

# Defeating enemies: The right war, the final victory

Acharya Prashant Opinion, Updated: May 14, 2025 14:15 pm IST



After the strike of terror in Pahalgam and India's counterattack, the region was on the edge of a catastrophic war. Public discourse became belligerent, and reports in the media generated a state of frenzy. At this point, it's necessary to pause and reflect: do we actually know what war is, its cost, its toll, its irreversible destruction?

Indeed, war can sometimes not be avoided, but it should never be driven by passion or wounded vanity. War, spiritually, isn't wrong in itself, yet like any right action, it must be caused by wisdom, not wrath, by discernment, not by public opinion. A nation's strength lies in wise calm, not passionate impulse.

The current disturbing trend is to minimise serious geopolitical conflicts into trite slogans and theatrical gestures. War is, at best, a necessary evil and should never be glorified. Even just wars entail profound responsibility and regret, never triumphalism.

### **Conscience Over Conflict**

The most perceptive perspective on war is perhaps in the Bhagavad Gita. Arjun is in a dilemma whether to fight a war; however, Shri Krishna exhorts him to take up his arms, not out of vanity or personal ambition, but in pursuit of Dharma. Only if all other avenues of peaceful mediation have been exhausted does one engage in war, but with clarity, detachment, and humility.

Arjun is not inspired to conquer; rather, he is counseled on righteous behavior based on reality. A war driven by hate creates no less suffering than the past. If one fights for justice and does not fall prey to vindictiveness, this righteous act might be for a higher cause.

### **Conflict Occurs in the Mind**

Warfare today starts not in missiles and tanks but in the minds of people. It is fueled by headlines, fed by rhetoric, and nurtured by a media too often lacking in integrity. When nationalism is manipulated, it becomes noise that silences rational thought. As war is sold as entertainment, wisdom gets edged out.

In contemporary society, television studios and internet websites are emotional factories distorting public discourse. The public becomes a passive recipient of misinformation, viewing adrenaline-charged thrillers under the guise of information, while the truth is obscured by spectacle. In such a context, escalatory calls are propelled more by emotion rather than reason, and reflective discourse becomes an increasingly rare commodity.

### **The Unseen Expenses of War**

National development is the basic responsibility of the government, and war comes in the way of that goal at every level. The cost factor alone is phenomenal during the chaos of war. It costs ₹25,000 crore to build an aircraft carrier. A

fighter aircraft: ₹2,500 crore. A battle tank: ₹100 crore. One typical war day can cost between ₹30,000 to ₹50,000 crore.

But behind the mere quantitative numbers are much more tragic costs: lives lost, infrastructure ruined, and long-term losses of national capability.

For Pakistan, the price is far worse. With its fragile economy and unstable democratic institutions, war is a necessity created by design. The entrenched influence of the military feeds on the myth of existential danger from India. As ordinary citizens endure hardships, the military increases its hold. With each war, Pakistan sinks further into internal chaos.

India, however, is destined for global leadership. A full-blown war would derail its developmental trajectory and imperil both peace and prosperity. As a civilisational power with a higher destiny, India must not get caught in self-destructive distractions.

### **The Nuclear Edge: A Gamble with No Winners**

The risk of uncontrolled escalation is both significant and catastrophic. Pakistan's weaker conventional forces raise the probability of a desperate reaction should Indian forces advance. In contrast to India, Pakistan does not adhere to a no-first-use nuclear policy. Nor does its military leadership have much respect for civilian welfare.

If Indian forces achieve significant advances, Pakistan may employ tactical nuclear weapons, which could trigger a lethal chain of nuclear reprisal.

The implications?

- Tens of millions of dead within hours.
- Cities reduced to ash.
- Rivers, ground, and the atmosphere are contaminated with radiation.
- Decades of environmental devastation and radioactive pollution.
- Mass starvation due to nuclear winter.

- Generations that have genetic disorders and diseases.

These are not fantasies. They are based on decades of worldwide scientific research and military wargames. Such a scenario would not result in victory but destruction.

## **Victory Through Vision**

What we face is not merely a hostile neighbour, but an entrenched ideology that thrives on division. The Two-Nation theory, which insists that Hindus and Muslims cannot coexist, continues to haunt the subcontinent.

But true victory is not in the defeat of the other. Instead, it lies in awakening the other to their fundamental mistake. Let India rise on the strength of its achievements in the fields of science, innovation, governance, and education. Let our success make the other introspect across the border. Let the common Pakistani reflect: What has helped India rise? Why don't we get the same freedom, dignity, and opportunity as Indians enjoy?

This is how the Cold War came to an end, not by bombs, but by intellectual progress, innovation, and the strength of democratic institutions. The Soviet model imploded beneath the weight of the USA's progress.

India needs to develop so decisively and inclusively that even its rivals are compelled to introspect about their choices.

## **Wage No War That Lacks a Spiritual Foundation**

The divide between India and Pakistan is far more profound than politics. It represents a spiritual poverty, identity, and understanding crisis. When religion is politicised, it ceases to be its true nature and instead becomes a vehicle for disintegration.

Authentic religion is founded on the principles of unity, love, and the empowerment of the individual. Peace can only be attained when the two nations reaffirm their common civilizational heritage, which connects them to higher aspirations. Nations lacking in inner clarity tend to seek meaning in outward conflicts. However, war is pointless if a nation does not possess intellectual and

spiritual wealth. The ultimate power is in becoming a beacon towards which people are drawn.

Let India be that beacon, a nation respected for its wisdom, research, economics, etc. Our true victory should be gauged by the minds we enlighten, the wrongs we right, and the futures we secure. Such a victory is the only one that lasts, and such a nation is the only one that inspires.

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