actions or inactions of other government”. Countries are bided by the Article 33 of UN Charter to peruse diplomatic means to resolve any conflict as it reads: “The parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their choice.” See UN Charter and Hughes, *op cit*, pp.89 & 253

small nations. The importance of military power to gain required diplomatic leverage at the international level can be best explained from the realist's perception of anarchy. According to the realist's world view, there exists no higher authority above states with some real capabilities to enforce judgment. At this level, states have to take care of their interest either through their own power or by forging alliance with more powerful states. This has been most aptly captured by a leading neo-realist of our time Kenneth Waltz: "In international politics force serves, not only as the ultima ratio, but indeed as the first and constant one."²² While one may have reservation about such strong endorsement of military power, but the fact remains that the core component of most diplomatic negotiation (and coercive diplomacy in particular) is the 'risk' and 'fear'.²³ Indeed, as Barry Hughes calls diplomacy as the "velvet glove" that conceals the iron hand of power. The fear of losing something or everything, isolation, boycott, embargo, tariff is often the perceptions that drive the parties to agree to the diplomatic solution. Though the military power is not the only instrument that can generate fear, it nevertheless is an important one. The combination of force and diplomacy is what is often termed as coercive diplomacy. Surely, thus, the military power undergirds the diplomatic instrument of power to a great extent.

IV. IMPERATIVES FOR SMALL NATIONS

Military Power of Small Nations

Military power of small nations has a checkered history. At one end we have countries like Singapore where the military power, clipped by the skill of political leadership, has made remarkable stride to the 'total defence' of a tiny nation; while some South Asian and Latin American countries stand in the other extreme where the military power was manipulated in the pretext of perceived insecurity and national crisis and promoted dictatorial regimes abandoning the

²² Robert J Art & Kenneth N Waltz, *op cit*, p. 5.

²³ As Sumit Ganguli and Micheal R. Kraig writes, "At its heart, coercive diplomacy tries to create a dramatically heightened sense of risk – an urgent fear by the elites of the targeted state that if they do not reverse course, disaster will surely ensue." see for an interesting analysis of coercive diplomacy in Indo-Pak context, 'The 2001-2002 Indo-Pakistan Crisis: Exposing the Limits of Coercive Diplomacy', in *Security Studies*, Volume 14, Number 2, April-June 2005, p.293.

democratic norms. To some extent Pakistan, through successive military takeovers has been trapped in a spin where the country is arguably no more governable without the military. The inherent danger of such dictatorship was aptly captured by Socrates in Plato's Republic, "...a state may be ruled by a despot, or a democracy, or an aristocracy... a democracy makes democratic laws, a despot autocratic ones, and so on."²⁴ Indeed, the exploitation of military power in small nations is perhaps the greatest challenge to the understanding and growth of military as a fungible instrument of national power. Let us set the record straight. The abuse (or use) of military power to seize the control of the state functionary in whatever pretext runs contrary to the concept of statecraft in present international system. One must not be tempted to draw conclusion from the examples in the history (like Portugal and Brazil in the early 70s) where military takeovers had brought stability, economic progress and discipline in a county.²⁵ What is missing from these examples is the question of *legitimacy*.²⁶ Military rule lacks legitimacy in current international system and without legitimacy the other instruments of national power suffer in a globalized world. The manipulation of military power by feeding into people's sense of insecurity runs contrary to the fungibility of military power that one would intend to achieve in the context of small nations. Prof Zillur Rahman makes the case quite eloquently in the South Asian context as he asserts:

"For small nations such manipulation in transforming a perception of insecurity into offensive armed action can be seriously detrimental to nation-building and identity resolving goals. Both historically and ideologically such a move is untenable and potentially dangerous. The strategy of "might is

²⁴ *Republic of Plato*, Oxford University Press, p.18.

