

THE WAR POTENTIAL OF TALIBAN

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The war potential of nations consist of the resources such as manpower, economic resources and administrative skills. War potential appeared to have played decisive role in the outcome of conventional wars. However in guerilla warfare motivation or will to fight plays a predominant role. Military strategists have long honoured this distinction. The ability and will to fight are not entirely independent factors. Up to a point, they support each other; and up to a point, the one can substantiate the other.

Talibans are neither trained nor equipped for a conventional war. His war potential except in the manpower has no match to a super power but the geography of Afghanistan favours a guerilla war. Strategically the terrain favours Taliban. The high, barren, Rocky Mountains of Afghanistan provides refuge and cover from the air.

When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in late December 1979, the geo-political environments were different. It was an era of cold war between the two super powers, Russia and the US. Pakistan faced a highly dangerous situation. To the east was hostile India, while now to the west, the Soviets had occupied Afghanistan. This was a dangerous situation and the likelihood of Pakistan being squeezed out of existence was a real possibility. Pakistan was left with no option but to provide help to Afghans covertly. The US, Saudi Arabia and China soon followed with material support. The US support to freedom fighters was for their national interests and not for the sake of democracy or love for Afghan Mujahideen. The US saw a chance to avenge their defeat in Vietnam.

Today the geo-political and operational environments are totally different. The whole world has united against the terrorism, the government of Taliban. The Central Asian states, having Muslim majority in their countries, are scared of the spill over of Islamic fundamentalism™ across their border. This is the case with China who has majority of Muslims in their southern provinces. Iran has its own sectarian problem with Talibans.