



# VICTORY INDIA

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## Tour Of Duty Proposal: A Review

Lieutenant General Syed Ata Hasnain

## A Crisis In The Cradle

Admiral Arun Prakash

## FIRST EDITION OF VICTORY INDIA

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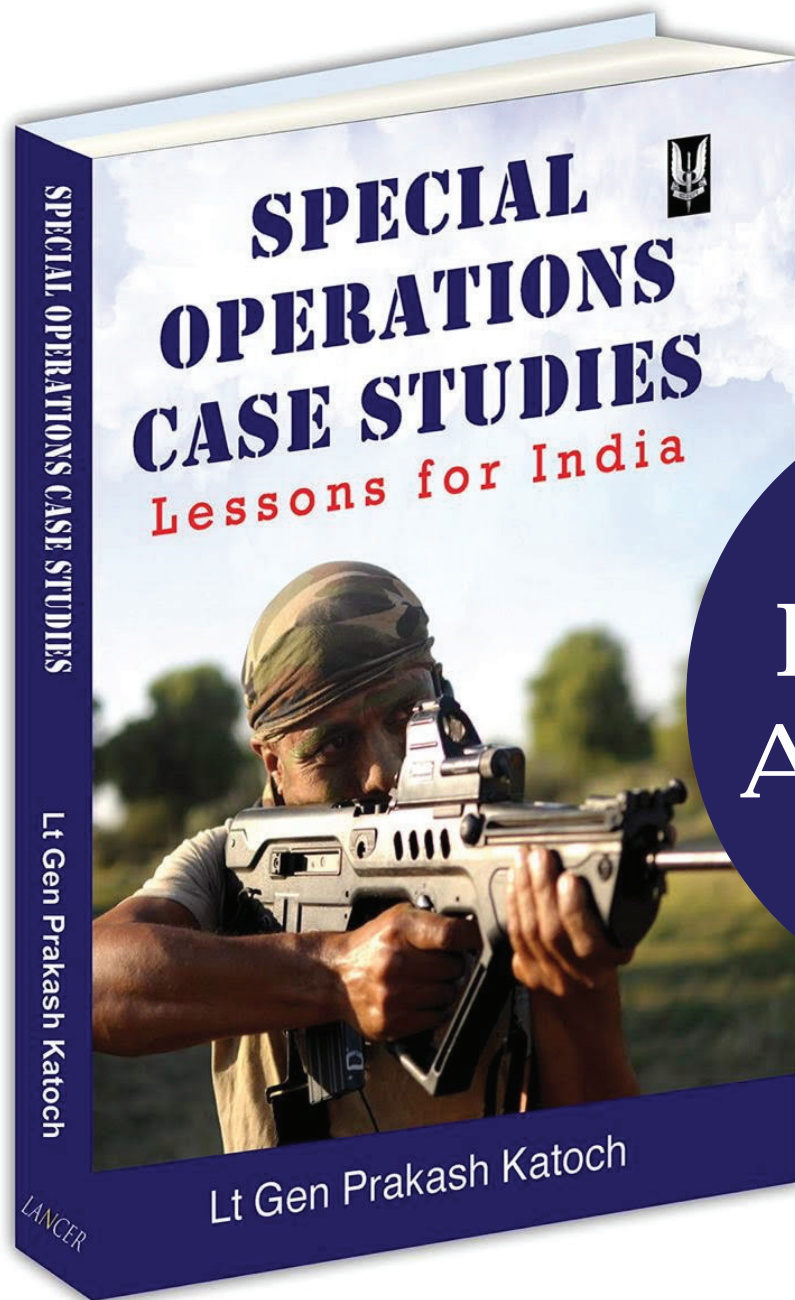
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A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

Col Rajinder Singh





# EDITOR'S NOTE

Colonel Vinay Dalvi Vol.1 • Issue 1 • July 2020

Dear Readers,

I am delighted to launch Victory India magazine with this issue. The aim of this magazine is to spread knowledge of military subjects encompassing: Professional Military Education (PME), Leadership, Military Sciences, Strategy, the Art of War and Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA). The magazine will house select articles, debates, and interviews authored by defence experts, analysts, and thought leaders every month.

The debut edition has a rich line up of articles on three core subjects: 'The Galwan Valley Clashes', 'The Proposed Tour of Duty Model', and 'Selection, Training & Leadership'. The cover story includes hard-hitting articles by eminent veterans sharing their insights on the Galwan Valley Clashes that claimed the lives of 20 of the Indian Army's finest infantry soldiers, in a cowardly attack by the PLA. The authors who have shared their views have themselves served and held vital command responsibilities in these areas.

It has been 50 years since the publication of The Himalayan Blunder a landmark book by Brig John Parashram Dalvi, which has acted as a curtain-raiser to the Sino-Indian War of 1962 has now come into sharp focus in the country and the world due to the ongoing face-off on the LAC. The relevance of this book, even after 58 years, remains relevant and unchanged. This issue has a succinct and insightful review of the book by Cdr. Vikram Karve; a must-read, both—the book and the review.

This issue of Victory India is dedicated to the 20 brave and gallant soldiers who fell for India on night 15/16 June 2020. It is also to pay tributes to all ranks of 7 Infantry Brigade who laid down their lives for India in the Battle of Namka Chu in October 1962. The world, more importantly, the nation now needs to know the true and full story of the 1962 debacle.

We request all our contributors and readers to continue to write and respond to the Victory India cause for the benefit of the Indian Armed forces, and the nation at large. Victory India!

Best Wishes,

Col. Vinay B Dalvi, ex-Maratha LI, ex-APTC,  
Editor-in-Chief Victory India.

# CONTENTS



## Selection, Training And Leadership

<b>A Crisis In The Cradle</b> Admiral Arun Prakash	1
<b>Looking Beyond Relegations</b> Aritra Banerjee	7
<b>To Lead Or Not To Lead From The Front?</b> Major General Anil Sengar	15
<b>Our Nation Needs Warriors not Gentlemen!</b> Pankaj Bhagwati	21
<b>A Mission For The Armed Forces Leadership</b> Nixon Fernando	23



## Tour Of Duty

<b>Debate: A Novel Proposal Or Sugar Coated Poison</b> Colonel Vinay Dalvi, Aritra Banerjee	25
<b>The Army Deserves The Best</b> Major General Raj Mehta	35
<b>Tour Of Duty Proposal: A Review</b> Lieutenant General Syed Ata Hasnain	41
<b>Tour Of Duty: Laudable or Laughable?</b> Air Commodore Suryakant Bal	45

# CONTENTS



## The Dragon At Our Doorstep

<b>Wuhan To Galwan: The Chernobyl Factor</b> Lieutenant General PR Shankar	49
<b>China Tests India's Red lines, Military Response Required</b> Lieutenant General PC Katoch	53
<b>India will Need to Bring Order &amp; Alacrity to Crisis Management</b> Admiral Arun Prakash	55
<b>"Avoiding War not an Option": Need for a China Specific Security Doctrine</b> Colonel Rajinder Kushwaha	57
<b>Chinese Military Base in Tibet: A Threat to India's Sovereignty</b> Major General Madhok	61



## Ordered To Laugh

<b>Humour</b>	67
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## A Crisis In The Cradle

**“I returned to Khadakvasla, after a lapse of 35 years, as Comdt, to find the NDA looking unchanged. However, I soon realised that appearances were deceptive, because actually the institution had undergone some radical changes.”**

**by Admiral Arun Prakash**

If we hark back to the 3rd or 4th millennium BCE, the earliest records of Indian culture are the Vedas, a collection of profound wisdom, created when people in the West had not even learnt to write. A thousand years later came the Upanishads and the Puranas, containing philosophic thoughts regarding the creation of the universe and nature of God. The underlying theme of their philosophy was that one could attain salvation through devotion (Bhakti), by selfless performance of duties (Karma) and by acquiring knowledge (Gyan) so that one lived a moral life. Then we have the two great epics of ancient India – Ramayana and Mahabharata – which deal with morality in conflicts, civil wars and conquests. The concept of dharma yuddha, or righteous war, forms the core of Lord Krishna’s epic battlefield sermon in the Bhagwad Gita. Urging the reluctant Prince Arjun to go forth into combat and perform his duty, Lord Krishna enjoins total commitment, without expectation of reward and tells him “You are bound to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of your action. Never seek credit for the results of your activities, and never contemplate not doing your duty.”

Turning from the spiritual to the temporal, we have the 4th century BCE Mauryan minister, Kautilya who has been termed a ‘combination of Machiavelli and Clausewitz.’ His

comprehensive manual of statecraft, the Arthashastra, sets out with dispassionate clarity, a vision of how to establish and guard a state, while neutralizing, subverting and conquering its neighbours, using a “blend of geography, economics, military strength, diplomacy and espionage.”

The point that I seek to make here, is this contrary to the impression conveyed by western analysts, the ancient Indians did have a firm grasp over strategy, as well as the nuances of statecraft. A well-developed and sophisticated politico-military philosophy was also available to the strategic leaders of those times. We are, thus, heirs to an ancient cultural tradition which threw up great men like Emperors Chandragupta Maurya and Ashoka, Emperor Akbar, Chhatrapati Shivaji, Peshwa Baji Rao and many more. They were not only great rulers and military leaders, but also honourable men who lived by the warrior’s creed and waged ‘dharma yuddha’ or ‘just wars’.

### Inherited Shortcomings

While recalling our glorious past, we must also take note of our shortcomings; so that we avoid them in future. At some point in history, India’s socio-cultural milieu seems to have undergone a huge transformation, and disunity as well as a leadership-deficit made us vulnerable to external threats.

Foreign invaders were permitted to make incursions and fight battles on our soil; resulting in defeat for our armies. Subjugation by foreign invaders created a vicious circle of treachery, betrayal and more defeats. These traumas of our past, have engendered flaws in our national character, signs of which are still visible in the social scenario today.

A serious shortcoming, apparent in the past few hundred years of India's history has been the absence of a strong central authority to hold the country together. We have also lacked men of strategic vision and resolute leaders who could think about nation-building or the strategic defence of India. Instead of uniting against foreign invaders, many Indian rulers joined the enemy to settle scores with local rivals.

Let us note that in the battles fought by the East India Company against native rulers, there were Indian sepoys; including Purabiyas, Jats, Kumaonis, Pathans, and Sikhs on both sides. No doubt, the sepoys fought with equal courage and determination; and yet we lost every important battle; for two reasons. One was the better quality of British officers, who led from the front and suffered heavy casualties, as compared to the rajas and nawabs who rarely took to the field of battle. An equally important reason was the lack of moral fibre that led many Indians – ministers, generals and quilladars – to betray their leaders for money or position. Let us look at two famous examples.

### A Leadership Deficit

In June 1757, at Plassey, near Calcutta, a battle was fought between the army of Siraj-ud-Daulah, Nawab of Bengal and troops commanded by Robert Clive, a mere clerk of the East India Company. Clive's force of 750 English soldiers, 2000 sepoys and 8 cannons, was faced by Siraj-ud-Daulah's army of 35,000 infantrymen, 18,000 cavalry and 50 guns. The battle was won by Clive in a few hours, because the C-in-C, Mir Jafar betrayed his king and defected to the British. Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah had to flee for his life. This battle laid the foundation of British rule of India.

A hundred years later, Sepoy Mangal Pandey of the 34th Bengal Infantry shot his adjutant and the whole Army of Hindustan rose in rebellion. Thousands of Sepoys converged on Delhi, where Emperor Bahadur Shah ruled. But they could not find a single person with the calibre to command them in battle against the British. So, in spite of heroes like Nana Saheb, Tantya Tope and Rani Laxmibai, Indians lost the first War of Independence for lack of leadership.

If all this sounds familiar today, it is because during the 73-years of independence our society has been steadily reverting to the traditional Indian archetype; with sycophancy, hypocrisy, duplicity and corruption becoming rampant in many walks of life. While the common man is becoming increasingly conscious and resentful of these deep flaws, he is aware that any societal reform will require a fundamental transformation in our polity; not an easy proposition.

### A Fall in Standards?

The Indian Armed Forces, on the other hand, are fortunate to have always made their own special code of conduct to live by. Traditionally perceived as an entity which stood tall above civil society, the Armed Forces were seen as setting unique standards of integrity, professionalism and excellence. Apart from being guardians of the nation's security, they were looked upon as an embodiment of order and discipline, and held, by their compatriots, in respect and admiration.

Today we find, to our dismay, that due to an erosion of values and occasional displays of venality, the Armed Forces, are slipping in the estimation of their countrymen. For the Armed Forces to blame this decay on our polity and our society is not an acceptable excuse. After all, it is we who invented phrases such as "an officer and a gentleman" and "officer-like conduct". It was these attributes, rather than any Warrant of Precedence, that earned us respect in



NDA Cadets standing in front of Sudan Block

society. Since the Armed Forces occupy a special place in the consciousness of our citizens, it becomes a matter of national interest to restore them to their earlier position as leaders and exemplars of honourable and ethical conduct for Indian society. For this, it is vital that we reinforce the moral fibre and professional calibre of our officer corps.

The cradles of India's leadership are its military academies. Here, a cadet's basic character is given its final shape; by the instructors, as well as by senior cadets. Since the qualities and attributes cadets acquire in the academies are likely to stay for life, it is vital that they are provided the right guidance and have good examples to emulate, so that their minds and characters take shape in an ethical mould at this impressionable stage.

### The Emerging Environment

One of the biggest challenges for our future military leaders, at all levels, is going to be management of the current



and emerging environment. Let us pause here, and take note of three significant areas.

Firstly, man-management will assume new dimensions. The present generation of soldiers, sailors and airmen possess the same entry qualifications and often emerge from the same schools and social background as their officers. Today's 'Jawan' is, tech-savvy, mindful of his rights and sensitive about self-esteem. Neither rank, nor fear of punishment will be enough to ensure respect and obedience from our troops. Leaders will be required to demonstrate professional competence, firm but fair discipline and, above all, strong ethical moorings.

A question that is still asked in this context, is: are leaders born or made? This is a debate which is as timeless as the chicken-and-egg conundrum. People have been arguing for years whether it is destiny, dedication or indoctrination that makes a good leader? Are people fated to become leaders; or can you just pick up any promising soldier or sailor and hope to transform him into a Napoleon or Nelson?

The answer to this must be clear and unambiguous. The days when the profession of arms and military command were considered the privilege of aristocrats or a calling for mercenary soldiers, are long gone. Samuel Huntington has described the 'vocation of officership' as a full-fledged profession, just like law, medicine or politics, except that the special skill required is 'management of violence'. Today's

The unfortunate reality is that not only are many graduates of our training academies turning out to be 'substandard' but it also seems that many of them actually 'learn' many undesirable traits from these institutions.

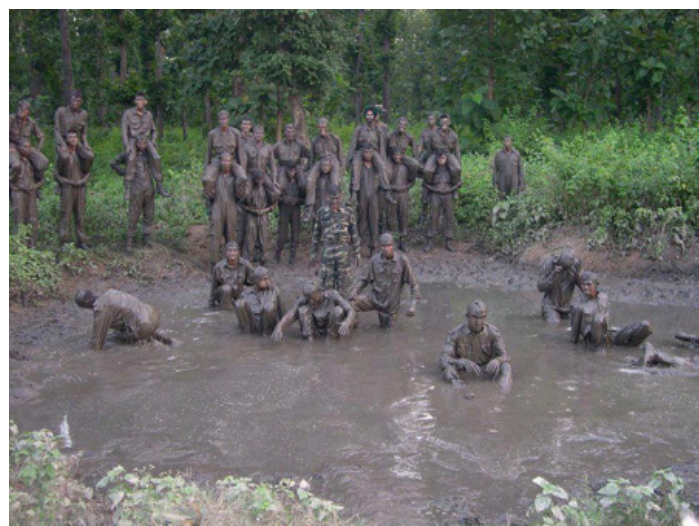
Secondly, the nature of modern communications and its speed have made traditional command and control obsolete. The 'world-wide web' of the Internet disregards rules, regulations and the military hierarchy. Anybody with a smart phone can post his story on the web and social media (SM) enables service personnel to register protest without fear of penalty. Given the intrusiveness and speed of SM, and the environment of transparency, nothing will remain hidden for long. The conduct of the military leader must remain, steadfastly, ethical and above board in 'word, deed and action'.

Thirdly, tomorrow's battle-space will encompass the full spectrum of conflict; from sub-conventional to conventional warfare, and while massive information-flow may be an advantage, it will also add to complexity. While space and cyber-warfare promise total disruption, tactical nuclear weapons hold out threats, we may be ill-prepared for. Artificial-intelligence, robotics, autonomous vehicles, and quantum-computing will add new dimensions to decision-making in combat.

Under these circumstances, we will need young leaders, who are not only intelligent, enterprising and versatile, but also mentally and physically agile and possess the confidence to accept risk and responsibility in combat.

## The Cradles of Leadership

Today's young officer is not only mature and intelligent but, is also, acutely aware of the environment. In order to ensure that he/she develops into an ethical leader there is need for our entry-level institutions to provide a balanced, all-round training, which includes an unshakeable moral foundation. Otherwise there is every possibility that he/she will go astray once in a position of power and responsibility.



Cadets undergoing unofficial punishments (Representational image)

military leaders are definitely 'made', and this exercise is carefully undertaken at great trouble and expense in institutions established for the specific purpose of training and grooming officers.

Most of our basic Service academies have a cadet body which remains 'captive' for anything from 1 - 4 years. Thereafter, the average Service Officer undergoes 2-4 years of further training and courses by the time he attains senior rank. Given proper selection processes, there is no reason why the Armed Forces should not be able to groom young entrants both physically and mentally, into highly motivated, upright and ethical military leaders in these time-frames. The unfortunate reality is, that not only are many graduates of our training academies turning out to be 'sub-standard' but it also seems that many of them actually 'learn' many undesirable traits from these institutions.



Surely, this constitutes a 'double jeopardy', because not only are the academies wasting a golden opportunity of moulding young and receptive minds through careful training and indoctrination, but they are also allowing them to be polluted by 'un-officerlike' qualities during training. Since a substantial number of higher ranks are filled by officers trained in the National Defence Academy (NDA), and it is they who provide examples for emulation, both good and bad, for juniors and contemporaries; it is on this institution that sharp focus needs to be brought, to start with.

### What Ails the NDA?

The good news, having passed out of NDA in 1964, I returned to Khadakvasla, after a lapse of 35 years, as Commandant, to find the NDA looking unchanged. However, I soon realised that appearances were deceptive, because actually the institution had undergone some radical changes - for better as well as for worse.

The good news was that the 600 or so teenagers, who entered the NDA annually, now came from a much broader spectrum of social and economic backgrounds, and with a higher motivation level than what I had witnessed before. The academic curriculum, which was a superficial hotch-potch of science and humanities in our day, had become a far more intensive and focused Degree-course. Similarly, the syllabus for outdoor activities - PT, swimming and drill - had been expanded and become much tougher. However, I was surprised and impressed to note that apart from an increase in instances of stress fracture (very rare in our days); the boys seemed to cope quite well with the enhanced, all-round, training standards in the Academy.

### Deterioration in Standards

But, within a few weeks, I realised that wherever one scratched the shiny surface, there was also much bad news. Firstly; beneath the impressive exterior facade, the Academy infrastructure was crumbling and decrepit. The cadets' accommodation and bathrooms were in need of repair, the mess kitchens and catering facilities had declined; the dhobi system was in disarray and general standards seemed to have deteriorated.

The most appalling lacuna was the huge shortfall in academic staff, made up by hiring temporary substitutes from Pune. While cumulative neglect, locally, may have been responsible for much of the problems, the main reason for this situation was the detached approach, disinterest and inadequate financial support from the Military Training Directorate of Army HQ. This was, indeed distressing and incomprehensible, given that this unique tri-Service Academy was (supposedly) the pride and joy of the Armed Forces. (Ironically, a few years later, when as the Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee, I attempted to intervene on behalf of the NDA in certain matters, an invisible barrier seemed to come up from Army HQ.)

Secondly; many of what I had considered 'Academy Traditions' had been forgotten or arbitrarily changed; to the detriment of the system. To take just two examples;

during a few random checks I found that the cadets were locking their cabins when they left the squadron. When opened, the cabins were found in shambles; with beds unmade and clothes strewn all over. It emerged that over the years, since cadets had been allowed to keep music systems, it had become customary to lock the doors, and the immaculate cabin layout of our days was no longer enforced.

When the weapon-training staff complained that army cadets were often late for their classes, I enquired from the Academy Adjutant why they were not marched off from the squadron fall-in on time. The Adjutant looked surprised, because he had not even heard of the morning squadron fall-in, which used to be a daily ritual, where turn-out was inspected and the squadron marched-off on time. Obviously, a Commandant or Deputy Commandant had considered it unnecessary and done away with it.

Thirdly; while the quantum increase in academic syllabi was inevitable due to adoption of a degree-course, the significant enhancements in PT, swimming and drill standards, appeared whimsical and, added tremendously to the



Panoramic view of Chetwode building, IMA

cadets' burden. To take just one example, the passing-out parade with rifles and swords (in our days, only canes were carried by appointments) needlessly added many hours to the training load as well as passing-out parade practices. A more serious consequence was that the onus of responsibility for a great deal of training had been transferred from the Academy staff to the senior cadets.

One night while driving back home after at night, I was horrified to see a whole squadron by the roadside, practicing on the wooden horse and rope under the 'supervision' of senior cadets. I was told that they were 'preparing for the PT competition'. It seemed that to the traditional drill and cross-country competitions, successive Commandants had added PT and even academics as 'competitions'! The responsibility for preparation for these competitions had thus devolved from the Academy staff to senior cadets.

### The Moral Vacuum

My most disturbing discovery was the range and scale of misdemeanours in which the cadets indulged on a regular basis: stealing (known as 'management') was rampant, while man-handling of juniors, and cheating and impersonation

in examinations were common. Those who were caught received punishment, but it seemed to have little deterrent effect, and the offences continued unabated. To me it was obvious that since many of these young men had received no inputs about a value system, nor were they provided a moral foundation at home or in school; it was up to the Academy to do something.

After a great deal of deliberation and debate, an Honour Code System was instituted, but during this process, I was astonished to find that while this proposal was supported by the cadets, it was stiffly opposed by the military staff - many of them just a few years out of the NDA. The logic offered to me by some officers was as follows: within a few months these cadets would be posted in counter-insurgency areas, and if they were not resourceful enough to 'manage' a few things, or tough enough to give and take a little man-handling, they would be quite useless to the army.

### The Moral Traps

There is obviously a deep subliminal urge, among the Indian officer corps, now emerging increasingly from the lower end of the middle classes, to 'keep up with the Joneses' in other sections of India's rapidly prospering civil-society. This has led some in the senior hierarchy of the Armed Forces to adopt ostentatious customs and lifestyles; either by blatantly misusing official funds and facilities; or by adopting other unethical means.

The preposterous and unstated message seems to be that rules, regulations and moral obligations apply only up to a certain rank. Once you pass that stage (corresponding to 2-star rank) everything in life is assumed to be complimentary; so much so that for a senior officer to be presented an authentic mess/bar bill is considered an insult. There is no shortage of 'yes-men' and pliant staff officers who applaud and abet such conduct in their seniors.

Recent trespasses, by our fellow-officers, as reported openly in the media, include 'medal-hunting' fake-encounters, involvement in land scams, sexual-misconduct, malfeasance in purchases, venality in contracts and recruitment, and even 'cash for good ACRs.' All these occurrences, which have brought a bad name to the Services, boil down to one fundamental cause; the lack of a 'moral compass' amongst our senior officers and their consequent inability to distinguish between the 'easier wrong' and the 'harder right'.

At the risk of annoying some readers, I would suggest that the bad habits and attributes learnt in the NDA (and other basic academies) by a young cadet, and considered 'minor' at that stage often mutate in later years into serious 'character flaws' and manifest themselves as lack of moral fibre and serious misconduct. Therefore, a 'smart' NDA cadet could well turn out after 30-35 years into a crooked two or three-star officer.

Once the thin line between right and wrong gets blurred in the human mind, it becomes easier and easier to justify progressively bigger transgressions. I would therefore say that the roots of all our ethical problems originate in

the 'cradles of leadership' - our basic training institutions - where our unwillingness to eliminate serious flaws in the training-system and failure to provide a sound moral foundation to young trainees have left them without a 'moral compass' to guide them as officers in later life. It was for this reason that the 1998 Academy Order promulgating the Honour Code, contained a paragraph which said, "It is my hope and expectation that this Honour Code will remain with an NDA Cadet as his creed and guiding light throughout his service career and perhaps the rest of his life."

### Selection Process

There is clear evidence that the current selection process does not ensure a minimum standard of physical fitness for entrants into Service academies. Consequently, many trainees suffer physical injuries soon after commencement of



Col.Vinay Dalvi, Air Mshl TS Randhawa with ex CAS Air Chief Mshl NAK Browne

training. Considerable time and effort is required to bring such laggards up to the mark, causing disruption in training. There is also evidence that the current selection-methodology is inadequate to pinpoint and eliminate candidates who are psychologically or temperamentally unsuited for the Armed Forces.

There is a section of strong opinion which feels that the UPSC/SSB selection processes are outdated, and therefore fail to identify the right material for induction into the Academies. An objective evaluation of our current selection methodology in comparison with Armed Forces of other countries may throw up some useful pointers. It may also be worthwhile linking up the service records of those who excel or falter in higher ranks, with their NDA records. SSB evaluations may be useful to find out whether there were early indications of a flaw which the system overlooked.

### Conclusion

I conclude this essay with a list of five recommendations, which I consider essential to improve the quality of NDA



training. Presumably some of these could be read across for the Service academies too.

## Selection and Tenure of Commandants

To do full justice to the prestigious appointment of Commandant NDA, it must be filled by a senior officer of good professional reputation and standing, who brings vision and zeal to the job, and serves for a reasonable tenure. Currently, this appointment is often seen by the Services as a convenient parking-slot or a pre-retirement sinecure. Moreover, a two-year tenure, rotated between the three Services (often split between two incumbents) is too short and totally inappropriate for this onerous responsibility.

In order to ensure continuity of tenure, the rules should be changed to make the appointment tenable by a senior Maj-Gen/Lt-Gen (and equivalent). A two-star Commandant, if promoted can remain in situ to enable a 3 to 4-year tenure. Rather than insisting on strict inter-Service rotation, the CDS and COSC should agree to nominate the most suitable candidate available in any Service.

## Ethics and Leadership

The laying of a sound moral foundation and inculcation of leadership qualities should be made a key result area in the Academy's training curriculum, and a suitable Honour Code should be instilled into each cadet. Training effort as well as faculty should be dedicated for this endeavour so that systematic indoctrination can be undertaken.