²⁵ For example the dictatorship of Antonio Oliveria Salazar and his successor Marcello Caetano in Portugal brought a degree of stability to that country while the Brazilian military government presided over a remarkable economic growth from 1968 – 1973. However, in both the cases, it was not sustainable as the Brazilian economy collapsed in the face of world oil crisis and the military government of Portugal had to cave in to the democratic reform by 1976. See for details Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Avon Books, New York, 1992.pp. 15-23

²⁶ Joseph Nye theorized the idea of legitimacy as "soft power" while Fukuyama underlined the importance of legitimacy by concluding that "it (i.e. legitimacy) is crucial to even the most unjust and bloody-minded dictatorship." see *op. cit*.

right” could be manageable to a point by resource rich nations, but it certainly would spell disaster for resource starved small states of South Asia and elsewhere.”²⁷

Fungibility in the Context of Small Nations

However, where we need to focus is not the abuse of the military power but its correct use to exploit its fungibility in the context of small nations. Small nations by its very nature have many external and internal vulnerabilities. Internal vulnerabilities include issues related to security, economic emancipation, natural calamities, disaster etc. Appropriate *direct* use of military power to address these issues may bring due dividend in strengthening the political and economic power of small nations. Empirical evidence suggests that the successful application of military instrument coupled with a political endgame to solve the insurgency problem in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh has strengthened the unitary character of the state. By any account, this was a successful story where the fungibility of military power had undergird the political power to preserve the national character of the country. The reverse is happening in case of Sri Lanka where the military is grappling to quell an insurgency, (of a different magnitude and character) and the failure of which may undermine the political character and economic progress of the country. However, this would be too naïve to suggest that there is a military solution to all the insurgency problems that small nations so often face. Arguably, military’s role becomes relevant only in the context where an ethnic group, consolidating its political power, reaches to a point where it can challenge the democratic system and the territorial identity of the nation. This is particularly crucial in case of small nations not having a federalist arrangement as it may sow the seed of further disintegration of the nation. Indeed, as Christian Wagner observes, “The risk of a potential escalation from competition between groups to a violent ethnic separatist’s movement creates a permanent tension and poses an obvious threat to the territorial and ideological claims of any central

²⁷ Zillur Rahman Khan, “South Asian Security and the Implications for Small States,” *Journal of International Affairs*, Volume 3, Number 2, January-June 1997, pp.3-4.

government.”²⁸ In such a situation, *measured application* of military power can help to preserve the national integrity and strengthen the political power of the democratically elected central government.

Notwithstanding the state of fragmented democracy in Pakistan, one could argue that its military is playing a vital role in its ‘war against terrorism’ which seems to be the most important laurel attached to the government to garner international legitimacy. The sheer number of Pakistani troops killed in action during this war on terror on their own soil justifies the seriousness of the central government to address a highly difficult and complex mission that was long overdue. The situation was further complicated with the fall of *Talibans* in Afghanistan, as a good number of them took shelter inside Pakistan adding to its internal vulnerabilities and eroding the power of the central government. Appreciating the problem, Musharraf rightly identified that the main threat to Pakistan was not external but were ‘terrorism, religious extremism and sectarian violence.’ Thus a politico-military solution to the problem ensued in earnest to restore the legitimacy of central government. Indeed the operations in Beluchistan against the nationalist Beluchistan Liberation Army (BLA) and in inhospitable terrain in North of Waziristan against the al-Qaeda coupled with a political process to address the grievances of Beluch people²⁹ underscores the interlink between the political and military power that can come to rescue the internal security vulnerabilities of a small nation. Irrespective of how one views the current state of democracy in Pakistan, the political dividend of these military actions could be far-reaching if applied prudently and may benefit successive governments by adding to the unitary character of the central government and domestic political will.

The precipitating effect of military power on the economy of small nations is also worth examining. Military expenditure in case of small nation is generally viewed negatively often without recognizing its symbiotic relationship with the economic power as explained earlier.

²⁸ Christian Wagner, Democracy and State in South Asia between Fragmentation and Consolidation? *Asian Survey* Volume XXXIX, Number 6, November/December 1999, p. 923.

²⁹ Following the *Dera Bugti* incident in Beluchistan that left 45 people dead, the government instructed the Parliamentary Committee to make recommendations addressing the grievances of the Beluch people.

