



VICTORY INDIA

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An Initiative By MVI

The Indian Army's Officer Promotion Policy Needs Urgent Overhaul!

Major General VK Madhok (Retd)

Battle of Nuranang: Fought & Won in a Miasma of Despondency & Despair

Brigadier Sarvesh D Dangwal (Retd)



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EDITOR'S NOTE

Colonel Vinay B Dalvi Vol.1 • Issue 6 • December 2020

Dear Readers,

Mission Victory India (MVI) is incredibly happy to release its 6th issue of the Victory India magazine, marking half a year of our now popular magazine. The compilation has a record 30 articles and debates on varied subjects that showcase our defence and strategic outlook through professional objective analysis of several complex issues or subjects confronting our Armed forces and nation. This issue also has selected inspirational battle honour stories penned down for posterity with valuable lessons for young and budding military leaders.

The issue is divided into six sections comprising: 1. Editor's Picks, 2. Debate, 3. Security Scan, 4. Professional Military Education (PME), 5. Gilgit-Baltistan Perfidy and 6. Lest We Forget.

The Editor's Pick section comprises select articles on popular topics that were appreciated by readers during the last 6months post launching of MVI Website.

The Debate Section has been introduced due to its popularity for our readers to express their views. Interestingly, over time, these debates have turned many of these readers into respondents and writers too. The subjects of these debates are most relevant to the times. They are Theaterisation of Commands, the DMAs age extension and pay policy, BECA, COs leading from the front, and Generalship.

The Security Scan this month covers PLAs Fake Microwave attack, US Foreign Policy Changes under President Joe Biden, Afghanistan-Graveyard of Empires, and India's Dilemma there. PME was relentlessly pursued by the Victory India Campaign for the past decade. The Mission Victory India Website and Victory India Magazine has been vigorously pursuing it this year to enhance the professional knowledge and awareness of our military leaders and trainees.

The articles in this section comprehensively covers the definition of PME, its importance during initial formative training and grooming for military officers, the imperative need to read, write and reflect and train, learn and balance during one's service career. It also highlights the need for PME to be more creative and not mere history. The section is highly enriched with select pieces from US military scholars and the November 20 cover story of Force magazine, which in fact was the trigger for creating this section.

Gilgit-Baltistan Perfidy section elaborately covers the complexity of this geographical area, its historical perspective, present status and strategic importance for both India and Pakistan.

The final section 'Lest We Forget' is dedicated to some of our past war heroes who distinguished themselves in two famous battles that earned battle honours for their units (4 Garhwal Rifles and 4 Sikh). The section also glorifies late Brig SJS Bhonsale and Maj Kaustubh Rane for their inspiring achievements.

We hope this issue will be read keenly and widely by our readers and circulated to their personal and official contacts and groups. We invite maximum readers to support our MVI Website and VI magazine and wholeheartedly contribute their unique articles and stories.

For the year 2021 we invite maximum battle stories of the 1971 Indo Pak War, especially those that won battle honours and/ or theatre honours for units, besides individual stories of valour, glory, heroism and bravery that would inspire the new generation to think, speak, write and act positively for Victory India!

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

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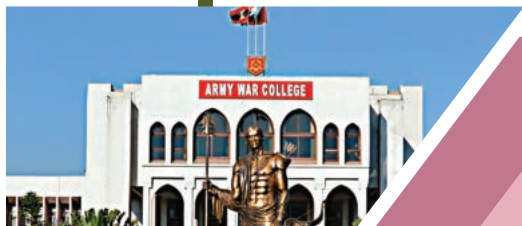
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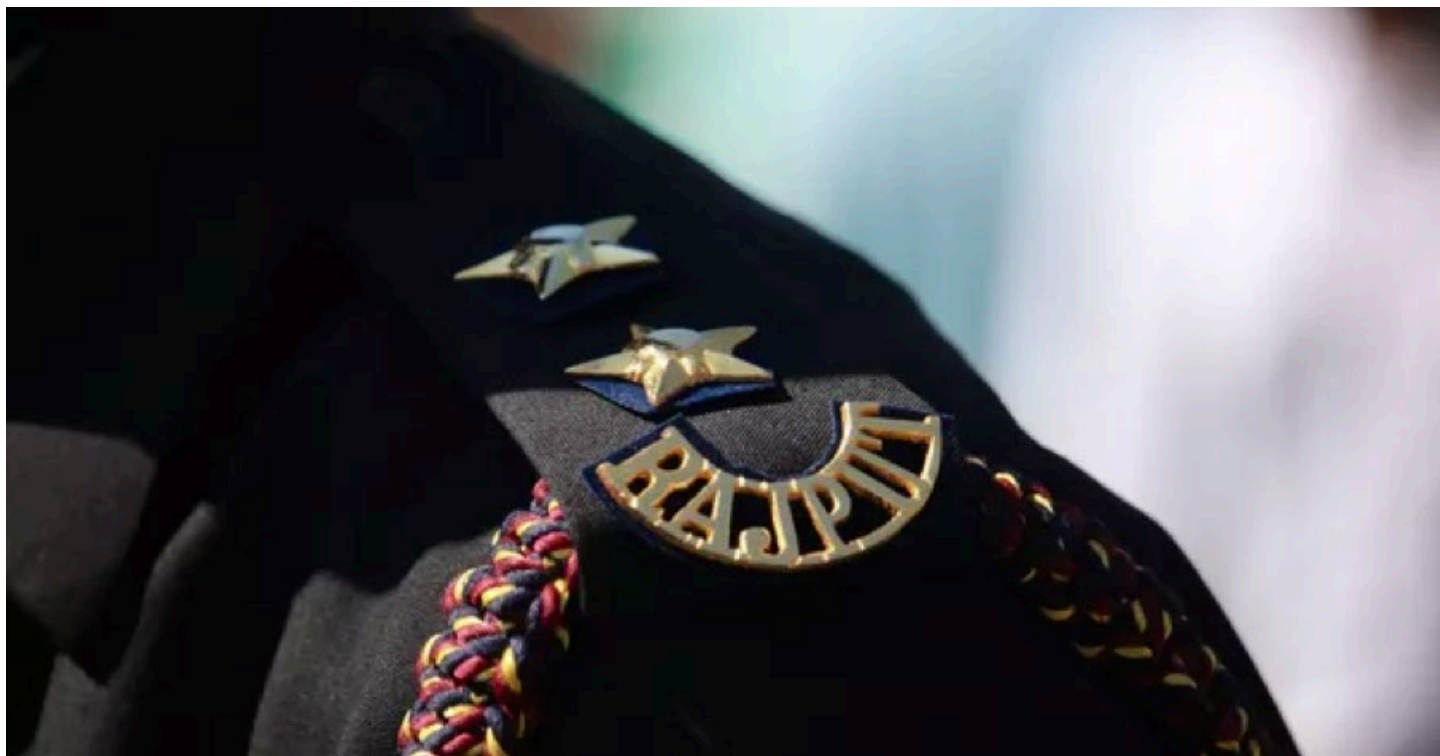
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The Indian Army's Officer Promotion Policy Needs Urgent Overhaul!

“There is something terribly wrong with our military leadership, and the political leadership would do well to put it right before India has another 1962.”

By Major General VK Madhok (Retd)

The promotion system of the Indian Army's elite Officer Corps awaits a radical reform. Rampant Corruption has gradually seeped into the higher echelons of a once near infallible institution. The past decade has been a witness to numerous cases of corruption at the highest offices of the Indian Army. In December 2009, four General rank officers were indicted in the 71-acre Sukna land scam. In 2012, the Adarsh Housing Scam and the Tatra Truck Scandal rocked the Indian Army to its core.

The grotesque killings by a rogue military intelligence unit between 2009-2012 highlighted the rot all the way up to the Army's highest office, bringing out some skeletons hiding in a former chief's closet. A case still being fought by a lone army officer who was made a scapegoat and decorated with a pile of trumped up charges for having had the audacity to speak out against the heinous crimes committed by this renegade group of intelligence operatives.

In 2018, a National Defence Academy (NDA) Commandant, a Lieutenant General rank officer, found himself in troubled waters during a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) enquiry concerning corruption. Another harrowing case saw a former Army Commander and Vice Chief of Army

Staff (VCOAS) under CBI investigation in Pune denied bail to go to Delhi.

In 2012, there was a mutiny in two combat units in Ladakh and at Samba in April and August respectively, where officers were beaten up. These are not mere anecdotes, but instances which highlight a deep rooted problem; there is something terribly wrong with our Military leadership, and the political leadership would do well to put it right before India has another 1962.

Dirty Fatigues

The questions which we must answer are: How did the Annual Confidential Report (ACR) system fail to detect character flaws in these officers during the 38-40 odd years of their service? Is the promotion system subjective and thus obsolete? How did these officers reach higher ranks? What major reforms are required to improve or replace the present promotion system?

The Defence Minister and his staff would do well to address these issues with promptitude before the situation degenerates further. As it is, corruption has become talk

of the media, society and even conversations within officer's messes. It is a situation with adverse effects on morale without which an Army will suffer defeat.

A "Major" Problem

The cornerstone of the existing promotion system is the ACR. Besides, promotion examinations from Lieutenant to Major, military awards, course reports, and commendation enhance individual prospects, while punishments and censures retard these. ACRs are reviewed by an officer's Reviewing Officer (RO) and Superior Reviewing Officer (SRO). Selection boards which meet periodically base their judgments entirely on ACRs.

Recommendations are then forwarded to the Ministry of Defence in respect of Colonel and above, for confirmation. The Military Secretary (MS) Branch handles all data, records, posts officers based on ACR recommendations, monitors and assists the promotion boards. It is of interest to note that nearly 80-90% officers are graded as above average by the Initiating Officers (IOs) as they don't want trouble in their units, or representations.

An officer is considered only thrice in a rank for promotion after which he may leave the Service if he/she so desires. No endorsement is conveyed to the officer by the RO or the SRO unless there are adverse remarks. The ACR form consists of approximately 10-12 qualities varying for those up to Col, Brigadier, Major General and Lt Gen. respectively.

Thus, the officer has to do well in these qualities many of which are outdated. If great Military commanders like Alexander the Great, General Montgomery, Gen Rommel, Babar, etc. were to be put through these qualities they would all end up as Majors!

Furthermore, Military Secy work is handled by amateurs! To put things into perspective, officers do a tenure of two-three years and civilians from 10-12 years or so. Thus we may have an MS heading this important branch for the first time and retiring at the end of his tenure in the MS Branch.

Yet Another Colonial Hangover...

Here is a system which was designed to suit the British Empire some time in the 1940s for Military leadership of a Colonial Army. It remains closed, while the environment has opened up.

Promotion and Selection systems must now meet five criteria: Ensure individual participation and avoid treating the officer as a hostage; have an appraisal channel for a positive and direct feed back to the officer regarding his contribution, weaknesses and strengths; be sufficiently open and decentralised, be fool-proof against meddling and have an independent adjudication authority for cases requiring redressal.

The first three essentials are missing in the present system and remaining two suspects. These are good enough reasons for complaints and court cases. With new work styles, availability of information and questioning of past values and procedures, an individual sees himself as a partner in his career development.

Why not? it is a legitimate aspiration. The Present system does not cater to this. The entire career planning of the officer is done by those sitting in the MS Branch. The system had its utility in a colonial set up but not in a democracy. Unless revitalized it would be totally obsolete as we move into the next decades of the 21st century.

A fresh concept based on the five criteria as aforementioned should be applied in three stages: That is, at the grassroots level-from recruitment to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Selection Boards from Lt Col. to Col. and Brig, and finally, Rejection Boards from Brig. to Maj/Lt Gen.

No officer should be superseded permanently. The ACR form should consist of just one page, both sides. An officer should write about his performance, his ambition and areas he would like to work, etc, on the first page. While the RO and SRO as Moderators should comment on the second page regarding officer's performance. Their endorsement, in full, should be communicated to the officer. A Career Advisory Cell in the MS Branch should be easily approachable to an officer for advice and consultation.



Indian Army's senior leadership with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during the Army Commanders Conference; File Photo

Looking for a 'Few Good Men'

At the first stage maximum screening should take place. No substandard candidate or cadet should be recruited or commissioned. The Services Selection Board's (SSB) criteria for selection needs a drastic upward revision as the standards of Junior Commissioned Officers (JCO) and Other Ranks (OR) have gone up. Standards must not be compromised to make up deficiencies.

A former Army Chief had once recommended dilution of Selection Board qualitative requirements to make up shortages. This is the worst possible thing which could happen. After commissioning, officers failing in promotion examinations with an additional Retention Examination (used



Troops from the British Indian Army; Archival Image

to be held earlier) should be issued Show Cause notices and called upon to resign after a number of specified chances.

The second stage of Selection/Promotion Boards is of crucial importance. It needs to be made sure that unsuitable officers do not reach senior ranks. At the third stage, that is, Brig to Maj Gen and Lt Gen, an Officer should be rejected only if he is found wanting in any of the three qualities: Moral turpitude, Cowardice in battle and Disloyalty to the state.

Otherwise he takes his turn for promotion except for those who are outstanding and should be promoted out of turn. This measure will cut out two major banes of the present system: A fear complex and sycophancy. While age and availability of vacancies will rationalize should any anomalies arise?

We are already living in an information-based society. Where people demand transparency and accountability. The concept suggested above is one option in line with this. It need not necessarily be the best one. Whatever system is adopted it should meet the five criteria. Armed forces are the mirror of a society.

In them, the Society sees the reflection and application of its highest principles. The Selection and Promotion systems must have the sanction of the Parliament so that it

becomes difficult for anyone to circumvent these by laying down Staff and Command Streams or meddling with the qualitative requirements for promotion.

There is a Mindset, to compare Army officers with civilian bureaucrats operating from air-conditioned offices. This is the greatest blunder we have committed, and the Defence Minister would need to correct this. A Military leader cannot lead his men without character (integrity, moral courage, fortitude, willpower, a sense of Justice and the art of command in warfare). Our recruitment system and training schedules would need to, I suggest, concentrate on this aspect so that only officers of character reach higher ranks. 🇮🇳

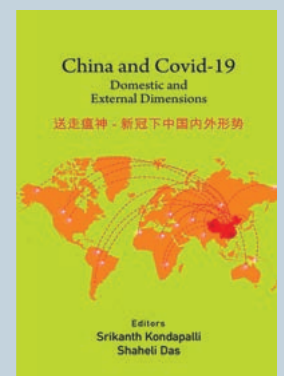
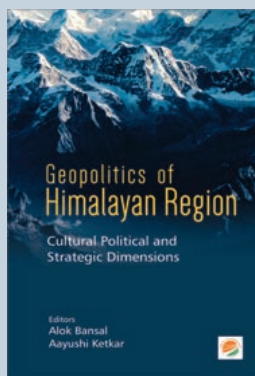
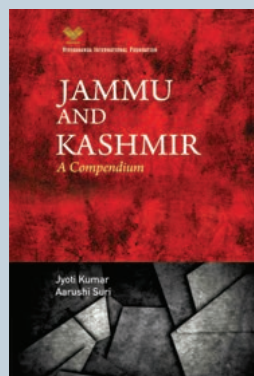
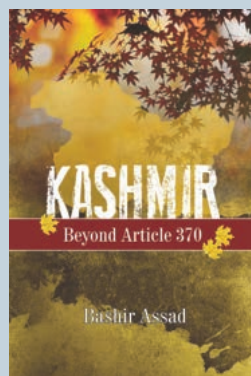
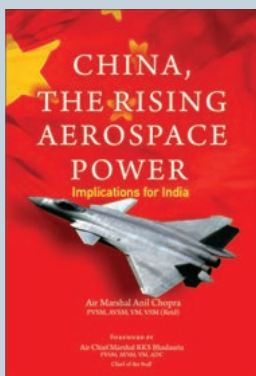
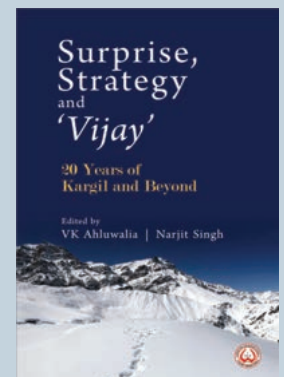
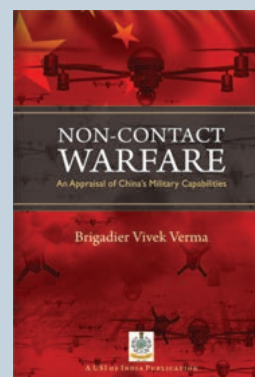
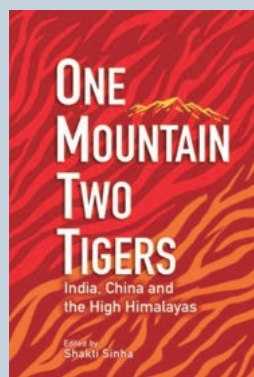
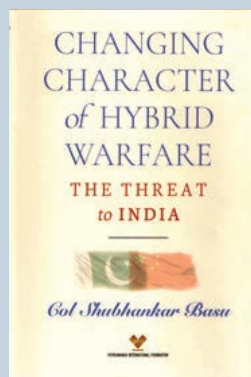
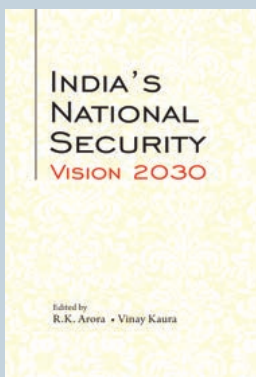
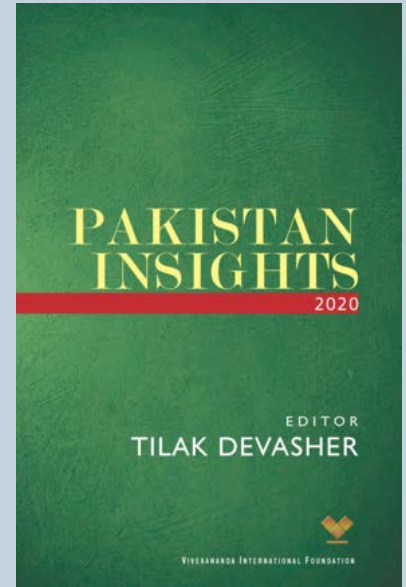
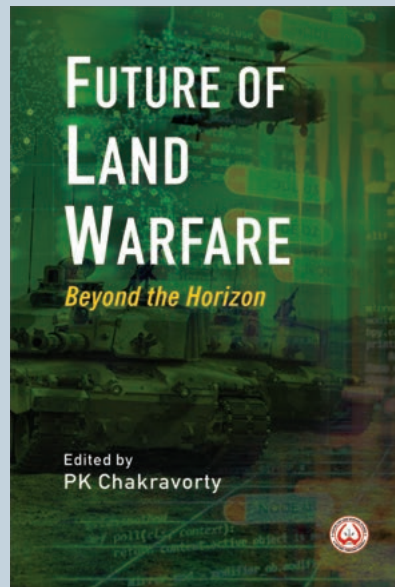
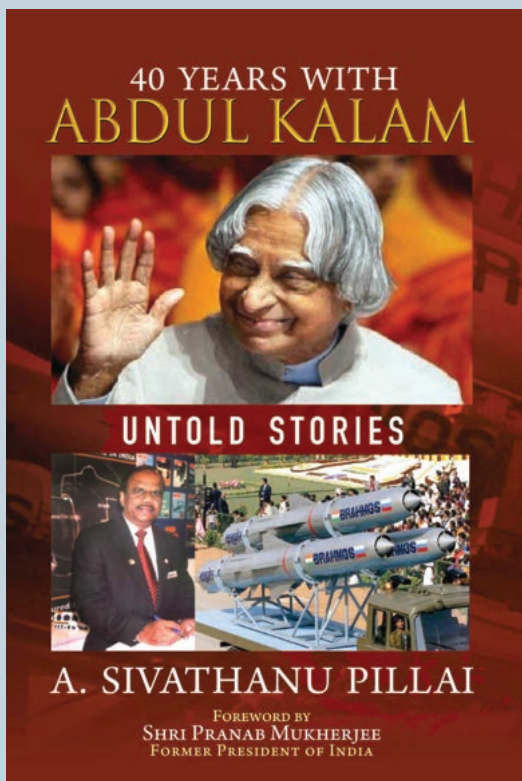


Major General VK Madhok (Retd)

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Guarding the Nations Frontiers: A Need to Revisit Border Security

“Keeping the current scenario in view, we need to carryout holistic review to embolden our border security.”

By Colonel Ramesh Davesar (Retd)

Guarding the Borders is a national Resolve of any sovereign State. It is part of overall mechanism - the “Border Management”, which implies, “the coordinated and concentrated action by Political Leadership by co-opting; administrative, diplomatic, security, intelligence, legal, ecological and the regulatory agencies to secure her Borders”.

Of these, maintaining the sanctity of borders is the prime mover and the main component of the overall National security. Accordingly, every country has worked out detailed procedures in guarding their Borders during peace time. But of late, the surge in global terrorism have made the peacetime Borders more vulnerable and, in few cases- perennially active.

We are no exception; in fact, we are worst affected. Keeping the current scenario in view, we need to carryout holistic review to embolden our border security.

Before proceeding further and to take this argument to logical conclusion, let us see the arrangements being followed by other Nations. Most countries have created specialised and dedicated Armed Bodies for security of Borders. For Example, Iran has Border Guard Command, Italy has Border Police Service, Russia has created Border Guard Service, whereas in US, it is under the Homeland Security.

Closer home; in China, it is the People's Armed Police guarding their Borders, while Pakistan has Frontier Corps for the Western Border and the Rangers looking after Indo-Pak Border. In Bangladesh, the Border

Guards Bangladesh are responsible for the security of their borders. Likewise, Canada, Vietnam, Australia, Indonesia and others, also have similar outfits for border security.

In addition, countries like Egypt, Iran, Italy, Pakistan (Western Border only), Vietnam and Indonesia; keeping in view the threat perception, have placed their Border Guarding Agencies under the command of Armed Forces (AFs). Here, two major deductions emerge, one; we need a single Agency for guarding our Borders, two; the threat perception should be the guiding Principle for deciding the overall Command and Control.

Now look at our arrangements, we share land borders with Pakistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar stretching approx.

15,106 Km; while Sri Lanka, Maldives, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Myanmar, and Indonesia are the Maritime neighbours. We have 7,683 Km of coastline and approx. 2 Million Sq Km of "Exclusive Economic Zone" (EEZ).

In addition, we have approx. 3,323 Km 'ALL WEATHER HOT'- Line of Control (LOC) with Pakistan, and further extends to rechristened stretch of 110 Km of the 'Actual Ground Position Line' (AGPL) dividing Siachen Glacier Region. Further East, we have 3,488 Km of recently flared up 'Line of Actual Control' (LAC) with China.

The cumulative manifestations of these factors make our task a unique and more complexed than other countries. It gets further accentuated as we have multiple Agencies from the Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) and the Para Military Force (PMF) sharing the responsibility.

We have the Border Security Force (BSF) looking after the International Border (IB) with Pakistan and Bangladesh, while the Army is deployed along the (LOC) and the AGPL. Guarding of LAC has been assigned to Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and Assam Rifles (AR).

The Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) is responsible for guarding Borders with Nepal and Bhutan. And finally, the AR is looking after our Border with Myanmar. In a nutshell, in addition to Army we have four Agencies guarding borders with six neighbours. Conversely, the maritime borders are guarded by a single Agency-The Coast Guard (CG). It goes without saying that such a composite arrangement has inherent and damaging incongruences.

Foremost, there is lack of coherent Policy, Planning and Conduct of guarding duties among various outfits. Similarly, the overall coordination gets drastically affected.

In addition, we are confronted with serious problems of cross border terrorism from Pakistan, terrorists' hide-outs across the border, drug peddling, infiltration and influx of refugees. Of late, changing or altering the status of

LAC by China has further threatened our National Security.

Not to be left behind, 'a bolt from the blue'! Nepal too has jumped in staking claims on our territory, thereby creating avoidable uneasiness along the otherwise age-old peaceful Border. Going by the frequent instances along the Western Border where our adversary often escalates violations by resorting to use of military resources have forced us to retaliate accordingly.

Similarly, the Chinese provocations along the LAC, including the Doklam and the ongoing standoff are deliberate military specific operations. All these lead to the conclusion that the peace time scenario is by and large militarised. Therefore, in order to ensure the security of our borders and to buttress the existing arrangements including the command and control must be reviewed.

Going back to aforesaid Deductions and keeping in view the regional security scenario, we need to draw algorithmic sequence. While the LOC and the AGPL should continue with the Army, we need to create a fully reorganised Armed Wing of PMF with the Charter of guarding the IB and the LAC, staffed by pooling and merging the manpower from the CAPF and the AR.

Further, in order to augment the battle efficiency, those Infantry Veterans meeting the age and medical profiles should also be enrolled. The proposed Outfit; let us Name it- National Border Guard (NBG), must be adequately

equipped to decisively retaliate the cross border armed transgressions and be able to stabilise the situation till the operations are taken over by Armed Forces.

In order to match fire power of our adversaries, it is strongly recommended to correspondingly arm the NBG.

Further, to ensure suitable armed response and effective coordination; like the Coast Guard, it should be placed under the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and operate under the overall command and control of the Army.

While the detailed modalities can be worked out subsequently, but depending upon the topographical considerations and impending threat, it should be divided into various Sectors. Taking cue from Assam Rifles, the officer Cadre should be drawn on deputation from Army.

Finally, a collateral spin-off! let us utilise this opportunity and prune the bulky CAPF into more cohesive, lean and efficient Police Force. While the ITBP and the SSB should be fully merged into the new Outfit, the BSF still has an important Role in the internal security duties, therefore, after shedding its share, the balance should be retained with original entity as before.

Similarly, the reorganised AR too should retain its remainder Role of Counter Insurgency operations and act as Reserve to the Army for conventional operations. 🇮🇳



Colonel Ramesh Davesar (Retd)

Col Ramesh Davesar, a Veteran infantryman, (Mahar Regiment) commissioned in Jan '69, has vast experience of 71 War, Counter Insurgency operations in North East, IPKF operations and commanded a Unit in the Valley during 91-92. He also served as the Col GS of an Infantry Division, Army Standing Establishment Committee at Army HQ, Col GS at CIJW School and Col Q of Sub Area. He can be reached on Email: ramesh-davesar@hotmail.com)



Read. Reflect. Repeat

Lack of reading in the new generation of officers is a serious malaise

By Ghazala Wahab

Nearly 12 years ago, when I first heard the refrain from a retired Indian Army lieutenant general that young officers do not read any longer, it was a lament. He rued the fact that the counter-insurgency operations — the endless and thankless low-level war (now referred to as no-war-no-peace) — leave young officers with no time to read even professional material, let alone literature. As a result, the overall intellect level of the officer class has progressively been on a decline.

But why a professional soldier would need to read literature, if not for mere pleasure, I wondered aloud.

It is true that reading literature is pure pleasure, he argued, but it also trains your intellect to absorb new ideas and concepts. It can also be inspiring, he said, adding that, he is not even expecting young officers who are overworked and hard-pressed for time to read fiction. “But at least they

should read professional literature and not take short-cuts by memorising the précis to clear various examinations,” he insisted.

Recently, at a public event, I heard a retired army commander talk about the lack of reading habit amongst the young in the uniform. There was no lament in his tone; there was a touch of pride, because he qualified the lack of reading as a new trend of the modern world where social media forums like twitter and Facebook are not mere sources of entertainment but news as well. This is what they read, and this is how they express themselves, he said.

Today, they have no time to write professional essays, as was required of them. But this does not mean that they are any less intelligent or smart than their predecessors, he claimed. What the older generation said in

their essays, the younger lot is saying in tweets, he said in all seriousness.

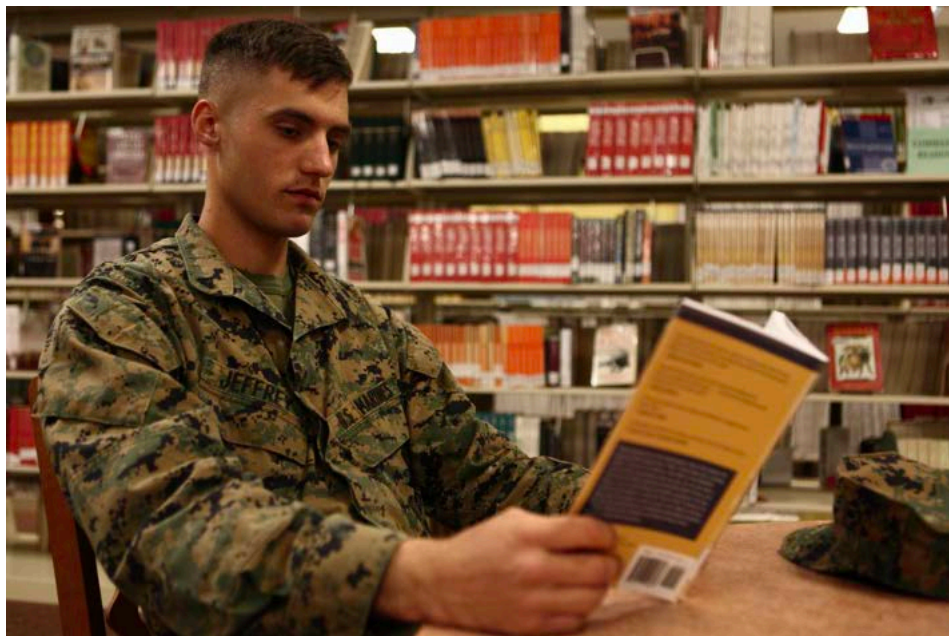
His final point was that the new crop of officers should not be judged by their poor command of the language, neither by the absence of grammar nor by spelling mistakes. They should be judged by their enthusiasm and initiative.

Safe to say, 12 years have had their impact. The fear of intellectual atrophy that haunted the old timer has come true. His successor, 12 years hence, not only rubbished the habit of reading, he also downplayed the importance of language. Clearly, for him too, the fountainhead of all wisdom was social media, where independent thinking, clarity of ideas, dispassionate assessment, language and spellings are slaughtered every minute at the twin altars of propaganda and herd mentality.

“

Nearly 12 years ago, when I first heard the refrain from a retired Indian Army lieutenant general that young officers do not read any longer, it was a lament. He rued the fact that the counter-insurgency operations — the endless and thankless low-level war — leave young officers with no time to read even professional material, let alone literature.

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A young US Marine reading a book from the Commandants reading list; File Photo

The 17th Century Irish writer, playwright and subsequently politician, Richard Steele is known to have written once that, 'Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body.' To this, I would add that language is the tool which facilitates reading and writing; and grammar a mechanism by which you express your ideas. All of these are the most basic necessities of civilised living.

If you don't have words at your command how are you going to say what you want to say? Complex ideas do not need complex words, but they certainly need a vocabulary without which the receiver of your ideas would be left struggling in the maze of incomprehensible sentences. And you would be left making excuses about being misunderstood!

Another great writer, this time a German and one of the earliest critics of Nazism, Heinrich Miller had said, 'A house without books is like a room without windows.' Without the windows, how would you know what is

happening outside? Whether there are friends or enemies outside, or whether your friends have been canoodling with your enemies. When you can't see for yourself, you will have no choice but to believe what you are told.



Ghazala Wahab

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Military fraternity. Views expressed are the authors own and do not reflect the editorial policy of MVI

The importance of reading, thereafter, reflecting and finally, writing, especially for the military officers can never be overemphasised. More than any time in the past, today there is a need for military officers to be well read, so that they are able to understand better, assess fairly, advice sensibly and are able to take far-reaching judgement calls. Reading is a habit that grows on you gradually, one book at a time.

If you don't read when you are a junior officer, you will not understand when you become a senior officer. And you will continue to repeat what you learnt from your superiors without questioning its efficacy. You will remain stuck in theories of the past, as your intellect will neither be able to absorb nor process new ideas.

It is not about literature alone. Once the mind is made supple by continuous and varied reading, it is able to connect what it has read with the events around. Prescience is not a supernatural trait. It is the ability to take a broad overview of the past to put your present in a context, so that you can understand how events are likely to unfold in the future. Isn't this ability essential for all military leaders? Where will this ability come from if not cultivated early on?