The Service HQs should be persuaded to evolve a comprehensive Professional Military Education (PME) programme for the officer corps of the three services. The start of the PME should be anchored in the basic training academies and it should run as a continuum throughout an officer's career till 2-star rank.

## Academy Blue Book

The traditions, standards, rules, regulations and SOPs by which the Commandant is to run the Academy should be laid down in a Blue Book, to be promulgated under the authority of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, and no change or amendment should be permitted without their approval. The Commandant should be made accountable, directly, to the COSC for the correct and proper functioning of the Academy and the maintenance of laid down training standards. At the same time the IDS HQ should be made responsible for providing adequate support to NDA in areas like budget, works and staff recruitment.

## Syllabus Review

Given the changing demands of tomorrow's battlefield environment, and keeping in view, the navy's up-gradation of its basic training to B. Tech level, there is a need for an all-encompassing review of NDA curriculum. An important aspect, that would call for expert evaluation, is the right balance between physical and intellectual standards

to be attained on completion of training, and the correct proportion of training effort to be dedicated to each.

## Selection & Training Methodology

In this context, the 'Victory India' campaign launched by Col Vinay Dalvi (Retd) has generated a wealth of ideas, suggestions and recommendations for improvement of the selection (and training) methodologies in our basic academies. Coming from an array of experienced and distinguished Veteran officers of the three Services, these proposals are worthy of examination at the highest levels of the Service HQ staff and could become an excellent launch-pad for reform and restructuring. 🇮🇳



NDA cadets celebrating outside Sudan Block

“Once the thin line between right and wrong gets blurred in the human mind, it becomes easier and easier to justify progressively bigger transgressions. I would therefore say that the roots of all our ethical problems originate in the cradles of leadership.”



## Admiral Arun Prakash

Admiral Arun Prakash, PVSM, AVSM, VrC, VSM, ADC is a former Flag Officer of the Indian Navy, who served as the Chief of the Naval Staff from 31 July 2004 to 31 October 2006 and as the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee from 31 January 2005 to 31 October 2006. He is one of India's most decorated naval officers and a pioneering member of Mission Victory India. He regularly writes for leading news publications and strategic journals. He can be reached at arunp2810@yahoo.com





# Looking Beyond Relegations

THE 25-YEAR-OLD BATTLE TO INCORPORATE  
'MANDATORY PHYSICAL TESTS AT SSBS'

**"The Indian Army conducts Physical Fitness Tests of 100 marks in the selection of recruits, but there are no mandatory physical tests in the officer candidate screening during SSB." –Extract from Paper Published in the Army War College Journal 2020**

**by Aritra Banerjee**

**T**he Week's Pradip R Sagar's article 'Mean Manoeuvre' published on 24 May 2020 pertaining to the relegation of 13 Lady Cadets (LC) from the Officers Training Academy (OTA), Chennai, raised a storm amongst the military community.

However, such widespread relegations in a single course in one of the country's premier pre-commission training academies is hardly a new phenomenon.

The 'Cradle of Military Leadership,' the National Defence Academy (NDA), situated in Khadakwasla, Pune witnessed 69 relegations in the academy around a year ago.

Several officers and veterans privy to the intricacies of Officer Selection and Training have unanimously said that these "routine occurrences" have been going on "for donkey's years!"

Of the host of challenges plaguing Officer Selection and Training i.e. unofficial training, more colloquially referred

to as Ragda. The Outdated Physical Training Methodology, the most hazardous of all these has been the lack of mandatory physical tests at the Services Selection Boards (SSB).

The need for mandatory Physical Efficiency Test (PET) in the SSB has been harped on by generations of officers, but proposals to incorporate the same have been "regularly and deliberately" shot down by "organisations with vested interests like the Defence Institute of Psychological Research (DIPR)...

...along with the inability of the Director General Recruiting (DG Recruiting), Adjutant General (AG) and the Chief of Staff Committee (COSC), especially the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) to intelligently comprehend the entire DIPR based SSB selection system, and its intricate linkage with the training syllabus, and physical training methodology in the academies.

This holds true especially for the NDA where wastage rates of officer cadets have remained exorbitantly high for the

past 25 year,” according to officials in tune with the selection procedure.

The country’s elite military academies such as the NDA, IMA, OTA have repeatedly taken this critical issue up for over a quarter-century now, but have failed to incorporate any form of mandatory physical tests in the SSBs, nor have they been able to introduce any form of Field Tests in the selection procedure.

This lack of incorporation of PT for the past 25 years have severely handicapped the military academies in bringing up the standards of their cadets and have negatively affected other aspects of military and academic training.

This has consequently led to abysmally high wastage rates. Such a significant loss of trainable human resources at a time when the armed forces are already financially crunched, and at an all-time low in terms of manpower, requires a serious introspection by all concerned.

### **DIPR Study: 18 Out of 100 GC’s Wasted at NDA**

A Defence Institute of Psychological Research (DIPR) study conducted in the year 2000 to identify the leading causes of the NDA suffering such a high wastage rate came to the same harrowing conclusions cited by Col. Dalvi.

The DIPR studied a total of 10 training courses spanning between 96 Course NDA to 106 Course NDA. It was concluded that the premier tri-services institution designed exclusively for basic training had an overall wastage rate of 18%; Meaning out of every 100 GC’s 18 of them were relegated or boarded out.

The study identified the leading cause of wastage to be “the non-structured training beyond the official training curriculum and training hours.” The Ragda culture has been exposed by several eminent veterans and members of the media in detail.

### **Indian Army’s Research Says: Physical Tests are Needed at the SSB**

It is not just veterans calling for an overhaul of the selection procedure, the Indian Army’s own study has pointed out this glaring shortcomings in officer selection. MVI reviewed an internal study published in the Army War College Journal 2020, which highlights the disparity in the fitness criteria of the officer candidates and the enlisted ranks whom they are meant to lead.

An excerpt of the study reads, “The Indian Army conducts Physical Fitness Tests of 100 marks in the selection of recruits, but there are no mandatory physical tests in the officer candidate screening during SSB. Most professional armies in the world like the USA, the UK, Australia, Greece, etc. conduct physical fitness tests as part of the selection process of the officer entry candidates.

It is recommended to include three physical tests on the first day of the SSB - 2.4 Km Run, Chin Ups and Sit Ups. A two-page fitness brochure should be provided to all candidates appearing for SSB like Australian Army to guide candidates in preparing for this test.”

### **A PTO’s Story**

Speaking about the need for mandatory Physical Efficiency Test (PET) in the SSB, Colonel Vinay B Dalvi, a former Maratha LI and APTC officer, who served as Physical Training Officer (PTO) at all three of the aforementioned pre-commission training academies, said, “I served as PTO Indian Military Academy (IMA), Dehradun, following which I served as PTO at OTA, Chennai, and then as PTO NDA.

After which I served as PTO IMA for the second time. During my nine years at three of the country’s most prestigious training institutions, I had witnessed an abysmal rate of relegations and injuries sustained by the cadets.”

Speaking about the correlation of injuries sustained in the training institutions due to lack of rudimentary selection



GC’s running in the IMA XC

reforms, the former PTO said, “The driving factor for such an astoundingly high wastage rate is surprisingly simple, and very well avoidable, if only the respective authorities had incorporated mandatory PET at the SSBs.

It has been a quarter of a century since I first stepped foot as a PTO at IMA, and despite writing a compendium of literature on the subject of military training, the situation unfortunately remains the same.”

Splitting the anatomy of the flawed selection model and its impact on the cadets and training staff, he said,

“The crux of the issue is that ‘physically weak candidates’ assessed purely based on intelligence, aptitude, positive trainability, and potential for leadership development, are screened in and receive joining letters with only an advisory recommending a few conditioning exercises for appearing in a screening test after reporting for training.”

Adding, he said, “Before the commencement of their training at the academies, the new entrants are made to undergo this short PT screening test on the lines modelled for recruitment of Army Jawans.

These screening tests are simply a formality as the majority (50% to 75%) fail in the main tests like the 1.6km run and chin ups. These tests only serve as a yardstick to identify the physically weaker cadets.”

“The plight of these physically weak cadets starts with the pressure of their instructors and senior cadets for inter-squadron competitions like cross country, and for passing mandatory PT, and swimming in the form of non-structured training which become a recipe for disaster leading to high rates of injuries and relegations,” quoted the reform-seeker.

Col. Dalvi stated, “Cadets who come from feeder institutions have traditionally fared better.

The cadets who do pass the screening tests, and are also able to cope with the pressure from their instructors and senior cadets for inter-squadron competitions like cross country are mainly from feeder schools and institutes like the Rashtriya Indian Military College (RIMC), Sainik school and other military schools or other schools with a military lifestyle or routine.”

“The main lacunae or rather shortcoming is the major disconnect between the selection standards for physical fitness at the various SSBs and the actual physical standards demanded at military academies, especially NDA, where the standards are whimsically raised even beyond the standards demanded at finishing academies like IMA.

All these factors add to the woes of the physically weak cadets who find it extremely difficult to meet the high expectations resulting in their sustaining stress injuries and other injuries resulting in relegations and even withdrawal,” explained the former APTC officer.

### A Rallying Cry Falls on Deaf Ears...

Speaking about his bid to change the existing selection system, the former PTO said, “I have been advocating for a change in the selection system at the SSBs for over two decades now, and had first raised the issue as PTO IMA in '95 when I saw some extremely weak cadets joining the IMA that resulted in their relegations despite their best efforts and extra training.

It was then that the case for mandatory tests at SSBs was taken up by IMA, at my behest, with the Army Training Command (ARTRAC).”

The former PTO recounted, “The justification for mandatory tests at SSBs was the high rate of relegations and injuries sustained by physically weak cadets. The initiative of the IMA was conveyed to my counterparts at the NDA and OTA who also projected the need through their academies to respective higher HQs—DGMT, ARTRAC, IDS.”

“However, despite all three academies [NDA, IMA and OTA] pursuing the matter the DG Recruiting, AG, DIPR did not realise the technicalities, and seriousness of the issues and continued to maintain the ‘status quo’ for SSB selection.

During my tenure as PTO NDA, and IMA during 2001-2007 I relentlessly continued to pursue the case for mandatory physical tests at the SSBs but the pleas fell on deaf ears and the military hierarchy and DIPR-based SSB selection system continued without any change,” narrated Col. Dalvi.

Highlighting his futile efforts, Col. Dalvi said, “Post retirement my book Role Model (2010) and five volumes of the Victory India Campaign comprising over 250 articles and essays by over 50 military luminaries have amply and elaborately justified the need to improve the quality of our military leadership.

This includes the imperative and inescapable need to introduce mandatory physical tests at the SSBs. However, so far my efforts have largely fallen on deaf ears.”

When asked about the recent relegations at OTA, the retired Colonel said, “The recent case of 13 relegations of lady cadets at OTA, Chennai in March 2020 is a classic example of relegations due to low physical fitness entry standards at SSBs for lady cadets.



YO traversing obstacle during 'Commando Course' in Belgaum

It is the need of the hour to introduce mandatory physical tests at SSBs for both boys and girls. These tests must ‘match’ the physical standards demanded by the training academies.”

“This will objectively and meaningfully connect the selection criteria for physical fitness at the academies with the SSBs. Presently there is a big disconnect in this regard resulting in high wastage rate at academies and avoidable pressure on academies due to selection of physical weaklings who are a liability to the academies and consequently the service too.”

### Strong Regimentation is a Proven Game Changer: Just Look at the CTWs

Col. Dalvi has stressed policy-makers to look at the success of the Cadet Training Wings (CTW) over other training establishments,

“It is pertinent to state that the performance of our CTWs of CME, MCME & MCTE over the last two decades has been exceptionally good and far better than other academies,



especially the NDA, with which it can be objectively compared due to same duration of training.

This is due to single service and regimental responsibility for training, and focused and coordinated training to meet actual service and regimental requirements.”

“Strong regimentation and single accountability were and will remain the main reasons why these breeds of cadets and officers are most preferred even in fighting arms despite being technical graduates. It is time for other academies, especially the NDA, to learn the right methodology of training and grooming from our own CTWs,” opined Col. Dalvi.

basic physicals. If a soldier must pass mandatory physical tests on recruitment, its applicability to a future officer is equally important.”

“A potential cadet must be checked for basic stamina, agility, and strength by suitable tests. This will put the cadets on an even kneel at the start of training otherwise he will lag, even develop an inferiority complex and may even affect his/her merit on passing out.

It is my opinion that basic physical tests in facets as mentioned above be conducted during the selection process and must be based on the scientific advances that are available today,” added the former Comdt.

**The driving factor for such an astoundingly high wastage rate is surprisingly simple, and very well avoidable, if only the respective authorities had incorporated mandatory PET at the SSBs.**

## Subject-Matter Experts Speak Out

‘Mission Victory India’ reached out to several ex-service-men who are subject-matter experts and have been privy to the various stages of the selection procedure.

Former Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) and former Commandant NDA, Admiral Arun Prakash, told MVI, “Stringent physical efficiency tests need to be instituted in the SSB. The physical fitness requirements should be publicised so that potential candidates can prepare for the physical tests just like they do for the written exam.”

The former NDA Comdt., went on to say, “Now coming to the intervention by the DIPR in incorporating mandatory physical fitness tests at the SSB, well that is something the Service HQs would be well within their rights to overrule [the DIPR], as physically weak cadets joining service academies are unable to cope with training and require extra time and attention, thus, disrupting the schedule.”

“At the end of the day the selected candidates will go on to join the respective services, making the individual Service HQ’s primary stakeholders in the matter. This is something the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) can look into,” added the former Naval Chief.

Former IMA Comdt, Lieutenant General RS Sujlana also stressed on the need for mandatory physical tests, “Physical activity is a part of life which cannot be ignored. By no imagination do I take away the importance of intellect and knowledge. Varied vocations have their priority to physicals; in the armed forces it has a special and necessary place with its own priority.”

Lt Gen Sujlana went on to say, “The selection process at the SSB has a proven standing but to make it more holistic there is a need to check out a potential cadet and future officer in



NDA cadets assemble with weapons

When asked by MVI about whether there is a need for mandatory physical tests at the SSB, Major General Raj Mehta replied, “Yes, absolutely! The incorporation of physical fitness evaluation in the SSB is crucial. It is a worldwide phenomenon led by practical sense, need, and necessity.

The selection system assesses a prospective candidates’ mental faculties that is the Intelligence and Emotional Quotient. What about the Physical Quotient? Not directly related. But the spiritual component too, SQ? If you are a man or a woman leading troops into battle then your physical fitness is just as important as your mental resilience.”

“I know that women today nowhere lead men into battle but once you have ‘climbed the Tiger’ as it were, in terms of broad decision-making that there is ‘combat-woman space in battle, today’s ‘women in combat-support tasking’ will one day lead men in battle and why not?

They are mentally capable of doing a good job. The Russians have lost thousands of women in combat; had them as amazing snipers far better than men; Israel has its

Caracal Women battalions albeit with mixed results; and everywhere, women's battle potential is being reviewed and calibrated.

We must join, albeit with tenuous steps, but must continue...and the entry Code Woman is exceptional fitness that accepts physiology and overcomes it, does not denigrate it."

"If an officer is not physically robust then their men will not obey their commanders, this puts the officers in a

2008 to August 2011 i.e. 12 a month or 155 fractures a year with an average 25.2 days hospital stay and overall absence from training for eight weeks."

A stress fracture occurs when muscles become fatigued and cannot absorb stress/shock/repeated impact. Fatigued muscles transfer that stress to the nearby bones, the Tibia and Fibula.

Overall, a recent study for 10 NDA courses (Serials 96-106) revealed a wastage rate of 17-18 per cent, which is almost



The main lacunae is the major disconnect between the selection standards for physical fitness at the various SSBs and the actual physical standards demanded at military academies, especially NDA, where the standards are whimsically raised even beyond the standards demanded at finishing academies like IMA. All these factors add to the woes of the physically weak cadets who find it extremely difficult to meet the high expectations resulting in their sustaining stress injuries.



precarious situation as the men lose confidence in their officers ability, potentially leading to inadvertent incidents such as 'fragging', which means killing of one's own officer, an occurrence which was prevalent during the Vietnam War, owing to the fact that their officers were unable to effectively lead their men and put them at risk."

"Therefore, the harmony between physical and mental strength is utmost in an officer and is something which must be tested on priority at the SSB. Candidates who cannot hack it should be weeded out in the selection process itself and not be subject to relegation in academies after commencement of training," added Maj Gen Raj Mehta.

Maj. Gen Raj Mehta had earlier highlighted the lack of quantifiable PT at the SSB in his article 'Military Selection Conundrum' and 'Grim Portents' published in both Force and Geopolitics magazines, excerpts of which read,

"There is no quantifiable test of physical capability/weightage awarded during the SSB regimen. The individual and group obstacle tests assess OLQ, not physical fitness which is left for post selection evaluation by training academies.

The issue of physical fitness may sound like an anachronism in an elite training academy, but it is there for real and the NDA/other training academies aren't to blame. What should have been checked by the SSB as an entry requirement has been forked off to the training academies as a 'trainable', hence, redundant factor for the SSB regime and with serious consequences.

Worrying levels of selected cadets who enter the academies are physically unfit and reflect their poor conditioning in 'stress fractures'. Male Cadets of NDA course serials 116-125 suffered a staggering 466 stress fractures from July



Gorkha Rifles troops during a training exercise

double the European and much higher than the Chinese average which is 12.45 per cent. Ratio of Academic/Physical Activity: As it was planned, the ratio of military vis-à-vis academic training should have been 30:70.

On ground, the absolute reverse has been in vogue. Seventy percent cadet time is spent in physical activities and 30 per cent in intellectual activity. Physical activity goes beyond authorised sporting and physical conditioning activity and includes 'josh' runs, ragging, practices for squadron level games/championship banners, all leading to gross overuse of the body."

Maj. Gen Mehta, added in conversation with this correspondent, that 'romanticising' ragda and josh, and 'squadron spirit' is always good in sepia recall but poor in terms of cadet wellness because valuable days are lost in ensuring a return to training which must be tempered with sense and sensibility.



Speaking about the monopoly the DIPR holds over Officer selection, the General said, “No performance audit of the DIPR has ever been carried out by the military as DIPR/DRDO function under MoD whereas the Services are merely ‘attached’ offices, hence, outside the pale of the government rules of business.”

“The irony is that the end users cannot question officer-selection norms and perhaps the reason why DIPR arrogantly bats for the status quo,” added Maj Gen Mehta.

Brigadier LC Patnaik, a former SSB President, and the present chairman of the ‘Odisha Public Service Commission’ (OPSC) too highlighted the need for mandatory PT in the selection stage,

“The SSBs have an in-built system of assessing physical efficiency of a candidate through the obstacle tests conducted as part of the GTO tests.

However, a separate test may be conducted for CDS, Short Service Entry or any entry at the post-graduate level as the training period is less and the body’s ability to respond to build up is limited. However, physical tests for NDA and Technical Entry Scheme (TES) entrants where the training period is longer, could be moderated with comparatively lesser standards.”

Speaking further about the wastage rates plaguing the NDA, as a result of the lack of physically fit cadets being selected, the former SSB president said, “The wastage at the pre-commission training institutions—especially at the NDA—has always been there.

In recent years, it is higher as games and physical training are no longer a priority in our school education and body metabolism has undergone transformation due to changing food habits.”

Proposing his solutions, Brigadier Patnaik said, “My proposed solutions are incorporation of scientific PT at the training establishments where body muscle index and respiratory systems are developed to build endurance. Less emphasis on conventional physical tests.”

“They need to be replaced by scientific testing with advanced testing tools and equipment. Furthermore, diets need overhaul with more stress on proteins and calcium to build bones and muscles. The maximum cases in the early stage of training are stress fractures and other bone injuries.” added Brig Patnaik

“Segregation of physically weak cadets to ensure a longer progressive training with different test standards. Separate dietary plans under nutritional guidance and body forensics to build up the deficiencies. For graduate and woman entries, have separate physical test standards at the concerned academy. Yogic exercises can be part of physical training with measurable test standards,” he concluded.

Colonel Pradeep Dalvi, a former DIPR-qualified Group Training Officer (GTO) and Interviewing Officer (IO) at the

SSB spoke extensively on the need for mandatory physical evaluation at the selection centres and shared a roadmap which he believes could be incorporated at the selection centres.

“Let me first appraise you on the foreign armies and their methodology in conducting SSB along with physical fitness tests. Britain, Canada, the USA, and even Pakistan have physical tests at their SSB.”

He went on further, “It is strange that India and Pakistan have inherited the same selection process from British in 1947. Yet, Pakistan and the UK have drastically carried out radical changes in their selection process including physical tests for their inductees at SSB.”

He continued, “The process of carrying out physical tests varies in different countries, some do it at SSB and some in boot camps prior to reporting at SSB. The Indian Armed



NDA Cadet during bayonet training

Forces are the only organizations where no tests are conducted at SSB or prior to SSB which is very surprising, resulting in additional load on the various training academies like the NDA, OTA, IMA and their equivalents in other services.

Keeping the rate of relegation, rejection, and not meeting the physical standards of training academies by men and women, it is highly recommended that basic physical standards should be incorporated in the SSB.”

“Keeping the above in view, it is recommended that suitable tests for men and women be incorporated for various age groups, NDA/Tech Entries (16-19), IMA and OTA equivalent (19-25) with their trainability factor.

Basic emphasis of these tests should be on the upper body and lower body capacity and strength. Timings and standards should be based on Indian conditions and trainability factors,” proposed Col. Pradeep Dalvi.

## The following are some recommended tests by Col. Pradeep Dalvi:

Sn	Tests	Male	Female	Remarks
1	2 Mile Run	16-30 Min	19-40 Min	Can Vary Based On Age
2	Beep Tests	7-9	6-8	2 Marks 20 Mts Apart
3	Push Ups	20 Reps In 2 Min	11-12 Reps In 2 Min	Can Vary Based On Age
4	Sit Up	50 In 2 Min	40 In 2 Min	
5	Pull Ups	10	8	

Col. Pradeep Dalvi's SSB PET recommendations

Speaking about how the incorporation of PT will hold the armed forces in good stead, Col. Pradeep Dalvi said, "This will not only benefit academy training staff in achieving laid down physical standards for the cadets with little stress on scientific orientation exercise.

It will also benefit the cadets in achieving laid down physical standards in the given duration without any injuries like stress fractures, muscle tear etc and avoid relegation and rejection from the academy."

"It will be a win-win situation for both the cadets and academy training staff. A good example is of Sainik school and military schoolboys joining NDA vis-à-vis boys from civil street without much physical development and tough time they face in academy in achieving desired physical standards."

When asked about the present challenges in the selection process, Col Pradeep Dalvi replied, "There are three major structures or organizations involved in selection and training of cadets till his/her commissioning.

Firstly, the DIPR, secondly, the Dte of Recruiting including SSBs, and lastly, the training academies like NDA, OTA, IMA and their equivalents. All these agencies must work in unison for the benefit of the organization which presently is a major flaw in the existing system."

He furthered, "As far as the inclusion of the physical test are concerned at SSB it is the job of Recruiting Dte to push the case keeping in view the relegation, rejection, and wastage of manpower from the academies by ensuring physically fit cadets join the academies and not rely on the trainability factor and the training staff."

Speaking about the inadequacies within the DIPR, the former IO and GTO explained, "There is no adequate follow-up factor on cadets joining the academies from DIPR/SSB and AHQ leading to lack of coordination, and over relying on physical training staff.

The question of DIPR not willing to lose monopoly over selection and training is far fetched, it is the job of Armed forces (AHQ, Recruiting dte, SSB) to ensure that they get physically sound and mentally robust cadets from the youth of this country."

## The Way Forward

Col. Pradeep Dalvi has proposed a way forward in dealing with a core issue which affects the very future of the nation's armed forces. "Selection and training of human resources is a complex subject. For 1.2 Million Armed Forces we do not have an HR directorate. What we have is splinter groups or directorates like AGs branch, training, recruiting directorate, SSBs, ARTRAC, working in isolation."

"This has resulted in lack of coordination and control over selection of cadets to be officers in the armed forces who are the cutting-edge of the forces. Senior officers nominated to hold higher appointments like DG recruiting should be suitably qualified and should have done at least one tenure at the SSB as president."

He concluded, "It is therefore recommended that all the agencies starting from DIPR, recruiting directorate, SSBs to training establishments be brought under centralized control of ARTRAC for better coordination, control and utilization of resources."


## Closing Notes

Maj. Gen. Anil Sengar, ex-ADGME, and ex-GOC Inf Div and Military Author, best summarised the need for mandatory PT and tied it with the recent mass relegations "The failure of 13 LCs in OTA triggered an 'Amphan' in a teacup.

Ill-informed opinions were expressed, some surmising vengeance and others the Supreme Court judgment on the Lady Officers in terms of the raised physical standards, none of which is true. These cadets failed the tests based on existing standards."

"This brings us to the question whether some standards of physical fitness test need to be introduced during the SSB selection board. The simple point is, experience shows that if a cadet was physically weak at the time of joining the academy, s/he generally remained so all through her/his career. In the academy, cadets are young, and at their fittest."

If a cadet is passed as 'mercy' favour, or 'supper night' in the academy parlance, s/he will remain a liability all her/his service which the army can ill-afford. I strongly believe a physical test should be introduced in the SSB for all entries and all cadets.

Those who do not pass need to be withdrawn. If they cannot pass now, they never, ever will and an officer cannot lead unless s/he can look her/his men in the eye." said the retired General before signing off. 



Sun-Tzu

# THE ART OF WAR

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*Col. (Retd.) Vinay B. Dalvi*



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## To Lead Or Not To Lead From The Front?

**“One day a terrorist can get the better of you and may be that’s what may have happened...The battle is all about being smarter than your adversary and you will have bad days sometimes. That is part of this game. This does not dictate the need to change our leadership ethos.”**

**by Major General Anil Sengar**

**W**henver there is a commanding officer casualty in the Valley a debate rages all over the country, picking faults on the conduct of operations by the unit. Whether the COs should be leading from the front or how close to the scene of action should they be.

No different than that the same thing happened when the gallant commanding officer of 21 RR (Rajwar Tigers), one Major, two NCOs and a police Sub Inspector died in Handwara.

For sure when we have such casualties and the ratio of own losses to terrorists is two to five, and that includes a CO and a company commander that operation by any classification is a disastrous failure.

I write with some experience having served in the most difficult places in

the valley as a company commander and RR Sector Commander.

We did exactly what this fine commanding officer did so often and we succeeded every time. For, if you do not surprise them and deny them time to hide and escape, you will kill no terrorists. In built up area, any operation is risky, planned or unplanned.

In fact unplanned operation is less risky, for the movement of army troops

is reported by the over ground workers the moment troops leave the company base. Number game is not correct, but killing terrorists is a necessity for obvious reasons.