The dividend of physical security offered by the military power of a nation is an important commodity in any business matrix. Say for example, a bank³⁰ where we put our money is considered to be solvent, i.e. capable of returning our money when asked for. Many would define the solvency of a bank in purely financial terms. But solvency, as Art argues 'is a function not simply of finance, but of physical safety.' The function of the liquidity and the physical safety of the money define the solvency of a bank. One would not keep his money in a bank that has no physical security. For example, the liquidity state of the banks in the war torn Somalia is certainly not comparable with that of a stable country. The fact that 'state makes banks physically secure by using its military power to deter and defend against would be robbers...' makes the case of fungibility of small nation's military power. The need for such physical security exists in all economic spheres and lack of institutional developments in small nations often puts a greater demand on the military power to attend to these needs. The recent demand by the garments industry owners in Bangladesh to deploy military to protect their factories speaks of such realities.

Internal Imperatives

Building and Maintaining a Sustainable Military Power. The first imperative for small nation is not to lose focus from the requirement of building and maintaining a small but robust military power sustainable by its economy. Such establishment, as noted above, will strengthen the other instruments of power, while the absence of it may seriously undermine the strength of those. However, having a large standing military may stress the economy and also reflect an aggressive posture that any small nation can ill afford. Thus it would be prudent to have a small but well equipped, trained and professional military supplemented by a large paramilitary or reserve that may be inducted into the active service in time of need. This would reduce the burden on the economy and also be commensurate with the non-aggressive posture of small nations. As the above graph shows (figure 5), countries like Switzerland and Singapore maintains small active military forces (only 4,300 and 72,500 strong respectively)

³⁰ This example is borrowed from Robert J Art with some modification in the context of this paper. See for details, Robert J Art & Kenneth N Waltz, *op cit*, p.15.

manageable by their economy that adds to their non-aggressive posture, while at the same time their large paramilitary/reserve forces

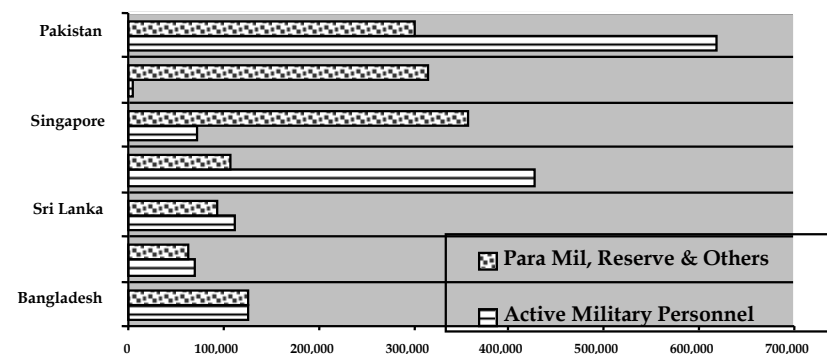


Fig 5. Strength of Military Personnel of Some Selected Small Nations

Source: *The Military Balance, 2005.2006*.

(well above 300,000 in strength) remain key to their overall military potentials. Many countries invest in compulsory military training to create such large reserve force. Switzerland has a compulsory recruit training (18-21 weeks duration) for its citizens at the age of 19-20 followed by a 6-7 weeks refresher training courses over a 10 year period between age 20-30. Approximately 113,200 Swiss of all ranks were trained in 2004.³¹ Similarly, Singapore's strength of over 300,000 'operationally ready' conscripts and reservists is made possible following its policy of universal compulsory military training spread over a 13 year training cycle including several weeks in-camp training.³² On the contrary, the large active military in Myanmar and Pakistan has arguably affected the political and economic potentials of those two nations.

Maximize the Implicit Use of Military Power. Having met the requirement of building and maintaining a small and robust military small nations should preserve and confine its use in the form of implicit threat as opposed to an explicit one, especially while

³¹ See for details, *The Military Balance, 2005.2006*, International Institute for Strategic Studies, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, London, Oct 2005, p. 129.