Military power is one of the prongs of national power. By celebrating the age of illiteracy amongst military leaders we are ensuring that as a nation we continue to hobble on borrowed wisdom. 🇮🇳



Of Pliable Generals: Splitting the Anatomy of Military Corruption

“The seeds of pliable military leadership were sown when the ‘Jeep scandal’ took place in the 1948. This scam, by the turn of the 21st century, had snowballed into multiple scams, involving many defence deals in which senior officers were involved.”

By Colonel Rajinder Singh Kushwaha (Retd)

The journey of the Indian Army’s pliable leadership was not in isolation and not of recent origin either. It came in hordes and with regular periodicity. The seeds of pliable military leadership were sown when the ‘Jeep scandal’ took place in the 1954. This scandal, by the turn of the 21st century, had snowballed into multiple scams, involving many defence deals in which senior officers were involved.

To cite, one such case is of the HDW Submarine deal of 1980. This deal was finalised by the SS Sidhu Committee (additional secretary in the Ministry of Defence). It had two seniors serving defence officers.

There was a Lieutenant General SG Payara and a Vice Admiral MR Schunkar, who were members. In

the AgustaWestland Helicopter case, around seven-eight years ago, the name of Air Chief Marshal SP Tyagi had figured.

The list is long and has slowly caused a moral degradation in the higher echelons of the armed forces from 1954 onwards. Personal agendas superseded organisational interests, whether it was General KS Thimmaiyya, Gen. PN Thapar or even JN Chaudhary, and it was across the Tri-services.

A few years ago, a naval senior commander was honey-trapped in Russia. An Air Chief Marshal was allegedly involved in the Augusta Westland Helicopter scandal.

The issue of moral bankruptcy in the armed forces came to head when Chief

of Army Staff, General VK Singh alleged that a retired Lt Gen had offered him a 14 Crore bribe for approving a tranche of sub-standard Tatra trucks. The said Lt Gen had been Director General Military Intelligence (DGMI).

It was revealed that already some 7,000 such vehicles had been purchased in the past at a whopping sum of 1 Crore each while the market price was 40 Lakhs each.

A few years ago, an army commander had made accusations against his Army Chief for some serious irregularities, who had preceded the complainant as Army Commander. However, the matter was suppressed, and the complainant was shifted to a nondescript Army Command.

As a compensation for his silence, the complaining army commander was made a member of the Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT) after retirement. Silence has its own reward, and they are handsome too. Who cares for moralities in today's officer cadre?

It may be noted that the said Army Chief's name had figured in Adarsh Housing Society (Mumbai) scam as well. It was during his tenure only that his military secretary (a Lt Gen) and a Corps Commander (another Lt Gen) were involved in the Sukhna Land scam.

He got himself declared as a Low Medical Category (LMC) for hearing impairment, just a few weeks before he retired. He is not alone in such incidents. There are a plethora of senior officers who follow such unethical practices.

The Tehelka Expose, dubbed Operation West End was the mirror which gave some glimpses of rot in the army, particularly our Generalship and it has trickled down to lowest rung. If Generals do this, can the rest of the rank and file be left far behind?

Newspaper reports on May 21, 2020, gave out a case of forgery by 9 JCOs and Jawans in a Unit CSD of a Medium Artillery regiment of a Tibri Cantonment. Amongst them, they cheated the unit of 90 Lakhs over two years between 2016-18.

It shows as to how deep rooted the moral degradation was in the armed forces, and one could be suspect that they could not do so without the connivance of some officers. If a Court of Inquiry is conducted properly, officers' names would tumble out.

Do not forget as the children learn watching their parents, so do the men in the armed forces by watching their officers, and officers learn from the Generals. It is a trickle-down effect. But to say that it was a recent ailment would be unjustifiable. It is deep rooted since the days of the Jeep scandal of 1954. This is why the above quote, by Evelyn Gennie, becomes very important.

Introspection and review of history is often unkind to great names and their legends. When the facts ooze out of the cupboards, the hidden skeletons fall on the ground. The myth of their greatness is torn apart. Hither to fore known heroes, look like zeroes. It might be harsh to expose the legends and iconic figures but unless it is done the wrong will not be corrected. Indians are very slow to learn from history.

I am reading Jai Ram Ramesh's book on Krishan Menon, 'A chequered Brilliance — Many lives of VK Krishna Menon'. Pages 503 to 510 are remarkably interesting, as it lays bare the intrigues of our Generals of the time. It exposes many big names of military leadership of the 1950s and 60s, who were worse than the ordinary officers.



Corruption has seeped into the highest echelons of the military; Graphical Representation

It was these scheming and sleeping generals who led Indian army to the 1962 debacle.

It is unfair to only blame VK Krishna Menon for the 1962 debacle, when his own army chief was plotting against him. Yes, it was General KS Thimmaiyya, who had direct access to the Prime Minister, Jawahar Lal Nehru. Going over the head of his Defence Minister.

He had exploited his direct connection to make complaints against VK Krishna Menon. When the Defence minister came to know that he was being short circuited by General KS

Thimmaiyya, he turned against the General

His links with Jawaharlal Nehru have been brought out earlier in Jai Ram Ramesh's book 'A Chequered Brilliance: The Many Lives of V.K. Krishna Menon', when as a third Junior most in army hierarchy, Nehru began cultivating him. His widowed sister was employed by Nehru in his own office. In 1956, he accompanied the Prime Minister for a retreat in the Kaziranga wildlife sanctuary.

Also, Gen Thimmaiyya was made the Chief of the Army by superseding two senior Generals to him. One was Lt Gen Sant Sint Singh Pantal and the other was Gen Kalwant Singh. Both were equally competent but

Thimmaiyya's proximity to Nehru went in his favour.

Krishna Menon and Gen Thimmaiyya's animosity comes out very clearly in Jai Ram Ramesh's book. Going behind the back of his Defence Minister, Gen Thimmaiyya gave an interview to ambassador of the United Kingdom, Malcolm McDonald in October 1959.

He alleged in his talk with the ambassador that VK Krishna Menon was planning a coup against the Prime Minister with the help of the army. Jai Ram Ramesh observes that had it come to the knowledge of the Prime

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The list is long and has slowly caused a moral degradation in the higher echelons of the armed forces from 1954 onwards.

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Minister and Defence Minister, Gen KS Thimmaiyya would have been sacked unceremoniously.

This was a very shocking allegation made by Malcolm McDonald in a secret cable to the UK Government. The fear of an army coup, since then, has been always haunting the political leadership of the country. No wonder the post of Chief of Defence Staff was kept hanging fire for 60 years, and even now the post created is toothless and lifeless.

It is this fear which led political leadership to create a counter weight to the army in the form of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF), such as the Indo Tibetan Border Police, Border Security Force and the Shasasthra Seema Bal under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Thus, national security was bisected into internal and external security. The result of this is what one sees on activities of these police forces on the borders/Line of Actual Control. Smuggling and terrorist infiltration is rampant. Chinese intrusion in Eastern Ladakh in May/June 2020 owes itself to inactive ITBP.

Coming back to Thimmaiyya and Krishna Menon slanging conflict, it led to affect the junior Generalship. VK Krishnamenon started cultivating Generals junior to Thimmaiyya. The two prominent names were Lt Gen PN Thapar and Major General BM Kaul. Both were sent home unceremoniously after the 1962 war.

BM Kaul was an Army Service Corps officer, and he had no operational record. He was posted at Ambala and was made incharge of 'Project Amar', which was the construction of married accommodation at Ambala station. He

did this job in the shortest possible time.

Prime Minister Nehru, along with Defence Minister Krishna Menon inaugurated the completion of the project. He was promoted and posted at Army HQ — later he was posted as Corps Commander of Newly raised 4 Corps HQ at Tezpur. Unfortunately, he fell sick and was evacuated to Delhi during Chinese attack.

He continued to command from his hospital bed. However, the total

Minister and Defence Minister overruled the President's approval.

Gen PN Thapar, on being prompted by Krishna Menon, had made certain allegations against Generals Thimmaiyya and SP Thorat — his immediate superiors. Though nothing came out of this, Lt Gen SP Thorat became a victim.

It is said that PN Thapar was not only close to Defence Minister Krishna Menon but he had an oblique relationship with Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru. Gen PN Thapar was married to the sister of Gautam Sehgal, who in turn was married to the daughter of Vijay Lakshmi pandit and everyone knows that Vijay Laxmi pandit was Jawahar Lal Nehru's sister.

It is said though he had advised against the 'Evict The Chinese' order of the Government but he was not strong enough to forcefully impress



The Jeep scandal was the first to rock independent India; Archival Image

route of the army led to Lt Gen SHFJ Manekshaw to replace him.

As for Gen PN Thapar's case, he superseded Lt Gen SP Thorat to become the Army Chief. It is said that General Thimmaiyya had recommended the name of Lt Gen SP Thorat as his successor.

He made this recommendation not to the PM or RM but the Supreme Commander, President of India, who had accepted it. But the Prime

Minister upon them. Thus, he paid for his lack of courage of convictions in 1962.

The person who replaced Gen PN Thapar was Gen JN Chaudhary. As a Lt Gen, he wrote for The Statesman of Calcutta, under a pseudonym, whereas the Army Act and army rules prohibit such communications with the Press or civilians.

Jai Ram Ramesh reveals in his book that it was he who clandestinely broke the news of resignation of Gen KS

Thimmaiyya, which led to a political storm and Nehru had to face an angry parliament.

What moral authority could he enjoy over his subordinates when he himself was violating laws. No wonder he had chickened out in the 1965 war with Pakistan.

In the face of Pakistan's armoured offensive opposite the Amritsar sector, he asked Western Army Commander, Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh to fall back to the River Bess Line. Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh refused to obey and saved the day for India and Bhikhiwind became the graveyard of Pakistani Patton Tanks.

This kind of Generalship carries on. Someone had rightly observed that competence alone is not enough to become a General or the Army Chief, one has to be pliable too.

For some years now, a false narrative on modern war has been the favourite of the Indian Government. It was being peddled around that owing to nuclear weapons, modern war will be limited to insurgency and low intensity conflict.

Therefore, Indian Government built up a narrative to neglect the defence needs. There are no doubts that the Government had the nod coming for this narrative from its army.

Thank god the Chinese action in Eastern Ladakh in June 2020 has falsified this narrative of the Government and its advisors within and outside the uniform. In its bid to meet Chinese threat, the Defence Minister rushed to Russia to buy weapons and ammunition. India requested USA for latest drones and missiles; urged France for expediting delivery of Rafale fighter Aircrafts.

It had happened in 1962 too. And the lesson was never learnt which is: When a nation has pliable Generals, national security is definitely endangered.

China gave us a wakeup call in 1962 and it has done it again in 2020. Would India have a Genal like Douglas MacArthur, who in 1931



Defence Minister VK Krishna Menon with top Generals of the era; Archival Image

had requested President Franklin Roosevelt not to go ahead with a cut in the defence budget.

When the president refused to do so. General McArthur walked out of the office, turned back and said, "Mr President! When in the next war, an American soldier lay prostrate with an enemy bayonet in his abdomen and he spelt out his last curse, I do not want the name to be Mc Arthur but Roosevelt". No gainsaying the fact that President Roosevelt rescinded his order.

Perhaps Field Marshal SHFJ Manekshaw came closest to General Douglas Mc Arthur. But he was disgraced by the politicians and army after the BanglaDesh war. It is "Sad" that his entry was banned, for some time, in army officers' messes.

There were others too, like Lt Gen Nathu Singh Rathore, who refused

to become Chief over the head of KM Cariappa. Unfortunately, he was made to retire by giving a three-month extension to Gen Rajendrasinhji. It is obvious that a constant fear of a military coup guides bureaucracy and politicians to pick up a weak and a pliable General as a Chief.

National Security is never a concern and the nation pays for it when bureaucrats and police officers head the National Security apparatus. Is it because of the known incompetence of the Generals. Obviously, because everyone knows how political connections play their role.

Who does not know amongst the bureaucrats and politicians as to how these Generals have risen to these positions? Recent upward move of some Generals shows that only pliable ones with political connections have made the cut. 🇮🇳



Colonel Rajinder Singh Kushwaha (Retd)

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He is a renowned author, and a highly respected defence & national security expert and a regular contributor at the 'Fauji India' magazine, 'Defence and Security Alert' (DSA), the 'Indian Defence Review' (IDR) among others. You can reach him on Twitter: @RajeeKushwaha, Email ID: rajee749@yahoo.com



The Continental Versus Maritime Debate

“A researcher from Carnegie India feels that the Indian Army’s prevailing doctrine leaves the military with two main choices: do nothing or risk wars it cannot win.”

By Lieutenant General PR Shankar (Retd)

Views on Indian Strategy: Many feel that India’s Military doctrine is outdated, orthodox and too continentally oriented and neglects the maritime domain. To quote some views. One researcher from Carnegie India feels that The Indian Army’s prevailing doctrine leaves the military with two main choices: do nothing or risk wars it cannot win.

The Indian Army needs to rethink its use of force to meet today’s new challenges. Ah ha! Are there any challenges beyond China and Pakistan for India? Another researcher from JNU says India’s obsession with continental strategies has yielded unflattering results — no secure borders or deterrence stability. Therefore, it is high time New Delhi shifted its almost exclusive focus from the continental space to the maritime space, stitching together a maritime grand strategy.

Wow! What is this maritime grand strategy to secure our land borders? Yet another feels that India’s strategic challenges in the near future will be naval, not continental. Really? The PLA is sitting on our head! He goes on to say that traditionally, the Indian Navy has been the neglected branch of the armed forces. Big words.

Perspectives on Wars and Strategies: Let us put strategy and war fighting in perspective. The strategic and military record of USA and China are unflattering. Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq are examples of US losses despite being the greatest military on earth. China, ah China! The superpower aspirant all set to have the greatest military. Its only notable military victory since 1962, has been sinking a Vietnamese fishing boat in South China Sea.

On the other hand, the orthodox, outdated and poorly equipped Indian Armed Forces, have been on the winning side of all conflicts barring 1962. Pakistan has been defeated through 1947, 1965, 1971 and Kargil at a time and place of its choosing. China has been tapped hard on the beak in 1967, Doklam and Eastern Ladakh. The much-flaunted PLA strength is deficit on ground.

Chinese multi domain war endeavours have been countered more than adequately. What more does a country require from its Armed Forces or its polity? Surely it must do something with strategy. Not convinced? Let us discuss further.

Threats India Faces: Every country organises its Armed Forces based on perceived threats. Despite being in an era of multidomain wars, let us recapitulate our threats simplistically.

Our land borders of nearly 3,500 km with China and over 3,000 km with Pakistan are largely disputed and partly occupied illegally. Further, China covets Eastern Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh and Pakistan wants Kashmir. Both are nuclear nations.

We have had to defend ourselves repeatedly against their aggression and assertion. They constantly pose individual and collusive threats - conventional and unconventional. These threats come directly and indirectly through other countries and are increasing by the day. Our border areas and states remain/kept unstable. Any weakening on land borders means high likelihood of loss of territorial integrity of the nation and an unacceptable threat to our people.

Even a loss of a few km of frigid uninhabited land on Pangong Tso is not acceptable to the nation. Furthermore, the LAC threatens to present us with a LOC situation. How do we ignore that hard reality? Both adversaries possess nuclear arsenals which can target the entire Indian landmass. The strategic threat is buttressed by space-based assets. If we did not have a second-strike capability, then their first strike is a Damocles sword over our heads.

Asymmetric threats to India have been multiple, manifold, constant and lethal - cyber-attacks, three warfare strategy, terrorism, digital and info domination, influence ops, cartographic aggression, economic dependency, political subversion, and diplomatic hounding.

Asymmetry is also built through the 'String of Pearls' in our neighbourhood. The air threat is not a stand-alone threat but accompanies a continental, maritime or a strategic threat. The maritime threat is essentially four-fold. Threat to our mainland, island territories, SLOCs and offshore assets.

Of these, our SLOCs can be interfered with to a limited extent and there is some threat to our island territories. Overall, the continental land-based threat from Pakistan and China is of highest priority to our national integrity and security. Hence India must pay more attention to its continental domain. However, it does not mean

the maritime domain needs to be neglected.

Thoughts on Maritime Domain: If India is to grow as a regional or global power, we must dominate the seas. On that there is no doubt. We can do that by playing the maritime policeman's role and by denying access to those inimical to us in our seas of interest - Bay of Bengal, Arabian Sea and part of Indian Ocean which extends from the Persian Gulf to the Malacca Straits. If we can do that, we are largely secure. To a large extent we can. In fact, beyond that, we are prepared to even defend our assets since 2012 as per our then CNS.

The problem arises when we think beyond this. We are then leaving the

does. However, when FONOPs have not deterred China from building and manning islands in South China Sea why will it deter China from being aggressive on the LAC?

Also, in the present situation, China has continued to be aggressive across the LAC despite being engaged in the South China Sea by USA. In fact, it is even planning to attack Taiwan.

Maritime Strategy Outline: So, what should our maritime strategy be? India should be the dominant maritime power in its security environment from the Persian Gulf to the Malacca Straits. There is no doubt in that. Are we in that league? Partly. However, we can definitely do better. Does China threaten us in the IOR?



Indian Army soldiers during a land warfare exercise; File Photo

security of the firm base of the Indian mainland and the seas we are familiar with to do the 'Enter the Dragon' act in the South China Sea. The logic of sticking our neck out into the South China Sea to fight someone else's battles without adequate resources or a base needs a visit to a psychiatrist. Do not forget, that more than half the ASEAN is in China's pocket and they are very sensitive to ASEAN centrality.

Why would anyone allow us to operate in disputed seas to antagonise China? Even if we did so, what would we achieve with our meagre resources that USA with its three carrier groups has not been able to achieve? At best we may carry out FONOPs, like USA

Not yet. However, there is a Sino-Indian competition for dominance of the IOR. China wants to get into the IOR.

It does not have the reach as yet. Despite everything, the bulk of Chinese Navy has not left the South China Sea, East China Sea or Yellow Sea. It has remained within the safety envelope of the Chinese mainland. Are the Chinese preparing to enter the IOR. Oh sure. If they want to be a world power they have to. So, we should do something which makes the IOR our fortress.

That has two components. One, we need to get hold of our neighbourhood - Bangladesh, Myanmar,



The LAC threatens to present us with a LOC situation. How do we ignore that hard reality? Both adversaries possess nuclear arsenals which can target the entire Indian landmass.



Srilanka, and Maldives. We are slipping there badly. We need to do more there to deny PLAN from developing bases in these countries. Two, Indian Navy must be enabled to deny the IOR to China or any other adversary when needed. That means capability building. Let us discuss that.

Choices: We have three choices. Increase our surface fleet including a third aircraft carrier. Increase our sub surface fleet. Strengthen our Island territories. In any option, increasing our maritime domain awareness is a given. Any sensible person will opt for a balanced option and I will agree with him. There is a lot of discussion about the third aircraft carrier.

As an Indian I would love to have that. However, its practicability needs to be thought through. After all it is not a matter of just building a ship but also equipping it. When we do not have enough aircraft for the IAF where will we get them for the third aircraft carrier? I wonder if we can get hold of enough aircraft for even the two aircraft carriers we are shortly going to have.

Also, I wonder if we have fully strengthened our Island territories. Well-developed islands in the IOR can be punitive pivots around which the IN, IAF and IA can manoeuvre. Further has enough discussion and analysis been carried out to take a call on the right mix between surface and subsurface combatants? I think it needs a joint thought and not a single service thought. The DMA must pitch in. A national consensus and clarity must emerge with due diligence and thought.

A Continental Thought: There is an old-fashioned continental thought of mine for consideration by vastly modern maritime enthusiasts. Our orthodox Army has by now tied down at least four to six PLA divisions

with a whole lot of other combat power in Eastern Ladakh.

Add other PLA forces which are on alert in the Central and Eastern Sectors. Add Chinese obsession with Taiwan. Add other border requirements. Add requirements to keep the CCP in power. Add the new rubric of QUAD. Suddenly one will find that Chinese force dynamics will change. Factor in the one child policy, conscription, inexperience, and untested weapons. My guess is that PLA has been shorted.

Mark my words. Do an old-fashioned appreciation called 'Troops to Task'. It will emerge that PLAN has a very long way to go before it becomes expeditionary. A correct joint assessment is on the cards. If the LAC degenerates into a LOC situation, the Chinese apple cart will be fully upset. Whether they like it or not, they will start looking at their own continental vs maritime theories afresh. Unless of course they want to lose Tibet and Xinjiang through asymmetry by sailing into the IOR.

Economic Impact: A major factor in all prescriptions is economic clout. We can think of achieving maritime glory when we have pockets deep enough. When we get to being a 5 Tn USD economy we can start dreaming to look over the horizon. Presently,

our condition permits us only to consolidate. Modernisation in contracting budgets will be a difficult option.

Force expansion in such conditions is La La land. Very importantly we must maintain balance. Fiscal and Physical. We need to be strong enough to deter China and Pakistan from undertaking any further adventures. That kind of deterrence comes through sustained progress in all five main domains – continental, areal, maritime, strategic and asymmetric. We also need to invest more in our joint ISR capabilities on a national scale.

The other way of deterring our adversaries is to get into an alliance or an arrangement like the QUAD to contain China in the Indo Pacific construct. Here exercises like Malabar have great value to develop operational synergy. Even in this scenario we must take a holistic view. We can never forget that there is an 'Indo' part of the Indo Pacific.

Indian Interests and Strategy: At the end of the day we need to cater for Indian interests through Indian strategies in response to Indian threats under Indian conditions obtaining on ground. We must think through them.

Our weakness lies in the inability of our Defence and Security system to work seamlessly, lacking joint structures, inter-ministerial gaps, inability to equip our armed forces and lack of a strategic political culture. We need to strengthen those within democratic norms without aping autocracies or falling prey to wishful thinking. We need a balanced approach which is best for India. 🇮🇳



Lieutenant General PR Shankar

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Views expressed are the authors own, and do not reflect the editorial policy of 'Mission Victory India'

Book Review: The-Be-Know-Do of Generalship

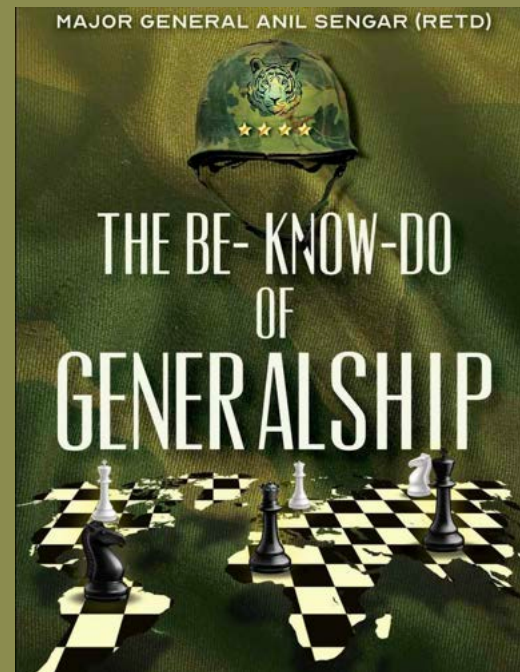
Author: Major General Anil Sengar (Retd)

Publisher: Notion Press

Available on: [Amazon.in](https://www.amazon.in)

Book Review by Colonel Regi Koduvath (Retd)

“A must read for all officers of the Indian Army!”



A well written book - it takes a lot of courage to come out with the truth - and the author has successfully done it. One could feel the conviction in the writing - not like the utterances of most veteran generals of today - as if the problems did not exist during their times. My heartfelt compliments to the author. I have neither served with the author nor interacted with him before and I consider it as my misfortune.

The language is simple and easy flowing. The book contains worthwhile anecdotes and quotes, mostly from American and German Army and a few anecdotes about Sam Manekshaw.

Our Generals were Colonels and Commanding Officers before becoming a General. The last place where one is in direct command of soldiers is as a Commanding Officer.

In the book, the word 'General' is replaced by 'Colonel' and if it is read by Lieutenant Colonels before being promoted to be a Commanding Officer, it is sure to help them. The contents are least likely to be of any value to the Generals as most may not accept what is written and their minds are already 'hardwired.' A Colonel's mind can still be influenced.

The chapters 1 to 3 speak about listening skills in detail, but hardly about reading - 'The Generals who command against me will never read it and the young men who read it will never command.'

The Conference syndrome begins at Battalion/Regiment levels. If a Commanding Officer needs to hold a conference, I feel there is something wrong with him - he surely does not know his job and is not clear about the way the task is to be executed. It is more for finger pointing and to save his ass. Conferences must be avoided at all costs and must be held only if inescapable.

The author speaks of thirty percent of Infantry Brigadiers being incompetent - thanks to the pro-rata system - in fact only 30 percent are fit.

Lack of moral courage is surely the cause of downfall of many Generals of the Indian Army and it did not happen because they got promoted beyond a Colonel, it was inherent in them during the Academy days itself. Moral values and the lack of it begin to be expressed in command - from battery/company/squadron commander days.

It is high time the Indian Army goes in for an objective performance assessment of officers and it got to begin with the Commanding Officers. Peer evaluation by officers and Junior Commissioned Officers - selected at random, maintaining confidentiality - as suggested by the author will prove credible in the long run - though there may be a few aberrations, but would end more objective and accurately than the present appraisal system. A must read for all officers of the Indian Army.



Generals & Generalship: On Quality Military Leadership

The debate is about the steady deterioration that has taken place in the quality of our military leadership especially at the apex and critical levels of Generals, Admirals and Air Marshals where it should be the best possible.

By Colonel Vinay B Dalvi (Retd)

A well-intentioned recent article (dated 5 June 2019) by senior Veteran Lieutenant General PR Shankar (Retd) titled 'Generally on Generals' has been appreciated by many Veterans as most of the points highlighted by the author are true. However, there is also a counterview to the article, not so much against the points raised and articulated, but mainly against the author and the very idea/intention/ethos of writing the article (as a retired General).

It is often seen that several writers, readers, or respondents question the very purpose of some Veterans writing articles on multifarious issues concerning the Armed Forces and national security. The argument or justification is not against the points raised and articulated and elaborated in the article but mainly against the fact that

the author is a retired officer and a Veteran.

In case the author is a 'General', the opposition is more to his writing as a retired General and not the points written by him. The argument/points mostly raised against the unfortunate/targeted 'General' is that he should have raised the points in the article/s while he was in service and not post retirement!

I honestly feel that we Veterans, especially our learned, experienced and highly articulate high ranking Generals/Admirals/Air Marshals, must often write their views on any and all multifarious issues concerning the wellbeing of our armed forces and the nation. Their articles and learned views collectively help, enable, and facilitate projection of multifarious learned/experienced views leading to

a clear conclusion and even consensus on most subjects.

These collective views of Veterans often project to the serving fraternity and the political hierarchy, including the bureaucracy, all the rich wealth of knowledge, expertise, experience and recommendations that the Veterans (especially Generals) make to all concerned through their excellent analysis and articulation. It needs to be appreciated that while in service we are bound by several pulls, pressures, restraints due to binding rules and regulations besides constraints of time and favourable inclination.

However, post retirement all the direct and indirect embargoes are lifted, and the Veteran (now out of uniform) is no longer bound or restrained to say and write what he now honestly and truthfully feels. Besides this, the

Veteran has ample time to not only reflect and retrospect but introspect too on several issues which was impossible during service. The net result is generally well-intentioned responses, articles, papers, letters, essays and even books for the good of the organisation with little self-interest and mostly pure selflessness!

There is an imperative need to support and encourage all Veterans, especially senior ranking Generals with

vast knowledge and experience to write and articulate their views on various subjects to benefit the serving fraternity and political hierarchy who are always short of time to review, reflect, retrospect, let alone introspect!

Second point of the debate is about the steady deterioration that has taken place in the quality of our military leadership especially at the apex and critical levels of Generals, Admirals and Air Marshals where it should be

the best possible. Some of the reasons for this fall in standards have been well articulated by General Shankar with the way forward.

Do you agree with General Shankar and his analysis? What are your views or analysis on this vital subject? How should the critical issues be resolved /addressed to improve the quality of our military leadership, especially at the apex level of Generals, Admirals and Air Marshals?



Responses by Veterans



Lt Gen Harbhajan Singh (Retd), ex-Signals Officer in Chief (1st Course JSW/NDA)



Generals do not drop from the sky or are parachuted in (like some political candidates for elections). Their character, sense of self discipline, camaraderie, dealing with seniors and juniors, leadership qualities start building up right from the time they join as cadets and training in NDA etc.

A critical phase in an officer's life and career is the first unit/ship/squadron any officer joins. If he joins a professional outfit with a good commanding officer, he will never forget his grooming and qualities he imbibed as a young officer. However, quite a few join units where drinking, playing cards, seniors flouting laid down norms, such officers are not likely to become good senior officers.

So, any debate on generals must start from the time when they were cadets. I would even go to the extent that the family background of generals who become prey to corruption etc. must also be examined. Regimental loyalties taken too far also result in undeserving officers becoming generals. Even some of our iconic Chiefs and Army Commanders are guilty of promoting and protecting undeserving regimental officers.

It is easy to say that officers' seniority should be fixed mid-way or so in their careers. What criteria are we going to use and who are going to decide revised seniority! I bet such norms will be changed/ revised to suit certain blue-eyed officers. A re-look could be taken on inter-se seniority when officers try for and go to DSSC. Here again, some officers are deployed in operational areas and will not have facilities to study for the entrance exam. It is not an easy matter to decide on re-fixation of seniority.



Lt Gen Ashok Joshi (Retd), ex-DGMT



Growth in professional and personal domains can only be achieved by well-directed effort by individuals. This is so in every profession. But what sets the Armed Forces apart is total inability of individuals or even nations to clearly foresee the nature of warfare that would prevail when the conflagration takes place.

The Great War was a very fine example of this phenomenon. WWII was a mere follow up – or part II after an interregnum of about 20 years. But since then, technology seems to have assumed more

importance than at any other time in the past. The nation that always keeps ahead in this field will have a major advantage.

At the other end of the spectrum is the capacity to field motivated manpower-boots on ground, and that is something that has never changed, and is unlikely to change ever. 'Computer-mouse-warriors' who operate drones can do a lot but not everything. Good generalship, I suppose, will call for the creation of the winning combination.



Maj Gen Anil Sengar (Retd), ex-GOC Inf Div, ADG MF & Author



First, it is a valid question to ask, what did he do when he was in service? There lies the answer to the problem of Generalship in our army. The biggest asset of a General is his moral courage and conviction to stand up for what is right in the interest of the organization and its people.

It is understood that there are various kinds of pressures and constraints when one is in service. But isn't Generalship all about standing up for something and dealing with constraints? What is at stake as a Lt General? Nothing! It is simply that our system spawns people who simply cannot speak up.

Having said that, if these Generals did not have the courage to speak up then and give tough feedback, there is no harm in hearing their views to get a glimpse into what they think ails the army. Before someone asks the same question about me, let me say upfront, right from a young Captain to a General, I have never shied from thumping the table to people as high as the Chief, Defense Secretary and the Defense Minister.

Then I have written about the same things post retirement in my book 'Four Decades in Olive Green – Pride Passion and Perspectives.' The Chapter two is titled 'What Ails the Indian Army.' It includes issues that I have flagged during my service and possibly paid for it, which I did not care a damn about. Thus, it is fair to ask this question, "What did he do when he was in service?"

Generalship is about preparing the army for the future, while keeping it relevant for the present. It is about making change before changes are forced by events, it is about managing change. It is about learning to deal with polity and bureaucracy and the intangibles. The Generalship has failed the Indian Army on both counts!

Why is that the Indian Army has its equipment most of which is in obsolescent stage, has huge ammunition deficiency, modernization and quality issues are suffering for years, officer's shortage, hundreds of officers going to the court on AFSPA etc.? The list is endless, and the time frame is timeless! The Air Force has not come down to 31 odd squadrons over night!

In my perspective, the army has spawned a system that will only throw up Generals who will add no value to the organization. It starts with the mandalised promotion policy, where an infantry officer on a scale of 6 on 10 gets promoted and others who are 8 on 10 in other arms do not.

The ACR is the only basis of promotion, whereas when an officer is posted as a DA, additional input by his last two or three IOs on aspects not covered by the ACR are sought for and become the basis for selection of DAs. Why should that not happen for officers who are going to lead this army and become army commanders and chiefs?