The casualty ratio of own and terrorists is disturbing especially in the last few months where it is almost one to one. When this figure includes commanding officers, it is very painful. It is also a shot in the arm of the terrorist organization and ISI across the border.

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**Whenever there is a commanding officer casualty in the Valley a debate rages all over the country, picking faults on the conduct of operations by the unit. Whether the COs should be leading from the front or how close to the scene of action should they be.**

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Yet a few of these bad days such as this one and the death of four SF soldiers who died a few weeks ago killing four terrorists are not the long term pattern. Neither could have those SF soldiers done anything more or better or anything different in that situation. With hindsight, sitting thousand miles away, it is a different story.

### Some facts about 21 RR (The Guards)

- This is an all Guards Unit, where all companies are manned from one regiment. They are a highly proud, integrated and a cohesive unit with a high standard of operational drills being from the same regiment and same ethos. They are the most successful RR unit in the valley for decades.
- Col Ashutosh, the commanding officer was no novice Commanding Officer. He had already been in command for twenty months and decorated twice.
- The unit was short of company commanders who had got stuck due to corona and unable to join the unit. Thus, the commanding officer had to be more hands on in the absence of some company commanders who would otherwise be there.
- He is the second commanding officer of 21 RR to die in two decades. This proves something that the unit has a great culture of leadership by example. That is an asset and not a liability.

### The Regimental Pride

After the loss of CO 21 RR, the Colonel of the Regiment, Brigade of The Guards contacted seven experienced colonels exploring to post a commanding officer to 21RR. Some of them were commanding units and others in staff after command and Higher Command course.

Seven officers were spoken to and given one hour to consider and decide. Not one took one minute, all seven confirmed affirmative on the same call. That is the ethos of The GUARDS. I am sure any other regiment would have done the same. And that is the ethos of the Indian Army.

### Now to the operation

We all have a twenty-twenty sight with hindsight. So you can question anything- ten whys and twenty hows. I will attempt to paint a picture of how things seemed to have happened from some inputs that I got. Now, put yourself in the shoes of CO 21 RR.

You are on an operation that has been on during the night in thick forests in some part of unit AOR. Some companies are committed to that operation. You get information about a terrorist/terrorists in a village in a specific house a few kilometers away. These information are rarely accurate and actionable. A lot can change when you get there.

You have two options- one, do nothing because you are in one operation and

civilians. If he takes the second option and waits for other companies to come, it may be too late. An opportunity lost and they do not come often and easily.

So, the other option is for the CO to respond with his protection or Quick Reaction team (QRT) of normally about eight to ten men, the immediate uncommitted element available and wait for others to build up. This is the best team of men in the unit. No experienced CO would have intended to conclude the operation with just five men with him.

Now, in such operations, the most dangerous time is the time till you locate a terrorist. The only confirmation is when he fires or when someone sees him with a weapon. If he does not, you are intelligently guessing based on



Indian Army's Para (SF) operatives training for CT-Ops

ready to launch troops are not available. Two, respond to the information. To respond, either you wait for some troops to fetch up from other company locations that could take long because they have no prior warning. The terrorist/terrorists could move on by that time.

Taking the first option is not the default choice of a good commander in the Valley who makes a difference. Terrorists can happily take their resupply or whatever, rape, molest, kill, harass locals etc.

The army will be seen as incapable of responding to terrorists and protecting

inputs. You could actually walk into a place, a house, or an orchard, or take position behind a cover where he could be hiding and surprise you.

These are all possibilities. We do not know what exactly happened, whether they walked into a trap or entered a house where a terrorist happened to be hiding.

### Leadership: Does it need a Review?

Does this incident dictate a major overhaul of leadership ethos in the valley. Some aspects about the dynamics of these operations:



- You are in battle with a highly motivated individual who is prepared to die.
- Soldiers die, when they make mistakes. Quite often a soldier who makes mistakes does not die but someone else dies because of his mistakes. Soldiers also die sometime even when they do not make mistakes. This is no chess game, a terrorist has many advantages. He is one or a few hidden and you are so many in close vicinity, someone or the other gets exposed. You cannot see him, he can see you. He has night vision equipment too these days.
- One day you can get away with ten blunders. On another just one can be disastrous. Go by the text book no soldier should have ever died in Kashmir.
- Terrorists have to succeed once in a year to make news, you have to succeed every day and that is not news. When you fail once in a year, it is big news.

## Leadership Aspects

After this operation, people are questioning whether CO should lead from the front or in another way. There is simply no other way. There is no such

with his experience and a ready reinforcement of ten best men available at hand to manage contingencies.

However, house clearance is neither the job of a CO, nor does any CO do it. In the valley, house clearance is a rarity if ever. Once the terrorist is located the house is brought down and rightly so for house clearance is a definite death sentence for someone in the team.



Indian Troops on Patrol

**Terrorists have to succeed once in a year to make news, you have to succeed every day and that is not news. When you fail once in a year, it is big news. There is no such thing as leading from behind a desk or leading from the rear.**

thing as leading from behind a desk or leading from the rear. Leading from the front does not mean being the first in line of fire. It means doing what you should be doing appropriate to your position and being prepared to share the same risks and hardships and living by the values that one preaches. So, in my opinion, that question is settled.

Every situation is unique and the commander takes the best decision at the point. And his decision cannot be questioned just because something went wrong. The company commander will have to be at the scene of action, the CO must be around too to assist

Even when troops enter a house when the terrorist is presumed dead, well trained units never barge in for the danger is not over even if the terrorist is dead- IED, strapped grenades etc. These are more a matter of training and not leadership. What exactly happened in this case, we have no definite idea.

## Were they wrong?

- During Operation Blue Star, PM Indira Gandhi refused to change her guard after the Golden temple operation. Those guards shot her. As a leader, she took the right decision,

because that action would have sent a terrible message to the Sikh community, already under stress. It is her security and intelligence establishment that failed her.

- Alexander the Great should have died in his very first campaign at the age of twenty because of his courage and propensity to lead from the front unlike most kings. Providence that another Greek soldier was right there as he intercepted the man at

the last moment as he was about to strike. Alexander was injured as part of his helmet sheared off because of the blow. His inclination to launch himself into the most critical place of battle always turned the fortunes in his favour. He did not go back to leading from the rear because he almost died in his first campaign. In every operation, he was heavily outnumbered but won. If he had lived as some are suggesting, he would have been another Mr. Alexander and not Alexander the Great.

- Nearer in time, out of 660 Generals in the German army in the Second World War, one third died in battle on the front lines. Were they wrong? It is such inspiring and risk sharing leadership, based on character that made the German army so successful.

Co, Ashutosh personified that spirit that inspires officers and men. One bad

day or a mistake should not bring into question the leadership ethos.

As a sector commander, in one case I was within 30 yards of action in a built up area. In another I was within fifty yards of action in a mountainous jungle. By all teachings, I should not have been there. I was there because I decided that the situation demanded that I be there. My presence in both incidents prevented a definite blue on blue because of my experience. If I was dead, there would have been a similar debate.

Thus, no template can be stated what a CO should do or not do, for every operation is unique in every dimension and every CO takes a decision that he thinks is workable. To suggest that the CO should not lead from the front is against the very ethos of military leadership. Leading from the front varies at different levels. It will be a fig leaf for many who in any case command from the comforts of their rooms.

Command gives you the authority to issue orders.

It does not sow the seeds of loyalty and commitment, Leadership does.

What needs deliberation is what must be done to reduce the chances of own casualties.

**Casualty Ratios-** We cannot afford to lose a CO and this casualty ratio is simply unacceptable. But how do we change it? This aspect needs to be addressed at a number of levels. Some suggestions:

**Strategic Level-** Strategic perspective is conspicuous by absence. Why don't we have the technology based weapons in the valley when they are there in the market after three decades of experience.

At the national level there is a complete lack of strategic understanding and complexity of national security. Home Ministry and Defense Ministry working at cross purpose. India which has serious interlinked internal and external security challenges has the most disjointed structure to deal with it. Recently there was a move to take the Assam Rifles under Home Ministry.

What happens when you have a skirmish with China? Some of these forces responsible for the border hardly ever go there, and they cannot even get to the border without local guides. How will you fight and what help can the army expect from them.

Coming to the valley. Like multiple agencies manning the border with no accountability to the army. In the Valley there are CAPF with no accountability to the Army even though they have some kind of joint working mechanism which does not meet the requirement.

The recent controversy of IG Police J&K blaming the CRPF for poor contribution is a case in point. Unless there is a centralized control of the security agencies, there will be no synergy of operation and intelligence.



RR personnel heading back from operations

The army itself does not seem to have a long term perspective of how to deal with this conflict and how it is changing. Stone pelting, targeting police and families, social media war etc comes as a surprise.

The corps commanders come and go, operating at the tactical level, making assessment of security situations by the number of infiltrations, comparative figures of terrorists killed month wise or in relation to the previous years. It can change in a week.

I fail to see any long term perspective from the military point of view to empower their troops to fight better, both in terms of doctrine or equipment. We are still doing what we were doing two decades back. Wonder if the army has

made any effort to learn lessons from Afghanistan, Iraq or Syria.

We need to review the restrictions we place on the army. A terrorist supporter is a terrorist and has to be dealt with accordingly. Collateral damage when operating against a terrorist, despite best efforts, is just a bad day, like it was for 21RR. Anyone who defies the military has to be dealt with strictly.

## The Theory of Indirect Approach

The tactical battle with terrorists will have to be fought as long as the problem exists. Like acupuncture the pain in the shoulder is treated by applying pressure on the toes or finger tips.

The pressure point is POK and Baluchistan. We need a dedicated department to prosecute a mirror image operation of the Valley to target the Pakistani military by the soldiers of the soil within 72 hours. I

## Tactical Level

No pressure for kills- direct or indirect. It happens. Even GOCs get pressurized if there is an extended period of no kill. The units will still go for the kill, pressure or no pressure and they must.

- Operations must proceed at the pace at which the commander on ground feels comfortable. Higher commanders must avoid coming into vicinity of the operations unless the commander on the ground wants him



too. His presence invariably places more security and logistics demands and is an unavoidable distraction.

- Principle- I will not trade one man for twenty terrorists. I do my best, If he gets away we will get him another day.
- No hurry in the operations. The phase till location of terrorist is most risky and must be handled with extra care. Use every means that does not expose troops.
- Every house is seen as if a terrorist is in there.
- Trust no one- verify every aspect before you act.

## Training

RR units under good commanding officers and good commanders are well trained. Or else they are simply jungle bashing. Good training and drills saves lives.

- Introspect- Train- Operate. Meaningful training that increases the conversion of contacts to kills is important. Every company must take three days off in a month for the purpose of introspection, AAR of their operations and train to overcome those shortcomings.
- Sect commanders must add value in their training. It is desirable that unless an officer has commanded a company or a battalion in the operations in the valley, they should not be posted as commanders
- Purposeful training is- Good shooting and fire control- shoot only when you see the terrorist, Field craft and use of cover saves from both enemy and own fire.
- Practical wisdom. Train to deal with ten most common situations that troops face when they contact terrorists in BUA and in forests.

## Technology

The most dangerous phase as I said is till you locate the terrorist, whether in BUA or forests. The units have to be equipped with high technology

equipment that enables surveillance in BUA, inside houses and in forests without exposing soldiers.

- Surveillance/armed robots that can be operated in the kind of houses that exist in Kashmir.
- Heartbeat locators.
- Small surveillance drone.
- Weaponized drones and robots appropriate to the operational environment.
- Other equipment like corner shot weapons and periscopes.(can be made by units) .

## Conclusion

Best commanders could sometimes make mistakes. Even the smartest guys get conned sometime. The Eiffel Tower was sold by a con man to a rich

business man in France. In hindsight it looks foolish, but it happened. Junior leaders are our pride because they operate the way they do.

There are risks involved and sometimes we pay the price. The need for getting more out of JCOs and NCOs is paramount but that is another subject and must be dealt with.

One day a terrorist can get the better of you and may be that may have happened, we do not know. The battle is all about being smarter than your adversary and you will have a bad day sometime. That is part of this game.

This does not dictate the need to change our leadership ethos. They have withstood the test of ages and cannot be questioned. What we need to do is to equip and empower them to do the same job with best safety.equip and empower them to do the same job with best safety. 🇮🇳



Rashtriya Rifles soldiers in Kashmir



## Major General Anil Sengar, ex ADGMF

Maj Gen Anil Sengar, 5 GUARDS has served in most varied environment as an Infantry and a Mechanised officer. Commanded battalion and brigade in Counter Insurgency Operations, division in a strike corps, raised a division in the North East as Deputy GOC and retired from the DGMF. He has written four popular books and is into his fifth. Served as Defence Attache in Turkey and has a reputation of holding no punches when it comes to professional views.



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# Our Nation Needs Warriors Not Gentlemen!

**“The Army owes loyalty to the Constitution rather than a political party. It is for this reason alone that the President of India is the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. The Army has a responsibility to give the correct information to the Indian people.”**

**by Pankaj Bhagwati**

**O**ur Nation and specifically our army is in desperate need of warriors especially in its higher ranks rather than suave, slick, tactful and charming gentlemen. Even though officer cadets are referred to as Gentlemen Cadets, during the pre-commissioning training, later on in life one particular aspect of being a gentleman is proving to be detrimental to the health of the Army. This is the aspect of moderation.

The mindset of a warrior is simple and straightforward. It in no way means that the picture of a warrior is a dull-headed, robotic moron. Every conqueror or famous general was a supremely intelligent individual whose cognitive processes were far more advanced than those of his contemporaries. What is intended to say is that a Warrior wastes no time indulging in the niceties of tact or moderation.

His answers to most questions are generally in monosyllables, short, crisp and to-the-point. How much of this is in variance to the great number of televised generals who speak in meandering discourses stuck between desperately trying to adhere to some semblance of truth and being politically correct?

It is this moderation that has weaned away truth from the public and also stifled the National responses to military oriented crises. Manekshaw's interactions with Indira Gandhi were never based on moderation. It gave the right picture to the government without mincing back harsh realities and enabled India to win the war.

The situation today is far more distant from that era. Most officers in the hierarchical chain of the Army actively practice and ardently preach

moderation. Those who are blunt and to-the-point find easy recourse to career stagnation early on in their service lives. Most senior officers in the Army actively believe in the Japanese Shinto custom of Kegare.

If you are the harbinger of bad news, you become a Kegare, worth putting down. This gives prevalence to the practice of moderation. For example, if a patrol reports that the Chinese have intruded six kilometres across the LAC, it becomes 5-6 in the first reporting, then a few kilometres & ends up as a marginal intrusion by the time it reaches the apex. Such a tendency to under-report facts or sugar-coat setbacks destroys the need for urgency from above. Often moderations up the chain result in portraying completely different pictures far removed from actual truth.

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By the time officers become Generals and inhabit the corridors of power, the act of moderation becomes a norm and a requirement  
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By the time officers become Generals and inhabit the corridors of power, the act of moderation becomes a norm and a requirement. It is not surprising that Media statements from the Army (approved by Generals far removed from the ground), heavily affected by moderation are only partial truths or in some cases quite divergent.

The Army owes loyalty to the Constitution rather than a political party. It is for this reason alone that the President of India is the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. In discharging its task the Army has a responsibility to give the correct information to the Indian people. When the political dispensation dithers, it is the Army's constitutional obligation to inform the right picture to the masses and fulfil its duty as a part of checks and balances that strengthen democracy.

The Defence Minister's responsibility by constitutional intent as 'responsible for defence of India', points towards the need to provide material and financial support to the Armed Forces for organising the defence of India rather than 'Lead' the Forces; as he is a political representative rather than a domain expert. If the Armed Forces are subservient to the Political representative, then it is bound to be misused for political purposes, a fact that is contrary to the constitutional direction that the Armed Forces should be apolitical. Such an arrangement proved to be disastrous during the debacle of 1962.

The present breed of Gentlemen Generals completely subservient to the political dispensation is detrimental to the health of the Army and safety of our Nation. That there is growing disenchantment with the military leadership is no secret. Social media handles and print media is replete with voices questioning the competence and loyalty of the Senior Officers.

In a world where information is supreme, the effective exploitation of

this domain by the Armed Forces has been found to be appalling. The poor and disjointed quality of information being put out to the public can directly be credited to the Army's highest authority, as all releases are approved by them prior to dissemination.

During the Balakot Strikes and the riposte by Pakistan, the Army abdicated its role of providing information to the Ministry of External affairs. By being present but not entertaining questions, the representatives of the Armed forces were seen to be siding with inaccurate information being given out by the political dispensation; thereby eroding their credibility. Even during the present ongoing tensions with the Chinese, the Army seems to have again abandoned its responsibility of providing timely, credible information.

The resultant information-void has been populated by rumours and fake news viral on social media handles. The statement given by the Army after much delay left many questions unanswered. Their credibility was further eroded once media outlets (who possessed accurate information but withheld it awaiting official statements by the Army), published news which were contrary to government statements.

It can now safely be said that the Armed Forces have completely demolished their credibility as providers of truthful information. Their abdication from the responsibility to engage the media seems to indicate that they are now functioning under 'Fear of

Failure' rather than 'Hope for Success'. What has been the most disconcerting is that the Chief of Defence Staff could address the nation to announce showering of petals on Corona Warriors, but not one representative of the Armed Forces was courageous to inform the public of what happened in Galwan.

Professional Armies do not lie. Neither are they reluctant to frankly answer questions posed to them about operations unless they are likely to jeopardise operational secrets. Propaganda and Psychological Influence Operations are done by covert agencies, not by withholding information or giving false statements. India is a democracy and cannot equate herself with the likes of China. Our gallant soldiers sacrificed their lives fighting unarmed against the Chinese.

They were the true warriors and they gave their lives in the best traditions of the Army. A lot of lies and half-truths have been propagated about what has happened and is happening in Ladakh. The lives of Col S Babu and his men cannot have been in vain. We need to avenge their killings and secure our sovereignty. There is no dearth of warriors in the lower levels.

Despite facing extreme weather, unbearable physical hardships, crippling deficiencies and bureaucratic apathy, our officers and men have always delivered on their mission. Nothing is impossible and no foe too powerful to fight and defeat. What is lacking are warriors at the higher echelons who have the courage to speak the truth, be loyal to their men, standby their convictions and fulfil their constitutional responsibility of protecting the Nation. Our Nation Needs Warriors not Gentlemen! 🇮🇳



**Pankaj Bhagwati**

The author has served in the Indian Army, was deployed for two tenures in Ladakh region and commanded a battalion on the Line-of-Control in Kargil. Views expressed are the authors own, and do not reflect the editorial policy of 'Mission Victory India'





# A Mission For The Armed Forces Leadership

by Nixon Fernando

**G**iven that we Indians have not realized the true extent of our potential. Given that the Armed forces is one of the best, effective and admired institutions in our country. A responsibility squarely rests on it. Do the Military leaders wait for some alien to come and lift the forces and the nation to greater heights or then does that responsibility rest on the shoulder of the armed forces?

The responsible position is that if the military is one of the best institutions in Indian society it must do its part to spearhead change that can take India forward. And why within the Armed Forces it should not be spearheaded by the institution that prides itself to be the “Cradle of Military Leadership”?

One can rest assured that there is churning. And mission victory India has become the point of focus of many veterans and well-wishers to toss up and dwell upon ideas and benchmarks that can make a difference. Mission

Victory India represents a sincere effort at pushing in the positive direction. Ultimately distinguished alumni including ex-cadets and ex-instructors have taken it upon themselves to ask questions and seek answers; to analyze the pluses and minuses. Initially it was about the NDA but the scope has gradually expanded to include the entire armed forces. Be it selection, training, modernization, Education, Physical Education, Values, Infrastructure, unstructured training, jointmanship or specialized training, everything is being brought under the scanner and the earnest suggestions for improvement have been compiled—and the process goes on.

What is now a set of six books and a website probably made a start in two separate sources that ultimately merged into one campaign as the Victory India campaign. Col Dalvi, who is spearheading the campaign, having served for the most part in the PT Corps, especially in the three academies NDA,

OTA and IMA for a cumulative of 9 years as PTO knows most aspect of the state of sports and PT in the armed forces—like the proverbial back of his hand. And seeing the mess that was being made of the PT tests, wrote a paper about it. This became the core of the first book Role model. On the other side Admiral Arun Prakash, who had served as commandant NDA, instituted a Honor Code in the academy knowing very well that it was required in an environment of falling values and the heights a soldier touches needs the idealism of a high code of honor. When Admiral Arun Prakash was CNS he sent a diligent visionary Vice Admiral SCS Bangara as commandant NDA on a mission to study the NDA and set it on the path of reform. Those who understood Admiral Bangara’s single mindedness to take the NDA to greater heights relish the team efforts that went in at the NDA and know the depth of the vision that was eventually compiled.

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**Col Dalvi, who is spearheading the campaign, having served for the most part in the PT Corps, especially in the three academies NDA, OTA and IMA for a cumulative of 9 years as PTO knows most aspect of the state of sports and PT in the forces—like the proverbial back of his hand, seeing the mess that was being made of the PT tests, wrote a paper about it.**

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Col Dalvi, after his retirement, when he was invited to give talks in schools and colleges to motivate students to join the armed forces, found that his conscience did not allow him to do so freely. Some basic reform had to take place. And that was the origin of the Victory India Campaign. With the intense study by the NDA under Admiral Bangara, with the wealth of insight of many distinguished veterans who understood the spirit of what Col Dalvi sought, With committed compiling and debate-facilitating by Col Vinay Dalvi something unique has been attained.

Ten years and five Victory India books down the line we have one of the largest compendiums on leadership and probably the only one on military leadership in the whole world. 60+ authors and 200+ essays and debates by well informed and articulate veterans of various specializations gives immense content and spectrum to the compilation. And those in service who had the courage of conviction to enlighten themselves have indeed benefited themselves and their organization from the knowledge that has been made available.

But there is immense inertia in the serving fraternity. Be it Col Dalvi's first paper to the higher authorities, Admiral Bangara's informed compiled vision about the NDA or the Victory India books, the willingness to benefit from it is rather damped. There does not seem to exist an institutional digestive system for such wealth of wisdom. When such research output is put forth, the military should be able to sieve out the positives and integrated into the existing system. One encounters many serving officers who agree completely with the findings unofficially but

cannot act on it officially. There is no university that can use these insights as text books to inform the upcoming military leaders or even inform the existing ones about needed changes.

In any case the trend has changed gradually. Increasingly the serving officers see themselves doing a better job at their responsibilities using the insights provided to them by their seniors, who in turn once served in the

very same offices. And it continues to be an upstream battle, whose tide will turn may be only when the tide in the nation itself turns.

It takes an informed leader at the top to make a difference and increasingly as the buck stops at higher places, change is imminent. The commanders have already given directions on the use of Sports Medicine in military Physical Education activities; including in training. That is a good start. More is already happening but it is not enough. Let's hope there will be even more of those in harness, who will see wisdom in getting informed by the experienced.

It is finally a duty to the nation itself. If an armed forces leader can demonstrate the heights in wisdom, valor and values by drawing from our ancient heritage as Admiral Arun Prakash has brought out in his essay, then the nation itself can see greater promise. The armed forces must lead the change. 🇮🇳



## Nixon Fernando

Nixon Fernando is a post graduate in physics, government and business administration. He served as lecturer and counsellor at the NDA for 10 years from 1996 to 2007. A versatile sportsman and ballroom dance instructor, his services were appreciated and commended by the Commandant and Principal of NDA. Currently, he is a research assistant to TN Seshan, former CEC of India. He can be reached on Email: [alnixonf@yahoo.com](mailto:alnixonf@yahoo.com)





## Tour Of Duty: A Novel Proposal Or Sugar-Coated Poison?

Following the Indian Army's novel proposal to allow able bodied youth to serve in the army for 3 years, 'Mission Victory India' interviewed eminent veterans, who shared their insights on the proposed policy. Excerpts below.

by Colonel Vinay Dalvi, Aritra Banerjee

**T**he Indian army's long-standing shortage of 7,680 officers could be partly reduced with the proposed novel "Three-year, Tour of Duty model" for Officers and Jawans announced by the Army.

Tour of Duty (ToD) is modelled on similar lines with the existing Short Service Commission (SSC) entry scheme, which allows selected candidates to serve as Commissioned Officers for 10-14 years, following which they can opt for Permanent Commission (PC).

If accepted the ToD model will serve as something along the lines of an "internship" offering able bodied youth volunteers a chance to experience "army life, including serving in combat arms for three years."

Speaking to 'Mission Victory India' a senior army official knowledgeable

about the developments has said, "The proposal is a shift from the concept of permanent service towards an internship or temporary experience of military service."

A defence spokesperson, said "There will be absolutely no relaxation in the selection and training criteria, and it is only those candidates who are meeting the Indian army's current selection standards shall be eligible to serve under this proposed model."

The official also said, "This mode of engagement is likely to benefit both the army and the candidates, the details of which are presently under scrutiny and will form a part of the main proposal which should be forwarded to the government for approval soon."

The proposal reviewed by 'Mission Victory India' highlights the significant

financial savings the Indian Army is likely to make if the proposal passes and would also "enhance career prospects of ToD volunteers in the corporate world, post service."

Both aspects are worth introspection as defence experts have claimed that the Indian Army's mounting salary and pension costs, have been seeping away major chunks from the defence budget. Furthermore, the perceived lack of adequate career prospects in the corporate sector post retirement has been another reason for a career in the Defence Services, let alone the army being considered as an unattractive career option by the talented youth.

Elaborating how the ToD model will financially unburden the army and make a career in the military a more lucrative choice the proposal cites:



“The cumulative cost of pre-commission training, pay/allowances, proposed severance packages, leave encashment and other costs is nearly Rs 5.12 crore and Rs 6.83 crore for short-service commissioned (SSC) officers released after 10 and 14 years of service. However, similar costs for those released after three years will be just Rs 80 to Rs 85 lakh”.

The proposal also says that the ToD model would eventually result in significant reduction in salary and pension budgets, too. The proposal also cites a survey that has indicated that corporate houses would prefer employing individuals who have been trained by the military and join them at the age of 26-27 after a three-year ToD rather than college graduates.

“Many corporates have indicated that ToD officers would also be preferable to the current SSC work force joining them at the age of 33-34 years after 10 years of service. The ToD concept will become attractive if seen by the youth as a vehicle which boosts their subsequent career in the government or the corporate world,” the proposal said.

Clarifying doubts as to whether or not the proposal amounts to conscription in any way Army spokesperson Colonel Aman Anand said, “It will be totally voluntary and there will be no dilution in the selection criteria.”

The proposal added, “This is an ideal opportunity for those individuals who do not want to make defence services their permanent vocation, but still want to experience the thrill and adventure of the military profession and the glamour of donning the uniform.”

