

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Many individuals with myopic vision questioned the relevance of space activities in a newly independent nation, which was finding it difficult to feed its population. Their vision was clear if Indians were to play meaningful role in the community of nations, they must be second to none in the application of advanced technologies to their real-life problems. They had no intention of using it as a means of displaying our might.

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During the last 50 years, we have primarily had a space programme with scientific and socio-economic based objectives. This line of orientation would have been acceptable had the other nations not utilised space for military objectives. Another factor to consider for orientation, is that our likely adversary China has tested ASAT capabilities and displayed an aggressive intent especially during border incursions.

As per Cohen and Dasgupta¹, "One of the most remarkable attributes of India as an independent nation has been its longstanding restraint in military strategy. Reticence in the use of force as an instrument of state policy has been the dominant political condition for Indian thinking on the military, including military modernization. From the initial delay in sending troops to defend Kashmir in 1948 to the twenty-four-year hiatus in testing nuclear weapons, India has used force mainly in response to grave provocation and as an unwelcome last resort." All this appears laudable but the major concern is can we afford to carry on this way. We have paid dearly in the

¹ Cohen Stephen and Dasgupta, Sunil (2013). *Arming Without Aiming*. Washington DC: Brooklins Institution Press.

1962 War with China as well as in the 1948 Kashmir Operations on account of following self imposed restraint in the military strategy.

We also need to consider whether timely military orientation of our space capabilities could have prevented the Pakistani incursion at Kargil in 1999 which largely went undetected till unintended physical contact with the enemy by our personnel.

There is an urgent need to carefully re-evaluate the above mentioned policy especially in terms harnessing available technology and capability to fully exploit the military potential offered by our assets in space. As already mentioned, information dominance provided by the satellites can make all the difference between winning a conflict or losing it rapidly.

We have also seen the contribution of space technology in nation building in our diverse and well spread country with inadequate infrastructure; therefore, protecting satellites becomes extremely important. Needless to say we require foolproof protection and redundancy for our space based capabilities. Developing and validating ASAT capability would act as a deterrent for any adversary having designs to interfere with our assets in space.

The role played by the satellites in the outcome of four major operations conducted by the US forces is a grave reminder of the direction in which we need to evolve. The most striking feature of these operations was that technology was utilised effectively firstly to reduce collateral damage, secondly to reduce attrition of own forces and thirdly to achieve optimum utilisation of the war fighting potential.

From media reports, available literature and the utterances of our strategists it is evident that we possess the capacity to develop and validate ASAT capability. What is probably holding us back is the political will, likely fallout in terms of sanctions and the prestige in international community. It is suggested that validating our ASAT capability has become a necessity especially in the face of similar tests and further aggressive exploitation by China. We have also seen practically that after our nuclear explosions in 1998, in spite of initial sanctions, our universal acceptability as a nuclear

weapons equipped state has increased. Another reason to expedite the process is the likelihood of another treaty as a follow up of OST, which may totally ban ASAT validation in future.

Our future plans especially for civil applications are ambitious. Considering the investments and substantial national dependency on our assets in space, protecting them adequately becomes imperative as any interference would result in disastrous national consequences.

Another issue which requires to be addressed immediately is that in our country the Department of Space, the DRDO and the Indian Air Force are working in isolation. We cannot have a situation where in the space assets and the security infrastructure does not work in synergy. Here we need to study how the other nations have integrated the same. As per Freese², when the US Air Force announced in 1988 that it would regard space as a mission and not just a place, it reversed decades of tradition and doctrine. Initially, space support and force enhancement were the missions associated with space, neither of them particularly controversial. Space would provide assistance to ground- and air-based war fighters. When space control and force application were added as missions in 1996, however, the Air Force began considering the potential for space as a battle space arena, creating both the potential for expanding Air Force turf and capabilities and increasing funding to accomplish the latter and a plethora of capabilities, What is evident from this statement is space as a strategic asset is an extension of airspace and in any future conflict control of space would determine the outcome of the conflict.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. India needs to clearly define military objectives of the Indian Space Programme. The capability aspired for should be broadly spelt out with

² Freese, Joan Jhonson. (2007) *Space as a Strategic Asset*. New York: Columbia University Press