Today over 80 percent of the senior officers above the rank of Colonels are being graded outstanding. ACR is not a function of competence, it is primarily a function of relationship with your boss and this overrides competence. If you see the ACRs of senior officers hauled up for moral turpitude, they would have been graded outstanding 9 in their ACR in last 25 years by their IOs, ROs, and SROs. That speaks loudly on the utility of the ACR as a document.

Officers who do not qualify for staff college despite three chances and all organizational support, get nominated for Higher Command and NDC. I have seen Commanding Officers and Brigade Commanders who in my perspective should have been hauled up for poor professionalism but went on to attend Higher Command and NDC courses. An incompetent man is happy surrounded himself by and promoting incompetent people.

I have on many occasions heard the Army Commanders say, “You guys think that the Army Commander is a big man. No, he is just another man like you.” When large number of officers went to the court on AFSPA, I mentioned to an Army Commander, he said, “It has not happened in my command.” I said, “As army commander it should concern you as it is a serious matter, and you need to be counted, even if it has not happened in your command.”

He then said, “Do you know who gives me calls?” and he named a minister. Then he said, “Do you know who is visiting me? The MoS for Defence is visiting me.” Well, if an Army Commander is excited or surprised that the MoS for Defence is visiting him or some politician is giving him a call, then he clearly has no comprehension of what his position entails.

A Colonel can become a Lt Gen in eight-nine years. How does the organization train or evolve him intellectually to grow from a Colonel to a Corps Commander or Army Commander? Most Generals are comfortable operating at the tactical levels while the need is to comprehend and operate at the strategic level. Does this not spell the doom for the army?

An army commander thinks he is nobody! When I raised a serious issue with a serving Vice Chief, when I was in service too, he said, “I hope someone does something about it.” I told him, “Sir, you the Vice Chief also thinks someone else will do something about it. Beyond you, who is that somebody?”

The solution lies in house. But we do not have enough people with caliber and the character to stand up and be counted. The malaise is known, and several studies have been done. I have written in clear terms what ails the Indian Army in my book, ‘Four decades in Olive Greens’.

The government by superseding/nominating chiefs have thrown the bait. Many will take it with far reaching effects. Neither of the superseded officers resigned, sending a message that we are prepared to be steam rolled. It has now become a practice.

We have seen how the army has suffered in last two years. While merit is the key, how is the government in better position to decide who is better of the five Army Commanders to be the chief, except pliability. If the people of India can elect their PM, why can't the army elect its own chief through the collegiate system like the Colonel of the Regiment?

Surely, in a democratic system, this idea will never see the light of the day, but I believe the army will elect a Chief who it believes will do the nation and the army good.

As for fixing the seniority mid-way, it is a black hole. Even today, the Chiefs have not been fair in exercising their privileges in the promotion boards of Maj Generals. Re-fixing seniority midway is an exercise that will spawn crony parochialism weeding out those who are seen as threats in the race to higher ranks. No clear-cut answers but the need to start looking for answers is the need of the hour.

If there is one thing that will give better picture, it is to harness the spoken reputation of the officers in the promotion system. Mediocrity is the name of the game. Different kinds of parochialism kill meritocracy. It is unlikely that the army will change from within. By the time officer becomes a Lt General, he is hard boiled and neither has the energy or the interest to stand up for anything.



Rear Admiral Alan O'Leary (Retd)



I am sure, that most Flag Officers are not tainted, but there is a sizeable fraction, who have brought into disrepute the Officer cadres. If these so called 'gentlemen' rose to the Apex grades, the harm that they would have done to the system would be phenomenal. I must quickly add that this is not something that is happening now, but has been going on, for years. Sadly, such types are hard to identify in their formative years. Furthermore, they get by as 'smart Alecs' who know how to play the system.

While we can brush under the carpet, some low key players, with the big ticket guys, the fact is that there is a sizeable percentage of senior Officers who keep their mouths shut, when they see clearly, what wrong doings are being perpetuated by those above them in the system.

This lot are actually as culpable, as they lack the moral fiber to correct something, in time and indeed prevent their seniors from further crimes. Today, as never before the services (despite all the hassles they are having with the bureaucrats, to get parity with the Group A) are well to do.

There is absolutely no justification for bribes, commissions and corruption, that needs to be dealt with firmly and I must say, be done across the board and not what is usually done by catching a 'bakra', to make it out that the establishment is acting, against wrong doers. Like a squid, the top guys get away, spreading a smoke screen. But the Fauji knows these guys and also know who the moral degenerates for the rest of their lives. But the moot question is, whether they are affected by these evaluations.

In my career, I came across a lot of middlemen both 'in' and 'out' of the service. These agencies have and continue to prosper in different 'avatars' I was told that the service needs them, to navigate through torturous channels of defence procurement. They also value add, to the understanding of complex technical matters and give a better all-round perspective.

This, any reasonable man will say is absolute, hogwash. Can a commission agent, ever give an all-round perspective? Would he not just focus on his brand and obfuscate the rest? Can anyone say with conviction, that these guys are wisdom personified and that the serving Officers need them? This is all a part of the game and a 'diktat' comes from the top, that no one, would like to counter, except at the peril of his career. I found a very few takers.

For some decades now, there is an increasing trend of senior Officers torpedoing the careers of their counterparts, who unfortunately come up against them, in the senior positions, where there are restricted avenues for promotion. Many of these degenerates use their juniors to be, "find outers" to provide them such information that, if leaked to the press or even the MoD, would hazard the chances of the obvious man for the job, getting his rightful promotion.

This is happening increasingly. The Army has a special Directorate, to look into such representations. I have reliably learnt that middlemen play a crucial role in this endeavour, as they have money power, which they can use to good effect. This notwithstanding, all the regulations that can be made, albeit with several loopholes.



Brig IS Gakhal (Retd), ex-Comdt SRC Ramgarh, ex-Cdr RR Sector



Generals and Generalship is critical to our times. Criticism is not easily digested in our Services; it is often taken personal and viewed with suspicion. In our uniformed service we have used the medium of cribbing to let off steam. Very few have voiced their concerns in open forums, simply because criticism is not taken constructively.

In this backdrop, Veterans who voice their concerns are trolled and slighted. The problem accentuates if the author is a General simply because the question asked is: “What did you do about it when you were serving, General?” Not realising that the General may have voiced his concerns or improved what was within his ambit.

For any organisation to improve and flourish change is essential. To affect change, inputs from every rug of the organisation is a must. If feedback is ignored, then change may not be realistic or acceptable to the environment. Managing change is most critical; therefore, feedback is equally critical, the source from where it comes is not material. What is material is the quality of the feedback.

It is important that Veterans write in with their comments and suggestions. The serving fraternity are constrained in the feedback and suggestions, not so the Veteran. A Veteran has seen it all and done it all; it’s now time to give back to the organisation that nurtured a Veteran.

The Veterans without hesitation must voice their concerns, but without malice or vested interests. Let not past baggage be a conduit for suggestions and concerns. This is only cautionary as Veterans by and large carry little malice. Keep writing in do does not stop Generals and et al!

”

Cdr Ravindra Pathak (Retd), ESM Activist

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Whilst what the General says it true and we need to express our views as a Veteran to give the serving a new vision or a different perspective. It is unfortunate but true that often the serving open up to the Veterans more than to the serving for obvious reasons. The argument why opens up now and what did you do in service is the most illogical. We have no knowledge of what one did or did not do in the service. Are we sure the author did not express his views within the limitations imposed by the service?

The serving have introduced rank based privileges even in social clubs like special furniture and sofas reserved in special enclosures for serving VVIP at social functions etc. One must realize that till the rank of Lt Col all are same in professional knowledge and there after your rise is based on date of commission and date of birth, initial seniority and then the place and men under whom you serve. Of course, the last bit includes extraneous factors beyond professional competency.

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Col Parmesh K. ‘Royal’ Mehrishi (Retd), ex-Inf, Clinical Psychologist

“

Military leadership in training academies can be taught, but it is akin to an assembly line production of clones as the training is too straight jacketed. Exercising leadership on ground is a complex process, as it involves factors of upbringing, imagination, cognitive functions of the brain, composite recall memory, integrity, prevalent situation, caliber of subordinates, cultural factors and more.

Functional independence cannot be taught, it has to be exercised day in and day out. At the junior level, small teams with adequate fire power and resources need to be trained to operate in a battlefield bereft of electronic communication and orders from above. Initiative, dissent, and boldness need to be recognized and rewarded not only when a person gets martyred but at the planning and execution stage as well, even if an individual does not fit the mould of a successful officer.

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Col NP Sharma (Retd), ex-Arty & APTC



Our service credo places country first, the men you command next and own ease and comfort last. But our ACR system has no way of ensuring this. An officer who keeps only his superior/s happy by hook or by crook has good chance of getting a good ACR vis-a-vis an officer who gives priority to his subordinates.

If we have 360-degree assessment in which an individual is assessed by the superior as well as subordinates, then he will automatically have to live in accordance with his higher self and the organisation as a whole will benefit. There will be no sycophancy and many adverse traits will vanish. In the corporate sector, this 360-degree assessment is in practice. I think Infosys is one of them? A similar idea was doing the rounds during Gen VK Singh's time but then army prefers 'status quo'.



Gp Capt Johnson Chacko (Retd), ex-Instr, DSSC, CDM, AFA, NDA



A leader leads a group of people. He needs to be aware of the situation that the group is in, ideate as to how to convert the situation in favour of the group using the skill sets available within the group. The focus is on the group for if there is no group then there is no need for a leader. Our Generals/Admiral and Air Marshals are leaders in their own right leading a large number of personnel. Their focus needs to be the personnel and what is good for them. Beyond a particular rank, when he is promoted from active involvement with his men, political correctness starts to take over.

Political correctness as defined by Gen McArthur is picking up a piece of shit by the clean end. That should be a no go for the military as we are not supposed to be involved with politics. At higher levels it is a battle between conscience and consequences. If one succumbs to consequences, he loses leadership. If he maintains conscience, then he endears to those whom he leads. Promotion of the required officers to higher ranks is based on ACRs.

The system that I used was self-assessment with moderation by the IO after consent by the ratee. It does wonders. Not a single ratee over assessed himself and in majority of the cases I had to moderate it upward. There needs to an assessment of sycophancy as an attribute.

Generalship needs to have personal power rather than positional power. Personal power is gained through professionalism or what you know rather than whom you know. Those who come into a position because of the latter cannot implement lasting solutions for the good of those whom they command. If they leave the position, the changes that they brought in also revert. There is a need to change the support system that promotes appointments based on factors other than professionalism.



The Way Forward

The debate on 'Generals & Generalship' was initiated after due review and reflection. The subject encapsulates issues concerning critical quality military leadership at senior, higher and apex levels, in the Army, Navy and Air Force. The purpose of the debate was mainly to ignite the

minds of all Veterans, especially the Generals, Admirals and Air Marshals and encourage them to air/write their views on vital subjects concerning the military and nation.

The compiled and collective views of our learned, experienced and illuminated minds has enabled projection of their valid concerns and suggestions

to the readers. The serving military and political hierarchy is in charge and will call the shots. It is hoped that they accept the views and suggestions of one and all without any bias or apprehension. The interest of the Armed Forces and nation must always take precedence and priority, always and every time! 🙏

Victory India – A Key to Quality Military Leadership

Author: Col Vinay B Dalvi (Retd)

Publisher: Pentagon Press, New Delhi

(Pp 310; ISBN 978-81-8274-704-3; Rs 895)

If you are an aspiring candidate for Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) exams hoping to join Indian military service, this book is one of the keys to convert your dreams into reality. Content of *Victory India – A Key to Quality Military Leadership* is a thorough compilation of more than 30 essays written by 20 renowned veteran defence analysts, writers, military experts and professionals in the fields of psychology, sports medicines, technologies and academics. Major deal in this book focuses upon the selection process of officer candidates for the armed forces at the SSB (Service Selection Board) as well as trainings for the selected cadets at their respective training academies.

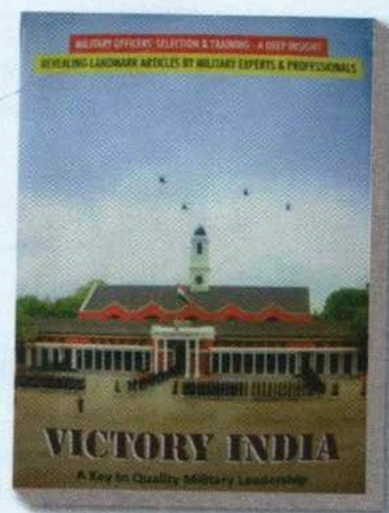
Steep increase in suicide rate of *jawans* at various military camps and frequent confrontations between officers and the men in India has become a matter of deep concern. A question upon such unsavoury incidents has surfaced asking whether the current system is valid and sound in keeping with crucial requirements of present and future battlefield environment. Or are our system outdated and required a throughout review by a group of experts? Of course, the need of expert advice is met by Col Vinay B Dalvi's *Victory India- A Key to*

Quality Military Leadership as veteran experts address these issues in the form of analysis of the selection process followed with views on trainings at the National Defence

Academy (NDA), Indian Military Academy (IMA), Officer Training Academy (OTA), Navy and Air Force.

Wide acceptance and deep appreciation of this book by the entire defence hierarchy including defence minister, service chiefs and army commanders encouraged the author to proceed further. Two landmark articles titled *Grim Portents* and *Unleashing The UPSC* by Maj Gen Raj Mehta published in *Geopolitics* earlier deliver the subject that required priority and boost. In nutshell, *Victory India- A Key to Quality Military Leadership* is an earnest, fervent and collective endeavour to attract, select, train, groom and promote the country's budding and dynamic youth into inspiring, effective and quality military leaders.

- Jyaneswar Laishram





Is 'BECA' in the Nation's Best Interest? Analysts Weigh in

An article by IAF veteran and security analyst, Group Captain TP Srivastava (Retd) headlined: 'Indo-US Military Alliance: BECA' has sparked a diversity of views and initiated a healthy debate among defence and foreign policy analysts.

By Colonel Vinay B Dalvi (Retd), Aritra Banerjee

Trigger by Col. Rajinder Singh Kushwaha (Retd), Author & Analyst

"There are no permanent friends or enemies; only interests" adage this has been the only constant in the realm of International Relations, things do not remain the same forever. The evolving geopolitics of the world also change International Relations. We as a nation cannot remain locked in the past. Stagnant waters are health hazards, which lead to unhygienic environs.

Gp Capt Srivastava seems to have not considered the Indo-Soviet treaty of 1971 which led Russia to come in our aid. However, Russia's gradual tilt towards China has left no choice for India. In fact, Russia has cheated India in the recent

Chinese aggression along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh.

(Read Gp Capt Srivastava's analysis 'Indo-US Military Alliance: BECA' in the current affairs section)

It was Russia which misled India that China was carrying out an annual military exercise in Tibet and there was nothing to worry about. Indian intelligence had detected Chinese troop movement towards Ladakh however ignored it upon Russian assurances.

As was in 1971, and now in 2020-21, India finds itself in the need fall back on someone to offset the

Chinese military advantage over India...therefore the United States of America was the only choice. More so, it is the US that needs it more than India. Therefore, it is a good decision by India.

As I said in the beginning — it is a transformational decision and not a permanent status. India has realised that self-reliance is the only answer to face international pariahs. However, it will take time for India to be 'atmanirbhar'. until then, the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) is a desirable arrangement.



Responses



Tarun Yadav, Foreign Policy Analyst



The US basically signs three agreements with a country for deeper military cooperation. These three agreements are Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) and BECA.

BECA will allow the Indian military to use US geo-spatial data which will enhance the accuracy of weapons like missiles and armed drones. Just as we use Global Positioning Systems (GPS) for accurate navigation, BECA will allow use of US satellite data for accuracy of our missiles.

The satellite data can also be used for tracking the location of our troops and the troops of adversary parties across the borders having rough terrain and tough topography.



Elstan Fernandez, Foreign Policy Analyst



India and the US inked their fourth military pact –BECA during a meeting in late October. The US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and US Secretary of Defense Mark Esper visited India on October 26-27 to meet India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs (MEA) Minister S Jaishankar as part of the two-plus-two dialogue.

During the meeting they inked the fourth military pact. After signing LEMOA in 2016 and COMCASA in 2018, this is the third and final foundational military pact between the two countries.

India had also signed the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) with the US in 2002. The pros and cons of BECA can only be described with the details from the signed documents but The 'Time of India' has quoted officials as saying that the geospatial cooperation agreement will "enable the US to share advanced satellite and topographical data for long-range navigation and missile-targeting with India".

Meanwhile, strategy and defence experts remain divided on the matter. There are fears that India may not be able to claim an independent foreign policy and strategy autonomy with the signing of the BECA. However, there are defence experts who are hailing the decision to sign BECA.

The Indian government has termed the signing of BECA important because India is buying armed drones from the US. India will be placing an order for 30 armed drones MQ-9B Guardian from the US for nearly \$3 Billion.

Former Indian Army Officer and Editor-in-Chief of FORCE Magazine, Pravin Sawhney explains that these armed drones are operationally tested, they can hellfire missiles, laser guided-bombs and its stands to reason that if they are to reach the target pinpoint then they should be given accurate coordinates, and this is possible with geospatial cooperation with America.

What is Geospatial Cooperation?

The main thing in geospatial cooperation is Geography Information System, wherein the US will be giving the military aspects of geography, which is the terrain capabilities, weather,

topography, so that better mission planning can be done. Satellite imagery will be part of this as well as the military GPS data.

Sawhney says: “This data is critical for the accuracy of any missile. The data will not directly go to the armed drone, but to a central place. This data is classified and will come as part of the secure wireless network, which will be given through the equipment, which has been given to India through COMCASA.

It will be a combination of BECA giving the data and COMCASA delivering the data to the command post, where there will be options that which missile should take on which target”. India has been in a border stand-off with China since the first week of May in the northern border, while the Western border continues to witness unprecedented shelling from Pakistan near the Line of Control.

Even if India becomes a military partner of the US in its venture to secure Indo-Pacific, Indian leadership, as well as the security forces, are aware that no country will come to fight its war. In such a scenario, the same data can be used for India’s indigenous cruise missiles, rockets, in the case of a two-front war with Pakistan or China.

Earlier this month, the Indian Air Force (IAF) chief Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria was asked if the US will be helping India deal with any security challenge, the IAF Chief said the US deployments are based on their perspective and “we will do whatever is required. Nobody is going to fight our war”.

Serious Concerns over Data

In January 2009, India was test-firing the BrahMos supersonic missile but to the surprise, the test failed due to an erroneous GPS calculation. Further, the investigation had revealed that the US had switched off the GPS signals due to security reasons during the swearing-in ceremony of President Barack Obama, which resulted in the test failure.

Jointly developed by India and Russia, BrahMos is an anti-ship missile which can hit targets 290km away and can cruise at a particular altitude at Mach 3 (three times the speed of sound). The January 2009 mission had required the missile to hit the target at 50 km, but it was missed.

As per India’s Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), the supersonic missile being tested at Pokhran in Rajasthan travelled for 112 seconds instead of the slated 84 seconds and fell 7 km away from the target.

While India-US inch closer on signing BECA which will provide data for precise targeting but the incident like this raises serious concern for New Delhi as it may occur again at some unfortunate point when India is at a war.

Similarly, another concern with regard to sharing data with the US is that the systems or equipment installed may have malicious software or cyber bots, which can cause a huge disadvantage to India in a longer run. Sawhney says that the mission plans can be easily extracted in such systems and this needs to be considered while signing.

In the long run of India’s future - we will not be able to run our own foreign policy. The closer you get to the US, the more you slowly lose your independence, and become a sucked in revolving satellite inside the US Orbit. Yes, it is true that safety is guaranteed, as it has a price tag on it.

Pakistan and China will be checked on the war board. We may get back POK, and Aksai chin. And our future generations will live in peace. Once we have our own defense equipment and GPS system, probably today’s US technology will be obsolete then.



Maj Gen CD Sawant (Retd), ex GOC Inf Div & Comdt MLIRC



Firstly, the paper has been written based on the news articles in print and electronic media. I wonder if anyone has gone through the agreement. Secondly, I do not consider China as adversary anymore, after Doklam followed by Galwan and their occupation of many locations indicate that they need to be considered as enemies henceforth. Anyway, this is only semantics.

We may recall that India's cooperation with USA commenced in 1998 after the conversation between Late Shri Jaswant Singh and Strobe Talbott. Since then lot of water has flowed. BECA brings India out of a closet. There is no doubt that PLA is quite superior to existing Indian Armed Forces.

Hence, while dealing with PLA now and in the near future we need to have a reliable partner who facilitates interoperability between the militaries of both countries.

There is no doubt that partnership with a Superpower is like walking a tight rope, it is not going to be easy. We have to be alert all the time and also make sure that we are not taken for granted.

In view of the fact that Russian President Putin recently remarked about possibility of possible military alliance with China, we need to have an equally strong partner, if the possibility fructifies.

It is therefore felt that BECA is likely to prove as an asset to India with a rider that Indian authorities need to be constantly vigilant.



Lt Col M K Gupta Ray (Retd) Author & Analyst



The comment written by GpCapt TP Srivastava has been a good effort and opened the forum for a good discussion on BECA which is highly relevant under today's political and security environment in South Asia. India today is literally facing two fronts which so far has been a strategic discussion.

Under this environment I would like to give my views on the BECA proposal.

First and foremost, we must try to understand that we should not compare the present with the past and vice versa. Every situation, scope of agreement, time space and the participants carry different connotations and relevance. Let me take issues one by one.

Over a period the situation has changed. We cannot compare today with 1971 which we take as a landmark for our strategic superiority and perfect use of defense forces. But today distance is not deterrence for having strategic agreement.

In fact, the distance between US and India will provide space for greater dominance over Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans by combined task forces and control the main economic routes thus choking adversaries from their supplies.

The participation and command over the task forces depend upon the intrinsic power of the participants. The military alliance is not 'loaded in favour of the powerful ally'. It depends on how much one is contributing to the overall force.

So far, the US has been contributing the most in terms of strength and weapons so obviously the overall commander has to be with the US. After all one cannot expect a smaller country with lesser resources to command the coalition army! Otherwise the Second World War is replete with examples when British commanders have been theater commanders having US forces under command.

Similarly, India, if joined with US Forces, would be able to command the theater forces if she is able to provide required troops. In fact, command of any battle in Indian Ocean theatre shall be the prerogative of Indian Commanders.

Provision of a few 'target coordinates' by the US cannot be the aim of the BECA. It must be much more. India is capable of getting these by her own resources. The US is aligned to create a joint force with India. Nobody can ignore India if one must operate through Indian Ocean through which 70% of the world's cargo moves.

The best examples have been renaming the formerly known United States Pacific Command (USPACOM) since its inception, to the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command on 30 May 2018, in recognition of the greater emphasis on South Asia, especially India. So why should we conjecture that India shall play second fiddle??

While our national aim is definitely to protect our territorial integrity and sovereignty, basically a defensive approach cannot be fulfilled without offensive operations backing it. Unless we create strategic depth or plan for a counter offensive the defense will fall.

The next war will be fought in the sea and ocean. China can only be brought to terms if one can choke its supply of fuel for which it has limited strategic reserve since it does not produce much of it. On ground warfare counter offensive is a must. At our level we had gone far ahead of Forward Line of Defence (FDL) to hold our national boundary. Later on these areas were handed over.

As regards strategy and international relation nothing is permanent. There is a positive shift by the US away from Pakistan and Pakistan is no force today less its nuisance value and unfortunate holding of nuclear arms. Nobody can fight an isolated war.

Signing an agreement does not forfeit sovereignty and all agreement has articles in it for the signatories to follow them and the agreement is never a permanent feature can be terminated at any point of time or after a specific period as per the agreement article. The Indo-Soviet peace treaty was valid for 20 years only.

For example: The Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation was a treaty signed between India and the Soviet Union in August 1971 that specified mutual strategic cooperation. That was a significant deviation from India's previous position of non-alignment during the Cold War and was a factor in the 1971 Indo-Pakistani war.

The treaty was caused by increasing Pakistani ties with China and the United States and played an important role in the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War. The duration of the treaty was 20 years and it expired by the end of August 1991. One of its articles, No IX is reproduced below.

Article IX

"Each High Contracting Party undertakes to abstain from providing any assistance to any third party that engages in armed conflict with the other Party.

In the event of either Party being subjected to an attack or a threat thereof, the High Contracting Parties shall immediately enter into mutual consultations in order to remove such threat and to take appropriate effective measures to ensure peace and the security of their countries."

Everything depends on how powerful our country becomes both economically and in defense and how politically steady we are. Sovereignty is definitely not an exclusive preserve of Politicians and Bureaucrats. The supreme command of the Armed Forces vests in the President.

The responsibility for national defence rests with the Cabinet. Once the policy is framed and the direction is given by the highest level it becomes the sacred duties of the armed forces to carry out the duties as it deems fit. The Government has to provide resources.

In today's world no one can fight independently. There must be alliances. The command of the alliance depends on how strong one is. We need to have a wider vision, think, and behave at least as a regional power entering the world forum.



Indian defence and foreign ministers with their USS counterparts

Conclusion

The BECA Debate has been initiated due to a recent article by Gp Capt TP Srivastava that has well-articulated its significance and implications for India. The first response to this article has been the trigger for more responses to follow.

All the responses collectively bring forth several critical dimensions of BECA and highlight its

relevance for India not only for safeguarding and ensuring its economic and security imperatives but also towards enhancing its regional supremacy and standing as an emerging world power which should no longer remain confined to its geographical borders as in the past.

This is only the beginning of an endless debate not only on BECA but more such agreements or alliances that we may be compelled to be a part of due to the critical threats emerging not only to our sovereignty but to the region and world environment. 🌍



Lock, Stock & Two Smoking Barrels: Fauji's Respond to the DMA's Double Bogey!

The recent letter by the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) on 'retirement' & 'pension' policy has irked several...in both the Veteran and Serving Fraternities, many of whom have vehemently opposed lopsided nature of these policy considerations in this 'No Holds Barred' debate.

By Aritra Banerjee, Colonel Vinay B Dalvi (Retd)

Sighter Burst...

The newly conceived Department of Military Affairs (DMA) has come under intense fire following a letter on 'pension' and 'retirement age' related policy considerations. The DMA, which is headed by Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat is yet another addition in nations long line of Higher Defence Organisation (HDO). This new department is tasked to 'look after HR and coordination issues'.

The DMA letter proposes to increase that the age of retirement for senior defence service officers...as follows; Colonels (57 years), Brigadier (58 years), Major General (59 years). The same is applicable to officers of equivalent ranks in the Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force.

The letter recommends to 'review' (read slash) the pension of commissioned officers looking to take premature retirement. This move by the DMA has irked several in both the veteran and serving fraternities, with Fauji WhatsApp groups and Twitter set ablaze with ex-servicemen and serving officers alike fuming!

The Tribune's Ajay Banerjee broke the story, and the most relevant extracts from his piece have reproduced for the purpose of a military discourse on this sour issue yet poignant issue.

Extracts from Ajay Banerjee's Story

- A letter sent out by the DMA office on October 29 says a draft of the Government Sanction Letter (GSL) is

being readied by November 10 for review by General Rawat.

- A senior lawyer, who deals in the subject of military law, said "the DMA has no locus standi to alter pension formula and it will be challenged in court".
- This letter proposes to increase the retirement age of Colonels, Brigadiers and Maj Generals to 57 years, 58 years and 59 years, respectively. The existing retirement age for Colonels, Brigadiers and Maj Generals is 54 years, 56 years, and 58 years, respectively.
- The core issue is the pension formula which is now suggested to be in a format that increases the emoluments with years of service. As per

the proposal, an officer with 20-25 years of service will get 50 per cent of 'entitled pension'. The existing entitled pension is 50 per cent of the last pay drawn. In other words, the pension will be halved.

- An officer serving for 26-30 years would get 60 per cent of entitled

pension; those doing 30-35 years of service will get 75 per cent of entitled pension. Only those who do more than 35 years of service will be entitled for full pension, that is 50 per cent of the last pay drawn.

- A functionary pointed out that only those who get commissioned by 22

years of age will be eligible for full pension after serving for 35 years as they could retire at Colonel's at 57 years of age. There has been an ongoing debate on the rising pension bill of the MoD since the 'One rank, one pension' was implemented.



Responses from Veterans & Serving Officers



A senior serving officer



I will die happily on the battlefield if you order me to do so. I will follow your orders as I have sworn to do so. But my heart evokes no loyalty to the persona of Bipin Rawat.



For ages the armed forces requested the political govt to institute the office of the CDS. But the devastation on morale, psychology, image, status and well-being of the armed forces by the persona inhabiting the Chair will earn him the position in the 'hall of shame', joining the likes of Generals like Kaul and Thapar. (My perception entirely).

Earlier this year in a grand, televised and hyped event the CDS personally announced the grand scale flower dropping operations to commemorate the medical staff fighting Corona..... but I did not see his presence to condole the death of 20 brave soldiers and Colonel Santosh in Galwan. Nor was there a whimper from him when Veterans were manhandled in Jantar Mantar in Oct 2017.

Whether it was the Balakot Strikes or the riposte by Pakistan, the media management of the forces has been pathetic. Yet again, just prior to his appointment as CDS, in Dec 2019 he vocalised against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) riots in the country. What does all this portray - Is the General bothered about the army or is he self-serving?

In Jul 2017, rations were stopped. It took four years and a court case to reverse the order. The same year as COAS he extended the 'Swachh Bharat' campaign into the cantonments (which were already pristine in cleanliness).

As a result, it was common sight to see Colonels and Brigadiers move with troops in civil areas with brooms in their hand. (Is this what the Army is?). When I spoke to him, his answer was "If we can clean the Everest in a foreign country, why can't we clean ours?" (Such irrefutable logic).

Later, cantonments were thrown open. Hooligans and lecherous elements abounded in SF accns forcing the Army to post more guards and soldiers. No more morning PT on the roads.... now littered with rickshaws and bikes.

Then all of a sudden newspaper carried the news that temporary duty stays in hotels have been suspended in order to economise defense budget and "To prevent officers exchanging suitcases of cash" (the generals' own

words). Can any more damage be done to the Army's image?

A Right to Information (RTI) query revealed this year that 8 Crores in legal fees has been expended by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) in fighting against War-Widows and Veterans seeking pensions on disability. But the word out of his offices state that many people and specially officers fudge facts and fake disabilities.

It is now common practice to scan newspapers and media outlets to search for Army Routine Orders. The litany of debacles and publicised caustic comments against his own fraternity and especially the Veterans (whom he utterly detests) have put all in gloom.

Generally, fantastical ideas, letters and forwards on social media are considered fake-news. The new letter on reduction of pensions was at first dismissed as fake-news due to its ludicrousness. But the sentiment soon turned to hapless confusion.

I wish the General could understand that the Armed Forces are an organ of

the government. If the budget is unable to meet the expenses, then the budget needs to be increased.....not pensions cut or retirement ages increased.....or land sold to buy weapons....or canteen facilities curbed.... or TDs stopped. There is also a huge retinue of civil staff who are a major burden on the Army budget.... why doesn't he target them?

The degradation in stature, pay, precedence and Morale of the Indian Army since the day Bipin Rawat has instituted (post supersession of others) has been continuing rapidly. The morale of the Army and its soldiers in their boots.... some say at the same level after the defeat of 1962.

The organisational spirit has been broken. No longer is there a sense of belonging to an elite organisation (something that is essential to perform). In all my years of service, never have I witnessed or experienced such acrimony, hatred, and widespread disdain for any General. I know this because I am still serving. But as I said, I will carry out my obligations

A serving Brigadier

“

While other government establishments secure their cadre, we for a few political brownie points, will surely let down our own as always!

”

It is sad that we are axing ourselves in the foot constantly with poorly thought out policies and futuristic plans. We are our own worst enemy! While the retirement age is certainly a factor we can debate, I personally welcome it. The misnomer that we will have an old army is a statement open to the house to ponder over. Because the fitness levels are much higher today. A brigadier with 31 years of service and 51 years old is as fit as any other officer.