The proposal also addressed questions about the level of preparedness and experience of ToD cadre in a potential wartime situation, reading, “This argument can be negated with the demonstrated performance of our officers and jawans with less than three years service in the Kargil war. If the ToD officers/jawans undergo the same training (for nine months) as the regular officers/other ranks, then their commitment, dedication and performance should not be in any doubt,”

## Responses Invited

In view of the above highlighted salient features of the Army’s proposed three years Tour of Duty model for Officers and Jawans Respondents were requested to weigh the pros and cons of this novel proposal and send their views, comments and recommendations keeping in mind their service background and experience in uniform in peace, war, Counter Insurgency environment and also post retirement life.

## What Veterans Have to Say About the Proposal

**Lt Gen VK Chaturvedi, ex Artillery & Director General Manpower Planning and Personal Services**

The Tour of Duty ( ToD) proposal of inducting the youth of the country



Gorkha Rifles troops during a training exercise

for three years in the Army came as a surprise to me as I wasn’t aware of the actual reason behind it. Taking the print media version of this news to be correct, i.e to give the youth a feeling of the Army and also inculcate in them the national spirit, left me aghast at the proposal.

Armed Forces are the last bastion of the state instrument of power. They have an onerous responsibility to ensure that come what may, the Nation never loses. Be it in aid to civil authorities or during National Disasters/calamities, or when everything fails or for repairing bridges for Common Wealth Games or in Mumbai, and most importantly the primary task being, defending the

territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country.

Armed Forces have to be equipped, trained, motivated and effective so that they always win. With such a charter to be fulfilled, we have to have the best soldiers, totally committed, dedicated and young. We need efficient, effective and highly synchronised formations, units and subunits.

For achieving this, our greatest strength is the ‘Regimentation’, which is built over time, when you rub shoulders with your men and colleagues, live together, eat together, share your happiness and sorrows, develop confidence amongst each other and above all the trust, faith and belief in each other. This takes time, you have to prove yourself in thick and thin and only then such trust and faith is cemented.

I therefore can not fathom how we have accepted a proposal that to give a feel of the Army and inculcate nationalism, we will have an entry called Tour of Duty (ToD) for three years for the youth of the country. In these three years about 8 months will go on leave (A/L,C/L), another about 5 months for the mandatory Young Officers (YOs) Course.

That will leave just about two years, i.e. first one year for settling down and second year for planning to leave i. e. employment post ToD. What will be his dedication, commitment to the Paltan is anyone’s guess. Our greatest strength i.e. ‘Regimentation’ will be the biggest sufferer and thereby result in operational effectiveness of the units and

subunits being compromised. This is something which is just not acceptable.

The Short Service Commission (SSC) was started for 5 yrs service initially, thereafter, it was felt it is less hence increased to 5+5 yrs, and later to 5+5+4 yrs and ultimately now to 10 +4 yrs (total 14 yrs). This is for two reasons, firstly to give adequate time to be part of the system and contribute and secondly this is the service group where we have the requirement due to a shortage of officers.

Both are operational effectiveness reasons. SSC, has already proved itself. We are adequately prepared in terms of training facilities, various SOPs, their optimum utilisation etc, and therefore this entry needs to be strengthened by making it more attractive. Lateral induction for them into CAPF, will be a



Infantry soldiers during army day celebrations

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**In these three years about 8 months will go on leave, another about five months for the mandatory Young Officers Course.**

**That will leave just about two years, i.e. first one year for settling down and second year for planning to leave i. e. employment post ToD. What will be his dedication, commitment to the Paltan is anyone's guess?**

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great step forward in making the SSC more attractive.

## Financial Savings

Armed Forces do not ever get involved in financial Savings aspects, however, this is a parameter kept at the back of mind. It has never become the overriding parameter. If we don't have the funds, we may spread the induction of a particular equipment or reduce the numbers i.e. if we need three divisions, we go for only two divisions immediately and leave the third for operationalization later, but we never compromise on the quality and effectiveness.

In this case there will not be any savings also as the training cost will go up substantially, as against training one officer we will now be training five, there will be requirement of more training facilities, more instructors, more Academies, also paying more number of the GCs for the period of

training. The number of SSB centres will also need to be increased as more candidates will need to be screened.

Why do we say our Pension bill is going up, we want to reduce it. It's bizarre, it is the cost of defending national integrity and sovereignty. Please don't call it expenditure, it's investment. Look after your veterans and give them dignity and honour, do not let them feel that they are liabilities, it's very hurting.

If there is a need to give the feel of Army life, then there are other means available like increasing the strength of NCC and let these cadets spend six months with Army units in field areas including HAA, take part in operations, patrolling, area domination etc, and cover them for the risk involved.

There is another option of TA (Territorial Army), raise additional battalions for 'Namami Gange' project, at

least 30 Bns are required to be deployed all along the Ganges. Now herbal plantation is also required to be done, they will do the best job with total dedication and commitment. No money will be pilfered. Similarly you can raise additional TA battalions for Heritage Protection, to protect all 30,000 odd Heritage sites of the country.

A requirement of 15 odd battalions is there for the same. Presently you have ad hoc arrangements, like private guards etc, wherein you have lost precious artifacts while the site is also not protected. The efficiency will improve manifold, and the areas will be well maintained with proper accounting of all the assets and also the visitors control will be proper. This will also result in creation of employment both for the local youth as well the veterans.

In the end I would strongly recommend that please don't tamper with a great professional institution like the Armed Forces, they have an onerous task of defending the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country where we can't be experimenting to give a feel of the Army life to the youth of the nation. It's too serious a matter to be dealt with in this manner.

Armed Forces have to always guarantee a victory for the Nation, they can't



afford to be defeated. If the Armed Forces lose the Nation loses, stakes are too high. Therefore, no experimentation please. It is not to give a 'tour' to anyone but to do a very sacred job.

If Armed Forces duties are taken as 'tours' that will be the end of a very professional Armed Forces of the world. Let's not be penny wise pound foolish. We will be creating a population who after having a 'tour' of Armed Forces demanding every privilege of the Armed Forces and be looked after like the veterans, many of them may also become medical categories and thus will demand looking after (of course you will have to pay them disability pension for life in these cases)

Let's bring changes in the Armed Forces only to make them more professional and operationally effective and for no other reason. Nation must know that this is the only organization which signs its death warrant willingly at the time of commissioning, let's respect its professionalism. Jai Hind!

**Maj Gen CD Sawant, ex Infantry, ex GOC Inf Div & Comdt MLIRC**

Tour of Duty concept is seemingly a novel idea for India. Of course it is a copy paste idea from Developed countries especially USA and Israel. However, while considering its benefits for the country or Army as such, there must be a detailed thought given for future prospects of the individuals. Some have indicated that Corporates may welcome these individuals; I do hope that Corporates both Indian as well as MNCs operating in India have been taken into confidence. merely conjecturing that Corporates will prefer such persons is definitely not adequate.

The government before implementing the scheme, must also make sure that these individuals after their tour of duty are absorbed not only in Corporates but also in other government services including IAS, IFS, IPS etc and other PMF. If the resistance to accept them in above services continues then the issue will be a non starter. I earnestly feel that consideration of future prospects of such persons are

**I do hope that Corporates both Indian as well as MNCs operating in India have been taken into confidence. merely conjecturing that Corporates will prefer such persons is definitely not adequate.**

more important than the benefit the government may accrue.

**Col Pradeep Dalvi, ex Mech Inf, ex Head of Security & Vigilance GM, Tata Power**

If the aim of the ToD model is to reduce the burden on defense expenditure then whoever has recommended this model is trying to please the bureaucrats and politicians without knowing realities on ground. Firstly what is the difference between ToD and SSC? You

Idea of the corporate world lapping them (ToD officers) for jobs and assignments is far-fetched. Individuals with 26/27 years of age will have to start from the scratch and at the bottom of the corporate ladder. Recently, I spoke to students of class XI and XII of Sainik school Bijapur (My school) to motivate them to join the forces (NDA) as the performance of students over the last few years have been very poor.

They live in a disillusioned world where they think that corporate world



RR troops on patrol

train a civilian for 11 months to become an officer and saying goodbye to him after three years is nothing but wasting of resources and killing the aspirations of the young.

Today's Generation Z has a different mindset than their previous generation, namely X and Y generation. Their attitude, behavior and lifestyle are focused along with technology and have to be taken into consideration. Some ARM CHAIR senior officers and bureaucrats cannot make such a decision sitting in Delhi without considering the aspiration of Generation Z. They are not likely to be drawn towards the Armed Forces only on adventure, army way of life or uniform, but something substantive in terms of pay and allowance and stability.

offer big fat salaries and they can reach the higher echelons of the corporate ladder in quick time, balloon which we deflated with statistics and opportunities in corporate world. If this is the response of Sainik school and military school students who are considered to be feeder pipe line for Armed forces I dread to think what will be the intake of civilians to ToD model where you are left on your own to manage your career?

Coming back to the Brass tacks, though it might look very attractive at first glance to civilians and also to men in uniform, the availability of officers on ToD is not more than 2 years being on Leave, courses, TD, etc, away from their duty station. The ratio of training at OTA (1 year) and actual military



service (2 years) will be 1:2 respectively which is highly undesirable and sheer wastage of trained resources. Armed forces is the last resort of the nation, be it internal/external threat, or from natural or man-made disasters.

If that be so, one should not put stop gap measures to ride over a shortage of officers in Armed forces where quality and intake is compromised. There seems to be some impression amongst Lutyens Delhi that ToD officers will provide the nation with strong, disciplined, military oriented citizens which will be of great value addition to the country.

Some have even started even comparing with military conscription like in Israel. For such day to dawn for dreamers, we need to first put in place our economy on road and have suitable opportunities for young men after ToD tenure, otherwise it will be akin to contract labor and their fate post Covid 19 pandemic.

Let me look at other options available to tie over shortage of manpower, especially of officer cadre, in the forces and also reduce our defence budget with addition of values and the ethos of the forces to provide stability to the officers cadre:

- All IAS, IPS, IFS officers carry out ToD of two years with Armed forces after their probationary training. All BSF and CPMF officers to carry out ToD of 3 years after completing their mandatory training in their respective training establishments.
- Direct recruitment as part of ToD (5 years) to officers in TA (territorial Army/ SRPF/CISF/CRPF etc) with options available of permanent commission or extension or severance or side stepping to other defense organizations/PSU.
- Direct recruitment as JCO (Junior commissioned officers) as graduate entry in forces thereby reducing load on officers and having manpower for induction through ranks to officer cadre.
- Lastly, the ToD model needs to be looked at holistically especially from the point of view of jobs, employability

and opportunities available and aspiration of the Z Generation. Being a short service commissioned officer I have had closer look at my course mates who did not get their permanent commission after 5 years of duty or volunteered to opt out and the difficulties they faced in finding suitable jobs in this corporate world. It is the job and duty of the Govt to provide them these opportunities and not leave them to fend for themselves.

## Brig IS Gakhal, ex Infantry & Sector Cdr RR & Comdt SRC

It is old Wine in a new bottle. There was a proposal to induct through our Territorial Army a short service cadre. Do a year in TA and if found suitable side step to Army for a specified tenure. However, this transitory method



RR troops planning operations

of making up officer shortage has the following repercussions:

- Adversely impact Regimental ethos and life. By the time a YO imbibes the ethos and ready for responsibility he is set to go.
- Frankly there will be few takers for this uncertain future after a 3 year slog.
- The answer may lie in a five year stint with guaranteed CAPF service thereafter.
- Without assured further progression why would I slog the hard road.
- In JCOs we have potential leaders. It would be better if we give them

greater authority and use them more gainfully than presently to make good officer shortage.

- As for Jawans there are no shortages. However to cut costs the answer lies in extending retirement age to 50.

## Col CM Chavan, ex AAD

The Indian Army's requirement is not just able-bodied individuals but highly trained and experienced individuals. The tour of duty model for three years does not specify the following:

- Would they be given the same annual and casual leave (if so, his effective tenure would be two years and four months)?
- Would they be subjected to various courses (at least two in three

years) i.e. YOs and another skill-related, which would further reduce their actual tenure?

- Would their dependents be given medical assistance more so when such an officer becomes a casualty, what would be his fate?
- Would there be any legal battles to be endured at a later date, as the women officers fought for permanent commission?

An officer/jawan almost takes more than three years to mature as a soldier by way of grooming, training, and experience. Apart from that, we strive to train soldiers by transferring them to various terrains by moving the units to different sectors. Here in this scenario,

an individual would have to be kept restricted to one type of terrain. This would mean that an individual would have to be posted to a unit which has just been moved to a particular sector.

We are thinking of reducing the cost of one short service commissioned officer who would be having a tenure of let us say, twenty years. It would thus necessitate in providing seven such officers in lieu who in any case would be of no comparison to a short service officer.

A short service officer is a highly trained soldier in twenty years of time, who is motivated and imbibed with the ethos of his unit and does not hesitate to give the supreme sacrifice. On the other hand, an officer who is on a 'tour of duty' would probably try to remain safe barring aside a few. Most of the officers from such cadre would be whiling away time as; they would know it in the heart of the heart that they are just guests of honour!

I dare say that most of the youth of India have been brought up in an environment, wherein they are not filled with national pride and fervour, who do not even know their responsibilities towards the state and lack initiative (the reason for rejections at SSB). It's the regimentation and grooming that an officer/jawan undergoes in his unit, that he becomes a true soldier.

It is the first three to four years which are crucial and as such, I personally feel that such cadre officers would not meet the requirement, especially when we are being subjected to unconventional warfare on daily basis from the Western Front and the Eastern Front is a volcano as to when it will burst, one can not say. In such a scenario we can not have three cadres of officers namely permanent, short service and now 'tour of duty' which is bound to create chaos and divide in a unit. It is the COs who are going to face the major brunt. It is NOT just the question of filling in the numbers. This idea should practically and not theoretically be thought over by including the views of CO upwards before putting it up as a proposal.

It is really painful that we can go to any length to reduce the expenditure for the Govt. It is pertinent to bring

out here that France's Armed Forces Chief Pierre de Villiers resigned when the defense budget cuts were in the pipeline under Emmanuel Macron in the year 2017. In times to come if India is to become a major power, it would need strong defence forces to project its foreign policy.

### **Cdr Ravindra Pathak, ex IN**

I wonder why we are keen on doing a cut-paste job, When we look to implement schemes from other countries we need to look at the general situation in those countries with respect to the Employability of such short tours, armed forces officers post-release when the unemployment rates are high. These officers unless first recruited in a job and then seconded to Armed forces will face a fate worse than that of



Soldiers waiting in formation

Short Service Commission officers and Emergency Commission officers.

We had such a scheme in the Indian Navy or Indian Navy Volunteer Reserve scheme. Frankly most of them were on holidays during attachments but some who volunteered to join as permanent commission officers did well.

It takes the services 11 months to train an SSC Officer in the academies and then on the job in the field. Now, will these officers spend 1/3 the period or a shorter time is not clear. One wonders if one-third of the total time is spent in training alone how much these officers will contribute to the fighting power of the service or will they be a burden on the unit. If it is lower the situation in units will be worse than the shortage.

In conclusion, in my opinion, this is a penny wise pound foolish step for which the armed forces and nation will pay a heavy price in the future

### **RAdm Stanley O' Leary**

When I saw this report in the papers, what struck me was the knee jerk reaction to a very serious issue, where someone thinks, Eureka, I have found the problem to ease the tensions of the Finance Ministry. But is this only for the Armed Forces? Is the contribution of those who served faithfully bound by what they can be paid in pay and pensions.

Why on earth does this not be considered by the Civil services whose service itself is questionable. Needless to say they have puppets in the Service who will applaud loudly to be seen to

be pro Government and even fair on the Govt. But many of these worthies have taken disability pension. These are the hypocrites that we need to contend with.

### **Gp Capt TP Srivastava, ex IAF**

One of the most insane, impractical ideas, which will have a direct impact on operational readiness as well as morale of the 'longer term' serving personnel. National Security is not counted in terms of pennies. In this proposal we have gone wrong there as well.

Quoted figures of 3 year term is about INR 85 lakh, whereas for a SSC person, who would serve for 14 years is around INR 5 Crore. Now the maths;



Five terms of 3 year tenure (15 years) will cost around INR 4.25 Crore (INR 85 Lakhs X 5). The 3 year tenure individual will remain a trainee for at least one year, hence five trainees will consume five years under trainee implying operational utilisation for 10 years only. whereas the 14 year tenure SSC person will be available for 13 years in operational role. Which insane person/s have come up with such an idea?

### **Col Rajinder Kushwaha, Author, Def & Nat Sec Analyst, ex CO 3 Bihar**

Many awkward questions arise. Are you going to use the youth of this country as canon fodder? It is a known fact that shortage of officer cadre, of some 7,700 officers, is mostly felt in the Infantry and RR Battalions due to deployment in Insurgency? Are we going to train them for a mercenary job to kill or be killed in insurgency environments?

What assurance do you have for lucky survivors for lateral absorption? If they are not absorbed laterally, would they not become killers roaming the streets of India? There are very many chances of unemployed amongst them being exploited by the mafia and underworld elements. Nation would face a serious problem. This remedy is worse than the problem.

Why are we making a 'khichdi' (mixture) of the Officer Corps? It is a most ridiculous proposition. In case the officer shortage is felt so badly, then increase the number of direct entry graduate JCO vacancies in Infantry and RR battalions. They could rise to the rank of Lt Col/Col and retire.

Police and PMF have such cadres — why not Indian armed forces? Why go on with the Colonial culture? We need to give more responsibilities to JCO cadre and enhance their chances of upward mobility.

Reduce the intake of regular and direct officers. A Junior Leaders Academy needs to be established. May IMA be temporarily converted into 'Junior leaders Academy' for direct commission of graduate JCOs. (Do not be Shocked!)

Direct entry officers Cadre can be reduced. They can rise to the ranks of Brigadiers and Generals. The NDA cadets of the reduced Army stream can go to OTA for final training. Naval and Airforce cadets entry to be appropriately increased for NDA, because of the emphasis of modern wars shifting to SAS (Space and Seas) rather than land. Land warfare will be confined to insurgency and border skirmishes where junior leaders would play an important role.

JLA (IMA) is only for initial Combat arms cadets training such as Infantry, Artillery and Armoured Corps for one year and later one year for combined training with Logistics and technical cadets.

Initial one year training of Logistics and technical cadets will be done at



RR Troops on the hunt

respective specialised institutes at Mhow, Secunderabad, Pune, Jabalpur and Barailey etc.

This will be a better way of making up the deficiency at the junior leaders level. As brought out earlier we need to strengthen the Execution level of leadership in the army for shrinking the Zone of 'Land Warfare'. We need to think of junior leadership, keeping in mind the emerging forms of warfare and also in tune with modern India.

The Army has to move away from Colonial thinking of JCOs being used only as a communication link between officer cadre and the men. Revitalise it and make it more responsible.

### **Col Alok Asthana, ex Infantry**

There is only one definite lesson here; rest is speculative which would be validated only in the future. It is now proven that the army itself believes that one year training is adequate to convert a univ lad into an officer, who will deliver as would an ex NDA boy with 4 years massive expenditure on him by Indian state. It believes that 1 year training meets the requirement of what the industry calls MVP (Minimum Viable Product). The other 3 years are just embellishments e.g. how to ride a horse, how to box, how to speak better English, how to display better etiquettes, how to bullshit etc.

So, why are we wasting so much money on giving anyone more than 1 year training?

How an officer turns out after the first 3 years depends not only on how he is handled in these first three years, but ENTIRELY on it. I am 100 % sure of that. Pre commission training has NOTHING to do with success after 3 years. Had it been so, the army would have had some system to benefit ex NDAs over DEs and others in their careers. That's not the case and rightly so. With that, the army can now simply not be training anyone for more than a year.

Another benefit maybe - just maybe - that these boys may tell COs and Bde Cdrs exactly what is wrong with them. This will be so because they won't care for ACRs and will thus improve the system. To get this benefit, we must make sure that COs and Bde Cdrs unhappy



with their forthrightness do not have any means of stopping award of the ToD certificate to them.

These two are my genuine thoughts and not just a way of mocking the system. I am sad, though, that the army has decided to go in for the cheapest labour available rather than improve the product i.e. career prospects such that these so called patriotic boys serve for life.

With this system the brightest lads will enter the army this ToD way and use the ToD cert to move into the civil sector, which will gladly pay for what the army refused to pay for. Only those who know that the civil sector may not hire them even after the ToD cert, will opt for permanent commission. With that our army of more than 3 years service will be of those who know they were not good enough in the competitive world of the civil sector. This is already happening, but the problem will be further accentuated.

### Col Yeshwant Umralkar, ex Infantry & AOC

I am reminded of a debate on a private TV channel where the topic was Pay Commission recommendations. One of the bones of contention was the withdrawal of free rations to officers in peace locations (the perk has since been restored). The general argument was that the bureaucrats got hefty allowances in difficult areas whereas the soldier comparatively was given a pittance although the bureaucrat did not face the same degree of difficulty while living in these so called difficult areas whereas the soldier in addition to climatic hazards also faced a risk to his life due to enemy action or due to vagaries of climate.

In the end one of the retired bureaucrats argued that when we fix the inter service parity in pay and allowances we look at the CTC (cost to company). So the babu's convert all allowances given to the armed forces personnel into cost in Rupees and see that the bureaucrat always maintained the bureaucracy's upper hand in the ultimate gross income terms. So, you get killed due to pulmonary edema or by a bullet, you are not a class apart and do not deserve anything out of the ordinary.

So, what are we talking about here? Are we trying to save expenditure of the exchequer of a state machinery where neither the politician nor the bureaucrat is willing to give to the services its justified dues, which has been amply demonstrated in the delay in granting OROP in full, further making the ruling dispensation's unfair intentions clear when it refuses to making public the findings and recommendations of Justice Reddy's OMC which it had itself convened.

Coming to the latest proposal of hiring civilians on a 'on tour duty' for three years and at the end of three years sending them away.

No doubt a considerable amount of pen pushing must have been involved and inputs from Defence attaches posted in embassies must have been considered



Going for the kill

before giving a final shape to this idea, the first reaction is that it is a hare-brained idea. One of being more loyal than the king. Napoleon had famously said "an army marches on its stomach."

Here the army wants to cut that stomach by saving money by short-changing itself in terms of having a battle worthy professional cadre at all times. Spend a few lacs to save a couple of crores. It is suspiciously an attempt at self-aggrandizement by a select few. It is also contradicting the claims of the present government of making India a USD Five-Trillion economy within the next four-five years. With an economy likely to double its present size, where is the need to economise on vital requirements of the armed forces, is the question.

One solution to correct the shortage of officers that comes to mind is several fold increase the intake in all entries notwithstanding the added expenditure involved.

The reasons why the "Tour on Duty" concept will be a non-starter are:

- the idea is not likely to find many takers among the job seeking youth if there is no incentive like being absorbed on a permanent basis.
- the army will spend a colossal amount of man hours (at the cost of more urgent matters) on giving 'on the job training' to these tourists and will leave very little time in which the organisation may receive something from them as pay-back considering that they will be in service for just three years.

- the professional competence that is required of the tourists to make meaningful contributions in suitable positions in the organization will just not be there, because they would not be attending training courses that they would make them professionally competent.

- Lack of professional competence for reasons enumerated above will restrict their scope of employment in the organization to basic duties (in an infantry battalion this might mean just a platoon officer, a post also tenable by a JCO).

- three years is a rather short time span to give the tourists a sense of belonging. Just one and a half year into their tour, they would be looking

forward to their exit "Ab dedhsaal hi bacha hai" Reiterating, increase the intake in all entries, notwithstanding the costs involved.

## A Serving Col, Infantry

Without being cynical, overall I feel the effect would be good. However there will still be that 1% of the lot who will start fighting for their rights, try to form a view about the forces based on mere 3 yrs of insight, expose few ills existing in the army like buddy systems, etc. This lot is a problem. What do they do of their ranks when they move out? We should start with seeing who the aspirants would be.

The academically well to do lot won't want to waste 3 yrs of their prime career years. In today's fast moving professional paradigm, getting 3 yrs behind your peers is a big issue. So the ones applying might still be a mediocre lot who will try to use this opportunity as a job prospect for a job.

Yes, there would be a considerable number of applicants who will want to join for patriotic reasons; they should not become trigger happy to slurp maximum adventure out of these 3 yrs. Now once they are in, how seriously can units invest in their grooming? Right from mess traditions, officer men relationships, our basic values, etc. And what jobs they can be entrusted with? In infantry battalions, first 2-3 yrs are spent by a Young Officer getting to know about his job through various courses.

Only after 3-4 yrs does he get employed in appointments like coy cdr/ adjt etc. Without YOs, for 3 yrs, these ToD offers will just be duty officers. With limited roles, they invariably will be tasked for JCO jobs which will again get us to the problem of underemployed JCOs, especially now with increased numbers courtesy 3rd cadre review.

On the pros, the army will get closer to the civil world by virtue of continued affiliations after exit from ToD, especially in the connected world we are living in. Stories of army attachment will travel far and over all the military-civil familiarity will

increase. On the political front, this should not be allowed to get exploited as a BJP move.

The Indian Army cannot become a Military Wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). There should be no influences entertained for taking in undeserving candidates.

On the jawan front, it's a very good move as a work force increment in the form of additional manpower. Some system of evaluation should be considered for both officers and men when they exit ToD to keep the nuisance makers under check. With ToD, lads with one year training will be found leading platoons in action in the same army in which bright ex NDAs with 4 years expensive training (and pension benefits), now in ASC/AOC, spend a lifetime counting sacks!



Troops standing in attention at an operational area

## Jayanta Banerjee, Senior Corporate Professional

I don't think it will serve either purpose. Neither will the army get select quality candidates nor will the corporate sector benefit from such human resources. Corporates would like to train young exits from college or university and mould them at an early age. They look for fresh young minds with no fixed mindset.

Corporates of today are very unlike the army. Armed Forces by design need to be blue organisations i.e follow orders and maintain discipline. Corporates on the other hand need fresh thinking, challenge the status quo, break the hierarchy and agility

with a growth mindset. Armed forces need a fixed mindset especially at junior levels.

The other point to note is an experience of a mere 3 years hardly counts, it does not give an experience of the forces and mould a person's character. It only takes away 3 years from corporate life, makes it a delayed entry if at all available and creates a disadvantage for entire career. This is too short too quick a tenure for the forces and too long too slow for the corporate entry.

## Conclusion & the Way Ahead

The Tour of Duty (ToD) Proposal of three years service for young Army Officers & Jawans after training for one year with post service lateral induction into the corporate world seems similar to the old concept of

Short Service Commission of five years service. The details of this novel idea and its justification for implementation were examined thread bare and deeply analyzed by several senior veterans who have served for decades in the Armed Forces and also held coveted positions.

