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Defense policy and the Qur'an

Prof. Khurshid Ahmad

The prime objective of a nation's defense policy is national security. It manifests commitment to safeguard sovereignty, territorial integrity and ideological moorings for smooth sailing of a system of governance. Translating these targets into reality is possible only when a nation has strength and power at its command to meet any challenge arising from within or without. This strength should be formidable enough to snatch the enemy's velour to launch any offensive. The enemy should be made aware that war will bring destruction and suffering to itself. The current military jargon for such capability is deterrence

Needless to say, that weakness coupled with the will to suppress the weak invites aggression, and that guarantee of peace and amity lies in the muscles to defend it. It is natural and a historical fact-not particular to the contemporary world politics prevailing for ages that power to defend cradles security and freedom. A nation becomes a stooge, a henchman in the hands of global powers when it waives the pledge to defend its freedom, integrity and intrinsic values. In such a case, having a flag to hoist, a national anthem to play on and days to celebrate make no sense. Rather, they ridicule a nation's self-esteem and ego, which it has bequeathed to others.

While exploring this facet of national defense, Walter Lipman, a famous political philosopher, opines:

"A nation has security when it does not have to sacrifice its legitimate interest to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by war." (Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, 1968)

The fundamental principle: Seen in the light of global politics and the history of war and peace, the above given is the golden principle of national defense and security. Let us now see what Allah Almighty has ordained in this respect, in the Holy Qur'an, for the Muslim to follow:

"Against them make ready, your strength to the utmost of your power, including strides of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies, of Allah and your enemies, and others besides, whom ye may not know, but whom Allah doth know. Whatever ye shall spend in the cause of Allah, shall be repaid unto you, and ye shall not be treated unjustly." (Surah VIII: 60)

Sayyid Abdul A'la Maududi while elaborating this verse says:

"For a timely advancement, you must have war equipment and an ever-ready standing army at your disposal. It should not be that in a situation when danger is afoot, you are pulling together recruits, volunteers and necessary equipment in haste. By the time these preparations are complete, the enemy might have accomplished its task."

Tafheem-al-Qur'aan, Vol 2, p. 155) (Highlighting another aspect of it, Ameen Ahsan Islafu writes

"The implied meanings of 'Ribat- ul-Khyal' is the horses trained and preserved exclusively for war. Ordinary horses cannot meet this need. The major reliance in wars those days was upon the horses alone, which, keeping in view the special climate of Arab soil, were trained with special care. Muslims here are directed the same thing to prepare the able-bodied people for 'Jihad' and have trained horses for this purpose. In this verse, Muslims are asked to augment and pile up their military strength vis-a-vis numerical, ornamental and by way of other resources. Horses; in those times wars, had the same importance as clinched by tanks and aeroplanes these days. In the battle of Badr, Muslims had very few horses at their disposal which in later stages were increased."

In the verse "To strike terror (into the hearts of) the enemies, of Allah and your enemies" - is stated the objective of these preparations which is to keep your and the enemies of Allah terrorized so that they dare not attack considering you a soft and easy target.

The second part of the verse, "Whatever ye shall spend in the cause of Allah," is referred to as the encouragement on spending in war preparations to bring the fact home that not even a single penny of it will go waste. (Tadabbar-ul-Qur'aan, Vol III pp. 193-194)

Mufti Muhammad Shafi makes it clearer, when he says: "Make all possible military preparations against the infidels...." This is then further explained by using the word "force" meaning the power to combat. It includes all warheads and vehicles, also, personnel training and exercises.

The Qur'an here did not mention the specific arrangements then used. It rather said "force" which could mean any equipment in any age and place. Arrows, swords, etc., were used then. Later came rifles and cannons and now it is the age of bombs and rockets. The word "force" includes all this. Therefore, Muslims today should, as far as possible, go for tanks, nuclear warheads, fighter planes and submarines, and must acquire all knowledge and technical understanding needed for the preparation and if all this is done for the defense of Islam and the Muslims, it will men Jihad as ordained.

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For defense preparation and waging war, finance is needed. The excellence of such spending in the way of Allah and its great reward is thus stated, "That what you (the Muslims) spend by way of this cause, will be fully compensated." (Maarif al-Qur'an, Vol IV, pp. 272- 274)

Four broad principles and goals, at least, can easily be deduced from deeper study of the above quoted verse:

- It is binding on the believers to equip themselves to tackle crises. Any negligence in this aspect may invite dire consequences.

War preparations include standing army's numerical strength, ammunition quality and quantity, war tactics, technological mastery and swift logistic movements. These preparations must be at par with the technological sophistication of the age and the combative strength of the enemy troops.

- In size and quality, the preparation must fulfil two objectives:

- To correspond to capability and resource endowment; and

- To be effective in creating terror in the enemy and snatching its spirit to launch aggression. This capability as mentioned above is the deterrence.

- This exercise warrants men and material sacrifices. Allah has full right on our wherewithal and persons. It is obligatory on us to cater to the needs of the forces striving to defend our faith and sovereignty. Muslims should never neglect acquiring necessary force or to spare resources for this aim. Spending on defense and to satiate the needs of the poor is the best expense of a Muslim's wealth. The Qur'an says:

"O ye who believe! May I lead you to a bargain that shall save you from grievous penalty? That ye believe in Allah and His Prophet; and that you wage 'jihad' in the way of Allah, employing your property and your persons: That will be best for you, if you could understand." (Surah L, xi: 10-11)

At another place, Allah says: "In whose wealth is a set right for the (needy) who ask and him who is deprived." (Surah L, xx: 24- 25)

Principles and goals of the Pakistan defense policy must be set in the light of the aforementioned Qur'anic verses. Thus, the objective of our internal and foreign policies should be to defend faith, freedom, and integrity and to ensure national honor and peace. This is possible only when we have proper threat perception in the regional and international scenario, and are morally and militarily fully commensurate with the task.