**Understanding Counter-Value and No-Value Targets**

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Benefitting from the Cold War literature on the military doctrines of countervalue and counterforce as the targeting philosophy, I am trying to understand the difference between the essence of its objectivity in the contemporary wars and conflicts. According to Britannica, “counterforce doctrine, in nuclear strategy, [is] the targeting of an opponent’s military infrastructure with a nuclear strike. The counterforce doctrine is differentiated from the countervalue doctrine, which targets the enemy’s cities, destroying its civilian population and economic base.” The primary purpose of these military doctrines was to avoid the population centres as far as possible, however, the first and only use of nuclear weapons by the US was very much against the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which levelled the two cities and killed over 200,000 people.

No sooner did the US realized, particularly after the Cuban Missile crisis of 1962, that its cities could be targeted by the Soviet Union, it tried to convince its rival that we must ‘avoid cities’ and fight our wars only against the targets of military value. However, the discussion remained focused on the possible use of nuclear weapons.

My concern is the use of powerful conventional weapons on the population centres, because they cause nearly equal number of deaths to the civilian non-combatants, even if does not leave the radiation effects over a long period of time.

I fail to understand the hypocritic military doctrine of countervalue that remains applicable on the western world, but when it comes to Middle East, the cities accommodating the Muslim population suddenly becomes a ‘no-value’ target. The latest being the Gaza Strip, where Israel is carrying out direct bombing on the well populated areas, schools, hospitals, and economic centres, killing innocent people who are mostly non-combatants, women and children.

Unfortunately, the sole super power of the world till date, the US has the audacity to veto the UNSC Resolutions for a ceasefire, and even the provision of medical and food aid to affected area is denied. While we all agree that ‘all lives matter’ but how can you punish the poor and innocent people of Gaza and West Bank, for the attacks on Israeli military targets by Hamas.

According toe United Nations Humanitarian Aid, over 5000 people have been killed so far in Gaza alone, out of which at least 2000 were the minors. Moreover, at least 40 UN workers have been killed in direct Israeli air strikes.

HAMAS (Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya, i.e, “Islamic Resistance Movement” or its politico-military struggle for Palestine is not new to Israel. It was founded by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, in 1987. Therefore, punishing the innocent people of Gaza for the Hamas attacks of October 7, 2023 on Israeli targets is insane. Whereas, Hamas has claimed that its latest attacks on Israel are in retaliation to “Israeli violations of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound and rising settler violence against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem.”

Perhaps, Hamas was losing hope of a peaceful resolution of an age-old dispute, because the establishment of an independent Palestinian state is not insight. As more and more Islamic states are recognizing and establishing diplomatic, economic, and military ties with Israel, the probabilities of a sovereign state for the people of Palestine is reducing with every passing day.

Israel, in fact, is very fortunate to have a solid support of the US-led west for all its doings since its recognized establishment in 1948, however, the Palestinian people are not that fortunate; unfortunately, though. The people of Palestine have not only lost lands, lives, and livings, but have been forced to live as ‘abandoned refugees’ all over the world.

It is time that the UN makes visible efforts to avert wars and conflicts, instead of reacting to provide relief and assistance to war torn and conflict-ridden areas, which are mostly located in Middle East, South Asia, and Africa.

Coming back to my title, I am still grappling to differentiate between the western world’s population centres as countervalue targets, but when it comes to the attacks on Gaza population centres, it suddenly becomes no-value target, or the legitimate counterforce target, on the allegations that Hamas fighters are present there.

The direct air attacks on the population centres, educational institutions, health facilities, and areas of common economic interests, must be banned across the globe, and condemned unequivocally by all states. However, it is intriguing to note that even the minor action against Israel hits the headlines across the globe, but the blatant violation of all international obligations by Israel are not even mentioned by the western world’s leaders in their pressers. The leadership of major powers seem to be appeasing the Israel at all times, and never even considers that the Zionist regime is causing hatred against them across the globe, even if it is not reacted as though, for obvious reasons.

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