Some veterans also have rich corporate experiences and are competent to comment on the pros and cons of the proposal, its viability in the Armed forces and in the corporate sector. All these eminent Veterans unanimously feel that this proposal is a non-starter from the beginning. They conclude that the very idea of this proposal is flawed and whose time has not yet come! 🇮🇳



# MISSION BRIEF

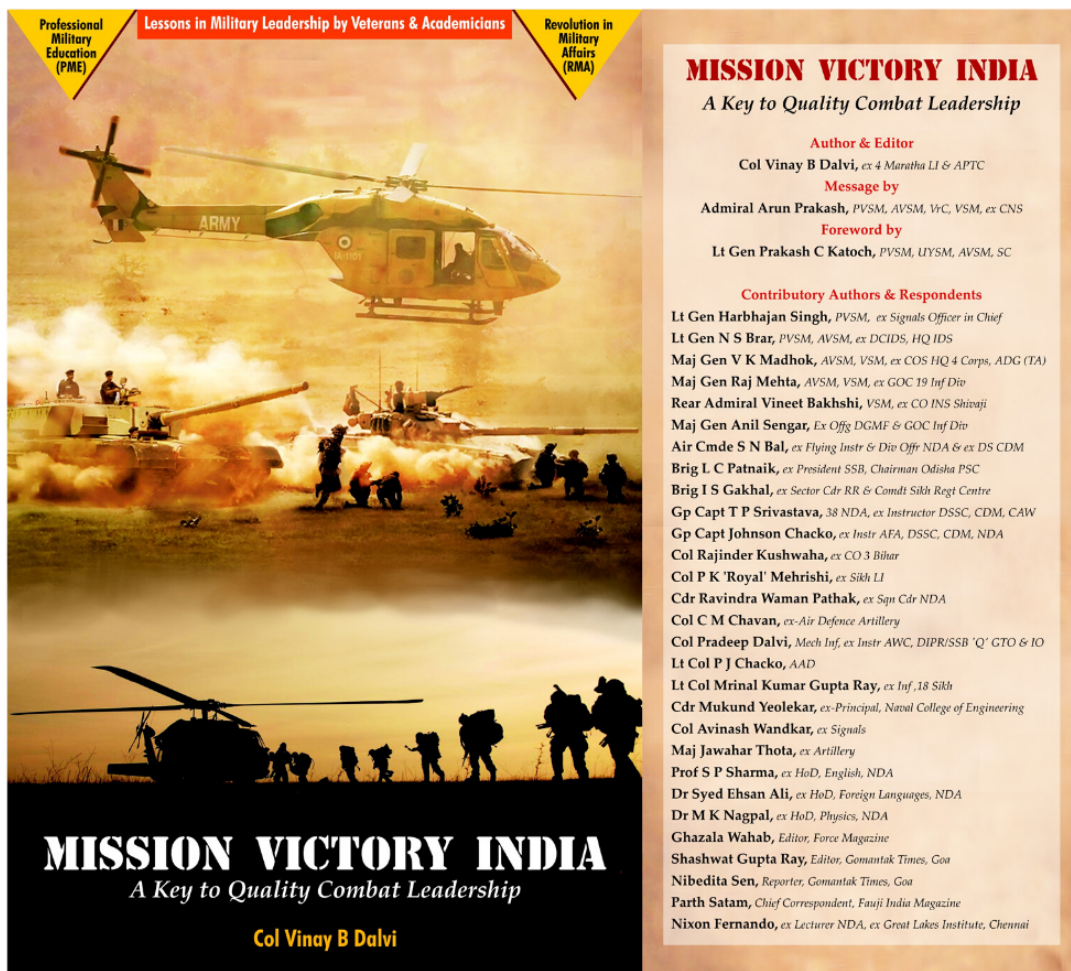
CODENAME: MISSION VICTORY INDIA

OBJECTIVE: TO CLINICALLY ANALYSE THE  
MYRIAD OF CHALLENGES PLAGUING  
THE INDIAN ARMED FORCES

LED BY: COL. VINAY B DALVI (RETD.)

EXECUTION: BUY THE BOOK

LOCATIONS: AMAZON AND PENTAGON PRESS



“The book has quality articles on military leadership and leadership traits needed to effectively lead men in war. Overall, the book makes is a compulsive read on critical issues that concern the internal health of the military with suggestions validated by serving and veteran officers.” —Lt. Gen Prakash Katoch, Special Forces





# Tour Of Duty: The Army Deserves The Best

**“The Tour of Duty proposal should be re-looked at again to ensure that quality is not compromised.”**

**by Major General Raj Mehta**

**A**lmost neutered by an ever-escalating pensions’ bill consuming over 60 per cent of a comatose, declining defence budget with reducing purchasing power pegged currently at 1.46 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the pensions’ bill is a soldier’s welfare obligation that leaves little for capital defence purchases. Governments over decades have fielded scheme after unsuccessful ad hoc scheme to make defence allotment of money count towards new acquisitions and stem this stark ‘welfare-over-defence preparedness’ conundrum that confronts us.

Tour of Duty (ToD) has deliberately been floated as a pilot project which is currently restricted to the Infantry arm of the Indian Army (less Para SF and other forces like NSG). The proposed three-year, cynically titled by some commentators as a ‘use and discard’ officer and soldier money-saving, scheme anchors itself on the conviction

that India’s teeming millions of unemployed male youth will aggressively seek a short tour in the battle zone as members of their glamorous and brave army and experience at first hand that macho feeling of war and war-fighting for India before returning to civil life with a ‘Badge of Honour’ which hopefully will have corporate employment value.

The question is will it yield the financial and operational gains that the government expects it to harness for better military effectiveness and defence budget management?. Or are there better ways of doing this?

## The Idea of ToD

Bluntly stated, the sole genesis of the Tour of Duty (ToD) issue is India’s exploding defence pensions’ bill. There is no other great or noble country-first intent behind its fielding. In the absence of ministry of defence (MoD)

transparency on the issue, one struggles to fathom what is behind this radical oxymoron of ‘volunteer conscription’ of under-graduate males immediately after 10+2 (18-21-year-olds). Inducted into the Infantry (because it is supposedly a ‘non-technical’ arm) using exacting selection norms and trained cursorily for six months, they will enter the war zone for three year tenures and thereafter be disposed of with minimal severance and nil attendant terminal benefits such as medical, education, employment or job reservation benefits.

The prime motivation could be the background work on military pensions management done by the duo of retired Lt Gen. Prakash Menon and Pranay Kotasthane. Their 2019 paper, ‘A Human Capital Investment Model for India’s National Security System’, seems to be one major input using which the newly-formulated Department of Military Affairs (DMA)

in MoD headed by the CDS/Secretary has chosen to tackle our exploding defence pension expenditure by proposing the TOD offering. (Read the paper at <https://takshashila.org.in/takshashila-discussion-document-a-human-capital-investment-model-for-indias-national-security-system/>)

The paper states that India's defence pensions' expenditure is unsustainable and has ballooned after the implementation of the One Rank One Pension (OROP) scheme. It states that in the long run, the pension component will make the defence budget irrelevant, consuming most of it and, in the short run it is severely degrading defence modernisation. As overwhelming proof, the paper says that the pensions' bill of Rs 54,000 crore in 2014 has more than doubled to Rs 1,12,000 crore in 2020.

It candidly accepts that starting with the Kargil Review Committee (KRC) Report, many solutions have been floated to address this problem but none of them have fructified or, on fielding, have defeated the very purpose for which the solutions were offered in the first place. The fielding of Short Service Commissions (SSCs) for officers for five years is touted as an example wherein the initial period of five years was expanded to 10 years and then 14, extended on Supreme Court's directions to women officers' entry schemes also.

Against that backdrop both stated and implied the paper proposes lateral movement of armed forces personnel into the national security system to contain the defence pensions' expenditure and estimates that the government can achieve savings of Rs 1.2 lakh crores if this model is implemented.

Readers can now hopefully see the deep linkages between the pensions issue and the TOD recruitment plan.

A word about the authors is warranted here. Commissioned in 1972, Gen. Menon is director, strategic studies at a privately funded think tank, Takshashila, and adjunct professor NIAS, Bangalore. He has been military advisor to NSA/secretary to government of India (GOI) and officer on special duty (OSD) in NSCS. He is the author of Non Alignment 2.0: A

Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the 21st Century which became a much-commented-upon policy paper in media and defence circles. Pranay Kotasthane is a VLSI professional who is research head at Takshashila since 2017 and writes on geopolitics, public finance, public policy and co-hosts a podcast.

Thus, both work for the same private think tank, Takshashila. Kotasthane recently teamed interactively in a well synchronised podcast with Gen. Menon on the Takshashila podcast platform (26.4 minutes) about how TOD could help reduce the enormous pensions burden; having been exclusively designed to do just that. The advantages/disadvantages/implementation norms of TOD were also discussed with their joint pensions' management paper as the backdrop to the entire

money for defence acquisitions. Menon is convinced that there is a huge demand perceived by government from young men who wish to be inducted for serving the army with spirit and daring; "for the thrill, adventure and pride of wearing the uniform".

These young men (women not yet included) wish to be part of the army's elite uniformed fraternity and experience that special bond and camaraderie that soldiers experience in actual war. Menon feels that their induction will result in a happy convergence of young men seeking military service for a short duration with honour and guts, grit and the GOI need to save big bucks.

The GOI will, thus in the long term, save huge money if the scheme catches on because there will be no pension



Troops on patrol

discussion. Kotasthane acted as the podcast anchor/co-discussant and kept the focus on reducing the pensions bill. Hear the podcast at Takshashila EP 334 of 26 May 2020. Tour of Duty; Short Term Service in the Army.

### **The TOD Proposal as Discussed in the Podcast**

'Essentially created without investing in too much detailing, the reduce-pensions proposal is an updated version of past efforts focused on cost-cutting as the primary if not exclusive strategy to reduce pension liabilities to free more

liability or severance/overheads or hidden perks and their costs. You get trained for six-eight months; then serve for three years in two separate operational areas. You may get additional truncated training by way of short refresher cadres in the Unit to meet specific operational challenges. In the short term, as already reiterated, there will be more money available for purchasing new weapons or replacements for discarded warlike equipment and for operational logistics.

The candidates, inducted after meeting exacting and uncompromising UPSC/

“

**Bluntly stated, the sole genesis of the Tour of Duty (ToD) issue is India's exploding defence pensions' bill. There is no other great or noble country-first intent behind its fielding.**

”

SSB selection regimen as in current usage for other kinds of induction, will get recruited at the pilot programme scale of 100 a year for officers and 1000 a year for Other Ranks and then serve in the army's many hot-spots under warlike conditions, presumably in two successive same or different operational area conditions as, for example, in Jammu and Kashmir, International Border, Line of Control, Line of Actual Control and the Northeast.

They will serve exclusively in the Infantry, learning practical soldiering as well as the soldiers' way of life; physical and mental toughness in the introductory six months and through subsequent short Unit cadres/upgrades or, more likely, learn on the job under fire. The principal focus, as Menon states and Kotasthane vociferously agrees, is that this form of officer/Other Rank entry will be without the huge financial sting that past schemes now gone awry have invited.

You serve your tenure and then meld in the Civvy Street with nothing to take home except for a cherished Badge of Honour and, for a freak minority, the odd bravery medal(s), may be physical maiming/loss of an appendage or other injuries but no severance benefits other than an anticipated Rs 5-6 lakh gratuity for officers and Rs 2-3 lakh gratuity for other ranks. There will, however, be the huge advantage of being trained and disciplined for whatever next career that the TOD inductee may enter post discharge but with no guarantee of suitable placement by GOI/private industry.

Most importantly, there would be huge long-term savings as the SSRC officer who serves 14 years costs the exchequer almost Rs 6.8 crores per officer whereas the TOD officer would cost a mere Rs 85 lakh per three years which is a staggering eight-fold reduction in costs. The same officer if granted

permanent commission—and 50-60 per cent of them do qualify for this award—will cost another Rs 3 crores till retirement at age 54 and another Rs 9 crores in pension liability post his retirement.

The calculations do not end there. An Other Rank costs Rs 11.5 crores to the exchequer over 17 years of service (the current norm) but only Rs 4.89 lakh if recruited for a three period.



Troops on patrol

Mentioned in passing but for serious reader understanding is the fact that, if the pilot scheme works, it may find itself extended by the DMA to the sister Services; the Indian Navy and Indian Air Force (IAF) and thereby, further reduce defence pensions liabilities, freeing scarce money for new defence acquisitions.

The issue of women officers has not been raised in the podcast as they are presumably not seen as participants in combat conditions; only in combat support, even though the Supreme Court makes no such distinction.

In a historic judgment on 16 February 2020, the Supreme Court cleared the

way for volunteer women to be inducted in the regular armed forces in permanent commission mode. “It is an insult to women as well as the army when aspersions are cast on women, their ability and their achievements in the army,” the Supreme Court noted.

The Supreme Court said that the Centre's opposition to permanent commission and command appointments to women officers citing physiological features is disturbing and cannot be accepted. While reading out the order on the centre's appeal challenging the Delhi High Court's ruling in 2010, Supreme Court judge Justice DY Chandrachud said, “Soldiers must have the physical capability to do one's role. Women in the army are an evolutionary process.”

The decision has, thus, opened opportunities to women officers in the Indian Army to serve for a longer duration and to pursue permanent careers in all branches like their male counterparts. Extension of the TOD scheme, if successful to women officers, can therefore be taken as a fair supposition even if initial entries would be for combat support employment in the battle area. The issue is not discussed further, being currently irrelevant.

### Implementation Norms for TOD

The podcast reveals that while the inductees would be paid current salary as applicable and provided existing



allowances/perks available to serving personnel, there would probably be restrictions on availability of annual/casual leave as currently entitled to make better use of the officers' short tenure. Understandably, the inductees would be barred from courses of instruction other than the Young Officers course/truncated recruitment training for Other Ranks. Similarly, the inductees would not be sent on temporary duty/administrative responsibilities/appointments to glean "more bang for the buck"; in other words, extract more operational area mileage. The podcast discussion assumed that much learning would be imparted within the Unit due interaction with other officers/personnel.

Gen. Menon, now no longer in governance, expressed distinct unease about the work and operational environment within which the officer inductees in particular would have to live, operate, earn acceptance from soldiers and officer peers and their respect. He noted that inducting officers in TOD "may not be a good idea". His plea was that it takes time and skilling to learn how to lead soldiers in war and the TOD did not offer that time or skilling in handling weapons, men and operating environment.

Both agreed that their 2019 paper on the inversion model of induction of CAPF-seven year army tenure-CAPF sequencing of officers; the key linchpin of their above quoted paper was the way out. Menon also noted that for officer inductees, previous schemes of similar nature like TOD had either backfired or were stillborn with the army still being 7,680 officers short.

The podcast suggested that so far as the Other Ranks were concerned, there is no deficiency in numbers and the rationale for inducting them to reduce pension bills makes financial and operational effectiveness sense. Menon ended on a sombre note, suggesting that government would have to think through multitudes of released personnel of TOD who had weapons expertise and were back in Civvy Street making a living in whatever manner they could in the near absence of government support as has happened with generations of EC/Short Service Commission officers since 1962.

## Assessment of the Podcast Content for TOD

References to the author and his thinking, having, till recently been part of government at secretary/ OSD levels was important to figure out what MoD is thinking about in the absence of open details. What stands out is that the TOD proposal is purely and simply driven by an urgent need to reduce pension bills and correspondingly provide money for defence purchases.

It is not clear on what basis the authors have presumed that multitudes of 18-21-year-old males just out of school are desperately keen to don uniform for three years because of the desire to look macho and think and act bravely in actual war conditions for which, besides euphoria they have little practical knowledge or insights. If a national survey was carried out, public and social media remain unaware and ill-informed about its contents. What appears more likely is that the authors have made assumptions and based their responses of them; at best an awkward premise.

There is also a contradiction in terms where, while the TOD for officers is ruled out because of its impracticality, it is accepted for Other Ranks. It does appear that, while denigrating the TOD, the duo pitches in for their inversion model as the antidote of all manning issues while meeting the need for reducing pension bills while maintaining operational efficiency. The fact that this 2019 proposal rebottled from past such proposals has so far not been accepted by government but, instead, TOD has been floated indicates that the officers may be at odds with current government thinking.

## Environmental Reactions to the TOD Proposal

These are varied depending upon the proximity of the writer to government sources/centres of power. This is why the thinking of Gen. Menon and his associate and their 2019 work has been given prominence. That aside, the major deductions are listed below:

- The defence budget even in its very modest form of 1.46 per cent of GDP is badly skewed in favour of defence

pensions which are a trend that must be arrested.

- As a consequence of defence pension allotment, the army has little to make new purchases with or replace/upgrade obsolete equipment/invest in critical operational logistics/infrastructure needs.

- The TOD is structurally and conceptually in dire need for an urgent review based on practical and operational realities. If NDA, for instance, takes in cadets after 10 plus 2 and takes four years to train its product to meet minimum operational needs and Direct Entry IMA cadets joining after graduation need 18 months and OTA cadets 10 months, it is untenable for young 18-21-year-olds (the same age as NDA entries) to be trained for six months to face daily challenges of life, death and instant decision making in the war zone.

- TOD inductees will not be trusted by rank and file because of young age, inexperience, lack of awareness of weapons, their handling, logistics and man management experience which their counterparts have in plenty.

- The current, decades old assiduously nurtured and developed social, emotional and leader-led bonding between the various forms of entry into the army will be adversely affected not just at the officer level but equally and more hurtfully at the soldiers' level.

- At family levels, the future social prospects of these young inductees will meet with much derision and skepticism and create social divides.

- The ugly tag of 'Guest Officers' out to glean macho credentials as their sole tasking in war zone activity will become a hateful label.

- Fallouts on issue of honours/awards; handling discipline and personal issues will make unity amity vulnerable and Company Operating Bases (COB's) a nightmare to live, work and operate in.

- The same issues though at reduced levels will be applicable to Other Rank entries.
- The near total absence of compensation/subsequent job security/placement in CAPF for TOD entries post release will seriously degrade candidate interest after the first rush of blood, if that happens.
- Lack of mention of death/disability/long hospitalisation and government support thereof and lack of post release placement will discourage applicants.
- Lastly, the timeless image of the Indian Army and its ethic of Naam, Namak, Nishan and Mai-Baap; its long-cherished positioning as the nations' deeply loved 'Go To' service for all eventualities will take a major hit which is best avoided.

## Recommendations

The Indian Army has established for itself a reputation that is the envy of the military world for long decades. We all know that no price is enough if paid for maintaining the sovereignty of India against all threats. We also know that the Indian soldier is amongst the world's toughest, grittiest and tenacious soldiers ever seen since warfare began. He deserves to be led by officers who are better than he is; not by guest officers here one day, out the next; ill-trained and ill-prepared to lead the finest of soldiers. We must remember that on entry, soldiers sign a covenant of unlimited liability till death. No one else does this in the world but soldiers. We must respect them by having the finest and best lead them.

## In this context, the following points are offered:

- The pensions bill needs paring yes, no doubt there. Look carefully at the almost 4,00,000 defence civilians who add a huge load on defence pensions and see what can be done about them beyond the part-tackling of MES.
- The TOD is currently raw and unfinished, though a good idea. Examine afresh by absorbing the feedback now generated and reframe its conditionalities.

- There is a long felt need to take out a Blue Paper on all aspects of defence examination, selection, induction, training and subsequent utilisation, training and education. In a brilliant initiative led by veteran Col Vinay Dalvi, a blog based on his Victory India books on our current selection processes needs urgent perusal and follow up decision making. (See <https://missionvictoryindia.com>)
- With the complex geo-strategic and geo-political environment, we live in India today, there should be no hesitation to hike our defence budget to 2.5 per cent of GDP and keep it there till we are ready for inevitable war.

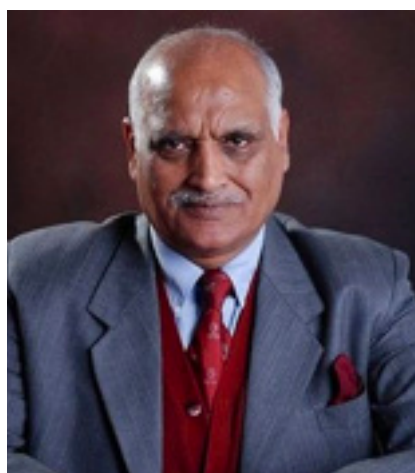
- We have a dozen or more existing entry schemes. All need to be re-looked at and fully exploited, keeping defence expenditure in mind but not compromising on quality.

Lastly, we must remind ourselves that there is no price big enough to be paid for ensuring national security and the defence forces are its guarantors. Let that price be paid. 🇮🇳

*(This article first appeared in the Guts, Grit and Glory Column of 'Force' in its June 2020 edition, and has been reproduced with due permission of the author and Force executive editor Ghazala Wahab. Views expressed are the authors own, and do not reflect the editorial policy of 'Mission Victory India')*



Ghatak troops ready for action

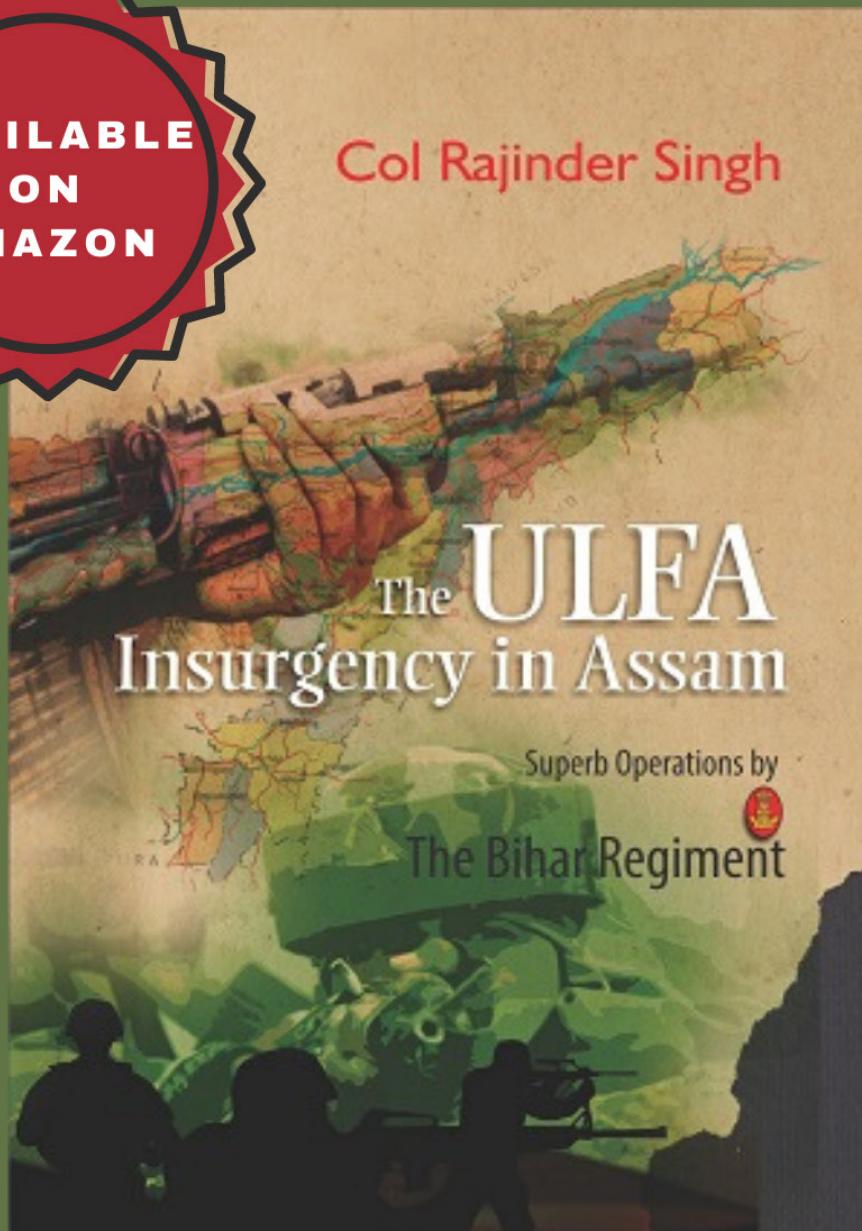


## Major General Raj Mehta

Maj Gen Raj Mehta has been a pillar of support for the Mission Victory India Campaign. He is a prolific writer whose articles have been published in renowned defence publications most notably 'FORCE'



*“The book carries many lessons for civilians, military and media personnel who are charged with the responsibility of fighting militancy.”— Lt Gen NK Kapur (Retd)*



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# The Indian Army's 'Tour Of Duty' Proposal: A Review

Lt Gen (Retd) Syed Ata Hasnain assesses the proposed changes to the Indian Army's recruitment and manning patterns in this commentary.

by Lieutenant General Syed Ata Hasnain

**R**ecently, the Indian Army proposed a 'Tour of Duty' (ToD) system, which involves a changed format of recruitment with amended terms and conditions for a few officers and personnel below officer rank. A highly manpower intensive organisation such as the 1.3 million strong Indian Army always needs a dynamic pattern of manning and recruitment contingent upon the social environment and budgeting parameters.

The domains of officer recruitment and that of jawans are considerably different, and there is a variance in terms and conditions too. Therefore, they must not be confused with each other. This two-part commentary will help to clarify misnomers and ascertain the worthiness of the proposal.

## Shortage of Officers

The Indian Army has proposed a few changes which are not transformational in nature, primarily to overcome current identified constraints. First among these is a long-standing challenge of officer shortage. There is no dearth of men and women willing to serve in the Indian Army as officers. However, the issue is not about numbers but about quality.

The Indian Army abides by certain standards in its intake, and has, over the years, refused to compromise on this. India's economic liberalisation, which was initiated in 1991, raised the aspirations bar in the traditional manpower base which provides the officer cadre. This resulted in a dilution in the quality of personnel seeking an army (officer) career, with the commercial world and other

professions stealing a march in attracting better recruits.

Consequently, since the turn of the millennium, there have been serious implications at the operational end, with units having to contend with 25-30 per cent shortage in officer cadre even with the security situation in Jammu & Kashmir and other threats intensifying along the borders.

An 11,000 personnel shortage in the officer cadre at one time forced the Indian Army to extend the engagement period of the Short Service Commission (SSC) from five to 10 and even 14 years. The higher the age for exit for these officers, the lower their chances are of finding a second career.

This situation made SSC less attractive in the long run, especially since

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the promised and approved system of the Peel Factor never got implemented. The Peel Factor was simply a method of lateral absorption of SSC officers and others from the main cadre who could not be promoted due to shortage of vacancies, into other government services, especially the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF).