But at that rank and age, it is not physical fitness but mental mobility, decision making capability, indomitable spirit, risk taking ability, calling a spade a spade, intellectual honesty and the tolerance for ambiguity that is required. Age therefore is not the ruling factor for retirement.

However, what this letter is trying to do is create an enigma of insecurity.

Deny you alternate careers, you in your wisdom of Annual Confidential Reports (ACR) being the main and only factor for promotion have already dug your grave, the manipulators, the managers, and the yes men are many, yes a few good men exist. But the minority are not even worth making a change in our system.

The degree of non-empanelment due to a pyramidal structure is a reality that we are not even addressing. What we have done by giving them opportunities in staff and the United Nations is like a laugh riot

Employment without promotion prospects is a dead horse, yet we still want to flog it. We have mediocrity in senior leadership which surprisingly addresses itself as the privileged class, because they have climbed the ladder while some of the unlucky ones who just happened to have a whimsical

Initiating Officer (IO) have been left behind. Our own officers constantly beat the system.

Take a breather out of the recently conducted National Defence College (NDC) list. None of the guys decorated for gallantry or serving in field formations as young officers and company commanders have made it. Maybe a minuscule but hardly worth the reckoning. The guys with two to three tenures in Army Headquarter (AHQ) are surely embedded there.

We are just chanting our queens English to a Bermudas Triangle of in-retractable catastrophe. An Armageddon of the mediocre. While, other government establishments secure their cadre, we for a few political brownie points, will surely let down our own as always!

Brigadier Pradeep Sharma (Retd) ex NSG (SAG), DS AWC, Analyst

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How will this affect the morale of our soldiers deployed in Ladakh when his counterparts in the ITBP deployed alongside him will smile with contempt at him? Why does the India Army seem to hurt this nation so much?

”

The implications of this proposal to increase retirement ages are:

No re-employment! All promotions and promotion boards will freeze for the next two or three years since no vacancies will be generated and a cascading delayed effect will fall on the subsequent promotion boards. Ageing of the Armed Forces, how will we be different from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) or Border Security Force (BSF) then?

The Armed Forces will have to shift to the National Pension Scheme (NPS) too. Increase in revenue expenditure since salaries will have to be paid for senior ranks for additional years. Any savings in lump sum retirement benefits will just be deferred to the next two three years.

Proposal to cut pensions is highly retrograde when all other organisations are getting full pensions. How will

this affect the morale of our soldiers deployed in Ladakh when his counterparts in the Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) deployed alongside him will smile with contempt at him?

This further indicates two things. Only some ex National Defence Academies (NDA) and Technical Entry Scheme (TES) entries will be eligible for 100% pension as maximum Direct Entries (DE) and Short Service Commission (SSC) Officers join at the age of more than 22-23 years of age.

(35 years of service + 22 years of age = 57 years which is also the retirement age of a Colonel)

The same may not be applicable for jawans in fighting arms, their pensionable service is being slightly increased. I think 20 years if recollect accurately and they will hence be eligible for 50% of their salary is normal pension after 20 years of service

..whereas a Lieutenant Colonel with 20 yrs of service will only get 25% of his last salary (basic + msp) (0% of present pension as per the letter)

So, a matriculate passed 'Bhoop Singh' with 20 years after having done good working and duty will get almost the same pension as a Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) competitive graduate Lt Col!

What troubles my mind is why is the government gunning for the Armed Forces alone? The Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) are getting everything and expanding, the Indian Administrative Service (IAS)/Indian Police Service (IPS) do not seem to be a burden on the budget, Members of Parliament (MP)/Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) too. Why does the India Army seem hurt this nation so much?

Brigadier Surinder Kakar (Retd), EME

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The MoD is ensuring, that the morale of the forces plummets all the way down into their boots... If you pay peanuts, you will get monkeys for sure!

”

This is the latest, 'Money Saving Scheme' (MSS) formulated by our Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat! This (development) is not at all, in the interest of the Indian Armed Forces! Neither in the short term nor in the long run! When the security scenario is going to be critical and

tense in the future with both our eastern and western neighbours, the MoD is ensuring, that the morale of the services, falls into their boots!

No wonder, a study showed that 75% of children of Defence Services Officers, do not opt to join the Armed

Forces! The reason is simply obvious. Will anyone join an organisation, if they keep changing, terms of reference at whims and fancies of individuals? Remember this, If you pay peanuts, you will get monkeys for sure!

Colonel Rajinder Singh Kushwaha (Retd), Author & Analyst

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Do Indian Generals of the day have the spunk to tell the Government of the day: "Pay the national insurance premium for national security now or face disintegration. Do not expect the Armed Forces to starve by tightening it belt.

”

This policy of increasing the retirement age of officers and soldiers, along with a new pension policy, is fraught with rising discontent and friction within the Tri-services. The gross discontent is due to the arbitrary tinkering of the terms of employment.

Even if the decision were for new entries to the Armed Forces, it would, in effect create separate categories of soldiers. Some new entrants might take it as discrimination and a violation of the fundamental right of equality! Courts may overflow with petitions of this nature!

Another point is that all the three services might not be on the same page as far as the proposed new pension rules are concerned. The Indian Army and the CDS cannot and should impose its will on the other two services. Furthermore, what to even say of seeking Jointmanship by creating Theatre Commands? It will lead to insurmountable walls of differences between the tri-services. This would be anti-thesis of integration and jointmanship.

In any case, even the idea of age enhancement might not be appreciated because of rising 'dead-wood liabilities' after supersession of officers. Let us say an officer becomes a full Colonel after 15-16 years of service then 85-90% will get superseded for next rank by 20-21 years' service. Army would have to suffer them for other 14-15 years of service against 10-11 years now.

The disadvantage of age enhancement, besides leading to ageing Colonels/Commanding Officers (CO), would also create a huge flock of

disgruntled officers. What more, it would also block vacancies in the rank of Colonels for five more years and thus the age of COs would go up by five years.

Furthermore, by implementing the policy of age enhancement, the armed forces would be violating the cardinal principle of 'Younger the leader; More risks he would take in combat decision making'. At the executional level of Command, a more aged a CO is more cautious he becomes and thus may let go of the fleeting opportunities presented at crucial times.

The question comes to mind as to what is forcing this policy change of age enhancement and pension rules. Is it to save money? What an irony? Lakhs of crores of rupees loans of farmers are being written off by the Government at various times, then why is this crunch for national security and integrity? What about the subsidies and grants being given to certain communities and states? Are they above national security?

It must be noted that any expenditure on national defence and security was a national premium for the national insurance of its security. It is indispensable and cannot become an onus of the Armed Forces by squeezing and tightening their belts. This premium must be found by the national government of the day to ensure the survival of the national integrity.

The arrangements of requisite funds for defence and security is not the responsibility of armed forces. It is a dangerous precedent being set by the CDS to please his political bosses.

On this, one is reminded of General Douglas MacArthur of US Army, when he was the Chief of the Army in 1931 before the Second World War. Franklin D Roosevelt was the president of USA then. The European economy had suffered a major slump and USA was helping its revival by Marshall Plans. Thus, there was an urgent need of funds and President Roosevelt decided to make cut in Defence Budget.

Upon learning about it Gen. Douglas McArthur went to the president to dissuade him from making a cut in defence budget. All his arguments were rejected by the President. General McArthur decided to leave president's office. As he reached the door, he turned on his heels and said to the president: "Mr. President, when in the next war, an American soldier lay on the battlefield, with an enemy bayonet piercing his abdomen and he spat out his last curse, I do not want the bane to be McArthur but Roosevelt!"

It is no gain saying the fact that President Roosevelt changed his mind immediately and allowed full defence budget with enhanced allotment too. And history bears testimony that it was the US army that turned the table on Hitler's Germany in the Second World War.

Do Indian Generals of the day have the spunk to tell the Government of the day: "Pay the national insurance premium for national security now or face disintegration. Do not expect the Armed Forces to starve by tightening its belt. Aged leadership and starved armed forces would crumble before the first bullet was fired".

Colonel VN Thapar (Retd), Author & Analyst

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The institute of the CDS has become totally subservient to the dictates of the Babus. We can expect extraordinarily little from this office in critical decision making.

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To me it appears that the very purpose for which the CDS was created has been fairly and squarely deleted. The institute of the CDS has become totally subservient to the dictates of the Babus. We can expect extraordinarily little from this office in critical decision making.

So far there has been nothing positive for the forces that has happened whether it is to do with the status, rations, CSD, Cantonment land and now where it hurts the most Pensions and pay.

The hurry with which this momentous decision is being pushed shows that this decision has already been taken and it is only a stamping from the CDS so that in future the CDS is held responsible for this fait accompli. It is a short-sighted measure which will have long term adverse effect.

Group Captain Johnson Chacko (Retd), ex-Instr, DSSC, CDM, AFA, NDA



Extending the life of demotivated pen pushers and encouraging them to hang on by reducing pensions is a disaster we cannot afford.



If one needs to fight, he needs to be young. Blood needs to boil. One cannot be in the youth Congress if he is above 35. Armed Forces needs to stop fighting after 35. The Commanding Officer (CO) and SM should finish their tenure by 35 years of age.

People who want to leave should be encouraged to leave. We should not hold on to experience, it only makes a fighting unit less effective. The experienced guys think that they are indispensable. All the graves around are filled with those who think they are indispensable.

The sun still rises in the east, youngsters are better motivated and smarter. I used to finish cross-country in NDA in about 20 mts, now the first cadet finishes in 38 mts due to increase in distance. Let us not populate the Armed Forces with oldies.

Veterans of the Armed Forces are a great talent pool. If retrained, they can do wonders for the growth of the Nation. I had trained myself for a second career as I knew that medical is a sword of Damocles for a pilot. It did get me great, I transitioned effortlessly into the top management of a multinational corporation (MNC). AVS Ph 2 would have ensured consideration for

promotion to three stars at 25 years of service (age 47) if it had been implemented correctly. 13 years of stability at three-star rank would have done wonders to Forces.

The Atal Bihari Vajpayee govt encouraged giving civil licenses to Armed Forces personnel performing similar trades. Resistance....pilots will leave, so he said tell me the number of flying academies you need, I will grant it. Vision...pilots are national assets. Extending the life of demotivated pen pushers and encouraging them to hang on by reducing pensions is a disaster we cannot afford.

Group Captain Kaushik (Retd)



The Indian Air Force and the Navy are no better off than the Army. Having seen the Tri-services from close quarters, let me tell you we are heading for a disaster! There is no jointness in the services whatsoever.



I would like to add IAF and Navy too. These two organisations are no better than the Army. Having seen the Tri-services from close quarters, let me tell you we are heading for a disaster.

There is no jointness in the services whatsoever. At one point of time the forces have become a joke.

I will quote two instances. I was the Chief Administration Officer at Air Force Station Lucknow and was called to attend Civil Military liaison Conference at UP Sachivalay.

Before the start of the meeting, one Babu came and said all those junior viz., Lieutenant Colonels and below to occupy the rear seats. We were so furious, half the Air Force officers walked out. (Army officers could not because GOC-in-C was present). Then came another Babu, who now had the audacity to inform the house that only Colonels and above to be seated and rest all can leave.

This time all the IAF officers left and many Army officers too left in protest. All this while none of the senior brass ever opened their mouth. In another incident the Collector of Nagpur, during the heights of Swachh Bharat,

had written a letter to the AOC-IN C to send their men to clean up an area in civil. Despite protest from the rank and file, a small contingent of personnel did go.

Now the issue is; why can't the organisation take a stand on such issues? Who are we scared off? Why are we scared to counter the bureaucrats? Look at the present state. For every damn thing, be it rations, accommodation, pensions, Non-Functional Upgradation (NFU), One Rank One Pension (OROP) and even promotions one has to approach the judiciary for the decision.

Where does the fault lie? In our system, because of the spineless top brass or audacity of the bureaucrats. In the entire Air Force, probably there 20 Air Marshals. In any State capital there will be 50 such officers. For their own selfish and personal agenda, these senior officers are screwing up the organisations.

What is the sanctity of the Oath we take on the day of graduation from the respective academies? Any ways, we can continue to crib without any visible outcome. Bottomline is who will Bell the cat? Sad but true. God save the Armed Forces!

Vice Admiral Vineet Bakhshi (Retd), VSM, ex CO INS Shivaji



There is great weakness in the belief for the scheme, for it doesn't seem to have strong grounds. It would be prudent to let it be yet another study, lying in the dark closets of the MoD.



Megasthenes, the Greek traveller, visited India around 300 BC observing the Indian society, he found discipline, and harmony amongst citizens, who trust each other even in large financial issues. He recorded "They (Indians), dislike a great undisciplined multitude, and consequently they observe good order. Theft is of exceedingly rare occurrence.

They have no suits about pledges or deposits, nor do they require either seals or witnesses, but make their deposits and confide in each other. They generally leave their houses and property unguarded. These things indicate that they possess good, sober sense ...Truth and virtue they hold alike in custom." Leaving aside the Armed Forces and closed cantonments, where in India would one find this form of an ideal society?

An underlying tenet of good order and Naval (Army/Air Force) discipline is the faith and trust in the senior leadership to protect the interests of the rank and file, the sub ordinates.

Are we about to upend it? It is quite bewildering that the country seems not to have funds for rifles and suitable bullet proof jackets, yet the non-performing assets of over Rupees seven lakh crores of PSU banks is simply an RBI statistic. Good taxpayer's money down the drain. And this is about 150 % Of the entire Defence Budget!

Do we see a reduction in the salaries and pensions of Bank PSU employees, the Directors of the Bank, the persons responsible for running the banks, directly and indirectly? In fact the emoluments continue to rise. In essence, have we become a country which rewards inefficiency and penalises those who put their lives on the line to protect this nation's sovereignty?

The reduction of benefits may possibly give rise to passions and resentments amongst the disaffected populace, making them rife for disturbing the equanimity that exists in the

Armed Forces. Such initiatives may become precipitators of dissatisfaction.

It is not that the issues would be forgotten, the thoughts and efforts of a form of denigration would continue to smoulder long after the decision and effect the core of beliefs in the sanctity of the chain of command. The thinking would not be based on a cost-benefit analysis, but on a more diffused emotive appeal, where the foundations of trust and the faith of the communion between the state and the soldier would now be questioned.

A rationale given is the arresting of the outflow of superseded officers, and suggesting in a way, giving them a disincentive of lowered pensioner benefits if they chose to leave. A rather unusual logic, suggestive of an accountant's outlook, hardly that of a leader, soldier, or a statesman.

The deed makes it worse for the ill-conceived words. What worth is the leadership, when instead of the promised 'vikas' offers 'hras'? Surely

those who leave service, carry their discipline, training and experience for the betterment of the country.

Their continued service, wherever it be, contributes in no small measure to the strengthening of the recipient organisation and that of the nation. As has also been pointed out, the diminishing of terms of service post induction is likely to be contentious and

may not find favour in the courts in view of prior precedents.

If they are to be implemented two decades later, it would need to be thought through carefully, keeping in mind the already undersubscribed recruitment. To conclude, the slew of rather unfortunate measures taken in the near past to the detriment of the interests of the Armed Forces

personnel does not speak highly of our leadership. The proposal for curtailment of pensions is a rather deplorable thought, fraught with disturbing possibilities. There is great weakness in the belief for the scheme, for it doesn't seem to have strong grounds. It would be prudent to let it be yet another study, lying in the dark closets of the Ministry of Defence.



The DMA policy is likely to affect future promotional prospects for officers.

The Last Word

The recent letter from the DMA (on proposed increase of retirement age of military personnel and proportionate decrease of their pension based on their length of service) initially surfaced on social media without any press release or formal statement. The contents of the letter itself led many to believe that it was a fake letter planted to create ripples in the Army circles. After the breaking of the news story by the Tribune also many veterans found it difficult to digest its contents.

The news of this proposed letter was believed to be true by all only

after the Times of India (TOI) and Indian Express reported the same and of course when the contents were divulged by the CDS himself! Since the contents of the proposed letter were highly disturbing this highly agitated both the veterans and serving officers alike.

'Mission Victory India' decided to initiate an objective debate by obtaining well considered responses with views, comments, and analysis of the same to reach a possible conclusion, consensus, and proposed way ahead. Our three-part fierce debate has highlighted frank, forthright and hard-hitting views

from serving officers and veterans. Collectively all these well-articulated and analysed responses convey that the implementation of the contents of the proposed letter will cause immense harm to the Armed forces than do any good.

All the issues are highly debatable and likely to further agitate the veteran fraternity and may lead to another agitation like OROP, possibly Protection of Pay and Pension (POPP) Agitation. We earnestly hope that better sense prevails, and such lopsided and controversial proposals do not ever surface again. 🇮🇳



Should COs be Leading from the Front?

Should a CO, be directly involved and personally conducting small unit tactical operations risking the onerous responsibility of his command? Do we not have competent, inspired and dynamic younger officers to lead such lower level tactical Operations?

By Aritra Banerjee, Colonel Vinay B Dalvi (Retd)

Background

The martyrdom of Colonel Ashutosh Sharma, the Commanding Officer (CO) of 21 Rashtriya Rifles (21 RR) on 2 May 2020, while leading his unit team during a counter-insurgency/ terrorism operation (CI/CT) in Handwara, a town situated in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district has posthumously earned the heartfelt acknowledgement for conspicuous bravery from his countrymen. Col. Sharma's act of valour is a testament to the sacred & selfless spirit of the officers of the Indian Armed forces.

However, the sad loss of this highly decorated CO has raised many eyebrows, especially in military circles and triggered a hot debate. Must our COs always be at the forefront in

leading small teams in such CI/CT Operations, jeopardizing the command of their units?

The Indian Armed Forces 'lead from the front' culture has come into sharp focus, especially in context with COs of units deployed in CI/CT Ops. During the past five years India has lost three COs in such Operations. Col. MN Rai and Col. Santosh Mahadik were two CO's who sacrificed their lives in the line of duty in 2015.

Trigger

Several questions have arisen from this recent tragedy. Should a CO, a Colonel rank officer be directly involved and personally conducting small unit tactical operations risking

the onerous responsibility of his command?

Do we not have competent, inspired, and dynamic younger officers to lead such lower level tactical operations? Is a CO required to prove or display his bravery in this manner so often? Where are the younger officers? Why can't they lead such operations? The 1999 Kargil War was won by young officers who successfully led from the front!

The spate of debates and discussions on the above subject led Col Vijay (1971 war veteran) of Ashok Chakra battalion to circulate an advisory to all COs deployed in CI/CT operations. The points highlighted by him certainly merit consideration and debate by all

concerned. The COs to whom it is addressed have a lot to gain from it.

The tragic loss of Col Sharma at this juncture brought to the fore the names of Col. NJC Nair of 16 Maratha Light Infantry and Colonel Vasanth Venugopal of 9 Marathi Light Infantry. Both these gallant Commanding Officers were posthumously decorated with the Ashok Chakra, the highest peacetime award for conspicuous bravery of the highest order.

Colonel NJC Nair made the supreme sacrifice on 20 December 1993, while

breaking through an ambush laid by Naga insurgents on his unit's advance party. Colonel Venugopal made the ultimate sacrifice while personally leading a body of troops against terrorists attempting to flee during an operation in J&K's URI sector in 2007.

Is the Indian Army's unique culture and reputation for officer leadership 'to lead their men from front' equally applicable to COs of units deployed in CI/CT Operations, especially in J&K? What are the possible circumstances or compulsions when the CO must lead from the front? When should he

not risk his life in the higher interest of his command?

The well-considered responses of battle hardened veterans and serving brothers in arms (within security constraints/considerations) who have seen and experienced it all should help and enable a clear and complete picture to emerge on this hot current topic of national debate especially on the print and electronic media. The esteemed responses will surely remove several dark clouds of ignorance and illuminate many minds.



Responses by Veterans



Lt Gen Vishnu K Chaturvedi (Retd), ex DG (Manpower & Planning)



A Commanding Officer (CO) may have to take spot decisions at times; any delay may change the script. Nothing succeeds like success, and failure teaches the importance of a timely response. There is a very thin line between success and failure. The onus remains on the Commanding officer.

What they did was correct and appropriate under the circumstances. We must not sit in judgment over this episode. The result would have been entirely different if the operation would have been successful, in that case the CO would have been given kudos! Armchair criticism is most undesirable at this stage when facts are totally hazy.

I do not approve of the letter to COs, please let the CO decide what he should do. Let us not try and teach him. They are as good as we were. This type of courage is required. No-one knows under what circumstances he decided to go with such a small force. Number of us have done it, most of the time with success.

The difference between a success and greater success in such operations is a fraction of seconds. Decision making is his, and many have succeeded. This is our greatest strength, let us not decry it. Our COs are our strength. He took the decision in the best interest and traditions of our Army, not for getting a personal reward. His sacrifice cannot be demeaned.



Maj Gen Raj Mehta (Retd), ex-GOC 19 Inf Div (J&K), Columnist FORCE Magazine



The day rank comes as a dividing line between the soldiers and officers will be the death of the Indian Army as we know it. Instead of legislating from comfortable offices, why don't we leave the choice to the CO? Bde Cdr? GOC? Rommel, Guderian, Manstein have legendary reputations for leading. These weren't earned sitting way back.

Israel has won its wars leading. Death in war is an accepted risk for brave men. The medal I respect most is my wound medal earned as a Sector Commander in RR in South Kashmir. The other medals are there but do not count for much.

Wake up India! Celebrate that your officers, Colonel and below are out there and making a difference, a few higher ranked officers. More must go and do what needs doing; plan well and execute to win; laugh at loss and accept with honour.



Maj Gen CD Sawant (Retd), ex GOC Inf Div & Comdt MLIRC



My response is based on my experience of command of my unit in Srinagar from July 1991 to Jan 1994. It was a time when many senior officers were worried that the Kashmir Valley may merge with POK due to actions by the Pak trained terrorists. I do not want to blow my trumpet, but the fact is, as a CO while fighting with these terrorists I was wounded twice and four of our officers including my 2IC were also injured. It was our destiny that none of us succumbed to our injuries.

I will first talk about what happened in the case of 21 RR. If you look at the area, you will realise that Handwara is more or less surrounded by a forest. I believe entire 21 RR was deployed in the forest trying to locate the terrorists who were reported to have been seen there about a couple of days ago.

In such operations all sub units are deployed for specific tasks and it is only CO and his QRT (Quick Reaction Team) is available to exploit fleeting opportunities that may be available. In instant case the CO's QRT was indeed very small, which should not have been the case. As the CO received information about hostages being held up by the terrorists, he thought it best to tackle the situation with whatever is available with him rather than wait for some nearby sub unit to arrive.

Maybe the house in which the hostages were believed to have been held had more than one exit or way for the terrorists to get away, hence he thought it prudent to enter the house and rest is history. He could have waited for his sub unit to arrive rather than risk himself and his men which were not many. I wonder how come a Major was also with him, where was the sub unit of the Major? The CO took it upon himself to resolve the issue and paid for it with his and the lives of his companions.

No CO worth his salt thinks about an additional decoration or career in such situations, he only thinks about the target or objective that is allotted to his unit and makes best efforts to achieve the same. With experience I can say that the CO is the best judge in such situations, and none should do back seat driving during such situations. Yes many times the actions do not succeed, and lives are lost, but it is part of the game.

I can quote numerous examples of not only COs but senior officers getting involved in such situations. Gen JJ Singh was commanding a reserve brigade in Uri sector, In one such incident there was a report of some terrorists nearby his HQ and since no other unit or sub unit was available he himself went out with his QRT and got injured in the thigh during a firefight.

Another case was of Gen Inder Verma who was commanding the Dagger Division and wanted to influence a particular operation with his presence and in the bargain was injured in his arm. Yet another GOC of a reserve division whenever deployed in the valley used to venture out with his QRT during Cordon and Search operations.

Late Gen Mavi while commanding a division in the valley was caught in crossfire and his ADC was injured in South Kashmir. Gen Zaki was also involved in a fire fight in South Kashmir when he was commanding a Corps. Some may call such actions as unwarranted Bravado, but these officers thought it prudent to get involved in such operations



Col JP Singh (Retd), ex Infantry, Military Historian



As anticipated, after the martyrdom of Col Ashutosh Sharma, CO 21 RR, a hot debate has started, should the COs be dying for nothing in routine CI or counter terrorism actions.

Leading from the front has been a significant military leadership trait in the Indian Army since long past. This is what I have witnessed in my 34 years Infantry service including 6 years on the LoC and two and half years in Op Pawan of Sri Lanka. Nation has seen it vividly in the Kargil War.

In any and every tactical operation, in war, on the LoC, in CI operations, precious lives of officers and men are always at stake. At some point in time when it becomes dangerous for the men in action, CO has to position himself tactically so that his presence is felt by his men and he can influence the emerging situations. Hence, he has to be in the closer vicinity of action. How close is his discretion because it is for a specific operational objective? There is the dilemma of life and death of the men he commands.

Handwara operation went on for 38 hours. It means that the terrorists were many, well equipped and strongly entrenched. Hence CO presence there was unavoidable. Hence Col Ashutosh was where he was supposed to be and did what he was meant to do as an experienced and competent Commander. Hence his sacrifice on the line of duty is in accordance with military ethics.

No aspersions can be cast on his gallant sacrifice. Debate on the issue is welcome but the supreme sacrifice is monumental and inspiring for the younger generation of leaders. Though I regret the loss of five previous lives in the encounter, I salute the bravery and sacrifice of Col Ashutosh and his team



Col Narendra Sheoran (Retd)



Sad that we are losing the precious lives of our troops even today. While I am no expert in making a detailed analysis and have not had any first-hand experience, some questions are well on the card, not for this operation as such but in the broader context of redefining the narrative for the terrorist and their masters. Under the present circumstances, when there is virtually no interference of local paid public demos to subvert an ongoing op, do we need to be hasty in its execution.

There is also I believe no need for senior commanders to press for early results. On the contrary, they should be concentrating upon 'No own troop casualty' while much can be argued in favour of the decisions of the commanding officers' decision on the spot, in this or any particular op. The point is that every case of the death of our own troops is a sort of victory for the terrorist in asymmetric warfare.

The other issue that troubles me is that the situation has been brought under relative control several times in the past, by the forces, making it conducive for some hard-political decisions and change strategy. Especially since the Art 370 has been done away with, hard choices are not just needed to capitalize on it, but doable. We need to put an end to this once for all.

To start with, let us not hand over the bodies and give them a burial. Just burn these after the mandatory postmortem. Also, rethink how to deal with the families of the dead terrorist. I also notice that after retirement, most big shot Generals who have the micro and macro level experience, start writing smart essays beating around the bush, instead of calling out the mistakes and remedies needed to be enforced top-down from the Govt level.



Brig BP Patnaik (Retd)



I normally do not subscribe to any view on how an operation should be carried out or not. I have done five tenures in J&K, from 2/Lt to a full Colonel. The first principle which we teach our subordinates is NO casualty whatsoever to the troops taking part in any operation. So, what the hell is happening nowadays. I have served in the Handwara area. Those days Sopore was the hot spot. I have taken part in operations in Sopore way back in 87/88. But never was action taken like in this operation.

I am not trying to ask questions regarding the decision taken by the CO, but I just can't imagine a decision being taken to go into action with such little force. Where have the SOPs gone? I am really sad. A CO twice decorated taking this type of decision? I will leave it at that.



Brig IS Gakhal (Retd), ex RR Sector Cdr, Comdt Sikh Regt Centre



The Commanding officer as the man on the spot is the sole judge of the ground situation and requirement of his presence upfront. CI ops are non-conventional and situation dynamic over nanoseconds. Those who compare it to conventional warfare will miss the point and criticise the presence of the CO upfront.

RR unlike an infantry battalion has manpower pooled from a set of groups that turns over as personnel complete tenures. Manpower is transient over 2-2.5-year tenures. The CO thus has a constant motivational role and his visibility is essential. RR deploy on a dynamic CI grid, and as situations develop the CO and his QRT may be the only force closest to the point of contact. Are we suggesting he sits pretty till others can mobilise? No way!

The CO cannot sit back, and hope results will flow, it also creates a gulf between the leader and the led, if the CO remains base bound. Those that comment about incompetent junior leadership are divorced from reality. Our junior leadership is professionally competent and extremely motivated.

Please do not question a CO for being up front, self-preservation is a human instinct and it takes courage and motivation to overcome it. The malice that needs to be addressed is about adequacy of operational equipment provided in CI scenario. The following will greatly help in diminishing military casualties:

- Man-portable UAV for over wall visibility.
- Flame throwers.
- Helmet mounted cameras for instant feed, COs can then monitor from afar.
- Robotic cameras and weapons.

Just a few of the many that our men need to cut their own casualties. The loss of a CO is tragic and should be avoided, but god forbid if it happens the unit is motivated to take revenge. Finally, in dynamic operations it's always the man on the spot, let us leave it to him. The COs have rarely let down the Indian Army. Let us not curb their initiative and operational freedom by imposing unwarranted caution.



Capt Kamal Singh (Retd), IN (Shaurya Chakra)



A CO can do everyone's job, it is a given. Otherwise he will not be a CO. The problem in the current ambiguous times and warfare however is the ability to see through a given situation and develop a proportionate response to deal with it, in accordance with the Rules of engagement. This calls for the experience on part of the CO.

The problem with leading from the front, in the hallowed traditions of the yesteryear's as compared to the present times is that the CO is actually compromising his primary duty as a planner, strategist and chief executive. The point is in the vacuum caused by his absence, "who does the CO's role" This is the critical difference between victory and defeat today, both factual and notional.



Cdr Ravindra Pathak (Retd), ESM Activist



I do not agree that the Commanding officer has to lead from the front literally. Unfortunately, this syndrome has developed due to the general tendency to blame the commanding officer for everything. He has a tough task to perform with limitations far beyond his means to overcome. He has to deal with matters like shortage of manpower, lack of trained manpower due to extraneous duties in peace stations, lack of modern and latest weapons, and the lack of will in the service to give responsibility to juniors and hold them responsible and accountable.

The officer who wrote justifies his presence in the most dangerous position in the raid but falls short of analyzing the reasons why he needed to be there. We have always taken pride that we have a large officer casualty whilst leading from the front but somewhere this has gone to higher ranks who still think they need to lead from the front in a battle like situation.

When one reaches command level you are too costly in terms of training costs and more importantly experience that is gone forever. This then leads to a situation where instead of the second in command taking charge, we have to replace the Commanding officer with an old horse. In the Navy, we have the second in command fully trained to take over a unit if the Commanding officer for some reason was not in a position to perform command function.

I feel that there is a very urgent need to battle inoculate youngsters before sending them to units on the frontline, bravery needs to also be supplemented with brain use and that is training



Brig BL Poonia (Retd)



Comments with Reference to 'Open Letter to all CO's in Kashmir':

Reference the article by Col Vijay on the subject. While the officer, in his article, has conveyed a very pertinent point, which has a lot of merit; it may not always be applicable in every situation.

I commanded a Battalion in a terrorist affected area for three years. I did not have a single officer who had any experience in fighting militancy, except for me. Hence, I personally led each and every operation wherever and whenever there was even the slightest chance of militants opening fire. It was to save the lives of my men, using my experience.

It was also to make sure that I used my experience to train the officers to conduct such operations by taking them along with me. It was not to get the entire credit or all awards for myself; rather I

ensured that not only the officers but even the JCOs and Other Ranks were recommended for awards as per their demonstrated performance. And the best part was that I could be absolutely fair in my recommendations as I had an opportunity to personally witness their performance on ground.

My Battalion got 70 awards including a Shaurya Chakra (an NCO), three Sena Medals (two officers and one JCO); I got a VSM. The Battalion was awarded with "Unit Citation" too. No one's credit was stolen. In fact one of my officers told me that had it not been for me, he could have never imagined getting an award, since I was the one who pushed him to his full 'potential', of which he himself wasn't aware. He told me this not while serving under me, but years later when he just happened to meet me.

I had an opportunity to lead three militant 'Camp Raids' on three different occasions with a 'two company-strength size' force each time, when my position as a CO, as per the teaching, should have been between the two companies, but I positioned myself just behind the Section Commander, who was just behind the two scouts of the leading section, because that was the position where the most important, crucial, critical and timely decision making was required.

It was primarily to ensure saving the lives of the men. Though it had its own risks and repercussions, yet these are the command decisions which must rest purely at the discretion of the commanding officers.