³² For details, see Tim Huxley, *Defending The Lion City, The Armed Forces of Singapore*, Allen & Unwin, Australia, 2000, p. 29.

confronting a big power. The escalatory nature of explicit military threats may often go out of hand for a small nation and even proved to be detrimental to the use of diplomatic and political instrument of power. For example, a small nation can hardly afford to have a declared policy of preemption as in the case of the USA. While such prescription may not suit in all situations, it however is the most preferred one. The implicit use of military power in combination with the diplomatic efforts allows the fungibility of military power to work at its best and may yield the desired outcome in case of small nations.³³ Creating a credible military deterrent, high standard of operational readiness of the forces, and the grooming and posturing of the total populace to rise for the righteous cause of defending the nation are enshrined in the implicit use of military power for a small nation.

Involving the Military in Developmental Issues. The resource constraints and the lack of institutional development of other state organs often obviate the need of involving the military of small nations in developmental activities. For example, in Bangladesh, the military has been used to tackle problems as diverse as distributing foods through VGF (vulnerable group feeding) card, safe drinking water, building roads in Chittagong Hill Tracts and even *Asrayon Prokolpo* (shelter for the poor). The situational factors and the lack of capacity of other government organizations often contribute to the employment of the military on such developmental issues. Nevertheless, such involvement surely adds impetus to the wellbeing of its people. Indeed, apart from their traditional roles, military personnel of many small nations are involved in similar types of developmental activities in many peace keeping missions. However, in the domestic front, such use of military is rather a patch work than a permanent solution to the problem. Routine involvement of large number of active duty military personnel in developmental activities may be counterproductive in the long run. However, if the skills of military personnel are the premium, the focus should be to develop individual capacity through compulsory or voluntary military training. Indeed, the Singapore and Swiss examples, as previously observed, serves as references for the small nations. The idea should be to

³³ As Art concludes, "In short, in a permissive realm like anarchy, where implicit threats inhere, force bolsters diplomacy..." *op cit* p.5

provide training and capacity building in individual citizens through voluntary or compulsory military training which will have a cascading effect in other areas of development.

External Imperatives

Strengthening the UN. The deficit in military potentials to address the external vulnerabilities demands the strengthening of the UN as the number one imperatives of small nations. This is particularly true in an era where UN has been increasingly marginalized mostly by the major powers. Apart from the US, India has also, for the first time, agreed to multinational military operations with the US without a UN mandate.³⁴ This significant shift of policy of an emerging global power makes it all the more relevant to strengthen the UN to respond to the security needs of small nations. Indeed, UN is the only viable international organization that any small nation should first count on to leverage third party threats against her adversary. More so, a strong and non-discriminatory UN may reduce the burden of military expenditure of small nations as explained earlier. Thus it is important for the small nations to be proactive to UN's demand by contributing troops, assets and materials whenever asked for. By actively participating in the peacemaking and peace building operations under UN leadership, small nations can exert more moral and diplomatic pressure on the adversary during the time of need and possibly count on UN's timely intervention. In sum, the international visibility of the small nations by contributing troops for peacekeeping missions captures the fungibility of military power in the context of small nations.

Building Alliance. Small nations should also be proactive in building alliance with regional or extra-regional power based on its existential realities and geopolitics. Such alliance may not necessarily be a military one but in all conceivable forms. The power of commercial transactions between states to diffuse tensions, as outlined by Adam Smith, aptly reflects the truth. Military alliances often play a determining role in maintaining the security balance and also in the outcome of war. For example, during the Iran-Iraq war, support to Iraq by Saudi Arabia, US and other nations played a vital role to outweigh

³⁴ *The Military Balance 2005.2006*, p.230.

the Iranian superiority (Iranian advantages were in the order of three to one) which was largely isolated by the international community.³⁵ Singapore's alliance with regional and extra-regional powers serves as a similar example for the small nations in a peace time environment. Owing to its peculiar existential vulnerability, the tiny city state has been instrumental in pursuing a balance of power strategy borrowing political and military strength from extra-regional powers.³⁶ However, apart from NATO, the Organization of African Union (OAU) serves as a working model of cooperative security arrangements for small nations. The increased level of cooperation through such cooperative security forums may facilitate to diffuse tension and irritants and thereby reduce the likelihood of war.