### Obverse Cadre Ratio

The second consideration pertains to the obverse ratio of the main cadre (career officers on permanent commission) and support cadre (non-career on tenure contract). Professional armies around the world have a lean main cadre and a large support cadre (1:5). In India's case, it is the opposite. Retention of higher numbers of SSC officers in service on permanent commission basis only swells the main cadre.

This results in the creation of a very large base from which promotions to a limited number of vacancies at higher ranks has to be executed. Unlike that of the civil services, the Indian Army's rank structure is pyramidal, and this can only be tampered with at the cost of operational functionality.

The current experiment and effort is aimed at ultimately reversing the ratio by generating a larger number of officers on short contracts exiting after their tenure. The ToD proposes three-year contracts for serving only in frontline operational units.

This reduces costs and enhances the prospects for such personnel to be absorbed in other careers upon exit, thereby making this proposal highly workable. Since large numbers of younger aspirants rue their inability to acquire military experience, it

helps in increasing their chances of service in the army.

The Indian Army is hopeful that this step will leave reasonably young, energetic, patriotic and well-trained personnel to be absorbed by industry or by other government services such as the CAPF. Yet, its experience in lateral absorption inspires no confidence. A cabinet approval to the Peel

service cadres and some assurance be taken from the corporates and PSUs.

In 2003, the Ajai Vikram Singh Committee on restructuring of the officer cadre recommended industrial deputation for two years with eventual absorption, but it never took off. There is no guarantee that the proposed ToD will either, if the terminal promises for the entrants are not delivered.

### Financial Considerations

The ToD system has been proposed to overcome budgetary constraints. If the Indian Army continues to live with an inflated main cadre of officers, it is forced to retain officers overlooked for promotion even at first stage for as long as 15 years and pay them a pension thereafter.



Troops in the valley

Factor in 2003-04 was never implemented because of intense resistance from the CAPF.

It will need the government's legislative intervention if it wishes to see this proposal succeed. That is something which has probably not been thought through by the army at all. Alternatively, lateral absorption vacancies can be sought in state civil

This is financially irrational besides producing discontent when seniors serve under juniors in service, creating a functional constraint too. An SSC officer exiting at 14 years has in him/her an investment of INR 6.8 crores.

In contrast, the estimated sum for a ToD officer with a three-year engagement is INR 85 lakhs. In times of lean defence budgets, this is tempting



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**The ToD system has been proposed to overcome budgetary constraints. If the Indian Army continues to live with an inflated main cadre of officers, it is forced to retain officers overlooked for promotion even at first stage for as long as 15 years and pay them a pension thereafter.”**

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the planners to introduce a shorter tour of duty with no post service obligations.

At the outset, a misnomer must be set aside: that the entire Indian Army will be manned on the proposed ‘Tour of Duty’ (ToD) terms and conditions. Some analysts have even interpreted it as conscription; but that is not possible with our population base and the perpetual need for a professional army.

Apart from officers, the ToD system is also proposed for a limited number of jawans. In their case, the proposal is more for savings in the budget since there is no shortage in quality and no existing deficiency such as the one in the officer cadre. A soldier on a three-year contract as against one for 17 years will obviously have far lesser investment and no obligations for pension and gratuity, which translates to an average lifetime saving of INR 11.5 crores.

It will also lead to better promotional avenues for the permanent cadre of soldiers below officer rank since that cadre too will shrink to an undetermined percentage of the whole. Ideally, below officer rank, the right ratio between ToD and permanent cadre will need to be established with financial considerations being matched against operational efficiency. Jawans under ToD can also have provisions for absorption by industry, state civil services or the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) if possible.

These proposals are yet at a nascent stage. Some have interpreted the proposed numbers of 100 officers and 1000 jawans as the limit and have thus questioned the viability of the

entire exercise with such small numbers. However, these numbers are only for initial trial and experimentation. What needs to be remembered is that the Indian Army’s budgetary constraints demand greater prudence in revenue costs so that the capital expenditure on modernisation can be enhanced.



RR soldier aiming his assault rifle in an operation

The proposed experiment is a reasonable step in that direction. It is workable as long as the Indian Army can ensure that short period of training or deployment in no way compromises its frontline efficiency. That is the issue being analysed and commented upon very deeply by a majority of veterans and deserves a more detailed look.

### Proposed ToD for Officers

The period of training cannot be included in the proposed three-year

period. Having an entrant train for a year to deliver for three years defies rationality. Reducing training to six months and then denying further centralised training (courses of instruction) during the tenure of three years will leave a relatively untrained officer to lead the sub-units.

There is a temptation to compare the concept of some foreign armies. We need not attempt to do that because our conditions of service, terrain, threats and social environment from which we draw our aspirants is so uniquely Indian that comparisons are pointless.

### Deployment of ToD Entrants

Deployment of ToD entrants must be only for operational areas with

an enhanced engagement for four years instead of three, two each in different areas. Their leave entitlement will have to be reviewed as also their training needs. Short Service Commission (SSC) officers in the past, on only five-year engagements, attended army level courses of instruction in development of skills but not career courses.

However, they attended the Young Officers (YO) course to prepare them for leadership roles. ToD officer entrants will either need to be further

trained in formation level cadres or restricted to perhaps just one army level course even if their tenure of engagement is enhanced to four years.

Anything more than that will compromise their residual availability to frontline units. More cadres at formation level will need investment in facilities far more than exist today and improvisation in this is the last thing which needs to be adopted.

## Unit Functional Efficiency

It will have an impact on unit functional efficiency since the unit is the army's main entity of effectiveness. A mix of entries at the level below officers is not desirable. However, if it has to be done, new challenges in the realm of leadership will emerge, with a need for greater sensitivity amongst officers. Over time, this will be overcome provided the ratio between the different entrants is kept optimal. That figure is initially difficult to arrive at and will need to be kept flexible with trial and error.

## Infantry


If service of such officers and jawans is only with units deployed in operational environment, per force it will be infantry which will bear the brunt. This aspect needs greater thought. Four years of operational service by these personnel will be higher than the operational service and experience of many other regular personnel from the permanent cadre. In due course, there will be awkward demands for compensation against risks undertaken and these may not be denied from a legal perspective.

## Looking Ahead

There are a range of thoughts that come to mind when such change is proposed for a complex organisation such as the Indian Army where personnel management is sometimes even more challenging than operational deployment. What the Indian Army's leadership needs to do is to hold extensive consultations and refer these proposals for reviews by different organisations; the College of Defence Management is just one of them. Wide consultation without

constraints of time is necessary if path breaking changes are to be effectively executed with no hiccups at a later stage.

(Lt Gen (Retd) Syed Ata Hasnain is Member, IPCS Governing Council; Member, National Disaster Management Authority, and former GOC 15 Corps and Military Secretary, Indian Army.)

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**The domains of officer recruitment and that of jawans are considerably different, and there is a variance in terms and conditions too. Therefore, they must not be confused with each other.**



On the lookout for militants



## Lieutenant General Syed Ata Hasnain

Lt Gen Hasnain, is a retired General of the Indian Army. His last assignment in service was as the Military Secretary of the Indian Army. Prior to that, he commanded the Indian Army's 15 Army Corps.





## 'Tour Of Duty' Laudable Or Laughable?

**“Is an “internship” of three years necessary for the potential product to “experience army life, including serving in combat arms for three years”? Is it proposed to send such an officer/soldier directly on active combat duty?”**

**by Air Commodore Suryakant Bal**

**A**t the very outset it must be acknowledged that any proposal must be accorded a degree of due scrutiny before being accepted or rejected.

It appears that the focus of the “Tour of Duty” or “ToD” proposal is exclusively on reducing the cost to the exchequer – though without any consideration whatsoever to the price the Nation could have to pay in the future. Why are such schemes not being examined for the Police/NSG/SPG/Railway Police/PAC/ CRPF/BSF/ Coast Guard? Why are the Defence Services being singled out for this signal honour? Certainly the “ToD’ concept, with suitable modifications, could apply to the IAS and IFS as well!

Surely ex-diplomats would be welcome in the corporate sector. While the element of economics is, without a shade of doubt, a very significant

factor in almost any human activity, it is equally important to recognize and acknowledge that there could be other factors as important if not more important than the economic factor. The most important factor, and possibly the overriding one, would be to examine what effect such a scheme would have on national defence preparedness – all other factors pale into insignificance before this one.

Is an “internship” (on full pay) of three years necessary for the potential product to “experience army life, including serving in combat arms for three years”? Is it proposed to send such an officer/soldier directly to J&K/the East/field on active combat duty? A closer examination is quite in order. Of the three years “Tour of Duty”, six months would be spent on earned leave.

Personal experience indicates that it takes anything up to one year for

a newly commissioned officer to inculcate significant elements of the Services culture – though in some cases it may take much longer. In the last year of this “Tour of Duty” the individual would be thinking of release and post - release rehabilitation. To expect him/her to show a significant commitment towards the Service would be rather unfair at this stage.

Thus the individual is effectively left with six months or, at the very best, one and a half years to enjoy the “glamour” of the Service (though without commitments). This does not include any period of sickness. If younger officers have acquitted themselves with exemplary dedication and courage in the Kargil conflict – then it must be recognized that they were career officers aspiring to climb many rungs of the ladder in the Service – and placed the honour of the Nation above their own well-being.

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Is an ‘internship’ of three years necessary for the potential product to ‘experience army life, including serving in combat arms for three years? Is it proposed to send such an officer/soldier directly to J&K/the Northeast/field on active combat duty?  
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The ToD officer has just three rungs of the ladder to climb – and then hop off – or be cast off. Would such an officer enthusiastically volunteer to serve in the field, or prefer to serve in the rear, play safe, be a Staff Officer to a senior officer along with its “perks” and “glamour”, not rock the boat and bide time for the final third year to pass off peacefully? The reader is the best judge to answer the question.

If the rank at entry for the ToD officer is that of Lieutenant, what would be the rank after three years? At the very optimistic – that of a Captain. Now he/she would be released into the environment without pension or ECHS benefits to try getting into the corporate sector.

Colleagues who did not opt for this scheme would already have consolidated three years in the corporate sector and have an edge. Is the corporate sector actually panting to welcome such officers? A rather simplistic assumption on a basis that is at best questionable. The cultures of the Service and Corporate sector are different – simply because the aims are different as well.

If the shortfall of 7,680 officers is to be made good, then there are other approaches that need to be examined. Suitable jawans can be encouraged, with necessary inputs, to opt for commissioning – either Permanent, Short Service or Branch Commissioning. They are already exposed to the Service culture.

Famous personalities such as Marshal Georgy Zhukov and Vyacheslav Molotov came from very humble origins but very effectively “learned the ropes” – and survived Stalin’s tyranny to die in old age – a remarkable achievement indeed. So the position that other ranks may not have

“what it takes” to be officers can be discounted.

All do not – but many certainly do. Another provocative option – reduce the NDA training to two years. Suitable graduates can be inculcated with the Service culture within that time. As a direct entry, we were exposed to arms drill within six months – whereas an NDA cadet did it after two years in the Fourth Term.

Direct entry officers held their own vis-à-vis NDA contemporaries without any difficulty whatsoever – and that too throughout the service tenure. While there is (quite understandably) a degree of emotional attachment to the three-year NDA training, there is no bar to re-examining it.

The proposal to introduce the “ToD” concept cannot be accepted or rejected without an in-depth study that would examine a wide spectrum of aspects. One approach could be to propose this as a Project to be studied at the College of Defence Management/ College of Combat/National Defence College/College of Naval Warfare/ College of Air Warfare.

This would generate a wide spectrum of views. Merely looking for any consensus among veterans or by popular vote cannot be a viable solution – the stakes are very high indeed. It could be helpful to co-opt sociologists/psychologists from our Universities/DIPR as well. In the ultimate analysis the acid test is that whatever step is contemplated, national defence is paramount and cannot be compromised and/or negotiated – and not simply on economic grounds.

There has to be a balance between defence spending and national security – with the latter being an overriding factor. Wars are not video games that can be rolled back at a mouse – click. Professional armies are expected to not only fight wars, but to win them as well. Pay and pension is not a lamentable economic ‘burden’ that can be wished away – but the price to be paid for safeguarding our borders and Nation – and whatever our nation and civilization stands for.

And it is certainly worth defending to the very end of time. Throughout history, wars have been fought and won by professional armies that have been paid and pensioned handsomely. This truth must be accepted with equanimity and grace as a reality that cannot be wished away – and certainly not solely on the economic factor alone. 🇮🇳

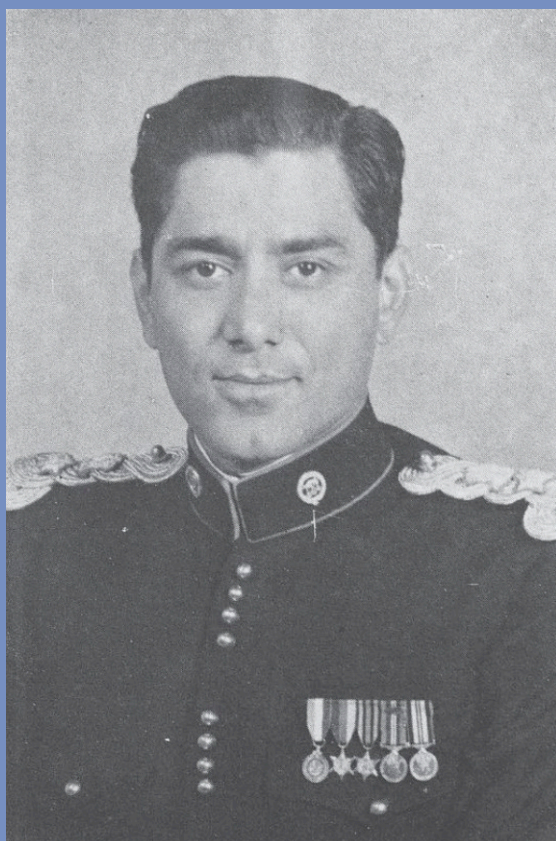
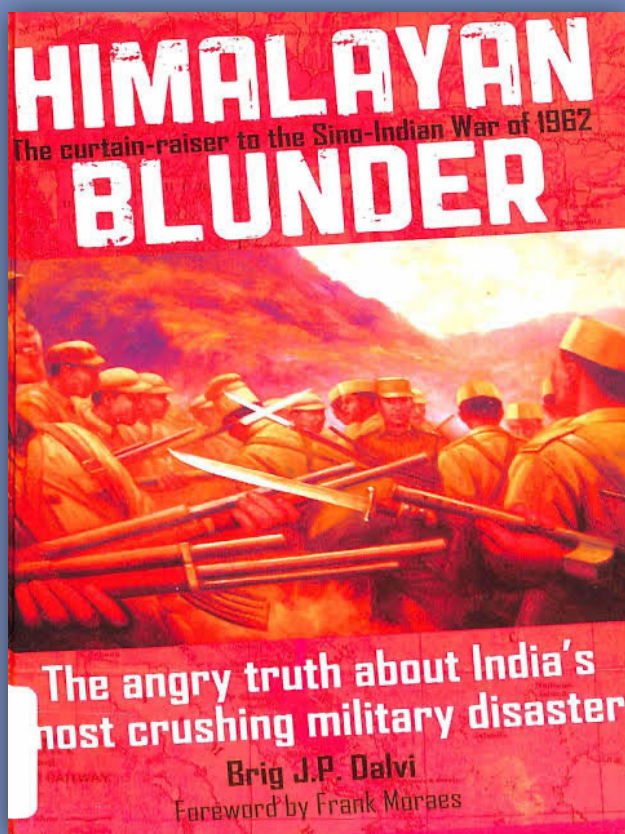
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**Air Commodore Suryakant Bal**

Air Cmde Bal is a renowned IAF officer who has held several prestigious appointments during his time in service. He has worked for several think tanks, journals and is a published author.





Recent Media Reports of the situation on the LAC create a sense of déjà vu.

Around 58 years ago – on 20 October 1962 – began the Sino Indian War – India's 1962 conflict with China.

Of all the books, references and literature on the 1962 India China War – I find the memoir of Brigadier JP Dalvi – HIMALAYAN BLUNDER – most engrossing.

Here is a brief review of the book that I wrote 8 years ago in Oct 2012.

## THE BOOK

Title: HIMALAYAN BLUNDER (The Curtain Raiser to the Sino-Indian War of 1962)

Author: Brigadier JP Dalvi (Retired)

Published by Thacker and Co. Ltd. Bombay (1969)

## HIMALAYAN BLUNDER

### Book Review

By Vikram Karve

(This is an abridged and updated version of my Book Review written in Oct 2012)

A few months ago, while browsing through my bookcase I chanced upon one of my favourite military autobiographies – HIMALAYAN BLUNDER by Brig JP Dalvi

Whenever I start reading *Himalayan Blunder*, leafing through the pages of the book, I am filled with a sense of déjà vu.

And as I read on further, drawing parallels between what was written in the book and the intriguing happenings of recent times, I wonder to myself:

“Are we heading for another *Himalayan Blunder*...?”

Is history going to repeat itself after 58 years...?

I have heard a saying:

Those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat it.

That is why I feel that “*Himalayan Blunder*” is a “must read” for the “powers-that-be” – Political, Civil and Military.

I am sure most politicians, bureaucrats, military officers, students of military history and the intelligentsia have read *Himalayan Blunder* – but – if you have not read the book – or even if you have read it – it would be worthwhile to read the book carefully once again – to draw parallels between what happened in 1962 – and what is happening now – and learn lessons – so that similar mistakes are not repeated again – and we do not have another “*Himalayan Blunder*” in the making.

*Himalayan Blunder* is a fascinating war memoir of the 1962 Conflict between India and China – in which India suffered a humiliating defeat.

Brigadier Dalvi was the Commander of the Indian Army's 7th Infantry Brigade – which was annihilated by the Chinese Army.

I feel that it is always better to read history written by those who have actually lived it – rather than those who have recorded it – merely by academic research.

First person accounts have an air of authenticity about them – which lends them credibility.

I have read 6 first-hand accounts of the 1962 India China War:

- 1. The Untold Story by BM Kaul
- 2. *Himalayan Blunder* by JP Dalvi
- 3. The Unfought War of 1962 by JR Saigal
- 4. The Fall of Towang by Niranjana Prasad
- 5. War in the High Himalaya by DK Palit
- 6. Recollections of the Sela Bomdila Debacle 1962 by Jaidev Singh Datta

(Of course – I have also read many other books/articles on the 1962 India China War including – “India’s China War” by Neville Maxwell – “1962 The War That Wasn’t” by Shiv Kunal Verma – and a number of analyses/memoirs of battles in the USI Journal – but – like I said – First Hand Memoirs have an air of authenticity)

Out of all these autobiographical first-hand war memoirs – I found Brigadier JP Dalvi’s *Himalayan Blunder* the most illuminating and enthralling.

The writing style is articulate, reasoned, lucid – as well as most soul-searching and analytic – and – the book is extremely readable.

In my opinion, *Himalayan Blunder* is a military masterpiece, arguably the best book by an Indian military author. *Himalayan Blunder* tells you of the debacle that happened when ill-equipped, unprepared, confused and demoralized soldiers were rushed into battle against a strong adversary in an ad hoc manner because military decisions were influenced more by political prophecy rather than by military strategy.

Dalvi tells his story with remarkable wit and exceptional candour.

His candid storytelling style captivates you – and – once you start reading – you get so engrossed – that the book becomes “unputdownable”.

There is no military jargon or gobbledegook.

Dalvi writes straight from the heart and that is why this book will not only educate you but also will move you emotionally, strike a chord and get you thinking.

In the preface, Dalvi says: “India has a near unbroken record of military failures through the ages. Our peasantry has always fought gallantly; but it is an indisputable fact that seldom has this bravery been utilised to win battlefield victories and thus to attain our political objectives, due to inept political or military leadership, or both. Need we follow this tragic path interminably...?”

After giving the reader a lucid introduction of the background and events leading to the 1962 War – Dalvi tells us his story – a personal narrative of 7 Brigade in the Battle of Namka Chu – in a most eloquent and engrossing manner.

From his easy writing style, and the way he narrates the story, it is evident that besides being a soldier, the author was a thinker and a scholar, and like most officers of his generation, he was extremely well-read and well-informed, and possessed a witty, yet biting, sense of humour.

Dalvi has interspersed his book with anecdotes, quotes and similes.

Sample this:

He writes that a Corps Commander was sacked because:

“He refused to be a dog in obedience and a lion in action...”

Why did India suffer the ignominy of such a crushing defeat in the 1962 war with China...?

It seems to be the same story we keep witnessing from time to time – the civil-military divide, the lack of appreciation of ground realities by the Delhi-Centric “powers-that-be” who call the shots, and the “trust deficit” between various stakeholders – like it is happening even till today.

Books like the *Himalayan Blunder* will make us aware of our mistakes of the past – so that we don’t repeat them.

That is why – we must read such books – and take cognizance of the message they try to convey.

In such matters – let history not repeat itself.

That is why we cannot afford to ignore the lessons of history – if we do so – it will be to our own peril.

Dear Reader: Do read HIMALAYAN BLUNDER – once again – even if you have read it before. Compare the situation today with that of 1962 – and reflect - whether lessons have been learnt from history – or – are the same mistakes being repeated again...?

VIKRAM KARVE

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## Wuhan To Galwan: The Chernobyl Factor

**“The Galwan clash is a watershed event. If Corona was the Chinese Chernobyl, the Galwan incident is like inserting enriched Uranium rods into the reactor. From here to criticality is a matter of time. After that, who knows?”**

**by Lieutenant General PR Shankar**

**D**o not trouble the trouble until the trouble troubles you. This is common sense and not Sun Tzu. I suppose that is why the Chinese have not heard of it. At Galwan they did trouble the trouble and they have ended up with more trouble than they have bargained for. Despite all their lies, deception, attempting to change facts on ground, disregard for a rules-based order, presenting themselves as an injured party and more, no one believes them since everyone knows the truth.

They have got a taste of what India can mete out to them. They will get more if they continue to ask for it. Ladakh is not South China Sea and India is not a Vietnamese fishing boat which can just be run over.

I will not get into the intricacies of the faceoff incident at Galwan. There is an overload of information about

that. There is live action going on. The situation is tense between two nuclear powers at loggerheads. This is a wider assessment of how the Chinese cards are stacked. At the outset, China has miscalculated at each step and achieved results just opposite to what it set out to do.

In this sequence, the Galwan clash is a watershed event. If Corona was the Chinese Chernobyl, the Galwan incident is like inserting enriched Uranium rods into the reactor. From here to criticality is a matter of time. After that, who knows?

The situation on the Indian front is ugly. While there were plenty of reasons for China to undertake a premeditated widespread offensive against India from Sikkim to Ladakh using Pakistan and Nepal as its catspaws, it has played a high-stake hand.

Fundamentally it has attempted to shut its far Western ‘Rear Door’ in a preemptive offensive when the sea facing Eastern ‘Front Door’ is still intact due to weakness in USA and incoherent global strategic response. It planned this misadventure in end April. China embarked on it on 05/06 May as a low-cost low threshold, muscle flexing, demonstrative and non-tactical operation.

Its strategy was Belligerent War Avoidance using classic inner lines. It has not worked. It has hit the Indian Wall. As matters stand tensions have heightened and thresholds are fast rising. This is no more a low-cost affair. There are heavy casualties on both sides. China has not disclosed the numbers in its typical secretive manner. When it does, it will like its virus numbers – vastly underreported.

Its attempt to obfuscate and alter facts has fallen flat. Both armies have mobilized and built up. Suddenly, China is in a situation that it cannot militarily force the issue across the Himalayas. It does not have the strength to do so. Any reinforcements to ratchet up the stakes must come from the mainland. It will be equally matched by India. That will open the East Coast! More importantly China might have to dip into reserves which are meant for internal control. This rod is highly enriched.

The flareup with India will remain heightened and long drawn. In attempting to tie India down on its land borders China will achieve the opposite effect. It will force India to relook at this dormant border through a different lens. China has unlocked its vulnerable rear door inadvertently. Xinjiang, Tibet, Shaksam Valley and CPEC are waiting to be exploited in the long term.

This line of action can start alongside the present situation. Incidentally, the longer this situation, the greater the problem for China. Its troops are not available for other situations. By the way have you noticed – all that ‘Wolf Warriorism’ has suddenly disappeared from Chinese Diplomacy! They are playing things down.

What is the situation in the South China Sea? Three US aircraft carriers have entered the area. They are going to pivot around Taiwan, which in my opinion is the fourth unsinkable aircraft carrier. Against this formidable force the Chinese have one recently operationalized aircraft carrier and a yet to be operational carrier. Total outmatch, despite this, the Chinese are still carrying out some aggressively dicey air manoeuvres.

One of these days an incident will occur, and they will get their comeuppance in the East Coast also. Regionally, there is no succour for China. Vietnam, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Brunei, Philippines, Singapore, and S Korea are all victims of Chinese aggression and Salami Slicing tactics. They will push back at the slightest opportunity. Indications from them point that way.

Taiwan and Hong Kong are hot thorns in the Chinese flesh. Any day the front door might go on fire. One is seeing a hammer and anvil at play. Where is the hammer and where is the anvil? Ladakh or South China Sea? Take your pick. This rod is getting enriched as days go by.

Where is our friendly neighbourhood Chinese virus? It has either jumped from Wuhan to Beijing through Norwegian salmon or taken the direct route. Does not matter. It has hit Beijing and forced the typical draconian Chinese lockdown in large parts of the city and countryside. There is a pattern emerging. We will continue to see an outbreak of about a hundred odd cases in some part of the country.

Virus, which does not differentiate its masters from others. It will extract its pound of Chinese flesh over a longer period at greater expense. I have said it earlier that the longer this virus lasts, the more difficult it will be for China and its economy, internal politics, geopolitics, and diplomacy to recover.

My views are reinforced. The longer the Virus lasts, the longer the world will remember Wuhan and Chinese bungling, complicity, delayed response, aggression, censorship, greedy mask diplomacy, wet markets, pangolins, and bats. This Stigma is for life. This rod is weapon grade and highly enriched. It could push China into super criticality.

Who wants Chinese global leadership? Barring some parts of Africa,



PLA troops training how use their rifle as a melee weapon

China, like a cat on a hot tin roof will jump and stomp that outbreak by extensive testing and draconian lockdowns. Then another outbreak will start somewhere. Another cycle will begin. There will be a perpetual lockdown somewhere or the other. Compare this with other countries. They might have suffered but have learnt to live with the virus and continue life.

They will eventually recover faster and stronger. China has used draconian communist methods against a very democratic and bipartisan

South America, Serbia, Pakistan, North Korea and some parts of Italy, the China story is unravelled. One sees Russia also being evasively neutral. The G7 Plus, QUAD, Five Eyes Intelligence etc are bad news for China and they are gaining strength. The sentiment in USA is steely across the board and it is anti-Chinese.