Each CO will have his own opinion and own judgement based on his experience, confidence, and the situation. While I don't say that the officer is wrong in expressing his point of view, rather he has brought out many sensible and pertinent points, that need to be appreciated and considered, this is simply another point of view.

A commander, no matter what his rank, should go to the 'hot spot', to the place where judgement counts, where a true feel of the actual situation can be gained, that simply is not transmitted by telephone or radio - in fact is transmitted in no other way than through the six senses of the man who is there. How far forward, will depend on the rank as well as upon the situation.

There can be no set rule, unless the rule is that when in doubt err towards the front and not towards the rear. Command of troops is an art, a free creative activity based on character, ability and power of intellect. And the prerogative of such decision making must rightfully rest with the commanding officer because that's a function of command.



Col Joseph Samuel (Retd)



Day in and day out we hear of brave officers and men biting the dust and being hailed as martyrs and heroes. Remember what Patton said? "I don't want you to die for your country. You should make the other poor dumb bastard die for his country!"

We must evolve tactics and strategy of how to stay alive, while decimating the enemy. We should not take refuge under the dictum that a percentage of casualties is acceptable. Why should it be acceptable?

We have huge departments (Staff college, senior command, Higher command, National Defence College (NDC), Research & Wing (R&AW), Intelligence Bureau (IB), Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) among others) working out plans and strategies, and here we have two hastily trained guys snuffing out five of our best. Seriously something is not right. Its high time the ostrich pulled its head out of the sand, and worked out a fool proof method to deal with this nonsense



Col CM Chavan (Retd)



Leading the men from the front has been the tradition and the culture of the Indian Army. But this ethos has been taken to a level where the COs are competing to display one-upmanship in their formations. The Commanders are to be equally blamed to have not checked the COs from doing so.

In the race for getting positive results and catches, the COs have forgotten to refrain from such foolhardiness. This also is the result of not having confidence in the junior leadership, which; is where the role of the COs comes to the forefront and that is training.

It is also true that the RR and infantry battalions may not be getting time for training on the ground as they are committed 24×7. Hence to overcome this situation, after every operation it should be critically discussed threadbare and lessons brought out for implementation in the next similar operation.

Tools like drones (if not authorized, they should be) can be used to see the operation in real-time so that the CO can see the performance of junior officers sitting in Command Posts and can correct them subsequently or intervene during the operation if so required on radio set and correct the junior leader.

The COs should be involved in motivating and boosting the morale of junior officers and encourage them, even when they make mistakes as; the aim is not to condemn but correct them and make them understand and be available to pat their backs whenever they do well.

This would go a long way in encouraging and building up the confidence of junior officers and JCOs. A CO has reached his level after having done a number of courses and years of experience as compared to the other officers of the unit and as such, is an asset of the unit and that of the Army as well.

He should use his second in command effectively and personally get involved when he is essentially required to be present in an operation. He should always rally behind his officers and men and stand by them, which will automatically boost the morale of the officers and the men. Only when it is a battalion level task, the CO should get involved physically.

It is pertinent that COs understand this and conduct themselves accordingly. The lure of awards should be avoided and ultimately the work of a battalion is always seen by the Cdr and CO would always be rewarded for this.



Col NP Sharma (Retd)



Leading from the front is a very desirable trait which any officer can display. Bravery displayed by any officer is laudable irrespective of rank and merits recognition. However, it needs to be ensured that the commander of the armed forces at the decisive point/area is of a rank and status in keeping with the enemy to be optimum.

None can deny the knowledge and experience of a CO but what is of far greater importance is the rank and service of the officer detailed to lead a particular operation at the decisive point /area which may at times be better dealt by a much junior officer.



Col Rajinder Kushwaha (Retd), Author, ex CO 3 Bihar, Author & Analyst



When one does not clearly understand one's own role, one tends to become confused and consequently one ends up taking the wrong call. What makes matters worse is the unfortunate tendency of the army to cover up such glaring mistakes under the guise of patriotism and bravery. Praises are undeservingly showered on people who should be court martialed!

My rather blunt observations have nothing to do with the tragic mishap of 2 May 2020, of the 21 Rashtriya Rifles. I truly salute the brave heart for his act of gallantry is genuinely commendable. However, I am equally perplexed and left astounded and wondering what it was that guided or rather motivated him to be with the leadership team without a backup team!

How was the outside bathroom left unchecked? Was Col Ashuthosh Sharma and his team led into a trap? Perhaps an inquiry would eventually establish what actually took place during the course of the operation. But till then these are inconvenient questions which will need to be asked.

There remains an urgent need to distinguish the role, function, and deployment of Infantry Battalions (Bn) in environments of insurgency and war, as the two are poles apart in nature. To be more specific, in war the enemy is known, and an infantry Bn is used as a concentrated punch at the point of impact. In short, the frontage employment is very less, whether in attack or in defence and in any type of terrain. Here command and control (C&C) are centralised with the CO, including the execution of the given task.

However, in an insurgency environment, an infantry Bn is deployed against an unknown, elusive and largely unseen enemy, in smaller more dispersed blobs over more extensive frontage. In the case of insurgency, the command structure is decentralised, however the control is retained with the CO. The rationale behind it is that the initiative is with the insurgents due to fleeting situations on the ground.

Therefore, the CO must allow execution at lower levels but coordinate and control the operations. Obviously, he does not have to be in the front but rather plan, guide, coordinate and retrieve situations if they go wrong.

So, if the CO himself was a frontline scout, then there would be a control and coordination vacuum. Who will retrieve him if he falls to insurgent bullets? I feel that in routine cases where the CO leads, they do so seemingly motivated by extraneous reasons.

Worse could be that the CO neither knows how to use his subordinates, nor is he sure of his own role. Once or twice is acceptable but if it becomes a matter of routine, then it ought to be checked by the higher Commander. Such COs are a danger to the organisation in actual war.

It is a wrong sense of bravery, the Nagrota terror attack, which took place a few years ago, should be a case in point to tell all commanders to keep away from the scene of action. 'Staggered terrorist' actions look for such a scene to inflict more casualties.

It is a falsity that leading from the front is the job of the CO. I would call it professional greed. It is a well-known fact that insurgency/terrorism prone areas are treated as arenas for 'punching your tickets', as the authors of 'Crisis in Command', Richard Gabriel and Paul Savage highlight. Kashmir is particular, is a glamour bazaar for Indian Army officers. It provides opportunities to careerists to decorate their chests and move up the professional ladder.

This is what had happened to the US army in Vietnam. Incidents like the Mai Lai massacre took place. Not that it did not happen in Kashmir. We just tend to cloak them under the guise of patriotism. In 2000, a DIG of BSF was killed by his own men, but it was covered up as a terrorist attack. The same thing happened in the case of CO of 4 RR, Col Balbir Singh, though later the culprits were caught.

In the case of the 21 RR CO, I have my apprehensions as to what motivated him to be with the front-line team? I am not questioning his valour, but what led him to this? Was he lured or trapped by his own informer? I do feel it is so.

I can quote incidents from the RR Battalions methodology of functioning. My own experience and knowledge of the valley from 1997 -2000 tells me about the wrongs that have crept in. RR battalions generally have double agents working as informers. In some cases, the COs know, in other some cases, they do not.

Some of the informer's act as the guides for the infiltrating terrorists. They would generally let 2-3, small-time terrorists, get captured/ killed, but most of the high-value ones would be allowed to escape.

This is the informers' general modus operandi in Kashmir. Besides that, these agents also manage weapons haul to show their operational efficiency and competence. In some cases, there is pressure from higher-ups on COs for more 'Kills' and action. Therefore, maybe it is a case of professional survival that COs do resort to such devious methods? But it happens!



A soldier from 15 Rashtriya Rifles (Gorkha) after a cordon and search operation in Kashmir

Conclusion & the Way Ahead

Many poignant issues have been well articulated by several senior and experienced veterans who have shared their professional military views on sensitive questions raised in the debate. The responses are interestingly divided with good 'food for thought' for all concerned. Most respondents are in overwhelming support of CO's leading from the front in the current challenging and trying circumstances.

One of the critical reasons cited by most respondents in favour of COs leading from the front is the high personal example of leadership that

invariably raise the morale of troops risking their lives in unforgiving counter insurgency environments. However, veterans who have responded against the practice of CO's engaging in lower tactical operations have pointed out few points worth review and reflection.

Issues like availability of human resources (especially officer shortage), pressures on a CO, a misplaced sense of bravado, lack of adequate technology and equipment available to our counter-insurgency forces and careerism do need serious consideration and reflection by all those who are responsible and accountable.

The responses to the open letter written by Col Vijay (71' war veteran) to CO's serving in J&K have received mixed reactions. The purpose of the debate was to get the well-considered views, comments and suggestions of professional and experienced veterans with a view to educate and enlighten all concerned about the hard facts and grim reality on ground in the prevailing CI/CT environment in J&K.

All responses have collectively cleared many doubts and myths by projecting the harsh reality of operations that our security forces (Indian Army) are currently confronted with in the valley. 🇮🇳



The Theaterisation of Command: Discussing the History, Rationale & Feasibility of Proposed Policy

The ongoing standoff with China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) has once again brought the focus on the need for 'Theatre Commands' in order to ensure seamless 'Tri-service cohesion' and 'coordination' in the event of hostilities. Defence experts weigh in the 'pros' and 'cons' of said proposal.

By Aritra Banerjee

Theatre Commands: A Quick Background

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat had spelt out the road-map for the restructuring of the Indian Armed Forces into five distinct 'Theatre commands' earlier this year. The ongoing standoff with China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) has once again brought the focus on the need for 'Theatre Commands' in order to ensure seamless 'Tri-service cohesion' and 'coordination' in the event of hostilities.

The need for interoperability and jointmanship among the three services has long been recommended

by the armed forces and had been brought up by the Prime Minister at the Combined Commanders Conference in 2015. Subsequently in 2017, Admiral Sunil Lamba, (Then Chairman Chief of Staff Committee) gave a presentation on 'Theatre Commands' at another Combined Commanders Conference at the Indian Military Academy (IMA), Dehradun.

According to Gen. Rawat, the 'Air Defence Command' led by the Indian Air Force (IAF) is said to be operational by March 2021, while the proposed 'Peninsular Command' focusing on the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), by merging the existing Eastern and Western Naval

Commands will likely be operational by 2022.

As aforementioned India is looking at the creation of five 'Theatre Commands' to replace the 19 Commands which are currently operational by the Tri-Services. (17 Commands are a culmination of all the structures of the Indian Army, Navy and IAF; Two commands are the integrated Tri-Service Commands, namely the Andaman & Nicobar Command and the Strategic Forces Command) The restructuring is aimed at optimal use of resources, and effective cohesion for the nation's future warfighting requirements.



What Defence Experts in Favour of Theaterisation Have to Say...



Brig (Dr) Rajeev Bhutani (Retd), Author & Analyst



In military parlance, a 'Theatre' is a contiguous geographical area on which military operations are carried out. 'Theatre' is not a new term, it has long existed and had become dominant during the Second World War when Field Marshal Montgomery, in North Africa, had moved his supporting Air Force Headquarter from Alexandria to El Amin where his Eighth Army HQ was located.

Thereafter, as history remembers it...the iconic Normandy landings! That is a classic example where the integration between the various services of different countries were achieved. The same concept (Theatre) was followed in the Korean War, but thereafter the lesson was forgotten and the United States came up with the Goldwater Nikolas Act of 1986, and from 1986 onwards they constituted what we call 'Theatre Command', which they (Americans) called 'Combatant Commands'.

They (USA) got nine such commands and these combatant commands are aligned according to their geographical areas or even globally as per their function. Various branches of their Armed Forces; US Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps report to a single combatant commander, who in turn gets the orders directly from the US President.

Theaterisation In the Indian Context

We (Indians) are not lacking in our thinking. In the late 1980's our illustrious strategic thinkers like K Subramaniam and Lieutenant General SK Sinha, a soldier and statesman, had been talking about the need for Theatre Commands and the appointment of the Chief of Defence Staff position. What had happened was that there was no political will, and there was bureaucratic interference, resulting in several committees.

What we have now gotten is because of our PM Narendra Modi, once he took over in 2014. You can say that in the 2015 Combined Commanders Conference, he displayed his concern for the lack of jointness amongst the Tri-Services. Thereafter on 24 January 2017, in the Indian Military Academy, Dehradun, there was another Combined Commanders Conference where Admiral Sunil Lamba, who was the Chairman Chief of Staff Committee at the time, gave a presentation on 'Theatre Commands'.

Beginning with the Lowest Common Denominator

The best course of action is to start with the lowest common denominator, that's what our CDS Gen. Rawat has done. They (Armed Forces) are starting with the 'Air Defence Command' first. There is (already) semblance of joint working existing between the IAF and Army Air Defence (AAD). They work together in the field at various places. The IAF is primarily responsible for the entire air defence of the country, the AAD further contributes to it.

The IAF has got both offensive and defensive assets, whereas the AAD has got their own guns, missiles, and radars. They can easily be integrated with each other. It is now a question of establishing a commander over them, having good communications and carrying out the task.

In fact, I feel that we should have a command which has Indian characteristics. The US and China have each got tremendous resources, they can allocate them (accordingly), but in our case the hall mark is not allocation but rather the utilisation of resources in a very flexible manner.

I will give an example of Artillery, it has got long range weapons, so how do they achieve allocation? The long range is given in support to some however at the same time the artillery can be deployed with a different unit in support by allocating them at priority...in that manner.

The Way Forward

There should not be any problem in getting an 'Air Defence Command', following which there should be a 'Logistics Command'. If one goes by the literal definition, then 'logistics is the science of movement.'

However here 'logistics' not only means the movement, but it is also the maintenance and procurement of common equipment which will be used in all the three services. So, if that is achieved, then there will be a good integration among the Tri-services.



VAdm Shekhar Sinha (Retd), ex-Chairman IDS, ex DAC



A positive development has been that the CDS has the power to take these decisions and carry them forward, unlike the older times (before the appointment of CDS), when the decisions were often very late to come and used to take a while to implement. But here it is a forgone conclusion, it is a decision that there will be 'Theatre Commands.' There will be jointness, so one big hurdle has been crossed!

What the committees are going to do now is not find out whether we should do it or not, but rather how to do it. So, the decision on whether we shall implement 'Theater Commands' is way behind.

The theaterisation of command is necessary. Before the historic appointment of a CDS I was heading the Integrated Defence Staff (IDS) Headquarters for quite some time, and the proposal had been submitted to the government.

Peninsular Command & Prospect of a J&K Command:

Now coming to the Peninsular Command, how to affect (read implement) it is (the basis on which) the study has been initiated. I am sure that the Naval HQ will come out with...not so say that it cannot be done but rather, how it is to be done!

Similarly, there is talk about a Western and Eastern Command, there is a talk about an Air Defence Command. As far as Jammu & Kashmir is concerned, some part of it is being looked after by Northern Command while some part of it is being looked after Western Command, so there is a bit of duality which makes the process of decision making implementation a little bit time consuming, despite being in the era of Information Technology.

As far as the Peninsular Command is concerned, my sense is that it will probably be called an 'Indian Ocean Command.' Because when one says 'Peninsula' it sounds like a land construct, whereas when one calls it an 'Indian Ocean Command' then it (highlights) the maritime primacy.

It is a good development. However the assets...possibly some more assets will be required in all three cases, because if you have the Eastern and Western Commands of the Indian Army, the assets of the IAF may not be adequate to allocate permanent forces with each of the commanders. Therefore, there will have to be some double backing, there has to be some redeployment etc but I am certain that they (IAF) will work it out.

It (Peninsular Command) is a good development; unity of command is always better. The areas are going to be vast as far as the Navy is concerned and he (Gen Rawat) has also said that it will be headed by a naval officer and rightly so. However, it will also have a little bit of an IAF component as they now have a strike element etc...etc...etc. But the strike element still requires input from a maritime patrol aircraft.

So, all in all I think it is a positive development. I guess that asset buildup will take some time and therefore the implementation of these, my sense is that they will have to go a little bit slower than what we think now.

...More on the Possibility of a J&K Command

The issue of J&K as I had mentioned (is complex). Some parts of it is in Ladakh while another part is in the J&K area. In Ladakh we are facing the Chinese, from there we start, and it goes right up to Arunachal Pradesh and further down. So, that is a noticeably big command! Right now, the responsibility is between the Northern and Eastern Command, so that needs to have a 'unity of command'.

If you see the 'Western Theatre' now, you know that the desert area is looked after the (Indian Army's) 'Southern Command' and some parts of the hill and mountainous areas are looked after by the 'Western Command', so there is a duality. In all probability these two will become one, so that you have the decision making that much easier and if they are fighting with each other in support, in that case probably the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) or the CDS will take a call.

Tri-Service Cohesion: The New Art of War

Future wars will be short and intense, so what we must do is...all assets of the three services must be utilised to achieve one common objective and that objective is to get the better of the adversary!

From that point of view, even if these are land based commands, they will also have the naval component attached to it in the operations wing, so that we know we can bring unseen pressures on the adversary by various naval assets...because you know they have a much longer range and reach. Obviously, they cannot fight over land, but they can affect, they can support the land war in a remarkably effective manner.

I will take you back to the Kargil conflict, one of the reasons why President Gen. Musharraf had to back out (of the conflict). One of the reasons was because the Karachi post was absolutely isolated, a lot of their equipment and munitions were not allowed and therefore the pressure.

He was told by the Americans that "look I can only share that it will be devastating if you continue (the war) because the entire (Indian) Navy is deployed in the Arabian Sea, South of Makran Coast." So, the pressure in the psychological sense is important apart from fighting a battle over the sea.

Impacting the land war is one of the most important duties of the other two services, as finally it is the Infantry who has to hold ground, we have to protect them (the Infantrymen) and their lives which are in danger.

All three forces have to work as a cohesive fighting unit. The entire force has to be applied including 'Hybrid Warfare' and other new methods of warfighting, Cyberwarfare, Special Forces, Space Command. All these are presently in the making, but what will happen 5-10 years later? I am sure that this development will be immensely fruitful.

The Way Forward

I have two pointers, firstly for the 'Joint Command' or the concept of CDS to succeed, the three service chiefs will have to give up some of their turf and they must do it because it was our requirement, it was our suggestion to the government (to appoint a CDS for ease of decision making).

Secondly, when assets are less, then it is quite possible that in peacetime the allocation (of resources) may not be the same as it would be in wartime.

Therefore, the service chiefs will have to give up some turf as far as assets are concerned. It cannot be that the Western Theatre commander says that he requires a certain amount of air assets all the time under his thumb, it may not happen as he is not in a wartime scenario.

If a war breaks out, if it is a one front war, then in that case it is obvious that the IAF will be in a position where it can cover the entire theatre or move certain squadrons to that area very quickly. To surmise, the peacetime and wartime allocation will have to be different.

Another point on the 'Peninsular Command', we tend to forget that we have 'chokepoints' under surveillance at all times and we need to sustain that because maritime wars take time to build up before it impacts the land war, it takes quite some time. It is not something that crops up suddenly as compared to the Army and IAF.

In the navy it takes time, and our adversaries must come from somewhere and during that period they can be tracked. Therefore, the navy's role will not only be limited to the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) but to all the 'choke points' to ensure that sea lanes of communication are available for the usage of the entire world, that is the intention of most of the navy.



Mayank Singh, Senior Journalist



The proposal was initiated after the 1999 Kargil war, when the Kargil Committee report was brought out, the group of minister's reports was brought out. The (formulation) of the CDS was the one which was specifically spoken about, and there was a purpose, let us understand the purpose.

Today even if we are going for a 'Theatre Command', there is a reason, and what is the reason? The policymakers, the strategic thinkers assessed that 'future wars' are going to be small, of only a few days, quick but very explosive, having a lot of assets being used in that short duration. So, in that case decision making will be the one aspect that will be immensely crucial. The army cannot be asking the IAF to provide support when the person sitting can take the decision.

Here (in this model) comes an entire region, which is under one officer who is entitled, empowered to marshal any asset, be it naval, air or land as per the requirement of the operation for a quick reaction.

The aim is to decide what is happening today and how it is being done (implemented)? The CDS Gen Bipin Rawat himself says that he has already initiated a study for the 'Air Defence Command' under the Vice Chief of Air Staff (VCAS). He says that the GSL letter will be issued by December and that he will be giving around three months for the study group to study that.

The point to be understood is that all these are to pick up the options so that we find a structure which is indigenous. Which might have a reference from a Chinese style of 'Theatre Command', a US style of 'Theatre Command' but it will be an indigenous kind of 'Theatre Command' which fits the requirement which fits the needs and requirements of the Indian Defence Services.

India is a very unique geographical feature, we have got around 7,600 km long maritime borders, huge mountainous borders (in Northern Command), here is a Western Theatre which will have marshes, deserts, mountains, requiring a unique format of our own 'Theatre Command'.

The ball has been rolled, the studies will bring out the options and then from all the feedback we (policymakers) will choose a style of 'Theatre Command', a structure which will meet the future requirements based on the nation's security requirements.

Marshaling All Assets...

To simplify it, let us say that there is a single man (Theatre Commander) who is competent enough to take a decision, so in the event of a war or threat to the nation he has all the assets laid in front of him which he can utilise to achieve a particular goal.

Wars are fought only when the political decision to fight it has been taken, the Defence Forces simply implement the decision. So, here you (the theatre commander) will have all the assets under you (him), how will you (he) implement them?

The Theatre Commander has a geography, an area of interest, accordingly the commander can marshal his assets and then divide them in such a way that the political objectives will be achieved.

Let's say that there will be a 'Logistics Command' and it is located at the centre of the country, whatever the map is, if a centrally located 'Logistics Command' is there, then it is supplying to all the formations and for example there are five 'Theatre Commands'; The Northern Theater Command, the Western Theatre Command, the Peninsular Command, the Air Defence Command, and then elements of Cyber, Space etc....all will be coming...that will also be distributed.

The most important aspect is logistics...to bring it at the centre, so that it is supplying to everyone...you are fighting wars and then accordingly the regions as per your specific targets and goals or threat perceptions; according to which regions are divided going by the example of five 'Theatre Commands'

Another option which was given, let's say...the northern border contiguous to the LAC which is 3,488 km, if it is there and if it appears to be too long because, the western border is (in comparison) not too long, so there are also options...that keeping Nepal at the centre, it is divided East of Nepal and the West of Nepal and then accordingly commit assets.

The main objective is to achieve the upper hand over the adversary, whatever the need be. All the committees, study groups will give the options and then we will come to the options.

In Conclusion...

During peacetime, the armed forces keep exercising various formats of war, various options, scenarios are painted. Last year there was an exercise conducted by the IAF called 'Exercise Gaganshakti' in which entire assets were moved from one 'Theatre' to another 'Theatre', if we call it so...

Our forces have already started exercising their minds for the day the orders come....The 'Peninsular Command' is not just a Command which will man the oceans, it is a very futuristic Command which has got diplomatic roles as well. Things have already started moving, the studies will come out, the options will come out and will once again be studied. It is all going well, we have come in the right direction.



Col (Dr) DPK Pillai (Retd), SC, Research Fellow MP-IDSA



We cannot win by preparing to fight the previous war, we must think ahead of the loop and understand how warfare will be evolving in the coming generations. Theatre commands are an important necessity. 'Theatre', for an ease of understanding can be looked at like a movie theatre, what happens inside a movie theater remains confined within it. The show that goes on has its own paraphernalia, that is what a theatre is meant for.

It is a theatre where entire (military) operations take place. The activities in one theater does not affect the other areas that are there. For instance, during the Second World War, you had the 'European Theatre' and then you had the 'Pacific Theatre' where a different enemy was being fought. You had the Japanese...the allied forces fought the Japanese (in the Pacific theatre). So, what happened in the 'European Theatre' did never really affect what happened in the 'Pacific Command'.

The individual Theatre Commanders were independent to take decisions and actions that were important and could execute them. So, it was a completely integrated tri-service effort. It had its own logistics system, its own commanders, it had its own ability to execute operations. That is exactly what we plan to have in our five theatres.

Because we have 19 Commands between the Tri-services in our country and none of them share the same geographical location. For instance, the Indian Army's Southern Command HQ is in Pune, whereas the Indian Navy's Southern Command HQ is situated in Kochi and the IAF's Southern Command HQ is housed in Trivandrum.

There was (is) really no enmeshing of the capabilities that were (are) there, so what you have with these five Commands that are coming up is that all three services will be on one grid. They will be on one map grid so to say, eliminating the need to operate on different levels. Once we have a Theatre Command, the assets, resources, and commanders will all be on the same page. That is the idea of having a Theatre Command.

India's History with 'Jointness' and a Legacy of 'Suspicion'

When the Second World War was fought and a large number of Indian troops participated...in fact in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, the 4 Guards 1st Rajput, the battalion that I have had the proud privilege of belonging to, had undertaken the surrender of the Japanese forces (in the Pacific Theatre). Eventually we worked on a very theatre system.

The armed forces could operate within India and island territories but also in Africa and other areas. That is the reason why, very early in the days of Independence we had come up with a Joint Services Wing (JSW), that was meant to create army, navy, air force officers who had operated together, trained together and knew exactly what was required. That was the idea behind the JSW which later metamorphosed into the National Defence Academy (NDA).

The fact is that this was very much a necessity. Jointness is something that leads to synergy of forces. Now what has happened is, while NDA has had a very lofty ideal, having tri-services, it was lost. This comes from the reforms that had taken place from the (then) Chief-of-Staff of Lord Mountbatten, who had done a study for us somewhere around '47-'48 and suggested that we do away with the Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) system. Following which India had an independent air force, navy, and army chief.

Otherwise we had a Chief of General Staff which was the Army Headquarters (AHQ) and had a C-in-C. Following which we had the Tri-service chief's reporting to the C-in-C. That was removed.

Basically, it stems...from very early on in our independence, we had a kind of suspicion (from the political and bureaucratic establishment) towards what was happening around because there were military coups happening all over the countryside. There was a coup taking place in Pakistan and there were coups taking place in other regions as well, so there was an inherent distrust the political system had for the military.

That is the reason you would see the garb of civilian control over the Tri-services. Coordination between the armed forces was also not encouraged, and that is the reason why 1962 happened, where if you recall the IAF was not even used.

The lessons of '62, the setting up of committees that came up later...General Thorat was on it (committee) and the suggestions that came up actually led to a good performance in '65 and the outcome of that performance was seen in '71 when the Tri-services jointly carried out operations in Bangladesh and the Western Sector as well.

The Indian Navy carried out its operations in Karachi. It epitomised jointness at the highest level. It was not until 1999 that another committee came up, under Arun Singh (Committee on Defence Expenditure) which was one of the four task forces that was set up. One of the task forces was on the management of defence and that was headed by Arun Singh. He had suggested the creation of a CDS and the associated structures that are there.

The armed forces had created the Integrated Defence Staff (IDS), which had come up and it was meant to have cross staffing between the MoD, civilian and military personnel. Unfortunately, the synergy between the Defence Ministry and the CDS was not created. So, we had an IDS which was essentially another onion peel in the entire layer.

It really did not achieve the synergy that was required. What happened was that the three training organisations were joined together in a manner, but it was not achieved in the manner it should

have been, for instance the Staff College, NDA and other institutions...and they were supposed to be trained together.

Shedding Tribal Loyalties to Enhance Inter-Service Cohesion

I think one of the key things like what had been envisaged in the NDA setting up as a JSW, as a fall-out of the Second World War, the lesson is that people should actually cross staff and cross train with the armed forces so that you shed those tribal loyalties towards your parent service.

You see your operational responsibility and you can execute and think as the armed forces. That is where jointness would be required, where you stop seeing yourself as, well this is an army intensive thing, or you distribute your vacancies as per your numbers. I think what is required to get an entirely operationally oriented thing (structure) and that comes from cross staffing and early on cross posting of people having training together.

Risk of Replication

What happens if you don't have jointness, is that you end up replicating the same functions. For instance, we have the same training going on at multiple places. Like I said, there are training commands of the IAF in Bangalore, there is the Indian Army's Army Training Command (ARTRAC) in Shimla and various other things. So, you replicate the same things that are happening, you have multiple assets, multiple resources and multiple staff deployed on that.

In the case of air defence, the IAF also has the same air defence and the army also has its own air defence. Now there is an overlapping of responsibility. It is like working on a map with multiple layers on it. Whereas today it is a digital era, where you have everything from the 'sensor to shooter' capable of being on one grid.

You really can do away with a lot of systems that have been (overlapped)...and that can only come when you have joint training...a jointness, that can only lead up. It dovetails into the entire theatre command concept that builds up to the apex level of the management of security in our country.



Maj Gen Anil Sengar (Retd) ex ADG MF & Author



The concept of integrated commands, where Tri-service assets were placed under one authority was practiced successfully during the Second Great War, with multi-national forces. This is the way forward. However, in the Indian context, the Tri-services seem to be more concerned with losing their pride and place and becoming a subordinate service. These are unfounded worries as the changing nature and character of warfare makes every service equally critical.

While synergizing the concept is a work in progress and could take two decades or more, this will make the best use of resources and make them responsive, both in combat dimensions and logistics. It is a long journey, and it will require the Tri-services to shed their service parochialism to get the best out of this initiative.

I am certain, this is the right way forward. Does it really make sense that while the Eastern Command HQ is in Calcutta, the Equivalent IAF HQ is in Shillong?





What Defence Experts Against Theaterisation Have to Say...



Gp Capt TP Srivastava (Retd), ex-Instr, DSSC, CDM, AFA, NDA



I believe that what is intended to be implemented as Theatre Commands is not good. These theatres are not independent enough to act like the European Theatre, Pacific Theatre etc. We do not have those kinds of assets.

The Army, Navy and IAF need to maintain their individuality as per the medium they operate in yet be integrated to such an extent that minimum resources are utilised for optimum effect.

What is evolving will lead to resources being idled in one theatre but are desperately needed in another. The biggest aberration is creation of the Air Defence Command. Probability of Blue on Blue will be high as seen in the past.

Read More in Gp Capt Shrivastava's article: Theaterisation of Command: The Ill-Advised Brainchild of Pseudo-Intellectual 'Jaichands'



Brig Pradeep Sharma (Retd), ex NSG (SAG), DS AWC, Analyst



My position on these ongoing debates verges around the following: Is the concept of 'Theater Commands' something new? No, it was done by another neighbour of ours several years back!

Is it based on the strategy of a national vision with a timeline on where we want to be in terms of our standing in the international position, and the need for an Armed Forces to suitably support this vision? My response is...No!

Does it lead to enhanced strength in our Armed Forces? Only time will tell, it is too premature. Does it meet the political demands of cutting costs? Yes! Will selling land from our cantonments help modernise our forces? No! What after the land is sold? What will the government sell next? Does the concept of theater commands raise morale? It is questionable at best!

Does our physical infrastructure lend itself to this proposed change? Only in part, changes/construction will be required. Does this compensate in any manner to the loss of status or dent in the image? No! Does it increase upward mobility to open up promotions? Can India do with the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) alone on borders?

Can we face a two-front war with reduced manpower and budgets? Will the Armed Forces attract the best from our youth? Has exploiting the Armed Forces for votes set the right precedent? Mere hot air and semantics alone will not serve organisational interests!



Col Rajinder Singh Kushwaha (Retd), Author & Analyst



The idea of a 'Theatre Command' is good in principle but flawed in its execution. It is typical of the Indian Armed Forces that its leadership always reacts in a knee-jerk manner. Most often, it ends up copying others, even if it might not suit Indian environs.

What is worse is the fact that the execution of the idea was not forward looking but rather poaching upon Chinese and US systems. It must be remembered that copies are always second rate performers.

The idea of a 'Theatre Command' must seek an appropriate integration of all three wings of armed forces at the grass-root level. In other words, while a 'compound' is desired, the current proposal is only creating a 'mixture', with the unique identities of three wings.

The purpose of a 'compound' is to create a new product with new properties. Therefore 'old and separate identities' would disappear and a synthesised product would have its own advantage. The current proposal would not only lead to inter-wing friction but also cause command and control (C&C) problems.

What is worse is that different types of training and understanding of operational parameters would affect optimum performance. It would also affect the flexibility of inter-transferability of units between different kinds of terrains.