In South Asian context, such potentials exist by expanding the framework of SAARC to include military-to-military cooperation. It is interesting to note that all the major SAARC countries periodically conduct military exercises with extra-regional powers like the USA, Russia, NATO and France, but have so far remained shy to do the same with their neighbours or regional partners.³⁷ In most cases, the defence cooperation amongst the South Asian neighbours has remained limited to the goodwill visits and training exchanges. While one can theorize such trend of the South Asian countries in the parlance of power politics emphasizing the need of having 'overwhelming power' on its side, there is however examples that encourages the possibilities of military-to-military cooperation. For example, most of these small nations have turned to the military instrument of power while responding to disaster relief operations. During the recent Tsunami, India responded by sending military personnel and platform under *operation Rainbow* (to Sri Lanka), *Operation Castro* (to Maldives) and *Operation Gambhir* (to Indonesia); Bangladesh, under *Operation SAARC Bandhan* had sent medical and engineering teams, naval ships and aircraft to Sri Lanka and Maldives, while Pakistan also assisted Sri Lanka, Maldives and Indonesia by sending relief and other assistance through its military

³⁵ Hughes, *op cit*, p. 87.

³⁶ For an interesting analysis on Singapore and the regional balance of power see Tim Huxley, *op cit*, pp. 33-37.

³⁷ With the exception of *Operation Eksath*, a joint India-Sri Lanka military exercise, all other military exercises of India and Pakistan from Aug 2004 to July 2005 were with extra-regional powers/states. See for details, *Military Balance 2005.2006*, p.232.

aircraft and ships. Other small nations like Singapore, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Norway, Brunei, and South Korea made significant contribution through their military tools.³⁸ The fact that most of the small nations manifested their solidarity through the military tools of statecraft (i.e. sending military aircraft and ships loaded with food and supply) during the Tsunami reflects that potential of defence cooperation amongst these countries.

V. END THOUGHTS

Ignoring the military power of small nations and viewing it as a burden is like Macbeth saying about jealousy not regicide. One needs to recognize that, most often nation states remain in peace and not in war; this underlines the dual character of military power as an *instrument of preserving peace* as well. Indeed the efficacy of any particular instrument of state's power needs to be viewed by the goals it seeks to achieve through its fungibility. Notwithstanding the fact that, at its heart military force of a nation is 'an instrument of controlled fury, designed to visit death and destruction of its foes...in the righteous cause of national survival', its ultimate goal is however to deliver *peace and prosperity*. Given the fungible nature of military power, even the small nations can ill-afford to ignore the importance of building and maintaining a sustainable military power. Indeed, the fungibility of military power in the context of small nations strengthens the other instruments of national power manifold. The physical security attained by the potent military might of a small nation contributes to the creation of a stable and non-threatening environment which is essential for any economic enterprise to grow. Its coercive or direct use to address internal issues like insurgency adds to the political will and unitary character of the nation. The implicit use of military potential in the permissive realm of diplomacy is crucial for a small nation to survive in an anarchic world. Considering all these contributions of military power, the internal imperatives that follow for small nations include: having a small but professional military force with large number of paramilitary and reserves, maximizing its implicit use rather than the explicit one and involving the military in developmental activities. The external imperatives are dominated by the requirement of having a strong UN

³⁸ For details of military assistance during 2004 Tsunami, See *Ibid*, pp.257-258.

that can be garnered by remaining visible in the international arena and responding to every UN request in the form of contributing troops and assets for peacekeeping missions. Taking cue from the cooperation manifested in various disaster relief or other types of operations through the military instrument of power, the small nations of any region could build cooperative security alliance by expanding the framework of existing regional organizations. Such alliance building would reduce the likelihood of war and holds the potential for ushering a new dawn of lasting peace.