In the forthcoming presidential election there is a good chance that President Trump and the Democratic contender Joe Biden will outdo each other in their anti-China plans. Let us also not forget that US is putting



in place a denial regime encompassing educational opportunities for Chinese, operation of Chinese firms, technology control, banning flights from China, restricting access to financial systems, visa restrictions on Chinese and many more measures to hurt China.

US resolve and ability to bounce back from disasters is phenomenal. History has shown that every time USA is hit by a disaster it has come back stronger. Analyse the Civil War, Pearl Harbor, attack on World Trade Center and Lehman's Brothers initiated global melt down. Counting out USA post this pandemic will only be foolish by China and many more. Where does China stand geopolitically? Isolated. Fourth rod under fast enrichment.

Economically things are not exactly rosy. Exports are under shock therapy. Imports are down indicating low consumption. Growth is staring at negative zones. Factories are losing orders. CPEC and BRI? Almost collapsing. The alternate Health and Digital Silk Roads are merely sops. The Made in China 2025 plan stands derailed. Yuan as international tender? Even Cambodia, a Chinese beneficiary has continued with the US Dollar and said no to Yuan! Mask industry? Collapsed.

Unemployment and job situation grim. People are working even at ¼th of their original salaries. Internal consumption – weak and going down. There is another reality. Deglobalization, decoupling and relocation of industry and supply chains will happen. It could be around 30% or more in the next five years. The Indian push back will be especially hard. Take any index, it is down.

If China had displayed a better attitude and been less predatory, there could have been a huge surplus dividend. China has killed its own dream. China might not collapse. However as things stand and with the current trajectory, Chinese economy might not overwhelm as hitherto fore. This fifth rod is unpredictable but might catalyze other rods in enriching them.

The overall picture is that China has a Navy which is hemmed in the South China Sea. PLA cannot force the issue against India. The Virus is active in the center. Its geopolitics and diplomacy are not working. Its economy is misfiring. Internal tensions could surface and spill over soon. The Chinese are stretched and under pressure. If this continues, they will reach criticality faster than anticipated. If they do not, there will be loss of face internally.

So where does it leave the current Sino Indian Equation? Our PM has made a clear statement. We will not blink. The Galwan incident is overshadowing the limited disengagement which was underway. The mobilised forces have even staged forward. Will we see de-escalation or escalation? Depends on the next few

it is our turn now. We need to leverage to get back to status quo ante as of 04 May.

That must be led politically. Our response must be politically firm since China has been conducting this entire operation politically. A whole of the nation approach is the need of the hour. The Indian Armed Forces, in the vanguard, have upheld the honour nation repeatedly. I have full faith that they will deliver again. India does not want armed conflict with China. However if it is thrust on us, China will get more than a bloody nose.

What are the options available to India? In my last article I did mention some options. The gallant and brave action of 16 Bihar and the nearby Gunners at Galwan have opened our



Representational image depicting China's military

days. However my feeling is that we are in for the long haul. In this period we must expect Chinese Propaganda, Threats, Psychological Warfare, Twisted Legalities, Violation of Agreements, Altering Facts, Lies and Deceit. China has played its hand and

options further. What is the worst-case option for China? India opening the old silk route with all its insidious implications and a resurgent USA establishing an Island base in South China Sea.

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“ There is no evidence that China derives its strategy from the Middle Kingdom. Which civilization are we talking of? The last generation Chinese Communists led by Mao revised and jettisoned every facet of Chinese civilization. ”

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That is now on the table and could be a reality in the long term. If we do not do that it will be a wasted sacrifice by Col Babu and all those who laid down their lives at Galwan defending India. We owe it to them. We owe it to them to also to weaponize ourselves.

If each of us spend a rupee less in buying Chinese items that will be a rupee well saved to honor our gallant soldiers. It is up to us - the people of India to push back against China. In between these options there are a range of options in the political, diplomatic, military, and economic spheres. That will come in my next article.


In conclusion, there is something fundamental. Everyone says that China takes a long-term civilizational view and is always strategic in approach. That is a myth. In the past Century there are four distinct periods where China has changed course from Chiang kai Shek's Nationalism, to Mao's Revolutionism, to Deng's Consolidation to Xi's Revisionist Expansionism.

There is no evidence that China derives its strategy from the Middle Kingdom. Which civilization are we talking of? The last generation Chinese Communists led by Mao revised and jettisoned every facet of Chinese civilization. The current generation communists have not revitalized the Chinese civilization which was inclusive.

They have done exactly the opposite by incarcerating minorities and promoting Han nationalism. They have simply been overtaken by myopic greed to become a superpower at any cost ever. Ever since the Corona has made its appearance in Wuhan, they are in some illusion that this is a golden opportunity to attain their dreams in in double quick time ignoring the world or a rules-based order.

All they have achieved is to put themselves in a nuclear reactor about to go critical. Why are the Chinese committing strategic Hara Kiri? Ask the Chinese! They are suddenly realizing that they were never ten feet tall.

(Lt Gen P R Shankar served as a former Director General of Artillery. He is an alumnus of National Defence Academy Khadakvasala, Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, Army War College, Mhow, Naval Post Graduate School, Monterrey and National Defence College, New Delhi. He has held many important command, staff and instructional appointments in the Army and has vast operational experience having served

in all kinds of terrain and operational situations which has confronted the Indian Army in the past four decades.) 

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PLA troops during a training exercise

“

**The flareup with India will remain heightened and long drawn. In attempting to tie India down on its land borders China will achieve the opposite effect**

”



### Lieutenant General PR Shankar

Lt Gen P R Shankar was India's DG Artillery. He is highly decorated and qualified with vast operational experience. He is now a Professor in the Aerospace Dept of IIT Madras.





## China Tests India's Red Lines, Military Response Required

**“What was the apprehension in admitting that intrusions had taken place and appropriate response was being planned? It would have not brought the government down. Intrusions are inevitable where gaps are covered by patrolling and the enemy has the initiative.”**

**by Lieutenant General PC Katoch**

**T**he horrible manner in which “at least” 20 Indian soldiers including a Colonel and at least one JCO were clubbed to death by China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA) in Galwan on the night of June 15/16 is without parallel. Number of injured reportedly were 17.

Any soldier would willingly die for the motherland facing bullets, not in this dastardly manner. This was perhaps waiting to happen and more of this is likely because China is testing the redlines of Indian policy makers.

The clash took place during the night and hence casualty figures on the enemy side remain ambiguous though the Indian media is claiming 43 PLA casualties. No doubt our boys too would have fought back but were they carrying iron rods and wooden clubs with iron spikes like the PLA?

Would the PLA not have opened fire if they suffered 43 casualties?

From day one of intrusions in Eastern Ladakh, China is blaming India for aggression. For the recent clash too China has blamed our troops for crossing the LAC twice.

Conversely, when have we held China responsible for the intrusions before today? Did we blame China for intrusions into our territory before today? The Defence Minister’s first statement on June 2, a month after the intrusions, only mentioned that the PLA had come in sizeable numbers “along” the LAC. How would China read this? Did we appreciate that this was not a picnic at LAC and something very serious was to follow?

What was the apprehension in admitting that intrusions had taken place

and appropriate response was being planned? It would have not brought the government down. Intrusions are inevitable where gaps are covered by patrolling and the enemy has the initiative. Isn’t that what happened in Kargil?

Keeping aside three American aircraft carriers in South China Sea and Beijing wanting to deflect attention from Wuhan Virus, we need to get down to mother earth. China annexed Aksai Chin for providing depth to their Western Highway. Pakistan made Kargil intrusions to cut off the Srinagar-Leh Highway to choke Siachen to tackle it subsequently. So it was but natural for the PLA to capture higher ground in Galwan to monitor the Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldi (DBO) Road from where interdiction by fire was possible. It also

**Any soldier would willingly die for the motherland facing bullets, not in this dastardly manner. This was perhaps waiting to happen and more of this is likely because China is testing the redlines of Indian policy makers.**

provides a launch pad for further operations towards the DBO.

Information of Chinese border infrastructure mostly comes to us from foreign media. But we indulge in publicizing inauguration of bridges and roads. Media even reports roads under construction. All this is good for vote-bank politics but needlessly alerts the enemy.

We should have occupied the areas in Galwan that PLA has now intruded into, before we went public on the DSDBO road and the Chewang Rinchen Darbuk-DBO Bridge. This should have happened 2-3 years back – perhaps when the current CDS (Chief of Defence Staff) was the Army Chief.

Why did we hesitate when we claim Aksai Chin? Would China have done so if they were in our shoes – most certainly yes? China built a road in Doklam to the Zomphiri Ridge defying agreement with Bhutan not to alter the status quo. And just two months after disengaging the standoff with India, satellite imagery showed a brigade-sized PLA deployed with heavy equipment north of Yadong – poised for quick move forward.

Our media focus somehow remained on Fingers area of Pangong Tso. For other areas the narrative was that both sides are dug in one kilometer apart. Media kept reporting that in Galwan the PLA is on their side of the LAC. If that was the case, why did this clash happen in the night? Were we trying to evict the PLA from “their” side of LAC? Were we so naïve to believe that talks will work and the PLA will vacate ground held in Galwan?

Recall the strategic China-Pakistan conspiracy to make India vacate the Saltoro Range for enabling a China-Pakistan link up along the Shyok River giving all areas north of Shyok to China. This is what China will keep on trying and we may see more surprise actions by the PLA.

Significantly, the statement issued by China’s Western Theatre Command reads, “On the evening of June 15, in the Galwan River Valley ..... Indian troops crossed the LAC again and conducted illegal activity and deliberately launched provocative attacks, triggering violent physical conflicts ... resulting in casualties. The sovereignty of Galwan valley has always been ours.... The Indian troops went back on their word, seriously violating their agreement on border issues .... We demand India should .... immediately stop all violations and provocations.”

This is a slap for us who believed talks with rogue China can work. Take it for certain China will not withdraw from Galwan and possibly some other intrusion areas too. Expect PLA intrusions elsewhere along the LAC to distract us from Ladakh and ensure our response keeps getting delayed.

It is often heard India cannot react “at this point of time” because China is militarily and economically stronger. Will this equation change in the foreseeable future? The answer is no. If we can’t stand up for our strategic interests, we will be pushed more.

The last time we had a Colonel ‘injured’ in enemy firing (Colonel Rai Singh later became Brigadier) and some of our boys killed at Nathu La in 1967, we killed hundreds of PLA. No PLA soldier was visible for the next seven days. Why are we tying the hands of our soldiers and getting them killed in this horrible fashion? Are we not fully mobilized? Are we so scared of escalation that Delhi will get nuked?

Forget mudslinging amidst political parties, the fact is China finds India a soft target. The PLA has now claimed entire Galwan Valley – next will be DBO. China is testing out redlines. How long will we remain colour blind?

The earlier we stand up militarily in the overall matrix of national response, the better because the costs of inaction will be far greater than taking action. The more we delay the response more Galwans will happen, keeping us on the back foot.

Finally, how about some homage to those who laid down their lives? 🇮🇳

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### Lieutenant General Prakash Katoch

Lt. Gen Katoch is renowned special forces officer with an unparalleled service record. He has been a prolific writer with his articles published in leading Defence magazines like FORCE & Fauji India.





## India Will Need To Bring Order & Alacrity To Crisis Management

**“At the strategic level, the government must moot a sustained process of engagement with China at the highest politico-diplomatic echelons. The negotiations should seek multi-dimensional Sino-Indian modus-vivendi; encompassing the full gamut of bilateral issues.”**

**by Admiral Arun Prakash**

**F**ormer Navy Chief Admiral Arun Parkash (Retd.) in his article on the Mission Victory India (MVI) website published on 25 June 2020, said “The current lack of clarity amongst our decision-makers is rooted in incomprehension of the long-term strategic aims and objectives that underpin China’s belligerent conduct”.

The sudden and tragic loss of 20 Indian army personnel in a treacherous ambush by the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) in Ladakh’s Galwan Valley has caused deep public anguish and anger, mollified, only partially, by the swift retribution visited on the assailants by our gallant jawans.

Equally exasperating for the public has been the cavalier inconsistency of statements emanating from government sources in New Delhi on a matter of grave national importance;

especially, since the contradictions have given comfort to the adversary and caused confusion at home.

Given that the Sino-Indian territorial dispute has been festering since the late 1950s, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the current lack of clarity amongst our decision-makers is rooted in incomprehension of the long-term strategic aims and objectives that underpin China’s belligerent conduct.

This is hardly a surprise, considering that we have failed to devote adequate intellectual capital, intelligence resources and political attention to acquisition of a clear insight into China and its motivations. Even when intelligence is available, analysis and dissemination have fallen short.

Consequently, it would seem that from Jawaharlal Nehru’s naïve hopes,

encapsulated in the “Hindi-Chini bhai-bhai” mantra, to Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s prolonged courtship of Xi Jinping, India has been groping in the dark, while grossly misreading China’s real intent. As we watch Beijing’s sinister border strategy unfold, the absence of a matching counter on India’s part becomes painfully obvious.

Indians, as devotees of chess or “sha-tranj”, have been thinking in terms of striking blows, fighting pitched battles and finally, checkmating the opponent. A similar Chinese board game, “wei qui”, is described, thus, by Henry Kissinger: “If chess is about decisive battle, wei qui is about a protracted campaign and ‘strategic encirclement’ where opponents seek to occupy empty spaces and then surround and capture opposing pieces. While chess encourages single-mindedness,

wei-qui generates guile and strategic flexibility.”

Since 1995, China has been issuing a defence white paper (DWP) every two years or so. These thematic public documents articulate China’s national security aims, objectives and vital interests and also address the “ends-ways-means” issues related to its armed forces. The 11 DWPs issued so far are a model of clarity and vision, and provide many clues to current developments.

It is a measure of our complacency and indifference towards national security that no Indian government since Independence has deemed it necessary to issue a defence white paper, order a defence review or publish a national security strategy. Had we done so, it may have prepared us for the unexpected and brought order and alacrity to our crisis-response.

Historically, China is heir to an ancient system, based not on sovereign equality of states, but on the divine and boundless reach and authority of the Chinese Emperor. Even in the current discourse there are enough pointers to show that an ascendant China sees itself on track to realising its “strong nation dream”, of becoming the world’s No 1 power by surpassing and then replacing the US.

A part of the “China dream” is the establishment of a “unified global system”, or empire, termed tianxia (“all under heaven” in Mandarin). Translating its enormous economic gains into coercive military power, China expects neighbouring nations to submit to its hegemony.

To show India its place, China had administered it a “lesson” in 1962, and may, perhaps, be contemplating another one in 2020, with the objective of preventing the rise of a peer competitor. For China, the line of actual control or LAC, representing an unsettled border, provides strategic leverage to keep India on tenterhooks about its next move while repeatedly exposing the latter’s vulnerabilities.

There is probably no other instance world-wide where two antagonistic neighbours have left such a long

border, undetermined, unmarked and unresolved for so long. Our diplomats derive considerable satisfaction from the 1993 Border Peace & Tranquility Agreement, which, according to former foreign secretary, Shivshankar Menon, “...effectively delinked settlement of the boundary from the rest of the relationship”.

But to a layman, it appears that by failing to use available leverage for 27 years, and not insisting on bilateral exchange of LAC maps, we have created a ticking time-bomb, with the trigger in China’s hands.

While “disengagement” may soon take place between troops in contact, it is most unlikely that the PLA will pull back or vacate any occupied position in Ladakh or elsewhere; in which case, India needs to consider a three-pronged strategy.

At the ground-level, we need to visibly reinforce our positions, and move forward to the LAC all along, enhancing the operational-tempo of the three services as a measure of deterrence. Indian warships should show heightened presence at the Indian Ocean choke-points.

Cyber emergency response teams country-wide should remain on high alert. While building-up stocks of weapons, ammunition and spares, the Ministry of Defence should seize this opportunity to urgently launch some long-term “atma-nirbharta” schemes in defence-production.



At the strategic level, the government must moot a sustained process of engagement with China at the highest politico-diplomatic echelons. The negotiations should seek multi-dimensional Sino-Indian modus-vivendi; encompassing the full gamut of bilateral issues like trade, territorial disputes, border-management and security.

Simultaneously, at the grand-strategic level, India should initiate a dialogue for the formation of an “Indo-Pacific Concord for Peace and Tranquillity”, inviting four members of the Quad as well as Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines and Malaysia.

Finally, in 1962, India’s Parliament had expressed, “the firm resolve of the Indian people to drive out the aggressor from the sacred soil of India”, a resolution interpreted as a pledge for the restoration of Aksai Chin. As a nation, we need to be pragmatic enough to realise that neither conquest nor re-conquest of territory is possible in the 21st century.

Parliament should, now, resolve to ask the government, “to establish with utmost urgency, stable, viable and peaceful national boundaries, all around, so that India can proceed, unhindered, with the vital tasks of nation-building and socio-economic development”. 🇮🇳

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## Admiral Arun Prakash

Admiral Arun Prakash, PVSM, AVSM, VrC, VSM, ADC is a former Flag Officer of the Indian Navy, who served as the Chief of the Naval Staff from 31 July 2004 to 31 October 2006 and as the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee from 31 January 2005 to 31 October 2006. He is one of India’s most decorated naval officers and a pioneering member of Mission Victory India. He regularly writes for leading news publications and strategic journals. He can be reached at arunp2810@yahoo.com





## “Avoiding War Not An Option”: Need For A China Specific Security Doctrine

**“The non-development of infrastructure along the LAC, fearing China’s exploitation of it in a future war, was a defeatist policy. To put it even more crudely, it was an abortion even before conception.”**

**by Colonel Rajinder Kushwaha**

Former Navy Chief Admiral Arun Parkash (Retd.) in his article on the Mission Victory India (MVI) website published on 25 June 2020, said “The current lack of clarity amongst our decision-makers is rooted in incomprehension of the longterm strategic aims and objectives that underpin China’s belligerent conduct”.

“The current lack of clarity amongst our decision-makers is rooted in incomprehension of the long-term strategic aims and objectives that underpin China’s belligerent conduct,” said former Navy Chief Admiral Arun Parkash (Retd.) in his article on the Mission Victory India (MVI) website published on 25 June 2020.

Notwithstanding the agreements arrived at during the military commanders meets and diplomatic talks on disengagement plans on the Sino-Indian Line of Actual Control (LAC) conflict

in Eastern Ladakh, after 16 June 2020, the situation on the ground along the LAC has not changed even a bit.

The latest input is that post the Galwan Valley clashes on 15 June, China has built up two motorised divisions in the Depsang plains. It has deployed heavy artillery, vehicles, and Tanks opposite Depsang plains, which lay some 30 odd kilometres South East of the Daulat Beg Oldi (DBO). China is maintaining a threatening posture despite the multiple rounds of so-called ‘sweet and cordial’ talks.

To be very frank, the genesis of the latest crisis in Eastern Ladakh emanates from the thoughtless border-management agreements, signed between India and China in 1993, 1996, and 2013. These agreements favoured China and India was militarily made impotent. The Indian political leadership, fearful of the 1962 debacle, has always opted

for a ‘No war strategy’ with China. In fact, after the 1967 Nathula clashes, it was China who wanted to avoid war with India.

Anyways, overwhelmed by the glaring defeat of 1962, Indian political leaders and defence strategists have made three major blunders in the wake of offensive moves made by China on the LAC, passively submitting to Chinese whims and fancies.

The first was the non-development of infrastructure along the LAC/Border, fearing that China would exploit it in a future war, this was a defeatist policy. To put it more distinctly the policy smacked of divorce before marriage or to put it even more bluntly, it was an abortion even before conception.

China had long sensed this ‘weak-kneed’ leadership of India. Therefore, before and after the 1962 war, China

**The Chinese strategy has been to act as a friend during the day and a rapist at night. All these talks of agreements and disengagements even now, act as nothing but lollipops**

took advantage of the Indian leaderships 'scarecrow' approach and started militarisation of its border as per its claims. In doing so, China developed railroad communications not only from Mainland China to Tibet, but also along the entire LAC/Border with India.

Thus, China militarily strengthened itself in Tibet, while India kept talking peace. Visits by Indian Prime Ministers, whether by Rajiv Gandhi or Atal Bihari Vajpayee or even Narendra Modi, bore no fruits. These visits were probably taken as signs of weakness. It is a well-known fact of history: the more one appeases a belligerent nation, the more that nation becomes aggressive. This appeasement has been the bane of India's China policy.

The second blunder was not having demarcated the LAC, both—on the map and on the ground, before signing these border management agreements during different periods in time. It was probably done at the behest of bureaucratic advice or 'Sarkari Generals'. Why should India have done it, if it was not scared? Maybe not the Indian public nor the armed forces, but the leadership was certainly 'chicken hearted'.

A military maxim from Alexander the Great applies to the Indian leadership of all these years since Independence. It says: "I am not scared of a hundred tigers led by a Sheep, but afraid of a hundred sheep led by a tiger". China saw through this weakness to realise that Indian soldiers might be tigers, but they were definitely led by sheep. What did India leadership expect from security forces to manage on the LAC, when it was left to varied interpretation by both sides, when fresh troops arrived? Surprisingly, pliable Generals too did not object. China should have been stopped in its strides by 1990, at least.

The third blunder was to take defence of the Chinese border lightly

by keeping it under the aegis of Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), which is led by officers from the Indian Police Service (IPS) and under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). What does a police force know about offensive and defensive warfare? It is not trained to fight like an army. More so, police officers have no idea about High Altitude and Mountain Warfare. It is doubtful if the ITBP was even patrolling the area properly, what else can explain how Chinese had come and located themselves between Finger 4 and 8?



Representational image of Brahmos Supersonic Cruise Missile

Admiral Arun Parkash, as quoted above, is right because Indian leadership right from Jawahar Lal Nehru onwards, barring Indra Gandhi, had lacked strategic vision. Afraid of a military coup, they not only neglected their armed forces but also did not allow military men anywhere near defence policy making. This resulted in an ineffective and improper strategy of appeasement against China being formulated.

India, over the years since 1962, has carried on with its appeasement policy

with China. In fact, it followed a 'weak-kneed' policy of avoiding a war at all costs. The Chinese strategy has been to act as a friend during the day and a rapist at night. All these talks of agreements and disengagements even now, act as nothing but lollipops. China cannot be trusted, a foe for all seasons of the year.

Henry Kissinger has narrated an incident about India's war with China in his book, where he quotes Mao Zedong telling his Commanders that a war with India was to knock some sense into its leaders. Mao is often also alleged to have said that he wanted to teach a lesson to Nehru. He indeed taught a lesson, but we learnt the wrong one.

Disengagement is a ploy to fool Indian leaders, both—military and civil, while it continues to build up along LAC and

slowly keep biting body limbs bit by bit. India's desire for peace and harmony with China is her biggest enemy. Avoiding war with China is not an option anymore. It can be done only at peril to Indian security and integrity.

Ever since the rise of Xi Jinping in China, it has been following its global ambitions aggressively. It has long abandoned Deng Xiao peng's doctrine of; Tao Guang, Huang Yei' (TGHY)—which means "Maintain a low profile; bide your time and keep making progress and development." This is how



Deng Xiao peng had opened China in 1979 when he came to power. He launched the 'Four Modernisations' and laid the base for China's military and economic base.

However, Xi Jinping is 180 degrees opposite. He wants to adopt aggressive policy to project China's new power. He believes in 'Fan Fa, You Wei' (FFYW). It asks for an 'aggressive Projection of Chinese power'. In the wake of Covid 19 spread, and China's global isolation, one can see the aggressive statements by Chinese diplomats, all over the world. It is also referred to as 'Wolf Warrior diplomacy', taking its name from two Chinese blockbuster movies. It is nothing but 'Chinese Ramboism'.

The main theme of FFYW is intimidation and bullying of one's adversary while avoiding war. China does it on three platforms, these are namely, psychological, media and legal aspects. It exploits adversaries' weaknesses in the political, media and legal systems. It attacks political vulnerabilities of democracies; it buys media houses and disgruntled individuals to create a sense of anarchy. It endeavours to make the adversary collapse without going to war.

Tormented by worldwide isolation due to Coronavirus and deteriorating internal situation, Xi Jinping wanted to divert both public and global attention. Therefore, it chose to create a situation on the LAC with India to make it look like a global incident. It served the purpose of invoking Nationalism in China. But did it do so?

It has been now ascertained that Galwan action on June 15 was premeditated to intimidate India with an aim to dissuade it from making the Quad with USA, Japan, Australia. It is also learnt that the said action of 15 June was to 'teach India a lesson'. It is indicated by US intelligence reports that the Galwan action was ordered by senior Chinese Commander, General Zhao Zongqi, head of the Western Theater Command. He had approved the operation.

It seems Gen. Zhao Zongqi had been very vocal to say that China must not appear weak so as to avoid exploitation by the United States and its allies.

Therefore, this face-off was a way to 'teach India a lesson.' In fact, General Zhao Zhongqi is not the only one, who advocated aggression in Chinese Conduct. There are a whole lot of Chinese Scholars who display such aggression. The Global Times is their mouthpiece.

A Chinese scholar, Yan Quetong from Tsinghua University, points out that China should embark on reforms in its foreign policy in four areas. These areas are: directly confronting the adversary rather than avoiding conflict; China should develop a 'strategic opportunity period' rather than waiting for a strategic opportunity; China should begin to mould international society as per its wishes because it is in a position to do so. Finally, China should change its non-alignment approach and make

Sea neighbours. It silences the five rim states at will. In South Asia, in its neighbourhood, it has pocketed Pakistan (it is nothing but another autonomous region of China — call it PAR-Pakistan autonomous region). The same is happening to Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar. It is even trying to woo Bangladesh. So, who is left but India?

China knows that India was the last frontier to be conquered before it embarks on a journey to Global supremacy. It also knows that a large-scale military confrontation was not a profitable option. It would only benefit the USA and European Union. It defeats its very aim of Global over lordship. The best way is to militarily intimidate and create a political anarchy in India through partnership with Indian traitors, in politics, media and other such institutions to implode India from within.



Two rising powers face off

efforts to establish a community of common destiny.

Therefore, there you are, then. China wants to mould the world and its neighbours according to its designs and under its tutelage. It has been challenging the USA and standing up to it. All the global institutions like WHO, WTO and even UNO are seemingly under its thumb. Monetary institutions like the IMF and World Bank are at its beck and call. It is the owner of Asian Development Bank. It controls the world economy through its manufacturing hub.

Most of the small African states are buried under its 'debt trap'. It has already browbeaten South China

What should be India's response? It must be deliberate, calibrated and measured one. First things first. India must make its response noticeably clear to China. It should say, "Come on China, come! You want a war? We will give you the bloodiest war! India is ready." There should be no doubts left and India must show its belligerent face. A full-fledged war, even conventional is not in the interests of China.