'Terrain specialisation' due to permanent deployment in a particular theatre cuts down the manoeuvrability and flexibility of armed forces. Loss of this flexibility would affect the outcome of a military conflict. To make a 'compound', three wings ought to be integrated at a basic level, the following points need to be taken care of: —

Uniform Rank Structure

The rank structure of three wings should be standardised. It would be better to create a uniform rank of officers and men of all the three services. A Captain in the army should also be a Captain in the IAF and the Navy. Similarly, a Colonel in the army should be called Colonel in the IAF too and not a Group Captain — a Captain in the Navy should be called Colonel. Similarly, a 'Naval Commander' or an 'Air Force Wing Commander' be designated as 'Lieutenant Colonel'. This is a must for proper integration.

Standardisation of Uniform

All elements of integrated theatre of whichever wing should have the same uniform. Theatre commands opposite China and Pakistan should have a combat dress as its uniform.

Additional Commands

Besides the, five proposed regional commands, India must have four additional Commands: -

- **Strategic and Space Operations Command:** It should control all strategic forces which include special forces, Strategic weapons division including Nuclear Biological and Chemical (NBC) and Inter Continental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM). The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) should be part of it. The Andaman & Nicobar Islands elements can be placed under it.
- **Information and Cyber Warfare Command:** This is particularly important for coordinated operations in a Hybrid war scenario. Manipulation of information and intelligence should be the primary task of this command. All intelligence agencies should be grouped under this.

- **North East Command:** There was also a need for a North East Command opposite Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Insurgency. One never knows when Bangladesh and Myanmar might turn against India. Time changes and strategies of nations change.
- **Internal Security Command:** It is time India must create an internal security command and dedicate proper resources under a unified command. It must become part of the overall framework of National Security. It cannot be treated in isolation anymore when China and Pakistan are actively involved in sponsoring it.

Effective Cohesion

Integration of the Indian Army and IAF elements for the regional commands opposite China, Pakistan and NE be done at the formation levels. Dedicated efforts must be allowed.

It entails from above that the Concept of Theatre Commands would only serve the purpose well if a holistic approach is adopted. It must not be done in any disconcerted manner. An overall view of National Security must be taken, and the concept must be applied based on our realistic needs.

There must not be an attempt to situate an appreciation, as is the case of Indian Army's habit of selecting the weapons first and then laying down the Qualitative Requirements (QR). Our Theatre Commands transformation must be needed-specific and not because China has it.



Capt Kamal Singh (Retd) IN, SC



The Following points need consideration:

- **The Aim of the Government in creating Theater Commands:**
 - Is it Financial to save the burgeoning costs in the Military/Defence Budget?
 - Is it aimed at creating better synergy and operating efficiency of the Armed Forces?
 - Will it free up resources for better use/redeployment/reserves?
- **Template to Base on:** Do we have a ready Template for the Theaterisation of our existing Geographic Commands?
- **Is it SMART?:** Did we audit the first Theater/Joint Command (A&N Command) on Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely performance (SMART) Metrics for delivery of its founding objectives? Has it improved the preparedness and response in this Geopolitically important Theater? Can this be a Template for our envisaged Theater commands?
- **SWOT Analysis & Assessing Risk from Change:** Have we done a Strength Weakness Opportunity and Threat (SWOT) Analysis for our contemplated move to Theater Commands? Have we prepared a risk assessment manual documenting the proposed Management of Change (MOC) and appointed MOC process owners for the proposed Theater Commands?
- **Implementing Effective Integration:** The proof of the efficiency of a fighting formation is at the cutting edge or the delivery end of business. So, for diverse units to firstly come together despite their differences in organisations, rank, C&C structure and then start working together needs organisational templates, standard operating procedures (SOP),

C&C, communication networks that have been adapted for the specific aim/function of the Command.

Needless to state, they must be first tested out, debugged and then ready for adoption. Joint training, drilling and efficiency building will be key priorities for these commands to succeed in their missions. The key question is how this will be done, while we always maintain battle readiness, considering the prevailing security environment around us.

- **Inter-Services Turf Warfare and Challenges to Jointmanship:** We need to understand how will the Senior Management, read Senior Officers of respective services (excess from subsuming of 19 Commands into 5 Theater Commands will be accommodated) How will it affect respective services cadre managements and morale of personnel.
- **Establishing a Direct Line of Comms with Political Leadership:** Theater Commanders by virtue of operational necessity/efficiency need to have a direct line of communication to the Defence Minister/PM. The basic Raison d'être for creation of the Theatre commands would be to synergise the warfighting/ conduct of operations to make it more effective and decisive in support of higher national aims.

The point here is that 'Do we have the supporting Chain of Command/ Communication procedures embedded in our procedures. From the present organizational structure, this is not seen, and clarity is lacking.



The Last Word: Maj Gen VK Madhok (Retd), 1st Course JSW

A very critical and relevant debate with all the 'pros' and 'cons' of Theaterisation with amalgamation of all our Tri Service/s Commands being examined, analysed and debated upon to reach workable combinations of various reformed, integrated Theater Commands.

The comparisons drawn by some respondents for justifying their individual analysis are based upon the vast and geographically spread out Theatre Commands specifically created for specific second World War vintage scenarios over 75 years ago.

The US systems based upon their specific needs for operational purposes too are vastly spread out and for clearly spelt out requirements or compulsions. The Chinese model too is for their clearly articulated expansionist policies.

Our own models that were considered for analysis were ad hoc and temporary models of 1971 war and

1999 Kargil Conflict considered in support of arguments put forth by analysts/respondents to back their findings, conclusions and recommendations.

However, it is very pertinent and relevant to state that the counter views formatted by respondents are well articulated, highlighted and justified with some strong points that demand objective consideration and extreme care, restraint and caution before any further venturing into the implementation of this reform proposal being apparently pushed down from top down, ie from the Government, CDS down through the Tri-services, the Commands, Formations upto to the Unit levels.

All this cumulatively appear to be more of high level exercises and forceful implementations on the lower echelons of Armed Forces, more to speedily justify the appointment of CDS and additional created organizations and

structures, than the actual pressing wartime like need/requirements of the country and Armed forces!

Hence, there is an imperative need to go about this entire exercise in a cautious, calibrated and deliberate manner by taking into confidence and consideration all the concerned stakeholders rather than pushing down the concept or philosophy down the throat to justify the appointment of CDS and his entire paraphernalia rather than an actual/ projected wartime/like imperative that threatens the security of our nation!

A detailed, deliberate and objective debate on the subject is vital by involving all the critical stakeholders before undertaking any such bold venture or major reform that could undo and negatively impact the existing efficiency and effectiveness of our entire Armed forces! 🇮🇳



India's Afghanistan Dilemma: To Stay or not to Stay!

But I am here, my leg blocks of concrete, my lungs empty of air, my throat burning. There will be no floating away. There will be no other reality tonight. - Khaled Hosseini in the 'Kite Runner'

By Colonel Rajinder Singh Kushwaha (Retd)

Outgoing United States President Donald Trump's administration has announced that it would be pulling out most of its troops from Afghanistan by 15 January 2021. Only a token presence of 2,500 troops would be kept at Bagram Air Base for strategic purposes and for future usage. God alone knows what is going to be future usage or is there some kind of such an agreement with Taliban? Perhaps, Pakistan, the facilitator of US-Taliban talks, would know better.

This has left India in a dilemma: whether to stay or not to stay in Afghanistan? In the transforming geo-politics of the region, a serious re- think is needed. If Pakistan was going to be the ringmaster of Circus in Afghanistan, India is better advised to stay out of it. Of course, pull out of Afghanistan

will bring to naught all its developmental and other activities. Maybe \$3 billion went down the drain. However, when one gambles, losses also do take place. India was gambling in Afghanistan for the last 17-18 years. It worked for some time, but now no more.

Afghanistan, historically, has been a graveyard of invaders and conquerors. Alexander the Great, who came into Afghanistan in 330 BCE, had faced strong resistance from local tribes. He was stated to have observed that Afghanistan was easy to march into, but hard to march out of. In recent history, it was found out by erstwhile Soviet leadership which led to the collapse of Soviet Union in 1989. It took 10 years for Soviet Union to disentangle itself from the Afghan quagmire.

And now it is the mighty United States, who is finding the truth of Alexander's statement on Afghanistan. It was easy for the USA to get into Afghanistan after 9/11. But it has been almost two decades, and it is not finding an honourable exit route. The long-drawn negotiations with Taliban have not produced the desired results. Terrorist activities go on unabated.

The exodus of the USA is going to create a power vacuum. It is assumed that the dreaded Taliban outfit would take control of Afghanistan. Most Indian scholars think that Pakistan would get an upper hand and India would get marginalised in Afghanistan. It has been so revealed by former US President, Barack Obama, in his book 'A Promised Land'. He says

“

Pakistan's ISI has formidable links with the Afghan Taliban. India will be badly handicapped, once the Taliban comes to power, which it would. India has no land and sea links with it to support her elements deployed there.

”

in the book that Pakistan ISI has formidable links with the Afghan Taliban.

India will be badly handicapped, once the Taliban comes to power, which definitely it would. India has no land and sea links with it to support her elements deployed there. Afghanistan is landlocked but a complex country. It is a country of multiple tribes with strong tribal loyalties. It is inhabited by many and diverse peoples like the Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbek's, Turkmen, Aimak, Pashayi, Baloch, Pamirs and Nurstanis. Multiplicity of these rival tribes makes it a volatile and a violent country. Tribal overlords are their own sovereign bosses and are not easily subdued.

Afghanistan became a state, in the real sense, in 1747 AD, when Ahmed Shah Durrani established it. It is hemmed in between Pakistan on the East and South; Iran on the west: Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to the North and China to the North East through the Wakhan Corridor. It is strategically located on the intersection of South Asia and Central Asia.

Historically speaking, the land had served as a Gateway to India. Ancient Silk route and many other trade routes converged on it from West and East, North and South. However, its land and sea link with India got snapped in 1947, when the Indian Subcontinent was partitioned and Pakistan was created. Severing of this link with Afghanistan has many connotations for trade and Geo-strategic importance for India.

Indian involvement in Afghanistan had started with the collapse

of Taliban rule in 2002. India had been helping in economic and infrastructural buildup of Afghanistan for almost two decades. It is estimated that India had expended about Three Billion dollars on various programmes of development.

As long as US troops were present, India could carry out its development programme smoothly. However, India had to use a circuitous air link through Tajikistan or Iran for movement of stores and personnels. This is because Hostile Pakistan does not provide any trade route though it's territory to India and Afghanistan. The US

administration wanted that India deploy its security forces to ensure Nationalist forces of Afghanistan are balanced against Pakistan sponsored Taliban. But it is not a worthwhile proposition,

Many Indian scholars too stress upon the need to deploy Indian military in Afghanistan. The reason seems to be more emotional than borne out of reality. They do not realise the significance of what Alexander had stated 2350 years back or what Soviet Union and USA have recently found to their dismay. They have not also learnt a lesson from Indian misadventure in Sri Lanka.,

The basic reason of Indian supporters of military intervention in Afghanistan seems to be to negate the likely influence of Pakistan in Afghanistan. It may be noted that Pakistan wants to use Afghanistan as 'strategic Depth' in a military confrontation with India. Not only this, but Pakistan also wants India to be pushed out of Afghanistan



Afghan soldiers, left, and American soldiers blew up a Taliban firing position in the village of Layadira, in Kandahar Province, in February 2013; Photo Credit/Bryan Denton

“

Whatever India was doing from Afghanistan, the same could be done from Leh and Ladakh. In fact, as a quid-pro-quo on Kashmir, India has all the right to provide logistic, moral and material support to separatists in Gilgit Baltistan.

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lock, stock and barrel. The reason for Pakistan to throw India out of Afghanistan was to disallow it to support the Balochistan insurgency.

Pakistan also cites the case of a former Indian Naval officer, Commander Kulbhushan Jadhav, who is in Pakistan custody, to blame India for destabilising Pakistan. He is accused of terrorist activities in Sindh and Balochistan.

Pakistan is convinced that it was India who was supporting the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA). Pakistan is also worried about its China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project, which it thinks India would sabotage from Afghanistan. This project, at the cost of \$62 billion, is considered as a game changer for Pakistan Economy.

In Indian parlance, maybe, India wants to use it as a second front against Pakistan. India might be also thinking of helping BLA as a tit for tat on the Kashmir Insurgency supported by Pakistan. As regards to CPEC, India has serious reservations about it, because the corridor gateway passes through Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), which India claims as its own territory.

CPEC, of course, is a major Indian concern and India would like to scuttle it at all costs. It provides a geo-strategic advantage to China, who is India's sworn enemy now. With the full operationalisation of the Gwadar port, China would gain not only economic and trade advantages but also military and strategic edge over India.

China's military presence in GB, in the garb of protection to

Kashgar-Khunjerab pass Highway to Gwadar, would endanger India's Ladakh region from West. In the long run, it is a security threat to not only Ladakh but the entire Kashmir. Therefore, India must sterilise and stall it.

The question is, notwithstanding historical and cultural linkages with Afghanistan, is it realistic for today's India to involve itself economically and militarily in Afghanistan? And at what cost, when India does not have a proper land and sea route to Afghanistan. In case a hostile Taliban government comes into power, post US withdrawal, it would not be possible for India to carry out its activities.

It seems Indian economic indulgence in Afghanistan has been wasteful. \$ 3 Billion dollars would be a sheer waste once Taliban springs to power. Taliban has no love lost with India. Like China, It cannot be trusted. Some would argue that India would lose its manoeuvrability of the second front. It is not so.

Whatever India was doing from Afghanistan, the same could be

done from Leh and Ladakh. In fact, as a quid pro quo on Kashmir, India has all the right to provide logistic, moral and material support to separatists of GB. If Pakistan can provide logistic financial support to Kashmiri militants, why should not India do it for GB? In fact, Pakistan ISI link is also established with ULFA militants. It is revealed by ULFA deputy C-in-C, Manoj Rava, alias Drishti Rajkhowa, who recently surrendered to Meghalaya police.

As it is Pakistan blames India for the situation in Balochistan, why not actually do it and openly support BLA? India should provide them a base in Ladakh and let them carry out their activities in GB and Balochistan. It would also be a cost-effective way to checkmate CPEC. Baloch insurgents could be an effective tool for an uprising in GB. India should Aim to strike at the heart of CPEC gateway.

In the final conclusion, it is assessed that India has to change its gears and do a real stock taking of geo-political environs of the region and be more proactive in GB and Balochistan all the same, India must support these covert operations not from Afghanistan but from Ladakh. Indian taxpayers' money would be better utilised from Ladakh than in Afghanistan. India should no more think of wasting funds in Afghanistan. Military involvement would be fraught with dangers. To defeat one's enemy, one ought to think of the unthinkable 🤖



Colonel Rajinder Singh Kushwaha (Retd)

Col. Rajinder Kushwaha is an ex-NDA, commissioned into 3 Bihar. He is a battle-hardened veteran of the '71 War & has served extensively in various counter insurgency environments across the country.

He is a renowned author, and a highly respected defence & national security expert and a regular contributor at the 'Fauji India' magazine, 'Defence and Security Alert' (DSA), the 'Indian Defence Review' (IDR) among others. You can reach him on Twitter: @RajeeKushwaha, Email ID: rajee749@yahoo.com

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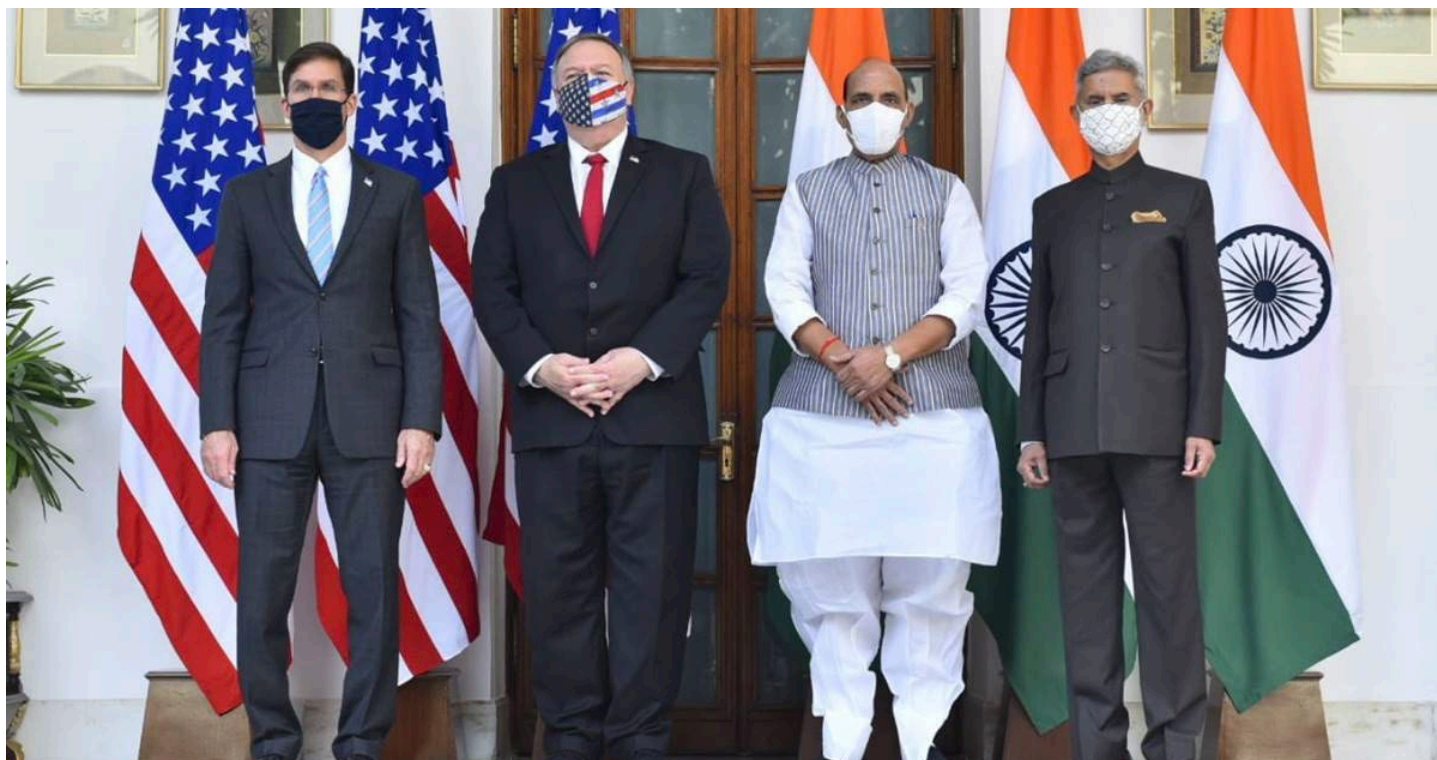


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Indo-US Military Alliance: BECA

It is presumed that with signing of BECA, USA will be willing to share sensitive target info and accurate target coordinates to enable our SSMs striking the targets with pinpoint accuracy. In return India, too, will have to share sensitive info and target details to USA.

By Group Captain TP Srivastava (Retd)

Non-aligned status of India is no longer a reality. While it has become customary in Indian Strategic Circle to blame Pt Nehru for numerous faux pas that he committed but his stance on keeping India, a non-aligned nation was his biggest and most substantive contribution.

Military alliance with any nation, particularly with a nation state, which is literally and actually across seven seas does not appear to be a sensible strategic decision. Military alliances do not necessarily require a treaty document/organization viz existing NATO and defunct Warsaw Pact among nations. Export of military hardware and signing a military treaty are two entirely different entities like the two banks of the river. But signing of an agreement

like BECA beacons towards military alliance.

It is presumed that with signing of BECA, USA will be willing to share sensitive target info and accurate target coordinates to enable our SSMs striking the targets with pinpoint accuracy. In return India, too, will have to share sensitive info and target details to USA. Subtle difference is that while USA, a global power would be in need of such info from India more than India seeking such info about our hostile neighbours.

Regional alliances aimed at regional development in spheres viz sharing of river waters, creating/construction of dams, construction of roads and railway, etc. is to facilitate mixing of citizens of neighbouring

nations on equal terms. On the other hand, a military alliance invariably is loaded in favour of the more powerful entity of the group. NATO is near perfect example of this.

According to the constitution of NATO, THE SUPREME COMMANDER will always be from US Military. All NATO campaigns were/are headed by US Military Commander. General Schwarzkopf headed the Op Desert Storm against Iraq. Thus the less powerful nation of every military alliance invariably becomes a 'second grade' nation by virtue of possessing inferior military power.

By signing agreements viz BECA, we are slowly but surely headed to become an US ally, which in military

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I would be terribly ashamed of myself and my colleagues in uniform if we were to accept and indicate by our actions that we cannot handle China threat on our own and we need BECA with USA. Let us 'milk' USA for weapons and weapon platforms and not indulge in military alliance.

”

terms is degradation of status of India vis-à-vis USA. It may be pertinent to mention that UPA government considered this issue as well but did not sign the agreement. Do we need an agreement like BECA? One of the most important benefit of this agreement is supposed to be access to sensitive information viz target coordinates, which will enhance the accuracy of our missiles targeting a vital target. I consider it to be almost an inconsequential gain in true strategic sense.

What is our Military Aim? Our stated national aim is to protect our territorial integrity and sovereignty. Indian Military is tasked towards ensuring that territorial integrity is not compromised along land and/or sea borders. Indian Military has done an outstanding job of ensuring that in spite of being ill if not poorly equipped and operating under severe constraints/restraints during operations. However, protection of 'sovereignty' related issue does not fall under the purview of Indian Military. It is the exclusive preserve of Politicians and Bureaucrats.

Every alliance invariably is in the form of intersecting circles. The portion of circle that is part of intersection does not enjoy the same degree of autonomy as against the free portion of the circle. In strategic terms it implies that every member nation of the alliance forfeits some part of its sovereignty. A classic example of military alliance between an extremely large (area wise) and powerful military nation and much smaller and far less powerful nation would be in form of concentric circles, with the largest and most powerful military nation encompassing all smaller nations within the circle.

In this model the smaller nations, though remaining independent, forfeit their sovereignty to the larger nation. For instance, Military/Political aims of France might be at variance with that of NATO, a military alliance.

By heading towards forming a military ALLIANCE with USA by signing agreements viz BECA are we prepared to forfeit a part of our sovereignty to USA is a tough question, which must be answered before taking more such decision. Are we by

knowledge USSR/Russia has never offered/asked India to sign such agreements.

Now the main issue. Why do we need BECA? With our national and military aims clearly enunciated, Indian Military will require accurate coordinates of target/s for targeting by missiles in Pakistan and China, the two main adversaries as of now. Let me elaborate. I consider Pakistan as an enemy but China as an adversary. There is a huge difference in dealing with an enemy and an adversary. If we needed BECA, we should have sought this agreement decades ago to target Pakistan. Current face off with China does not warrant this under any circumstances.

“We must not forget that USA in a not too distant past was in favour of UNSC resolutions, which were totally against India. It is the VETO of USSR that saved the day for India.



Indo-US Friendship; Graphical Representation

default walking into a trap? Are we giving wrong signals to the world, in particular to our most trusted all weather friend the erstwhile USSR, now Russia?

We must not forget that USA in a not too distant past was in favour of UNSC resolutions, which were totally against India. It is the VETO of USSR that saved the day for India. For records; Nearly 70-80% Indian military hardware as on date is of USSR/Russian origin. But we have never ever signed such agreements with Russia. To the best of my

For records; Nearly 70-80% Indian military hardware as on date is of USSR/Russian origin. But we have never ever signed such agreements with Russia.”

Current POTUS is perhaps the first POTUS, who has enunciated US postulate of international relations clearly and candidly, which is 'AMERICA FIRST'. I endorse his views fully because I as an Indian believe 'India First'. Hence US will never compromise her strategic interests. For instance, no US administration will ever declare Pakistan a



Indian Foreign Minister with the the US Foreign Secy discussing BECA; File Photo

terrorist state. USA did not hesitate to declare a non-nuclear Iran a terrorist state but a blatantly nuclear state Pakistan, cradle of terrorism, escapes that 'reward/recognition' from successive US administration. It is unlikely to change in near future as well.

I will not be surprised if we discover a decade later that by signing BECA, USA has taken us for a ride in the process getting most/all relevant information required to protect US interests but giving us very little.

This write up will be incomplete if a bit of technology was not discussed. We are no longer India of 1971. We have access to sub-metre imagery from our own satellites, which is adequate for targeting even while using an ordinary unguided rocket/bomb by fighters and a SSM engaging a target based on GEOREFF. No doubt our military capability has suffered a setback with respect to our very own GPS having become non-functional due to failure of atomic clocks. Hopefully our scientists will overcome this problem sooner than later.

Can the US promise us that in the event of any future war with Pakistan unfettered use of differential GPS will be available to

Indian Military while denying it to Pakistan? Incidentally selective disability region wise is possible. US satellites viz KH-11 and now the latest variant launched specifically to monitor Russian and Chinese nuclear facilities are not meant for us. It would be a great and monumental folly to seek accurate target coordinates for a conventional warhead tipped missile because the most accurate target coordinates with an error of few seconds will result in missile missing the target.

USA just might be using us as a pawn in her war against China to remain the only superpower. Like USA China is also trying to become 'Two Ocean Power'. What China does in South China Sea should not

be of any interest to us but What China wants to/intends to do in IOR should worry us. Geographically we are more powerful than China to keep control of IOR provided we are willing to exercise our authority, resolve and power as we have done in the recent face off in Ladakh.

And finally as a soldier I would be terribly ashamed of myself and my colleagues in uniform if we were to accept and indicate by our actions that we cannot handle China threat on our own and we need BECA with USA.

Let us 'milk' USA for weapons and weapon platforms and not indulge in military alliance. 🇺🇸



Group Captain TP Srivastava (Retd)

Gp Capt. Tej Prakash Srivastava has served in Iraq and is a graduate of both DSSC and AWC. He was Directing Staff at DSSC and Chief Instructor at College of Air Warfare. He Served at Air HQ, commanded a MiG-21 Sqn and headed the IAF establishment of Strike Corps during 'Operation Parakram'. He has authored a book titled 'Profligate Governance – Implications for National Security'. & written extensively on international and strategic affairs and Defence Procurement Procedures. He can be reached at Email: tejgvp@gmail.com

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Information Warfare: Splitting the Anatomy of the PLA's Fake Microwave Attack!

By Lieutenant General PR Shankar (Retd)

The Chinese Claim

Jin Canrong, a professor of international relations at Beijing's Renmin University claimed that China had used a "microwave weapon" to retake land that had been occupied by the Indian Army on the southern bank of the Pangong Tso.

He claimed that Chinese forces had turned two strategic hilltops occupied by Indian soldiers "into a microwave oven", forcing them to retreat, and allowing the positions to be retaken without an exchange of conventional fire.

"Within 15 minutes of the weapons being deployed, those occupying the hilltops all began to vomit. They couldn't stand up, so they fled. This was how we retook the ground," the professor (does he really exist?)

reportedly told his students during a lecture. This report was filed by the 'The Times' in UK and in 'The Australian'. The Indian Army has rejected this report as fake. The matter should have ended there.

Inquiries

However, I got inquiries from good and concerned people whether this news was correct and whether the Army was rejecting it as a matter of routine. They were worried about the welfare of our troops. So, I did my digging in and found that the whole report to be as fake as the Chinese. Now by merely saying that the report is fake won't do. I will prove it so. So, let us start at the basics.

Direct Energy Weapons

Armed Forces have been actively and constantly pursuing non-kinetic

weapons systems known as Directed Energy Weapons, (DEWs). DEWs could be based on lasers, particle beams or microwaves. These weapons are devices which deposit requisite energy on targets to achieve a given level of damage.

Alternately, every target needs a certain level of energy transfer over a period of time to be damaged. Hence the DEW must produce much more energy at source since a significant amount is lost in propagation. They tend to be bulky and need large power generators. The first thing one must understand is that DEWs are not handheld systems.

Microwaves

This story is all about microwave weapons and henceforth I shall stick to them. Microwaves are a type of electromagnetic radiation, having a

much longer wavelength and much lower frequency than light. Like all electromagnetic radiation, microwaves travel at the speed of light.

Microwave frequencies lie in the range 0.1–100 GHz, and the associated wavelengths lie in the range 100–0.1 cm. Oxygen and water vapor can absorb radiation in the microwave region. Liquid water interacts well with microwaves. The interaction between microwaves and water is employed in microwave ovens.

Since water is a major constituent of organic matter, microwaves are absorbed in foods placed in the oven and heat them. Yet they are not absorbed in ceramic dishes, which don't contain water. In this way, the food is heated while the dish itself remains cool. Microwaves are emitted from a directional antenna. Microwaves travel along line of sight.

If the object is directly not visible, it is not affected. Due to the large wavelength of microwaves, they spread much more than light for given aperture sizes. It means that their effective ranges are limited. Rain and water vapor restrict microwave propagation.

If a laser beam is like a bullet shot from a rifle, a microwave beam is more like the shot from a shotgun. Through divergence, the energy spreads with distance, and the effective range is less.

Microwaves are unsuited for the precision destruction of threatening targets. Rather, they are ideal for an array of targets, hoping that most will receive a dose of energy sufficient to exploit internal vulnerabilities and result in target negation even at intensities below that required for physical destruction.

Microwave based DEWs are generally best suited for soft targets having a built-in vulnerability which microwaves can exploit. Their best potential use is against electronics.

Microwave DEWs in Service

The Active Denial System (ADS), is a non-lethal DEW developed by Raytheon in 2004 for the US military.

It is designed for area denial, perimeter security and crowd control. It works on microwaves being directed at targets which heat their surface, such as the skin of targeted human being.

The microwaves incite movement in the fat and water molecules located just below the human skin surface, making the target feel like they are burning from the inside. As soon as the target steps away from the ray, the pain ceases, purportedly leaving no damage to nerve endings and blood vessels, which are located deeper below the epidermis.

The ADS was deployed in 2010 with the United States military in Afghanistan, but was not used in combat. In 2010, it was evaluated by Los Angeles Police Department for prisoners control. As of 2014, the ADS

which is unmistakable. It has limited ranges and a limited beam width.

To be effective, the system has to be quite close to the target. Most importantly the DEWs are non-lethal with only momentary effect. The effect fades the moment you are out of the direct line of the microwave beam.

If the Microwave weapon produced such drastic results (as claimed), that troops occupying two hill tops fled, then there are two companies involved. Then at 100 least casualties – with symptoms of severe vomiting and burning – would have come to light. My authentic sources- operational and medical – report no such casualties.

Secondly, our troops would have reported having seen an ungainly vehicle closing in. No such vehicle was



The Army has vehemently disputed the claim as a malicious disinformation attempt

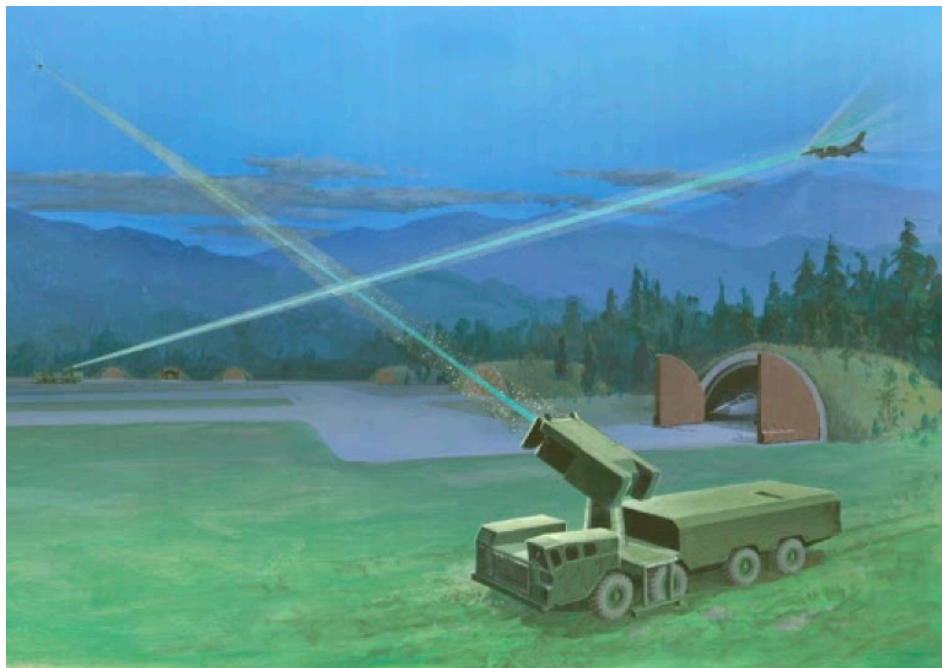
was only a vehicle-mounted weapon, though U.S. Marines and police were both working on portable versions.

