reason enough I should think -- tend to look back upon the Eisenhower presidency with affection and more than a tinge of nostalgia as the halcyon years of the post-World War II era.

Ike's own standing with historians and experts has gone up steadily with the passing of the years, as more and more State papers are declassified, studied, and, possibly, also reappraised. Dulles' reputation, on the contrary, has, if anything, plummeted, even with Americans. In 1981, the results of a poll of 50 diplomatic historians in the US placed him in the category of 5 of the worst secretaries of state. If at all people think of him today, it is as the progenitor and proponent of such bizarre doctrines as "brinkmanship" and "massive nuclear retaliation."

Indeed Dulles' many sterling qualities were offset by certain less than endearing traits. Of gaunt and almost ascetic appearance, he was a sternly pious and moralistic son of the Manse, living in a Manichaean world of black and white, without any shades of grey. His refusal to shake Chou-en Lai's proffered hand at the 1954 Geneva Conference on Indo-China was a wholly gratuitous insult that surely did not enhance the prospects or cause of world peace. Nearly two decades on, it took Henry Kissinger -- and also President Nixon -- to make amends for this graceless act. Dulles was not even averse to cosying up to venal and unscrupulous dictators, provided, of course, they were sufficiently anti-communist. Communism for him was a monolithic menace, an evil to be combated at all costs. Neutrality on this issue was fence-sitting and, thus, immoral.

Sir Feroz Khan Noon, in his memoirs I think, described Dulles as a great friend of Pakistan. Sir Feroz should certainly know. And yet, one cannot but wonder whether Dulles' feelings or sentiments in respect of Pakistan had to do with the land or its people, or with the role he perceived for that country as the most trusted US ally Baghdad Pact/Cento and Seato -- in the region, and as a bulwark against communism.

"What we need to discover in the social realm is the moral equivalent of war: Something heroic that will speak to men as universally as war does, and yet will be as compatible with their spiritual selves as war has proved itself to be incompatible."

This somewhat lengthy preamble or digression should make it clear that I am not exactly an unqualified admirer of Dulles. And yet I would wholeheartedly subscribe to something that he once said or wrote. Apropos of what, I do not quite recall, Dulles observed that: "The world will never have lasting peace so long as men reserve for war the finest human qualities."

He never spoke truer words.

Some years back, in a well-known Indian daily, a commentator characterised a solider as "possibly the closest we come to a hero in the modern world, for his profession calls upon him to die for his country." And centuries earlier, Simonides writing to Thermopylae described the war-dead as heroes, whether their sacrifice had been worthwhile or in vain. Not much would seem to have changed in perspective and perception, even over millennia.

The military represents, in essence, organised power that is so essential for governing a state or running a government, and generals personify the highest echelons of the military. It is no coincidence that in times past, military and political powers were fused or merged in the same authority, and that successful kings or rulers were more often than not competent generals as well.

The examples of Alexander, Caesar, Taimur, Duke William, Harsha, and Sultan Mahmud come readily to mind. In Britain, even today, the monarch -- or in the present case the Royal Consort -- is a simultaneously vested with the highest ranks of all three services, namely, Admiral of the Fleet, Field Marshal, and Marshal of the RAF. In the US, it is the president who is the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, and two of France's greatest heroes, or even idols, are Napoleon and de Gaulle -- both of whom wielded full political authority and were also authentic military leaders.

War heroes have a special niche in every country. Marlborough, in Britain, for much of his career wielded enormous influence, if not formal authority or power. In Britain in particular, military leaders were traditionally well-rewarded -- munificent gifts of land, handsome purses, titles, and honours. Wellington possibly is the only example of a British professional soldier and war hero --who incidentally cut his military teeth in British India -- who also achieved the highest political office.

Instances of civil-military undercurrents, if not tension, were not exactly unheard of even when civilian primacy over the military became the norm in established democracies. In British India, the most imperious and imperial of viceroys, Lord Curzon, clashed with his own hand-picked commander-in-chief, Kitchener.