China would have two options — either incite Pakistan to go for war with India over Kashmir, while it holds India on its LAC and disallows switching of forces. It would also make the USA ineffective to an extent that it would hesitate to intervene. However, India would get a good opportunity

to get Baltistan-Gilgit liberated by holding China in Eastern Ladakh and launching a pre-emptive offensive along Turtuk-Skardu axis. But it must hold in strength and abort China's plan to capture DBO-Depsang Plains and Shyok valley.

Second option of China is to capture territories in all or any one of these four Tri junctions on India's border with China. These are:-

- Siachen DBO -Ladakh Tri junction with Pakistan and China
- Lipulekh- Kalapani Tri junction with Nepal and China
- Doka La - Chumbi valley Tri Junction with Bhutan and China
- Diphu La Trijunction with Myanmar and China

Last two are in the Eastern sector. First one is in the Western Sector and second one is in the Central Sector. These are strategic locations and any territory grabbed by India or China would make others vulnerable and cause damage to image. Though all four are important but one each in the Central Sector and western sector are especially important.

China has its eyes on Siachen-DBO as it separates Gilgit Baltistan from Aksai Chin, it is so strategically located that it can at a future date provide a launching pad towards Highway G-219. In Aksai Chin. Therefore, China would not only like to deny India this advantage but also try to seize it or capture it. It could be an airborne operation along with a ground thrust from Depsang valley. Should it happen, India must exercise its own offensive option through Lipulekh- Kalapani axis directly into the mid centre of Tibet. While this happens in the western sector, the two Tri-junctions in Eastern sectors must be held in strength.

China will also exploit internal vulnerabilities of India, not only Maoists and North East Insurgencies but also its political and media partners to weaken political determination and demoralise armed forces. Should the war break out, known media and political

favourites of China must be quarantined. All political activities are to be banned.

Also, a word about Indian intelligence agencies. Instead of chasing political masters they must keep a proper eye on India's enemies. Regular appreciation must be carried out. Also, it is important that LAC guarding troops such as ITBP, SSB and the BSF should be placed under MoD for all purposes. In fact, it would be better if ITBP/SSB Bns are converted into an Infantry Regiment of the Indian Army and offered by army officers, police officers should be weeded out.

A comprehensive national security doctrine for dealing with China must be formulated. Avoiding war with China is no more an option. War is the only option if China continues to show aggressiveness on the LAC. What cannot be cured, must be endured! China must know that India is more than equal in defensive capabilities and it can smash China's face. If it launched an offensive. Out of 12 best cruise Missiles in the world, four are

from India. It includes Nirbhay Mark -12 (11th position and range 1250 km); Brahmos-1 (6th position-range 300-500 km); Brahmos-II Mach -7 (2nd Position with range 450 km), and Shahryar-Mach 7.5 (1st position-range 700 km). The Shaurya Missile is currently the fastest missile in the world, and it can carry a payload of one ton.

If China triggers a war, we have matching defensive capability. Therefore, the only way to avoid war for China is to retreat to an acceptable date to India and the disengagement of troops should be based on the positions occupied each before 10 April 2020. China should be told once for all, if you want war, you should have it. Get back to April 10, 2020 position or else you would be responsible for the consequences. Be prepared to physically throw them out.



*The author was a former CO of 3 Bihar. Views expressed are the authors own, and do not reflect the editorial policy of 'Mission Victory India'*



Leading Southeast Asian Powers, head to head



### Colonel Rajinder Kushwaha

Col Rajinder Kushwaha is an ex-NDA, commissioned into the 3 Bihar Regiment in June 1971 and was the Commanding Officer of same unit in insurgency environs in Assam in 1990-93. Has vast experience in CI Ops from North East to Punjab and J&K. A prolific writer-cum-critic on defence and security matters, he has authored the book, 'Kashmir: A Different Perspective'. His second book on Assam was released in April 2018. Held prestigious appointments in the army including as an instructor at a premier army institute, Col GS, Col Adm of an Infantry Division and Col "Q" works at a Command HQ. He can be contacted on email: rajee749@yahoo.com





## Chinese Military Base In Tibet: A Threat To India's Sovereignty

**“There is a view that India committed a momentous blunder at the time of independence in voluntarily surrendering all those rights on Tibet which had been inherited from the British.”**

**by Major General Madhok**

**T**his endeavor from a Veteran is to understand our government's policy towards Tibet as the goings on of the Lhasa and China's current and long term strategic ambitions affect India. When China annexed Tibet in 1951, Mao Ze Dong while enunciating his stand on liberation of Tibet had included Nepal, Bhutan, Ladakh, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh (Five Fingers) as the larger strategy in this orbit and all indications in the last 69 years or so seem to support this doctrine which is being successfully implemented. Today, Lhasa, they say, has been turned into a sex city for China's military.

That Monks are being expelled on refusal to be politically indoctrinated. There have been continuous group clashes between Hans Chinese and

Tibetans. It is difficult to get news from Tibet because of the vice like grip on the people and that, we have been in a fix over Tibet for more than half a century: Whether to dare use Tibet as a trump card against China – an old adversary? Or to go along with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), who think and see Tibet as a liability. Because they think, our decision to grant asylum to the Dalai Lama led to China attacking us in 1962.

Besides, for the unrest which erupted in Lhasa on Mar 14, 2008, China blamed the Dalai Lama for inciting Tibetans and confusing public opinion. While on the other hand, in spite of pouring a lot of money into Tibet, China has been unable to win the hearts and minds of Tibetans.

As such, there are a number of questions to which the Government and its advisors and Think Tanks have to find answers. Is Tibet really a liability? Can Shangri La become a breeding ground for future terrorism after Dalai Lama to support secessionist movements in India's Northeast? What inferences can be drawn from the Mar 2008 uprising in Lhasa – China's worst intelligence failure? Dalai Lama's and China's views and India's options? Is the US in a position to play the Tibetan card? Finally, possible solutions and what India should and must do? But before that, a few facts.

### **BACKGROUND**

There is a view that we in India committed a momentous blunder at the time of independence in voluntarily

“Today, Lhasa, they say, has been turned into a sex city for China’s military. That Monks are being expelled on refusal to be politically indoctrinated. There have been continuous group clashes between Hans Chinese and Tibetans. It is difficult to get news from Tibet because of the vice like grip on the people and that, we have been in a fix over Tibet for more than half a century

surrendering all those rights on Tibet which had been inherited from the British. Then the Chinese representative approached New Delhi in 1948 to esquire whether the Indian Government was contemplating retaining these rights, Nehru’s reply was in the negative.

Accordingly, Tibet was handed over on a plate and the ‘Buffer Zone’ disappeared forever. Today, Tibetans with nearly 1,30,000 settlers, spread over 50 settlements all over India, with 46 educational institutions and a government in exile at Dharamshala, continue to make news intermittently.

The latest one being Karmapa Lama in India-third in line after Dalai Lama and the railway being Karmapa Lama in India-third in line after Dalai Lama, and the railway line which China is contemplating to build up to Sikkim in the Chumbi Valley from Tibet.

The last time, in Sept 1991, prior to the visit of the then Prime Minister Li Peng to Delhi, a big demonstration was staged by Tibetans. It was put down by Indian authorities on a complaint by the Chinese envoy who made it clear that Beijing will not tolerate any encouragement to anti Chinese demonstrations in India. Thus, successfully administering a snub to the democratic tradition.

Besides, a rumour has been doing the rounds in Delhi’s corridors of power that the Chinese might bargain by recognizing the Macmohan Line in the eastern sector while retaining what they already have in Ladakh, provided all Tibetan activities are stopped from the Indian side.

## CHINA’S POLICY & ATTITUDE

China is quite clear on Tibet while New Delhi’s policy is ambivalently vague and depends on the likely reaction from Beijing. India does not recognize the Tibetan Government in exile and yet has given all necessary



Indian troops during the 1962 war

facilities to this ‘government’ to function effectively.

We have accepted Tibet as an autonomous region of China but according to Chinese view, this applies only to Central Tibet and not to two other regions (Imdo and Kasun). Thus keeping these two regions out. But Dalai Lama does not want a truncated Tibet. We, I think have been afraid to express our views clearly fearing that China would then talk about Kashmir or pay back in the same coin in India’s northeast.

That leads me to this inference that we did not speak up in 1949 when the Chinese invaded Tibet nor did we lift a finger when Beijing set out

to consolidate its hold 1954 onwards. As a result, the Tibetan issues stands relegated to the dustbin of history. But today, the nuclear threat from Tibet is real. Besides, 300,000 troops, 17 radar stations, 14 airfields and 8 missile bases, several dozens from Chinese 30 strong nuclear warheads arsenal and medium-range missiles including DF missiles are deployed in Tibet with all seven NE states and nearly all Indian cities within range.

The danger is that as the NE states realize the potential nuclear threats from China, they might be more inclined to deal with Beijing than New Delhi unless of course India comes out with an articulate nuclear policy that it is in a position to hit back when necessary.

The Dalai Lama, now nearing 88 who fled to India in 1959, like a true Buddhist is following a Middle Path. He wants demilitarization of Tibet. But is that possible? He has been sending representatives to Beijing for talks since 2000. After nearly 8 rounds of talks in the last 13 years, nothing has emerged.

In May 2008 while on a visit to UK he said, that he would like to return to Tibet as a Chinese citizen and had set four conditions for his return: That is, open Tibet to foreign media and given them free reign to observe and write; accept medical assistance from outside as many Tibetans were suffering from diseases; release all





**Is Tibet really a liability? Can Shangri La become a breeding ground for future terrorism after Dalai Lama to support secessionist movements in India's Northeast? What inferences can be drawn from the Mar 2008 uprising in Lhasa - China's worst intel failure? Dalai Lama's and China's views and India's options? Is the US in a position to play the Tibetan card? Finally, possible solutions and what India should and must do?**



political prisoners and have fair trials and conduct substantive talks.

He does not want total independence but would be happy with an autonomous Tibet within China. He has been asking for US's help and wants India to act as a mediator between Tibet and China.

The US, on the other hand, has taken various initiatives, most of which were discussed during Dalai Lama's visit to Washington in 1993, 1994, 1995 and later on during his visits there. He was always given red carpet treatment. Further though officially it does not recognize the Tibetan government in exile in India, according to a Foreign Relations Act sanctioned for setting up Radio Freedom Asia in May 94, primarily meant for propaganda, Tibet has been listed as a sovereign country under occupation of foreign powers.

The Dalai Lama addressed US Parliamentarians during his visit there in Sep 2003. The US did condemn that there were major Human Rights Violations in Tibet in the Mar 2008 uprising. But the US has far too many economic and strategic interests in China and at the moment would be foolish to support Tibet in anything except for Human Rights Violations.

But China, the main player, has been accusing the Dalai Lama of trying to drive a wedge between US and China and split China. It has criticized India for discussions concerning Tibet which took place at the world Parliamentarians conference held at New Delhi in May 94.

Further, it has accused the US of trying to play the Taiwan and Tibet cards. Beijing has been conveying to various countries not to receive the Dalai Lama. President Hu Jin Tao scrutinized every address of the Dalai Lama. Because of various changes taking place in Tibet he has been visiting Lhasa quite often.

Strategy being to force a change with its super economy, money and setting of Hans Chinese dividing cities like Lhasa into two worlds: Chinese and Tibetans.

The Mar 2008 uprising in Lhasa-largest protests in Tibet in the last 25 years, had rattled Beijing. They accused Dalai Lama for it. His reaction was that the violence was staged by Chinese troops dressed as monks and that lies can't work. While Beijing has become fearful of possible Tibetan suicide attacks.

Tibet is valuable to China for its natural resources like Uranium, Copper, Lithium, Chrome and so on. All major rivers of South and SE Asia originate in Tibet. A point to note and emphasized by the Dalai Lama is, that India has borders with Tibet and not China. It is only in 1951 when China occupied Tibet that India and China became neighbours and then began the Sino-India border dispute.



Leaders of Southeast Asia's leading powers

The 365 year old Potala palace now overlooks glitzy 5 star hotels, night clubs and numerous brothels. China is supposed to be spending more than 3.2 billion dollars a year on modernization of Tibet. All villages are to be connected with roads. Qinghai-Lhasa railway is already a reality with a railway station at 5000 meters in Lhasa.

The train from Beijing-Lhasa is supposedly running in 48 hours, costing 48 US dollars per ticket-at least thrice a week. The same train will be extended to Natsu La (Sikkim from Lhasa).

China is not prepared to allow any political role for the Dalai Lama Nor is it prepared to recognize any successor to him in whose selection the Chinese Government and the Communist administration in Lhasa has not played a leading role. Various rounds of talks which have taken place so far are merely to mark time till Dalai Lama passes away. Concurrently, Beijing always says that Dalai Lama is welcome to return but must reflect on his mistakes and return to a correct patriotic stance.

## INDIA'S POSTURE

The brutal crackdown on Tibetan peaceful uprising in Mar 2008 found New Delhi in a bind. India, as mentioned before, recognized Tibet as an Autonomous region of China and has assured no anti Chinese activity from its soil. Yet, India is a democracy and cannot keep quiet as Tibetans follow Gandhian philosophy.

New Delhi refrained from criticizing China. Instead, MEA said that it supports the 'One China' policy. India does not recognize the Dalai Lama as the head of a government in exile.

I think we have had an ambiguous and confused attitude towards the Dalai Lama. Our original agreement with the Dalai Lama was that he will not be permitted to conduct political activities, yet we allowed him to have a government in exile and a Parliament of deputies in Dharamshala.

When we say Tibet is a part of China we have never asked the Chinese to demarcate Tibet. This is important so long as China shows Arunachal Pradesh as part of South or Lower Tibet, and till that is done we should consider Tibet's position as unsettled.

## DALAI LAMA, TIBETAN YOUTH & THE NOV 2008 CONCLAVE OF COMMUNITY LEADERS

Tibetan youth in India took a stand against the Dalai Lama for not speaking up against China. There is a Free Tibet Movement about which the Chinese know, and during the peaceful revolt in Lhasa in Mar 2008 all news from Lhasa was available in Dharamshala due to the technical facilities we have today. There is a view after the Dalai Lama is gone, there will definitely be violent resistance as impatience spreads amongst young Tibetans.

We could perhaps see an equivalent of the IRA or Hamas in Lhasa. The gulf between the Hans Chinese and Tibetans has never been greater than it is today. During a visit to Japan in Nov 2008, Dalai Lama said, the Chinese rule is handing down a death sentence to Tibetans.

That they are totally obliterating an ancient culture. It is of interest to note that Dalai Lama's original move was for independence. When he realized, it was no longer possible he modified it to Middle Path: an autonomous region on the lines of status given to Hong Kong. At a conclave of 600 community leaders held at Dharamshala in Nov 2008 Dalai Lama directly asked New Delhi to help resolve the crisis between India and China by rescuing Tibet from trouble.

The conclave was discussing Dalai Lama's Middle Path approach, his succession, negotiations with China and all topics of independence or autonomy. Beijing asked India to stop the Conclave thus putting India in a spot while the Dalai Lama looked to India for help. Concurrently,



Chinese paratroopers during a training exercise

Tibetan youth is at cross roads. They felt that the Conclave was a waste of time, they wanted to know as to who should lead the movement for independence? That there has been far too much lip service.

That time was running out and soon, with Hans population in majority, Tibetans will be refugees in their own land. The Conclave decided to break off all relations with China, put Dalai Lama's Middle Path on notice and voted that total independence will be their option or self determination as per UNO charter.

Though they will watch Middle Path for some more time. While Dalai Lama termed India's attitude as cautious, rejected Independence option and stuck to Middle Path. Though the Conclave did declare Dalai Lama as their unanimous leader.

## SECURITY ASPECTS

The Chinese are now capable of transporting troops and ammunition from the hinterland to the Indian borders within 20-25 days as against 3-6 months required earlier. So, India's security stands threatened. The revolt in Tibet was a big security threat. India's hands off and timid reaction to it sent wrong signals to Beijing.

There is no reason why New Delhi should not have censored it. There is a view that India has given a lot of foothold in one country after another. In Bangladesh we shied away after facing accusations of hegemonic intentions. In Myanmar, we gave undue importance to pro-democracy sentiments. While in Nepal we let the Maoists have a free run. Now we risk whatever legitimacy we have in the eyes of Tibetan people.

We, meanwhile, have been busy establishing confidence-building measures on the 4,053 km long Sino-India border with China. But the bottom



line is that Beijing is most advantageously placed. It does not recognize Sikkim or Arunachal Pradesh as parts of India. It has kept its boundary dispute alive with Bhutan and has more or less militarized Myanmar on India's eastern flank whose border runs along the sensitive states of Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram.

Beijing is now preparing to use the naval ports of Hangyi, Coco Islands and Sittwe in southern Myanmar which will give it unhindered access to the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal. Thus, with Chinese nuclear weapons deployed in Tibet, Lhasa's status entirely dependent on its discretion, flat refusal to talk to Dalai Lama, no time schedule fixed for settling the border dispute and a militarized Myanmar, various secessionist movements are gaining momentum.

India has high stakes in Tibet, add to this, the appointment of Panchen Lama in Jan 1990 by the Chinese government which has totally usurped Dalai Lama's position. The question is, what happens after the Dalai Lama? The US has already appointed a coordinator for Tibetan affairs. Besides, Dalai Lama has opened an office at Taipei in Taiwan in 1997 where nearly 500,000 citizens practice Tibetan Buddhism of different types.

Beijing considers it a threat. It had warned the Dalai Lama at one time against his intended visits to Taiwan. The US has been thinking of more initiatives which provide a leverage to India to take some positive action concerning Lhasa, where the Chinese population outnumbers Tibetans in their own homeland, and it is only a matter of time before the Chinese give Tibet a new Chinese name and it disappears as Tibet from the maps.

What inferences can be drawn from the above scenario? China will not loosen its grip on Tibet come what may. Because, it is from Tibet that Beijing's larger strategy to create proxy satellites and to use their markets while keeping their competitor India engaged can be implemented most effectively. Accordingly, it has been and is developing connectivity with Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar and

Bangladesh whose markets can or will be at its disposal in the future.

Further, there is no reason as to why China would not sign fresh treaties for defence cooperation, development and even to train their armies with these satellites. And to do that, Beijing has to keep India unsettled, delay resolution of the Sino-India border dispute and claim Arunachal Pradesh.

Most importantly, support secessionist movements which could, ultimately even take the space of a second Proxy War in India's Northeast, and once the Dalai Lama passes away, dispose of the Tibetan issue to the dustbin of history.

the arming of Pakistan by China. New Delhi must speak up against human rights violations and must question deployment of such a vast arsenal of nuclear weapons in Tibet which target most Indian cities.

Besides, India must outline the framework of a second strike nuclear capability and take out Agni and Prithvi missiles from hibernation. New Delhi will have to refashion a new bold foreign policy to deal with China and Tibet which has to be supported by a strong military. It will have to dilute Chinese influence on our neighbours and support Tibetans.

We have already lost 25-30 years in the Northeast and are far behind in creating the necessary logistic infrastructure to support our armed forces,



His holiness Dalai Lama

## WHAT INDIA CAN OR SHOULD DO

New Delhi must decide once for all, whether Tibet is a liability or an opportunity? If it is a liability, then we might as well carry on at the existing slow pace and leave the resolution of various disputes and issues in the Northeast to future generations. However, if we want to look at Tibet as an opportunity, then India will have to stand up and get out of the present attitude and tendency of 'Reactive Policies'.

The parliament will have to find time to debate the goings-on in Tibet and

without whom, no foreign policy will succeed. Further, we should consider the following for a change to tell Beijing that Indian means business -

- Recognize the Dalai Lama as the head of a government in exile.
- Be aware of the Human Rights violations in Lhasa and censor these.
- Do not stop peaceful protests by Tibetans against Chinese atrocities in Lhasa, in keeping with the democratic tradition.
- Redraw treaties with the neighbouring countries to suit India's

permanent interests. But first define these interests.

- We must find solutions to the separatist problems in the Northeast in accordance with a time bound schedule. We have been dilly-dallying on these for far too long.

- Involve the citizens of Northeast by raising more TA battalions, Ecological and Infrastructure development task forces.

- The entire security structure in the Northeast needs to be reviewed keeping in view the emerging threats. Start with consolidation of Para Military Forces into a BSF or ASSAM Rifles instead of the 10-12 Para Military Forces that we have there. We can and must ensure that the Maoists do not have a free run in Nepal.

- Improve connectivity with Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh on a priority basis.

## CONCLUSION

Tibet will be in the news in future because of Chinese actions, US's initiatives and resurgence of interest in that region. We still have some time to redraw our policies concerning China and Tibet, and therefore, in the light of emerging scenarios, the NSA, NSAB, NSC, R&AW and our service headquarters should examine, analyze the contingencies arising in the Northeast as a result of Chinese intentions and let the Government know the options open to India.

## HIGHLIGHTS & WAY AHEAD FOR INDIA

"The goings on in Tibet, China's Military base across the LAC, seem to have been totally sidelined. Obviously, Beijing is not resting and has a lot of plans up in its sleeve. Its interests and possibilities can be articulated with precision, and that is the task of our NSA, NIA, NSAB, NSC, DIA, Signal and intelligence agencies and Service and PMF headquarters. Our army corps and divisions deployed at the LAC must have updated maps across the LAC.

Their headquarters and down to Brigade Commanders must have regular intelligence briefings. They must be prepared to act Proactively along with the IAF whenever sensitive situations arise.

They must not forget that they have an adversary across the LAC, who are

the Chinese commanders, the morale of their troops, their intentions and capabilities, their tactics and strategy and so on. While the NDA govt. concentrates on developing the administrative infrastructure and connectivity to support our formations." 🇮🇳



Parliament of India

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**China, has been accusing the Dalai Lama of trying to drive a wedge between US and China and split China. It has criticized India for discussions concerning Tibet which took place at the world Parliamentarians conference held at New Delhi.**

”



### Major General Madhok

Maj Gen VK Madhok is a product of the 1st Course JSW/ NDA and was commissioned into the 3 GR. He was the BGS HQ Southern Command and the COS at HQ 4 Corps. He retired as the ADG (TA). He lives in Pune. The author can be reached on Email: majgenvkmadhok@gmail.com



# Humour In Uniform



## NDA Days

While getting to know the new class at NDA, the teacher asked one of the cadets, "Where were you born?"

"In Mettupalayam Sir!" promptly replied Cadet Sridhar.

Being a North Indian, the teacher could not follow the reply, "Spell it out, Cadet," he instructed.

Cadet Sridhar thought for a moment and then replied, "I think I made a mistake sir, I was born in Ooty!"



## Drunkard CO

A 1971 war veteran and addicted to liquor, liquor Lt Col. Singh, was given command of a Supply Depot. Word about his love for liquor spread in the depot.

Gen. VK Sharma, GOC of the area, made an intentional visit to the unit one morning. He was welcomed at the gate by Lt. Col Singh himself, 'Good morning, Sir,' he said, greeting and shaking hands with the GOC. There was alcohol in Lt. Col's breath but Gen Sharma was quiet. Lt. Col Singh took him around the unit and replied to all the questions correctly and nicely. Finally, to drive home the intended message, the GOC went with Lt. Col Singh went to his office, and asked, 'Are you drunk?'

No, Sir, I have only taken a few drinks!

'OK!...But why do you drink early in the morning?'

'Because I like it and don't like tea, Sir.'

'Singh, tell me if I am drunk in day time can I run in my area? Asked the GOC.

'No, Sir! You can't. But since my unit is very small, I can manage to run it with a few drinks,' replied Lt Col. Singh.

The GOC presuming that Lt. Col Singh is beginning to understand, further asked: 'Yes Singh, I can't, and would you like it, if your GOC was drunk during duty hours?'

'Like it sir...? I will love it!' remarked Lt. Col!

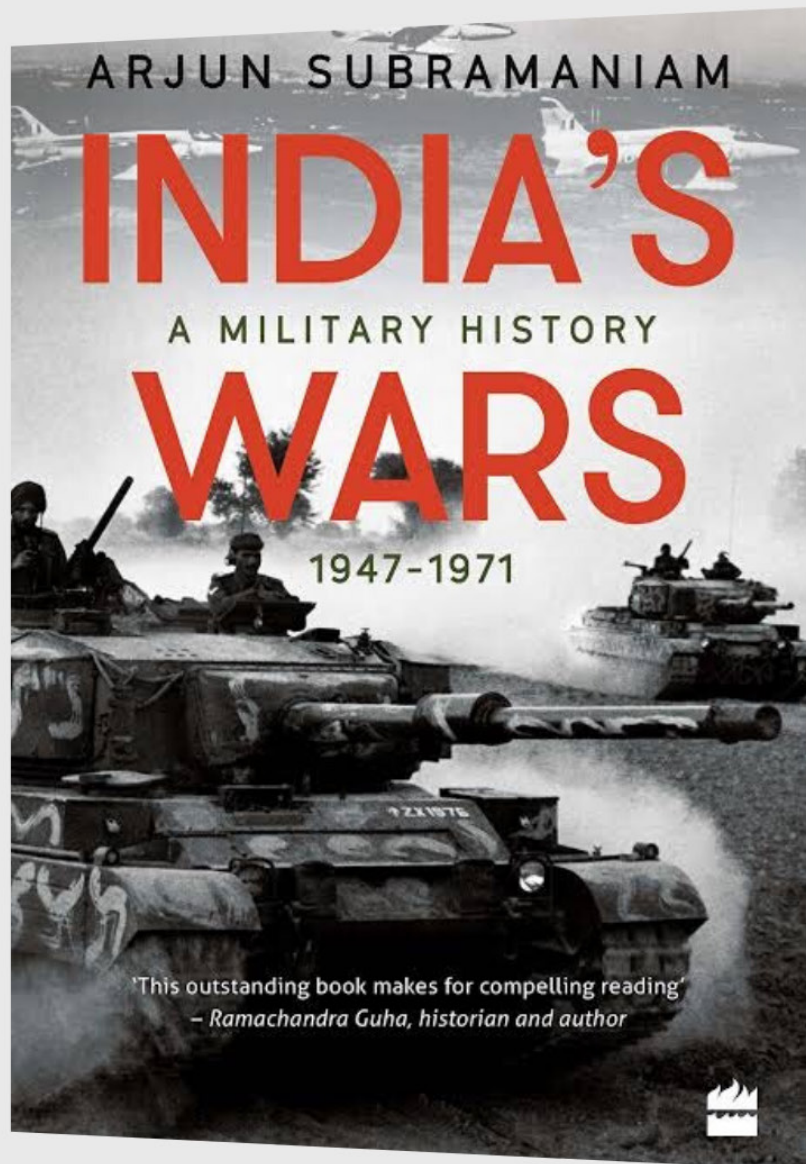


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