Analysis

If you have seen the videos you will realise that any microwave system is based on a huge truck/platform and needs large amount of power(200 KW). It has a huge silhouette and outline

sighted. Very importantly, the vehicle needs a road to come as close as 100m of own positions. All hill tops occupied by us would have access through an op track which would have been barricaded at the first instance. Hence the story fails here.

However, let us take it forward. Any two hill tops are at least a few Km apart. If the claim is true, the



How DEWs work; Graphical Representation

Chinese would have had to use more than one DEW. In which case they would have made a great show of it. Moreover, if two hill tops were vacated, the Chinese would have been all over the town and media as to how Indian Troops (scared of the ten feet tall Chinese) had decamped seeing the might of PLA!

The Microwave DEW is a line of sight weapon with limited range and beam width of a human being (at best). It would have to be aimed and fired from a lower height towards men at higher heights and defiladed to the line of fire. No way these chaps at heights can be hit.

If the effect was as claimed, each man had to be targeted steadily for at least 15 minutes. If you step out of line, you are safe. Logically, if a man senses danger in combat, he hits the ground! The moment he does that he is safe from the 'Chinese Microwave'.

This whole affair looks like a bedtime story when you are travelling on the silk route and gazing at the stars above. Impossible to execute unless you are high on cannabis. There is no way this weapon can target 200 men on a hilltop together except in the drunken haze of Shanghai Waterfront bars after six drinks.

Also, the men on hill tops would be tactically deployed and spread. Surely, they were not waiting all bunched

up together to be microwaved by the great Chinese Wonder Weapons!

Also think. The heights involved are 4000-5000 m. The hill tops would have been awfully cold. We all know that all machines underperform by about 30-40 % at such altitudes. This Chinese vehicle portable microwave oven is no exception.

My guess is that even if our men had been targeted by Jin Canarong's imaginary Chinese Nobel Prize winning vision, it would have only served to warm them. They were otherwise freezing with cold. 'Good Open-Air Heater'.

Very importantly, the claim is that this entire Microwave episode took place in the last week of Aug. However, after that the Chinese and PLA have gone all over town cribbing that India should vacate the South Pangong Tso Heights otherwise they will attack us. Which they have not had the guts to do till date.

On the other hand, India has gone and occupied more heights above Finger 4 in Sep. If the 'microwave theory' is true and good, then it should have imposed caution on us, and we should not have expanded to occupy other heights.

Current Status

As of now, India is occupying all the features as I had explained in my Sino-Indian Logjam series: SINO INDIAN LOGJAM - THE CHINESE THREE CARD TRICK. No one has vacated anything. This entire episode is a Fake effort. It was probably tailored to spin a positive yarn to domestic audiences through foreign media.

That is why it was released in UK and Australia. The Chinese will now doctor even those reports to tell domestic audiences that the foreign media has reported that the great Chinese war machinery has microwaved India!

The Chinese desperation tells a story and a morale. Do not vacate Kailash Range at any cost. All this is a ploy. 🇨🇳



Lieutenant General PR Shankar (Retd)

Lt Gen PR Shankar retired as Director General of Artillery, Indian Army. Lt. Gen. Shankar has vast operational experience and has held many important command, staff, and instructional appointments in the Army. An alumnus of Defence Services Staff College Wellington, Army War College Mhow, Naval Post Graduate School Monterrey and National Defence College Delhi, he gave great impetus to the modernization of Artillery through indigenization. He has a deep understanding and experience of successful defense planning and acquisition spanning over a decade. Major 155mm Gun projects like the Dhanush, M777 ULH and k9 Vajra, Rocket and Missile projects related to Pinaka, Brahmos and, Grad BM21, surveillance projects like Swati WLR and some ammunition projects came to fructification due to his efforts. You can reach him on Twitter: @palepurshankar, Email ID: pravishankar3@gmail.com

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The Graveyard of Empires: Analysing the Future of Afghanistan Following US/NATO Troop Withdrawal

A view is that when the US and its allies leave, an Afghan-Pak-Taliban combination could be disastrous for India, and therefore the US should leave an independent, sovereign state of Afghanistan under a democratically elected President. But again, will this concept work?

By Major General VK Madhok (Retd)

This is a message from a veteran, who seeks clarifications on India's policy towards Afghanistan: A citizen's right. An address of goodwill to the joint session of Afghan Parliament on May 13, 2011 underscored the suggestion to form an Indian-Afghan Parliament Friendship Forum, to extend financial assistance for development from 1.5 billion dollars to 2 billion dollars and outlined the contours of a strategic partnership besides enhancement of people to people contact and so on.

It received bouquets from the media, and I am sure also earned a good chit for New Delhi from Hamid Karzai. But the crucial issue which has been left out from our policy making is,

what happens if Ashraf Zhari is removed and the Taliban stage a successful coup? After all, King Muhammad Daoud Zahir was overthrown in a coup in 1973. Five years later, President Muhammad Daoud was murdered in a second coup.

Then President Taraki was ousted in yet another coup in September 1979 and replaced by Hafizullah Amin who had to call the Russians to run the Government. They came in 1979 and deposed Amin and installed Babrak Kamal who was replaced by General Najibullah in May 1986, who in turn was hanged by the Taliban as Russian withdrew.

So let us not take Ashraf Zhari's survival for granted although one wishes him well. Accordingly, there are many questions and issues the Indian Government and advisors would do well to ponder upon.

These being: What is the United States' exit strategy, current and future objectives and implications? Is the US wanting to convert Afghanistan into a permanent client state such as Iran was for the US before their 1970-72 revolution? Pakistan's efforts to contain both the US and India and to expand its influence in Afghanistan by assisting in revenue collection, suggesting

transit and trade and possibly Chinese collaboration?

India's stakes: What is or should be India's emerging role-based on realities and not theories? Is New Delhi prepared for a more difficult and demanding time in Afghanistan as Kabul enters a new phase with US/North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) troops withdrawal and will not be caught off guard?

Have our security advisors and National Security Council (NSC) analysed this? Does India have any intentions to get militarily involved in Afghanistan by transporting troops and logistics through Chabahar Port with Iran's consent? Finally, options open to India and what should our Afghan policy be? But before that, some general aspects and connected issues.

No foreign country has ever succeeded in permanently occupying Afghanistan. In the late 80's after the largest covert operation in US history, the US supported Mujahideen defeated Soviet 40th Red Army in the 90s. Then the radical Taliban movement took overpower. Because the US had failed to follow up battlefield success: A mistake they are now planning to avoid.

Concurrently, the US's grand design and dream of western style democracy in Afghanistan won't work so long as the Taliban, Al Qaeda and the warlords are there. There should be no doubt about it. If international forces leave, insurgent forces will take over.

Although the cost of staying is real, it is less than the cost of leaving. Furthermore, British had imposed the Durand line-the border between Afghanistan and erstwhile united India. Which artificially divided 15 million ethnic Pathans in Afghanistan from the 24 million Pathans in North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). They share common language, kinship and are indistinguishable-something like our Naga problem in northeast.

Afghanistan does not recognize this border. Besides, three elections have taken place in Afghanistan in the last 13 years. A democratic government is

in place. Though fragile, corrupt and incompetent. But then the choice lies between this government or a government led by fanatic, Islamist Taliban.

US/NATO, International Security Force (ISAF), Planned Withdrawal, Strategy & the Afghan National Army (ANA)

The 13 year old war in Afghanistan has been the longest in US history. America has lost 1,400 troops (killed) since 2001 and the Americans back home are not ready to see or accept any more body bags from Afghanistan. That was the message for President Barack Obama when he took over.

There have also been divisions in US administration over identifying US policy, finding appropriate strategy to pursue it and finally, what constitutes success in Afghanistan?

The US and its allies (ISAF) intended to end their combat mission by 2014 in a year phased plan commenced in July 2011, if conditions permit. Currently, there are 1,40,000 troops in Afghanistan including 30,000 US troops inducted in November 2010, 2/3rd being from the US.

After 2014, significant forces were to be left behind to train and advise the ANA and the Afghan Police. All this is according to the plan presented and approved by NATO and its allies (23 members) at Lisbon.

So far, US plans with Military action and vague political meandering have been unsuccessful. The intention now appears to be to negotiate with the Taliban and bring them on board. But will this work?

A view is that when the US and its allies leave, an Afghan-Pak-Taliban combination could be disastrous for India, and therefore the US should leave an independent, sovereign state of Afghanistan under a democratically elected President. But again, will this concept work? In February 2009, after his election President Obama had made Afghanistan as the centerpiece of his foreign policy. He also made a big change in his policy.

While former President George W Bush had three different policies for Afghanistan, Pak and India respectively, Obama's administration had integrated Afghanistan and Pak into one policy and kept India in an advisory role. Further, as all aid and supplies from the US go through Pak to Afghanistan, the US needs Islamabad badly.

The US sees Afghanistan's significance from an energy point of view from its geographical location, a potential transit route for oil/natural gas exports from Central Asia to the Arabian Sea, for economic control of oil and gas resources from West Asia and it plans to import 64% of its crude (25.8 million barrels per day) by 2020.

A rumor doing the rounds in November 2010 was that the US was building 13 secret bases in Afghanistan for an attack on Russia if needed (Operation Barbarossa 3). Concurrently, US interlocutors have been stating, that Pak and Afghanistan are both allies of US in their fight against terrorism. According to General Petraeus, a former US commander, who suggested US withdrawal from 2011 onwards, Afghanistan was in a state of mess and confusion.

Karzai, Taliban, Al Qaeda, Afghanistan & Pakistan

Afghanistan has been in a lot of trouble in the last 40 years. First, the Russian invasion in the 70s, then the warlords and the Taliban and then the US. Taliban and Al Qaeda have been operating jointly and even planned to target the Hydro-Power dam outside Kabul. They raise money from sale of illicit drugs, foreign contributions, criminal activities like kidnapping, extortion and from protection payments.

Besides, the Pak and Afghan Taliban have joined hands and therefore Karzai wanted Taliban sanctuaries in Pak to be destroyed. Karzai became President after winning elections in December 2004 and visited India in Feb 2005. His priorities were: education, economy and security and wanted India and Pak as friends. Afghanistan became a member of SAARC.

But he could not move out of Kabul without protection as the Government had little hold on eastern and southern Afghanistan. Karzai was again declared President in November 2009. He wanted to avoid an impression that he was a US puppet. He had taken a stand against civilian casualties by ISAF and against search of private houses. He had even proposed official talks with Taliban through a "High Peace Council", an initiative launched by ex President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

In June 2010, according to a geological survey, there was mineral wealth (iron, copper, cobalt, gold and lithium) worth 1 trillion dollars in Afghanistan. Although according to Karzai, it was worth three trillion dollars or so. Accordingly, US and Indian businessmen are already making a beeline to sign contracts with the Afghan Government. Afghanistan, possibly like Saudi Arabia could hold untold potential?

Pakistan, Former Gen. Kayani & Strategic Depth in Afghanistan

Islamabad had started operations in Afghanistan in 1979 through the Mujahideen (supported by the US) against the Russians. Pak does not permit transit facilities for Indian goods to Afghanistan have doubled. Karzai felt that Pak was trying to destabilize Afghanistan. While Islamabad says that Kabul is getting away with a lot of aid. He wanted oil and gas pipelines from Iran and Turkmenistan to pass through Pak.

Meanwhile, Islamabad has offered to build a 10.5 km rail track and to assist the Afghan Government to collect revenues. Besides, a joint Pak-Afghan Jirga was held in Kabul in May 2007 but no visible results emerged. Pak has also offered to train ANA officers some of whom are already being trained in Pak. Therefore, Pak is Afghanistan's well wisher and not an enemy.

Concurrently, Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani wanted the US to deliver on Kashmir and to be given a freehand in shaping the future of Afghanistan. He was the first Army Chief who stated at a press conference in February 2010 openly, that Pak had the

legitimate right to gain strategic depth in Afghanistan but did not want to control it. But to regain what Pak lost 2001.

On the other hand former Pak President Musharraf said in the US in November 2010, that India was trying to create an anti-Pak Afghanistan. Pak sees India's financial and development aid to Afghanistan as some sort of initiative by R&AW to encircle Pak and to make Afghanistan anti-Pak.

Foreign Aid & The UNO

Afghanistan has been receiving colossal financial assistance. Representatives of 56 donor countries met in Berlin sometime before 2004 where Karzai wanted two billion dollars. While the donors wanted poppy cultivation to stop in 27 districts of Afghanistan. Karzai had been welcoming aid from the US, India, Iran and Pak. But wanted it to pass through the coalition structure.

Another conference of 18 foreign ministers was held in New Delhi to consider aid to Afghanistan. In Feb 2018, representatives of 70 nations gathered in London to pledge an aid of 10.5 billion dollars for education, economic development, removal of poverty and security. While the US, UK and Germany have cancelled their debts from Kabul.

In July 2010, 60 foreign ministers again held a conference in Kabul to monitor and consider more aid to Afghanistan. Karzai was confident that ANA would be ready to take over law and order of the country by 2014, more than three years after the US commenced its withdrawal.

Indian Stakes, Aid, Development, Projects, Oil & Gas

Indian philosophy seems to win the hearts and minds of the Afghan people by offering financial assistance, construction and development. India is one of the largest donors of aid to Afghanistan.

A large number of refugees live in India. Approximately 1000 Afghan students come to India every year.

And nearly 32 Afghan cadets are under training at the National Defence Academy (NDA).

Right from Feb 2005, when Karzai (newly elected President) visited New Delhi with 8 cabinet ministers, India had offered to train the ANA, but this was not agreed to. In Aug 2005, during the Indian PM's visit to Kabul, three agreements concerning education, health and agriculture were signed. A view was that one could drive down in two days from Kabul to India on a 1,300 km road from Kabul-Khyber Pass-Peshawar-Rawalpindi-Lahore-Amritsar.

India was keen to get an oil/gas pipeline both from Turkmenistan and Iran through Afghanistan-Pakistan-India. However in April 2006, Taliban issued a notice to all Indians to leave within 48 hours. Then, there were two bomb blasts in the Indian Embassy in July 2008 and Oct 2009 respectively causing a fair number of casualties.

India's Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) even considered stationing a brigade for protection of Indian assets in Afghanistan besides the Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) detachments but not as a part of the ISAF.

But this did not work out. In December 2010 Karzai noted that India was prepared to offer Light attack Helicopters and that this proposal had led to adverse reaction from Pak. Finally, India has joined in a 10-billion-dollar gas pipeline project from Turkmenistan in Central Asia via Afghanistan and Pak. This inter-governmental agreement was signed at Ashgabat on Dec 12, 2010 with respective Presidents and is backed by the US.

In Jan 2011, Indian business rivals in domestic markets like Sail, Tata, Essar, RINL and Jindal had come together to jointly bid for iron ore assets and to explore building a steel plant in war torn Afghanistan.

Further in anticipation of US withdrawal, India's Army Chief visited Tajikistan in November 2010 and offered a Field Ambulance (medical

cover) comprising of 70 personal including training in counter terrorism and also visited the military airfield at Ayani which was upgraded by India. Where New Delhi might even positioned half a squadron worth of rotary aircraft in cooperation with Russia.

With regards to the former PM's visit to Afghanistan on May 12-13, 2011 in addition to what has already been stated earlier in paragraph one, India had agreed to train Afghan women's police battalions, donated 1,000 buses, agreed to support the escalated cost of Salama Dam and showed interest in the Russian proposal for private companies to participate in bids for a mining centre.

China & Russia: Beijing has already taken a headstart in developing Afghanistan's Giant Aynak copper mine since 2008- a 4-billion-dollar project. Afghanistan is also inviting tenders for developing Hajigak iron mine-one of the biggest in the world. China would probably go for it.

In April 2010, before leaving for China on May 17, 2011 Pakistan's PM Y R Gilani met Karzai and suggested that the US had failed both Pak and Afghanistan, because of its economic issues and was therefore not in a position to support a long term regional development initiative. Therefore, a better partner would be China. So, here is a statement by Pakistan which is currently living on US dole.

Russia is concerned and wants to prevent narcotics trade coming in from Pak. They are also concerned that should extremists take over; they will start filtering to other parts of Central Asia and would not therefore like Taliban to share power. The US has a military base in Kyrgyzstan, too close to the Russian border and are concerned about it. They want to be the only masters in Central Asia. Concurrently, NATO seeks Russia's help to give alternative routes to Afghanistan.

What Inferences can be Drawn?

- Ashraf Ghani's survival is a crucial issue. We seem to have taken it for granted. If he is eliminated, US/

NATO will have to think twice before withdrawal. Their plans may have to be revised. India's development projects will in any case come under serious threat and will be stalled by Taliban and Al Qaida with Pak support.

- The situation in Afghanistan has remained unpredictable and will remain so. Even the US does not really have a clear and articulate policy.
- If India wants oil and gas pipelines from Turkmenistan and Iran, then these will have to be through Iran, then these will have to be through Iran's Chabahar port (yet to be fully developed) Islamabad and Taliban will not let these pass through Pak.
- New Delhi has poured in a lot of money in Afghanistan. It is establishing relationships with Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and signing strategic partnerships with them, at the drop of a hat. But for what overall purpose? New Delhi has also offered some military support and equipment to Afghanistan. But in no way, India can afford to get militarily involved in Afghanistan.
- The loyalty and effectiveness of ANA, now under training by Americans and Police will be tested in the not too distant future. Will it remain loyal to Ashraf Ghani? Will its ranks be infiltrated by the Taliban? Will the senior Afghan military officers deliver a coup? Finally, what happens if Ghani is removed?
- China is a serious contender for Afghanistan markets. It is already

very well placed in POK and the effectiveness of its construction and other programmes is visible. It would be ready to deliver arms and military equipment to the ANA. It will be ready to build roads, con- tonements, lay railway lines and oil and gas pipelines as they are doing so successfully next door in Pak.

In addition, Gwadar Port South of Chabahar Port is already functioning efficiently. Where they have factories installed to manufacture goods for export to Africa. So, it is possible that Beijing and Kabul may sign a strategic partnership with or without Ghani with Pak in support. Which will create an entirely new situation.

Options: India's options in Afghanistan are limited. The Taliban, Al Qaeda and Pak do not like Indians. Besides, China is waiting to step in to capture Afghan markets. India's stay in Afghanistan is entirely dependent on Ghani's survival and so long as the US/NATO alliance is there. That however does not stop New Delhi from making an effort to maintain cordial relations with Afghanistan and its next door Central Asian neighbors.

The other situation is, When the US/NATO alliance has to stay on for reasons beyond their control and Ghani survives. That is a situation which needs to be seriously analysed by our National Security Advisor (NSA), NSC, National Security Advisory Board (NSAB), National Investigation Agency (NIA), Service Headquarters, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and R&AW who have all the necessary data at their desks, to which the common man does not have access. 🇮🇳



Major General VK Madhok (Retd)

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Views expressed are the authors own, and do not reflect the editorial policy of 'MVI.'



Theaterisation of Command: The Ill-Advised Brainchild of Pseudo-Intellectual 'Jaichands'

Advisors in the Prime Minister's Office on military affairs are intellectual pygmies, whose expertise lies in copying/aping from others without going into the nitty gritty of the issues at macro level.

By Group Captain TP Srivastava (Retd)

The world is moving towards de-centralisation. But our pseudo military strategists and uniformed intellectual 'Jaichands' want India to move towards centralization. In recent times the most important de-centralisation at strategic level has been splitting up of a single controlling structure of nuclear armed Inter Continental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM) of the United States Air Force (USAF).

Existing geographical commands were created not merely on regional basis. These commands came up considering, terrain, diverse climate, lines of communication, adversary's strength and vulnerabilities and most importantly the reaction time.

The advocates of change from existing structure to theatre commands must answer the following questions convincingly:

- Firstly, enumerate the specific incident/s under actual operational conditions wherein the existing command structure was found wanting for mounting an operation?
- Secondly, enumerate explicitly the deficiencies in the existing set up.
- Thirdly, how would creation of theatre command ensure that existing deficiencies would be eliminated?
- Fourthly, is there a white paper enunciating the need for change from

geographical commands to theatre commands?

- Fifthly, would these proponents of 'Strategic Reverse Engineering', explicitly state the gains that would accrue because of their irrational proposal to replace the existing geographical commands with Theatre Commands? let me now state how these Intellectual Jaichands have arrived at this proposal.

Advisors in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) on military affairs are intellectual pygmies, whose expertise lies in copying/aping from others without going into the nitty gritty of the issues at macro level.

A Classic Case of Strategic Myopia. Among Other Ailments...

Their myopic and tunneled vision enables them to recommend only those issues, which exist somewhere else for instance USA, China, and the United Kingdom.

The United States has theatre commands because it has global footprint. However, the United States still retains all geographical commands within the territory of USA. You will be surprised to learn that few geographical commands in USA have their headquarters located outside the boundaries of that Geographical command.

Now about China. I consider comparing Chinese Military with the Indian Military as an insult to the Indian Armed Forces. The Indian Military protects the national and territorial integrity of India, while the Chinese Military protects the Communist Party of China.

Their pathetic and inhuman role in Tiananmen massacre is only too well documented. The Chinese Military might embark on similar action in Hongkong in near future.

I consider the Chinese Military as a worthy adversary only because we have nearly 3,500 km long land borders. Chinese Theatre Commands concept failed them in the Vietnam war, where they received massive pasting at the hands of a much smaller nation with a much smaller Army.

Do you know the reason? Chinese Military failed to replenish resources as well as troops when they were outnumbered. Why did that happen?

As reported in the international media, the Guangzhou based Southern Theatre Command HQ failed to react to immediate requirements of troops/weapons because the troops on the frontline were from Nanjing based HQ of Eastern Theatre Command.

That is a fine example of total lack of co-ordination in a Theatre Command structure. Do we want to suffer the same trauma? The biggest disadvantage of Theatre Commands is long, stretched and highly bureaucratic chain of

command, resulting in delayed/inappropriate response.

Since our intellectual pygmies advising you on theatre command creation based on USA model, I sincerely hope that they have informed you that in USA, the Commander in Chief Pacific Command (CINCPAC) speaks directly to Defence Secretary (the Defence Minister in our case).

Are we going to have the same chain of communication? The single window clearance 'Policy is good only for the business.

'Theaterisation Neither Relevant Nor Warranted'

'Single Point Advice' on national security issues is an open invitation to disaster. The Theatre Command Concept is a figment of the imagination of intellectual Jaichands of the Indian military and ignoramus bureaucrats having little or no knowledge of military operations. It is irrelevant and unwarranted.

I am open to having a constructive and professional debate with the entire lot, which proposes such irrational change. I am afraid the PM and the RM are being wrongly advised by such intellectual Jaichands on many issues such as this.

Let me forewarn the nation; If the Geographical Command structure of Indian Military is tampered with and replaced by unwanted, undesirable and untried Theatre Commands, Indian Military will not be able to ensure Favourable Conflict Termination Situation during the next full blown war, if and when thrust on us, entirely on account of unwieldy structure of Theatre Commands.

Our next full-blown war is likely to be with Chinese in Arunachal, may be twenty years hence it is advised not to approve the proposal of creating Theatre Commands replacing the Geographical Commands as at present. Status quo must be maintained.

Need for Revisiting the Decisions

Mature governments work differently while dealing with military affairs. Let me give an account of recent happening

in US Navy. Acting Secretary of US Navy summarily removed the Captain of United States Ship (USS) Roosevelt, a nuclear carrier because the Captain informed about COVID-19 outbreak in an unsoldierly manner as seen by the Secretary Navy.

Senior Military Commanders, both serving and retired, and even American public disapproved the Secretary Navy's actions. The Secretary Navy resigned and Captain re-instated.

That is professional maturity of the government in a democracy. But in India we dismiss a Service Chief and give a plum assignment to errant Defence Secretary. We still have nearly 300 million Indian below poverty line courtesy intellectual Jaichands.

Of Air Defence, Land Based Thinking & Jaundiced Logic

A person, who does not have basic knowledge about intercept geometry of an aircraft/missile is talking about creating Air Defence Command for entire India.

He obviously does not have a clue about our overall radar cover provided by Civil and Military Radars, at low level (below 500 m), medium level (up to 6 km) and high-level cover (beyond 6 km). He obviously has not educated himself with Purulia Arms Drop incident.

I hope PMO advisors have informed the PM that we have no low-level cover in the entire country except within 30 km radius of military airfields, few Vital Areas (VAs), and Vital Points (VPs).

I am not divulging any secrets. The entire world knows it except Indians. We do not have enough Airborne Early Warning (AEW)/Airborne Warning and Control Systems (AWACS) to have round the clock cover even in the sensitive areas.

Let me educate the readers how Air Defence Commands are set up. USAF commenced the programme to establish North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) in 1958. It took 22 years to declare seven of its regional operational control centres fully operational.

The area under NORAD's jurisdiction is marginally bigger than India (minus island territories). During this period USAF underwent massive modernization of Radars, SAMs, and most important element communication systems.

We do not have even 1/100th of the resources, both in numbers as well as technology and we are talking about setting up a unified Air Defence Command. Let us not axe our own foot.

Aircraft Carriers: Three's Not a Crowd!

The Indian navy must have two fully operational Carrier Battle Groups (CBGs) to take care of oceans stretching from straits of Hormuz in the west to Malacca Strait in the East and till Diego Garcia in the South.

To have that operational capability a third Carrier is mandatory, which will be in dry docks for refit/re-equipping/repairs while the serviceable carriers roam the seas. We need both, the Sea Denial capability by Submarines as well as Sea Control capability by the Carriers.

We can find 20 lakh crores, almost instantly, to fight COVID 19 but not for national security over next ten years. I can say with certainty that in 20 lakh crores, two fully operational CBGs can be created.

Two Lakh Crore (1% of current GDP) investment annually for next ten years dedicated towards weapons procurement will make us formidable air, maritime and land power.

But without having done due diligence a jaundiced logic has been put forward by the CDS for not going ahead with third carrier. If India genuinely wants to control IOR, we need three operational CBGs, which means four carriers. With the 'on land thinking of the CDS, Chinese Navy will roam the waters of Indian Ocean at will before the end of next decade.

The Sri Lankan port of Hambantota is slated to become another Gwadar in the next ten years. We can strangle China, economically and militarily if we take control of Malacca Strait or have the capability and more importantly intention to do so. Only other requirement

will be to have friendly relations with Indonesia.

National Security Requires Strategic Vision

If Gen Bipin Rawat had an iota of strategic vision and intellectual wisdom, his message should have read:

- Service HQs must ensure that while writing the desired GSQRs for weapons/platforms must consider available technology/expertise with Indian Manufacturers.
- DRDO and other manufacturing agencies must ensure that GSQRs projected by Service HQs are met in full so that no concessions have to be granted before inducting weapons/platforms for operational use. Instead he said accept sub-standard weapons (Actual statement read; if the weapons/platform meets 70% of the GSQRs accept it).

Our adversary is unlikely to grant us any concessions during the war. Has he ever authored an original paper on international affairs, prevailing geo-strategic scenario, measures to improve weapons procurement process, high end technological innovations needed for the military and so on?

The issue is not personal; having an ill-informed/inadequately informed individual as CDS is a national security issue. If he had strategic vision, required experience, expertise and exposure, he would have asked for the following before assuming the mantle of CDS: -

- CDS should be assigned the responsibility of national security instead of Defence Secretary as has been the practice.

- He should have advised that the DPB should be headed either by respective Service Chief or CDS instead of Defence Secretary as at present.

- Before accepting the government offer of CDS he should have asked the government to appoint a dedicated Secretary for each Service.

- CDS should be a five-star officer.

- CDS should have the same status as NSA. Above could have been suggested/demanded only if the individual had strategic vision. If your government had decided to appoint a CDS, it should have given requisite authority and not made a lame duck appointment.

There are numerous soldiers with brilliant track record, who would have brought respect and glory to the office. I will name a few (views are personal).

Lt Gen Satish Nambiar, Air Chief Marshal NC Suri or Admiral Arun Prakash have all the mandatory qualities viz Experience, Expertise, Exposure and Strategic Vision befitting the appointment of CDS, specially the first CDS.

But for that to have happened, your advisors would have had to think out of box. Age of the incumbent should not have been a constraint. I am labouring on this issue because it is a National Security issue and not an individual's issue.

Indeed, if the government wants to reward Bipin Rawat for his excellent performance as COAS, give him a Rajya Sabha seat. It is advised to either abolish the newly created post of CDS or appoint a suitable officer 🙏



Group Captain TP Srivastava (Retd)

Gp Capt. Tej Prakash Srivastava has served in Iraq and is a graduate of both DSSC and AWC. He was Directing Staff at DSSC and Chief Instructor at College of Air Warfare. He Served at Air HQ, commanded a MiG-21 Sqn and headed the IAF establishment of Strike Corps during 'Operation Parakram'. He has authored a book titled 'Profligate Governance – Implications for National Security'. & written extensively on international and strategic affairs and Defence Procurement Procedures. He can be reached at Email: tejgvp@gmail.com



BOOK REVIEW: **MISSION VICTORY INDIA**

By Lt Col Balasaheb Barge, 15 Maratha LI, 1965 & 1971 War Veteran

'Mission Victory India' (Volume 5 of Victory India Campaign books) Edited & authored by Col Vinay B Dalvi with essays, articles and responses from 30 military veterans and academicians is indeed a 'treasure book' strongly supported by select print media, especially Gomantak Times Goa and Fauji India magazine. The book gives immense insight into multifarious military issues of national importance.

The book is informative containing valuable articles and essays with rich responses, honest and clear opinions, concrete recommendations, and pragmatic views, constructive write ups aimed at honest and progressive approach for the betterment of the armed forces. This is in fact the need of the hour!

Essentially, both aspects, i.e. proper and meaningful training with mature leadership need greater attention to maintain the standards achieved by our predecessors to arrest the slide down. In nutshell, overhauling is desired at all levels without any fear or compromising trends.

The mindset needs to be positive especially at higher levels. Unfortunately, the armed forces are exposed to the undesirable elements and hence there appears to be some turmoil. Soonest we return to the apolitical state the better it will be. Honesty is the key factor! Everything will fall well in place. As all know, our armed forces are the largest and disciplined force in the country. Hence, the protective approach is a must. Also care is required to be taken by all 'Think Tanks' that such a fine and dedicated force of mankind is kept well protected before it disintegrates into thin air!

In retrospect, it appears that the present situation is deficient of moral values and precious principles which has resulted over a period of time and now requires a strong and corrective action before the situation gets into retrograde mode. Essence must be well thought out with well desired training and very high order of leadership.

The collective work of this book includes articles and essays with responses from several learned and committed veterans and academicians which is undoubtedly praiseworthy! It has very high value to be emulated for participation and practice. The relentless pursuit can bring about definite positive change and past glorious days of high training standards and moral & ethical values.

Book details : '**Mission Victory India**'. 217 pages Price Rs 795 /\$27.95

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US Foreign Policy Changes under Biden could have Profound Impact on South Asia

Joe Biden may not drastically reverse foreign policy decisions of his predecessor like Donald Trump did of Barack Obama but Biden's novel approaches to issues and regions could have ramifications for South Asia even as India-US relationship continues to grow,

By Lieutenant General PC Katoch (Retd)

US President Donald Trump has challenged the election of Joe Biden as 46th POTUS-elect but much before the election verdict came, the airspace over Biden's house was declared a closed zone and taken under special control of the military, signaling Biden's victory.

That did not stop the US media from comparing Biden with Trump, painting Biden "segregationist," one who branded black Americans "predators," and airing his 2019 debate with Kamala Harris (Vice President-elect) where Harris accused Biden of "misdemeanors" and labeled him "racist."

