

A Dollar Game

ALL WARFARE IS BASED ON DECEPTION. THUS OBSERVED SUNZI, A contemporary of Confucius (551-479 BC), who authored the Chinese classic *The Art of War* that continues to influence military tacticians even today in both the East and West. What is true for military strategy is equally true for civilian diplomacy. Also, what is true internationally is equally true for domestic affairs. The latest observation by India's outgoing foreign secretary and ambassador-designate to the US that Pakistan's attitude towards 'terrorism' had changed could not be anything but a diplomatic hyperbole based on 'deception'. True, India's foreign policy orientation in the region has been a disaster since the days of Nehru. That India and Pakistan cannot live in peace, is a fact of life, no matter how many times they conduct parleys at foreign secretary levels or top leadership levels. Even if they somehow succeed in resolving the Kashmir tangle, maybe under the spell of a magical wand, new areas of contention would crop up. The rulers in both countries need a perennial 'no war, no peace' situation to further their vested interests. China was the first to propose the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence (*panchasheel*) that arose out of the dialogue between India and China in 1954. How does the spirit of *panchasheel* works in the region today is anybody's guess. At least it doesn't make Indian sub-continent a safer place.

Islamabad for quite some time insisted on third party intervention, more precisely Uncle Sam's mediation in the Kashmir dispute, hoping that America's award would invariably go in favour of Pakistan. Of late, they stopped completely in raising such a demand in any fora, possibly realising the bitter truth that Uncle Sam is not interested in disturbing the status quo. It's not in their best interest in the region, particularly after the end of cold war. Uncle Sam's offensive defence strategy in South Asia, particularly in Afghanistan is not solely dependent on Pakistan. The scale of US military basing in Iraq and Afghanistan is frightening by any standard. US\$ 2 billion in military construction money has reportedly been expended in only three years of the Iraq and Afghan wars. Given the present level of instability arising out of jihadist militancy, it makes sense for American strategists to curtail military expenditure in the region otherwise described as the most volatile and fragile flashpoint in the world. US \$800 million is a not a small sum for any third world economy but that is what Pakistan's military is sacrificing, to minimise American military presence on Pakistani soil. And New Delhi was quick to hail US move on curtailment of American military 'aid' to Pakistan. It's now the turn of India to rely more and more on Uncle Sam to win what it has lost—credibility to its neighbours.

Maybe, the \$800 million episode is a message to the detractors but America is not really leaving Pakistan. It's not in their strategic calculation. In short even as there are real tensions brewing in recent months over how to carry out military operation along Pakistan-Afghanistan border region, it is simply deceptive to believe that there is no agreement between every significant figure in the US administration and the military establishment of Pakistan that the current status quo, enforced by overwhelming American security perspective will be disturbed. Right now there is no viable alternative on the chessboard in terms of the dirty role Pakistan plays for America in the Afghan theatre and throughout South Asia.

New Delhi is pinning too much hope on the deterioration of strategic partnership between America and Pakistan. But Islamabad has already changed its strategic calculation by way of strengthening Pakistan-China partnership in almost every field. Washington cannot block

it. Nor can India do much other than expressing concerns and feeling restless because of growing Pakistan-China cooperation. Just a few weeks back both Pakistan and China observed 60 years of their diplomatic ties with a grandiose showbiz. On that occasion Islamabad rulers literally projected China as a counter-weight to American unilateralism. As for geographical distribution of China's foreign 'aid', including military 'aid', Pakistan occupies a significant position. And it matters a lot in maintaining stability and equilibrium in South Asia. No doubt what worries the policy makers in the White House is the growing Chinese influence in Islamabad.

Unless India's foreign policy drive becomes more dynamic and accommodating nothing is going to change favourably for India and there is no reason to believe that the Nehru legacy of Himalayan blunder will be reversed anytime soon. □□□