During his visit to India in February 2020, Trump had declared that the US economy was the best ever,

which was true. But then the coronavirus, which originated from China, ravaged the world and ultimately it was handling of the pandemic and economy that mattered most for the US public in choosing their next president.

US policy towards India – will it change?

Joe Biden may not drastically reverse foreign policy decisions of his predecessor like Donald Trump did of Barak Obama but Biden's novel approaches to issues and regions could have ramifications for South Asia even as India-US relationship continues to grow.

The general opinion has been there would be no change in the US

policy towards India irrespective of who the next POTUS is. It was also hoped Democrats would not nurture a grudge that last September Prime Minister Narendra Modi vociferously canvassed Indian Americans in Houston to vote for Trump during the next election.

Indian Americans are Americans first whose priority is the US national interests, not Indian. The same goes for Kamala Harris who projected herself as both Black-American and Indo-American while electioneering.

Nikki Haley, the US ambassador to the UN visiting India in June 2018 told reporters, "We think freedom of religion is just as important as

freedom of rights and freedom of peoples.”

Biden's election agenda exhorts India to restore the rights of the people of Kashmir and lift all curbs. It also mentioned Biden's disappointment over the National Register of Citizens for Assam and the Citizenship Amendment Act, calling these inconsistent with secularism and sustaining multi-ethnic and multi-religious democracy. India ironically ranks 142 in World Press Freedom Index 2020 - just three spots above Pakistan.

Biden's priority as next US president

Biden's priority would be tackling the pandemic and getting the economy back on rails, both not easy tasks. He will possibly review the US policy on the Paris Accord, Iran Nuclear Deal, and TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership), in addition to START-II ((Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty), though arms control without China would remain partial at the global level.

Biden may not strike a trade deal with China but in order to improve the US economy may go 'soft' on China - as is being interpreted from a statement by the US ambassador to China. A 'soft' stance on China could affect America's Indo-Pacific policy and slowdown Quad's transformation into a security alliance.

Beijing would woo Biden for adopting such an approach that would give time for China to enhance its CNP (Comprehensive National Power) and match up with the US military. But in such a case, China could advance forcible integration of Taiwan and resume aggression against India, testing US redlines in between.

The US sanctions on Iran and killing of Iran's Quds Force commander General Qasem Soleimani escalated the US-Iran tensions tremendously, pushing Iran closer to China. Soleimani was for Baloch liberation, which would fragment Pakistan and fracture the CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) restricting

China's land access to the Indian Ocean. The Trump administration labeled Baloch Liberation Army terrorists but has just de-listed East Turkestan Islamic Movement from its terrorist list.

Will Biden revive the Iran Nuclear Deal and ease sanctions on Iran which the EU ALSO wants? Reviving the Iran Nuclear Deal and lifting sanctions on Iran would be good for the region. India can resume oil supplies from Iran that would help India's economy. Iran has already allowed India to use the Chabahar-Zahedan rail link.

China and Pak policy – will it be softer now?

The drawdown of US troops from Afghanistan has been halted with spiraling violence amidst Intra-Afghan talks. Biden hopefully will retain sufficient troop strength in Afghanistan to not let Af-Pak become a cauldron of terror, expanding China's influence in South Asia.

As the US was closing bases in Afghanistan, reports emerged that instead of transferring surplus tanks and warlike stores to the Afghan National Army, these are being shifted across the border to Pakistan. What will be the stance of the Biden administration towards Pakistan with a softer approach on China and talking of lifting curbs in Jammu and Kashmir but ignoring Pakistan's proxy war on India that has necessitated such curbs in the first place?

How the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) wants to orchestrate the global Shia-Sunni conflict with or without the Biden administration is important. It is no secret that the Obama administration allowed the

rise of ISIS and its training and arming in Turkey.

In Afghanistan, the US troops have been battling Taliban-Haqqanis-Al Qaeda while the CIA has been using the IS directly and through Pakistan. ISIS is back in Iraq and with its associates like Jundullah has been launching cross-border terror attacks in Iran. Biden had welcomed the fall of the Shah of Iran but how would the US react to Iran giving it back to Pakistan in a similar manner given the sustained killings-massacre of Shias in Af-Pak?

Has Capitol Hill noticed that China is in league with major terrorist groups including ISIS - the absence of terror attacks against Chinese interests in Afghanistan proves this? A new terrorist organization has come up with swearing allegiance to Islamic State in Myanmar.

This is in addition to the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army headed by a Pakistani national and supported by China-Pakistan in addition to other terrorist groups. The CPEC and CMEC (China-Myanmar Economic Corridor) is China's strategic highways to the Indian Ocean that greatly assist China's domination of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Without a doubt, the US realizes India's centrality in the defense architecture of the Indo-Pacific given the rising China threat. Counter-terror cooperation will continue, and the US wants India to become strong.

The question is how strong the Biden Administration would want India to be and how it addresses the China-Pakistan sponsored terrorism in South Asia. 🇮🇳



Lieutenant General Prakash Katoch (Retd)

Lt. Gen PC 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, Indian Defence Review, The Week & Fauji India among many others. He is also the author of Special Operations Cases Studies: Lessons for India and India's Special Forces: History and Future of India's Special Forces



In Conversation with Col. David O Smith (Retd), Author of 'The Wellington Experience'

'The American Philosophy of Professional Military Education is Completely Different from Both Pakistan and India, the Latter Two Being Virtually the Same'

By Ghazala Wahab

(Editor's Note: This interview of Colonel David O Smith (Retd), a former United States Army officer, Distinguished Fellow with the South Asia Program at the Stimson Center, and author of the book *The Wellington Experience* has been reproduced from the November 2020 issue of the 'Force Magazine' in the larger interest of military fraternity, both serving and retired.)

Q: Your book *The Wellington Experience* has generated a lot of discussion in India, especially amongst the Indian Army officers. How much of this did you expect? Did any part of the reaction take you by surprise?

I am not at all surprised that the book generated discussion—and probably a lot of criticism—from Indian Army officers; I fully expected it. To provide a bit of context, in October 2018, I made presentations on my then newly-published book about the Pakistan Army, *The Quetta Experience*, to several think tanks in New Delhi. Not surprisingly, because the book was critical of

the Command and Staff College and the Pakistan Army, the presentations were well received.

I was more surprised, however, when several senior retired military officers suggested I do a similar book about the Indian Army, surely knowing that because Wellington and Quetta share the same origin and use the same pedagogy that the criticisms levied on the Pakistani system would likely also apply to India. Accordingly, last June the Stimson Centre arranged for me to make a virtual presentation of selected key findings in *The Wellington Experience* to a small group of top-flight Indian academics and retired senior military officers. Again, not

surprisingly, this presentation received mixed reactions—a few that were negative, but many others that were positive.

The areas of agreement, or at least those that resulted in no significant pushback during the event, included my criticism of the lack of 'jointness' in the Indian armed forces; the Defence Services Staff College's (DSSC's) curriculum, pedagogy, and organisational culture; attitudes about Pakistan, China, and civil-military relations; and the lack of preparedness of the Indian Army to operate in a nuclear environment.

Two areas of pushback were that my findings about the Indian Army ignore its own counterinsurgency doctrine in Jammu and Kashmir and is involved in the extra-judicial killing of militants, and that my findings in the nuclear area reflected a basic lack of understanding about India's deterrence doctrine. I carefully reviewed those sections of the book but did not make any change to the findings.

The most significant pushback came from an offhand comment I made that the Indian Army had not engaged in high intensity combat since 1971, an observation that can also be applied to the Pakistan Army, as well as to China since 1979. In response, a senior retired officer tartly declared that the Indian Army had been facing bullets in Jammu and Kashmir for more than 30 years. Since this was clearly an emotive issue, I took care to clarify a comment in the book and wish to do it here as well. What I mean by intensity combat is large-scale manoeuvre warfare against a similarly organised and equipped, competent foe that requires the application of combined arms operations by ground forces, systematic cooperation between at least one other service, and sustained logistics operations—the kind of warfare the Indian Army will face in a future war with Pakistan or China.

I continue to believe my definition does not include counterinsurgency operations or incidents along the Line of Control (LoC) in which the forces of both sides are, for the most part, safely protected in bunkers during the brief periods of small arms, machine gun, mortar, and artillery firing that characterise such incidents.

Q: One of the criticisms against your book is that your research sample is small and is unmindful of the cultural, traditional and historical context. How do you respond to that?

This criticism reminds me of the well-known quote by American poet and historian Carl Sandburg, "If the facts are against you, argue the law. If the law is against you, argue the facts. If the law and the facts are against you, pound the table and yell

like hell"—in this case, criticise the study's methodology.

It is an undeniable fact that in both India and Pakistan, all but the most superficial access to the armed forces is denied to diplomats and military attaches, journalists, and foreign researchers like me. Critics of my methodology, who question the validity of relying on the recollections of a small number of US military personnel as the basis for making judgments about

Wellington is addressed explicitly on pages 109-100, the Indian Army traditions and ethos are frequently referred to throughout the book, and there is a chapter on the history of the US-India relationship plus a full treatment of the evolution of civil-military relations in India.

Q: Would you say that the reactions to your book in India by default proof your point of the Indian



Col. David O. Smith (Retd)

Indian Army attitudes and values, know perfectly well that any request by me (or anyone else) to interview a large number of the Indian Army personnel on this topic would never be permitted.

Even if it was, the interviews would necessarily have been limited to a relatively small sample in a fairly recent time frame. My purpose in doing the study was never to capture one snapshot in time of the attitudes and values in the Indian Army, but to determine if they had changed over time.

As for ignoring culture, tradition, and the historical context, this is simply incorrect. The impact of South Asian culture on the pedagogy of

Army being resistant to criticism and change?

It is grossly unfair to single out the Indian Army on this score. All military establishments and services tend to resist change, and all are sensitive to criticism from foreign observers. For example, the US Army continued to field horse cavalry units long after World War I and the US Navy greatly preferred battleships to aircraft carriers well into World War II.

Nor should it be forgotten that the US military's present commitment to jointness ('jointmanship' in India) was literally crammed down its throat by the Goldwater-Nichols legislation passed by the Congress in 1986. This

said, it is also undeniable that in both India and Pakistan, the army is the dominant military institution, and such institutions are generally loath to give up positions of ascendancy unless they are forced to do so by their civilian masters or accept the need to do so by changing circumstances.

Q: Officers from the other two services often say that in the Indian Army the focus is on training rather than professional military education. Is this something unique to the Indian Army or do you think that the land forces by their very nature need to focus more on training instead of Professional Military Education (PME)?

On the surface, this appears to be another unfair criticism of the Indian Army. The principal focus of every operational unit—land, sea, or air—should be training to accomplish their assigned wartime tasks; the principal focus of institutions like the DSSC, however, should be professional military education. If what the navy and air force officer you cite actually mean by ‘training’ is the preoccupation in the Army Wing at DSSC of studying the tactical level of warfare instead of the operational or strategic levels of warfare, then the criticism is valid.

There is indeed too much emphasis in the Army Wing at DSSC on what US Army calls TTP—tactics, techniques, and procedures. The navy and air force wings appear to have more latitude to address the operational and strategic levels of warfare.

As I point out in the book, the DSSC website features a quotation by a former commandant, Lieutenant General F.N. Bilimoria: “It is here at the Staff College, the ‘think tank’ of the services, that the middle piece officers of the Indian armed forces and selected civil servants upgrade their knowledge from the mechanics of soldiering to the level of conception of ideas in the sphere of military, socio-political, economic and scientific fields, and integrate them into the larger aspects of national life.” Probably not a single western

foreign student would have agreed with this description of the DSSC curriculum.

Q: Would you like to compare your personal staff college experiences in the US and Pakistan, in terms of syllabus and understanding of geopolitics, future warfare and technology?

Having already completed the US Army Command and General Staff Course by correspondence in 1978, I requested that I be considered to attend the tri-service Armed Forces Staff College in Norfolk, Virginia in lieu of the resident CGSC course at Fort Leavenworth. After completing AFSC in 1981, I attended the Pakistan Army Command and Staff College in 1982. The two courses could not have been more different. Both of my American staff courses were primarily focused at the operational and strategic levels of war as well as gaining an understanding of the nature and application of the components of national power.

Both used a wide variety of electives and guest speakers to cover geopolitics, future warfare, and the influence of newly emerging technologies on the art of war. Quetta, on the other hand, was focused almost exclusively on the tactical level of war and what the Pakistan Army termed ‘minor staff duties,’ learning the routine tasks and formats required to turn the outcome of the appreciation of situation into an understandable and easily executable operational order.

However, any comparison between the two systems is an apples and oranges exercise because the American philosophy of professional military education is completely different from both Pakistan and India, the latter two being virtually the same. In the American system, promotions and the determination of future potential are made based on demonstrated performance during operational assignments; the selection to attend a staff college is merely one result of that determination. Therefore, the purpose of our staff colleges is purely to impart a broad professional educational experience

and not to make an independent evaluation of a student’s potential for onward promotion. The difference between the top 10 per cent and those finishing in the middle of the pack is meaningless in terms of their future assignments and promotions. This was certainly not the case at Quetta in which evaluation of future potential, not professional military education, was always the number one priority. Wellington is a close second to Quetta in this respect.

Q; In The Quetta Experience you wrote that the current generation of Pakistan military officers are less obsessed with India than the previous generation. Would you say that the current generation of Indian military officers, in contrast, are disproportionately Pakistan-centric? What do you think is the reason for that?

It is important to remember that the information cut-off date for The Quetta Experience was in mid-2016. I wrote then of a growing ‘generational divide’ between the senior and mid-level officers and Staff College students about the priority of external and internal threats to Pakistan, that the traditional view of India appeared to be moderating, and I opined that future senior leaders in Pakistan might be more amenable than those currently in charge of contemplating peace with India. Two major changes have occurred in the intervening four years: first, the internal threat to Pakistan from anti-state militants has eased dramatically, and second, the situation in Jammu and Kashmir (and along the LC) has deteriorated sharply. All Pakistani officers today are now laser-focused on India.

In The Wellington Experience, I wrote about a similar generational divide concerning China in which from 1998 until 2010 there appeared to be a clear divergence in the attitudes of senior and mid-level officers and those of the DSSC students about whether China or Pakistan was the greater threat to India. After 2010 that divide ceased to exist and now all three groups of officers consider China to be the principal

threat to India with Pakistan being the lesser threat, but one that from time to time may require short-term attention. The present concern about India's ability or inability to fight a two-front war (or possibly a two and a half front war) increasingly blurs the issue of which threat is more salient at a given point in time.

Q: Why do you think there is reluctance in the Indian armed forces to identify China as an enemy, unlike Pakistan?

First, I need to emphasise one fact about the findings in my book: they describe only the attitudes observed in three discreet groups of officers at DSSC—senior officers, faculty, and students. While it might be logically inferred that those attitudes are widely shared by the rest of the Indian armed forces, this supposition should not be taken for granted because foreign researchers have no access to the roughly 75 per cent of Indian military officers who never attend DSSC and none at all to Indian junior commissioned officers, non-commissioned officers, or soldiers.

What was observed at DSSC is that the most frequently used word at DSSC to describe China was 'competitor' despite the fact that all three groups ranked it (by the end of the study) as India's principal external threat. Prior to Doklam, such ambivalence was reflected in the country as a whole by Pew Global Research polls showing that only 56 per cent of Indians believed China's growing military power was bad for India and that only 51 per cent thought China's growing economy (with which India runs a growing trade deficit) did not bode well for the country.

The post-Doklam meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping at the BRICS summit reinforced another attitude observed at DSSC, confidence that border disputes could be de-escalated or contained through diplomacy and that a peaceful resolution of the entire issue was possible. Whether these attitudes about China have

changed appreciably since Ladakh remains to be seen.

These observations at DSSC can be explained by a variety of factors, the two most important being the sensitivity of the Indian Army about its poor performance in the 1962 war with China and fear of a similar 'embarrassment' in the future, and the relative absence of an emotional lens about Sino-Indian relations unlike those that distort India's relations with Pakistan and, to a lesser degree, with the United States.

Q: You have been closely associated with South Asia, both during service and later. What would be your prescription for sustainable peace?

I am flattered you think my years of experience in dealing with South Asia qualify me to offer a prescription for sustainable peace between India and Pakistan. I had hoped to end this interview on a positive note, but sadly, on this subject at least, I have little to offer that is positive.

Henry Kissinger once observed that Americans have a tendency to believe that every problem has a solution. However, my experience leads to an opposite conclusion. There are many problems around the world that are simply too complex and intractable to resolve absent the willingness of the contending parties to accept a compromise solution. Kashmir is one such intractable problem. Sustainable peace in South Asia requires a solution that fully satisfies both India and Pakistan,

but today I see little appetite on either side to abandon maximalist positions.

Therefore, the best that I can offer at this time is to suggest that absent of will on either side to compromise the most realistic way forward is to find ways to 'manage' the problem without resorting to a fourth war between India and Pakistan. This in fact has been done in the past with at least partial success. First, after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979 and for 10 years afterward, President Zia put the issue of Kashmir in the 'deep freeze' while he focussed on Pakistan's western border. The issue was unfrozen only after political mismanagement in Jammu and Kashmir kindled an indigenous insurgency in the state that ultimately was hijacked by Pakistan's Inter-services Intelligence (ISI) after Zia died in a plane crash.

A second example was the agreed ceasefire along the LC that was negotiated in 2003 that sharply reduced the level of violence and was more or less in effect until 2016. The reduction in violence enabled President Musharraf and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to employ back-channel contacts for the next two years to discuss potential arrangements for Kashmir that included a phased withdrawal of troops, self-governance for Kashmiris, and making borders irrelevant without redrawing them. Tragically for both countries, the talks foundered after Musharraf lost power in Pakistan in 2007 and ever since the Mumbai attack in 2008 the bargaining positions of both parties have hardened. 🙏



Ghazala Wahab

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Professional Military Education and Producing Thought Leaders for The Army

'A different habit, with worse effect, was the way that ambitious officers, they came in sight of promotion to the Generals' list, would decide that they would bottle up their thoughts and ideas, as a safety precaution, until they reached the top and could put these ideas into practice. Unfortunately, the usual result, after years of self-repression for the sake of their ambition, was that when the bottle was eventually uncorked the contents had evaporated.' – Liddel Hart

By Lieutenant General (Dr) Rakesh Sharma (Retd)

Background

As a corollary to the above apt quote, as the prospective Generals' would 'bottle up', they would have similar expectations from the lower rung officers to contain or suppress their ideas, in effect causing the entire organisation to remain so. Is that the rationale why Armies persist ardently with status quo? For the very junior levels, it is symptomatic to be told '...to be seen and not heard!' In effect, hence, ideas and thoughts, if any, that lead to change, emanate from the hierarchical apex.

Nurturing of relentless curiosity, by gathering newer sources of

information, expanding of knowledge base, and envisioning the 'next big thing', even in the form of innovative processes and systems, become absent, or effectively shot down. The difference between first and second rate organisations is this, the constant generation of fresh thought, its analysis and implementation, albeit in a non-parochial manner. We need introspection and examination of impetus to visionary and creative growth in the Army, and the modalities for the inculcation of guidance and exhortation of development ideas.

In an IDSA Issue Brief in 2010, the subject of professional military education (PME) was initiated, arguing for

creating a professional advisory board, a multi-disciplinary faculty, and a fair mix of military and civilian professorship that induces richness and rigour in Indian military thinking of the future. A simplistic analysis of the current environs sheds little light on any significant transition to focused PME, retaining the classic fervour of military training as against education.

The academic rigour and research that is imperative in producing thought leaders in the Army, is noticeably absent, including at the highest institutions of learning. The production line hence churns out military leaders proficient in brushing and cleaning the status quo, or inspectors of

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The DSSC, the AWC and the NDC should inculcate habits of honing intellectual agility and related skills. The emerging challenges to India's National Security and to the Army dictate and demand so. Innovators and thought leaders are the call of the day, and if we want material change in the next fifteen years, the PME must addressed soonest.

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lower formations and commanders, and micro-managers of some calibre proficient in honing and perfecting routine.

The depth evident in military leaders restricts itself to the organisations, locations and tactics (or maximally at operational level). Undoubtedly the invention of power point and the availability of plethora of past dissertations and papers in soft copy deter fresh thought. Incessant involvement in counter terrorism decries birth of fresh military thought. In pursuance of larger aims of the organisation and deliberations at Governmental levels, academia and policy makers, paucity of trained analysts, thought leaders, fall short in influencing decisions.

Thought Leadership

Thought Leader surely sounds an extremely pompous and haughty term, one that is suitable for think tanks or among academics, and many a military-man would opine it as outside the realm of military practitioners. Ideating in uniform forces is retained as an exclusive preserve of hierarchical seniors, and limited platforms exist to receive, contemplate, conceptualise and execute, based on freshly minted ideas. Out of box is a much-touted cliché, yet underutilized facet. Corporate management, which originated from military leadership, has with focus on bottom-lines; expansion, novelty and entrepreneurship propelled itself in rewarding ideation, leaving militaries way behind.

Indeed, thought leaders do not have any special gene, nor are born with great expertise to analyse, ideate and have the capacities to put it across. Surely even a thought leader or analyst could many a time have persisting

reservations on ideas. However, it would be great to sift through plethora of innovative ideas for a positive change and build in blocks to revitalise the organisation. In time the organisation may witness evolution, by creating new methodologies, processes, or practices.

Ideating is the bread and butter for all living organisations, and accordingly they endeavour to create, locate and



DSSC Wellington, one of the nerve centers of PME in India; File Photo

nurture ideators, engage with them – in the Army, officers who can question the status quo, and bring about freshness, innovativeness and improvement in all spheres of Army life. To achieve it, the organisation has to be receptive too, and create systems to absorb the ideas that may flow.

Professional Military Education

Professional Military Education (PME) covers a wide range of activities. In

one sense it refers to a plethora of training, continuing education, and other activities designed to provide development to members of the military at various points in their career and to prepare them for the next level of responsibilities.

In a White Paper on Joint Education in 2012, General Martin Dempsey of the US Army had argued that the purpose of PME is “...to develop leaders by conveying a broad body of professional knowledge and developing the habits of mind central to the profession.” In addition to critical thinking, he listed the ability to understand the security environment, respond to uncertainty, anticipate and lead transitions through change, and operate with trust, understanding, and empathy as important skills for future military leaders.

For officers in the Army, the inculcation of systematic objective analysis and evaluation of any important issue to reach a course of action, commences at a stage of preparation for competitive examination like the Defence Studies Staff College (DSSC), and while undergoing the Course. The military education prior to it, including the Junior Command Course aims to bring officers by learning to a universal platform to undertake varied lower levels of command and staff.



This training (more training than education) correctly focuses on disciplined thinking, as against open-minded alternative or fresh opinionated format. The preparatory phase of the DSSC and the course itself does facilitate some search for alternatives, though it cannot be stated as deep expertise in appropriate and promising areas of interest.



This training (more training than education) correctly focuses on disciplined thinking, as against open-minded alternative or fresh opinionated format. The preparatory phase of the DSSC and the course itself does facilitate some search for alternatives, though it cannot be stated as deep expertise in appropriate and promising areas of interest. As has been oft stated this all-important course is also largely silo-ed in respective Service syllabi, as against a joint Services curriculum.

In a similar manner the all-important Higher Command Course (HC) lacks the academic rigour that students of Masters of Science and Philosophy in Defence Studies have to undergo. In counterpart institutions, for example in the Pune University, a sampling of the syllabus states subjects as diverse as, Peace and Conflict Studies, Strategic Studies, Geopolitics and Military Geography, International Relations, National Security, Defence Economics, Strategic Studies, Evolution of Strategic Thought, Theories and Causes of War Deterrence, Concepts of Nuclear Deterrence and Current Relevance, Evolution of Nuclear Strategy, among many others.

The basic syllabus in the University system denotes scores of professional books as must read, to provide the student the rigours of academic degree, the much-valued depth and create analytic capabilities. Of course, there is significant hard work that the students have to apply in the DSSC and the HC Course, yet the focus remains on conformity, and significantly related to current plans largely at tactical level. There is but no search for thought leaders or ideators and exhortation towards that end, in many ways

also due to the operational committal of the mid profile officers, which allows posting of routine directing staff.

It is, hence, contended that in the HC course, the focus must change to academic rigour, strategy, critical thinking, writing and communication, diversity, and various skill sets in a manner corresponding to a civilian post-graduate degree. The aim of PME is NOT to produce conformists and followers, but to inculcate a systemic push towards analysis. The course content must seek out freshness of thought, ideators, and also denote so in their assessments.

The syllabus hence needs open-endedness as against regimented firmness and discipline. Project based research, as is the capstone of College of Defence Management, with projects provided to by the establishment on need basis and must form the major ideation platform in HC Course. That necessitates a faculty of the kind which has been through the academic rigour to debate, hone talent and guide research.

The basis of the HC Course is not to teach or revise existing plans; it is to

formulate new ones, as any good research-oriented institution would do so. Consequently, tasked to work in at higher headquarters that deliberate on future thought, HC qualified officers would possess sound knowledge base in the national security establishment to effectively exhibit the depth imperative at a Director and higher levels. At the National Defence College (NDC), the content must be essentially towards critical thinking and research and seek out thought leaders who will bring about a material change to status quo.

Time hence is to revamp PME, especially in terms of academic rigour, critical thinking, and creating thought leaders. Understandably, as imparting academic rigour is a professorial assignment, portions of curriculum would have to be outsourced to academic professionals. Such transformation would require less regimented syllabi and more autonomy and challenge, bring in depth in thinking, risk taking, innovation and analytic work.

In time, PME itself will throw up officer's adept at imparting academic rigour, and creating thought leaders, who can be for much longer tenures deputed in institutions of higher learning, and at creative work. The DSSC, the Army War College and the NDC should inculcate habits of honing intellectual agility and related skills. The emerging challenges to India's National Security and to the Army dictate and demand so. Innovators and thought leaders are the call of the day, and if we want material change in the next fifteen years, the PME has to addressed soonest. 🇮🇳



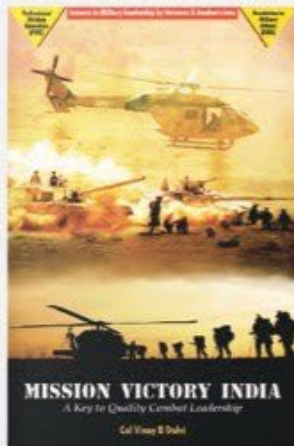
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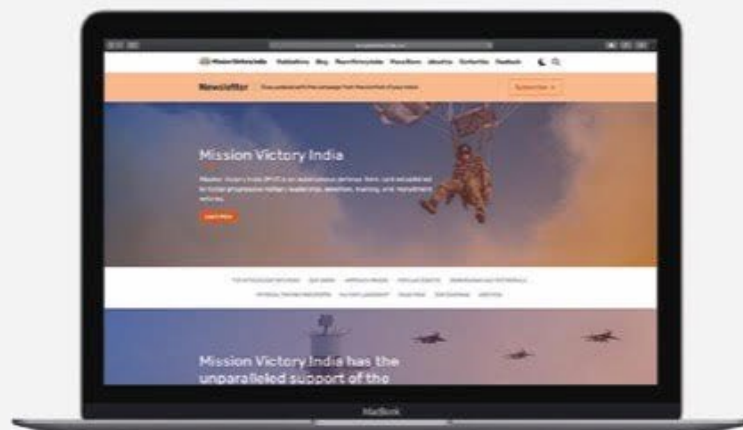
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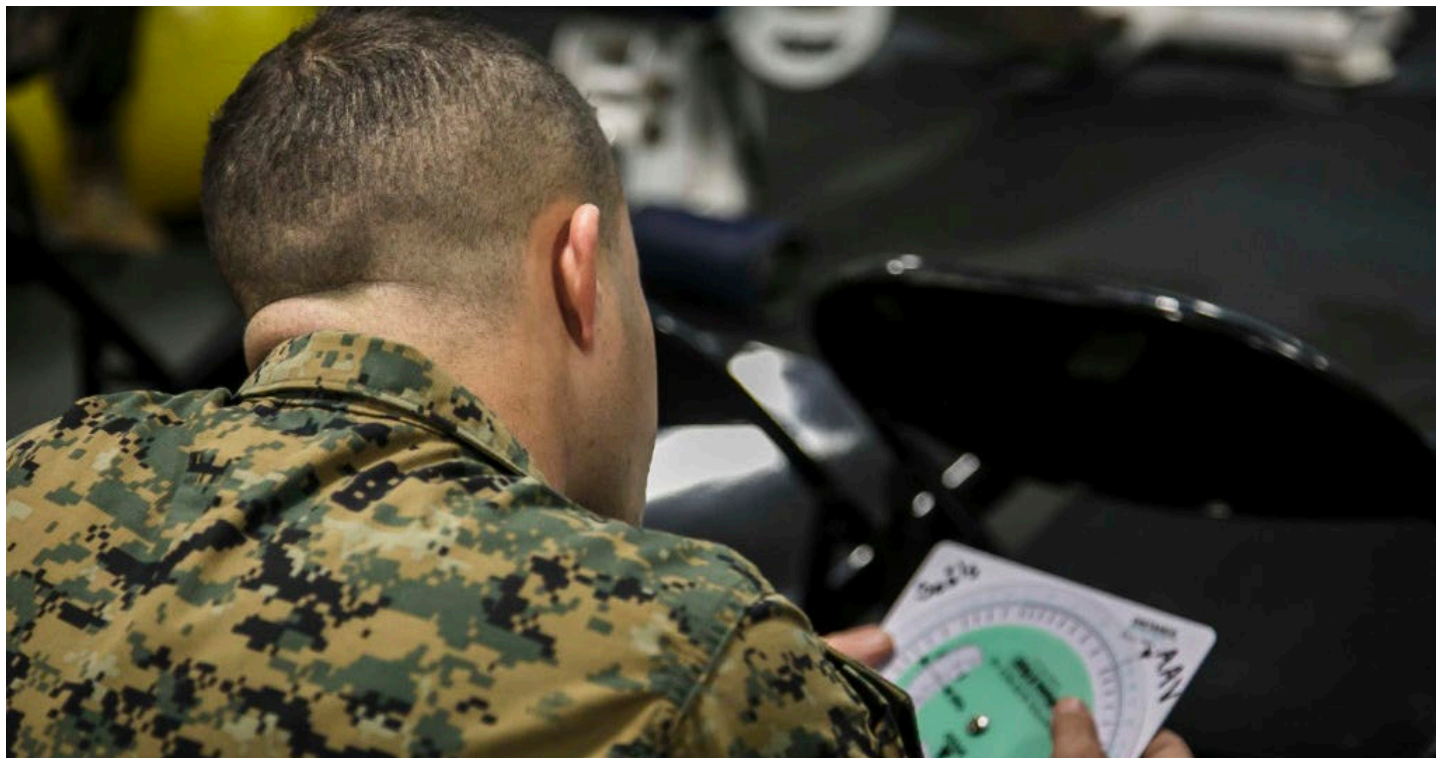


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Professional Military Education Needs More Creativity, Not More History

By Dr. Adam Lowther, Dr. Brooke Mitchell

On an official visit to the People's Liberation Army's National University of Defense Technology in Changsha, China, a colleague from the Air Force Research Institute and I were talking with a group of senior Chinese officers. They began to tell us that they devoured the Chinese-language edition of *Air and Space Power Journal* that we sent them.

They said the People's Liberation Army Air Force could overcome American technology in a conflict, but — where they fell short in their eyes — was in ingenuity, independence, and creativity. This comment was hard to forget and serves to stimulate our interest in a renewed effort to promote creativity within professional military education.

James Lacey's recent article discussing the new official joint vision and guidance statement for professional military education came shortly after the latest release of the Officer

Professional Military Education Policy. The intense and sometimes vitriolic debate over professional military education's future is certain to heat up once again.

The new document calls for officers to, "Demonstrate critical and creative thinking skills, interpersonal skills, and effective written, verbal, and visual communications skills to support the development and implementation of strategies and complex operations." To what degree this statement signals a dissatisfaction with current professional military education is debatable, but America's most senior military leaders clearly want officers who can more effectively apply creativity to the challenges facing the United States.

It was not long ago that *War on the Rocks* published a series of articles debating the criticism to which the professional military education system was subjected by the National Defense Strategy. These articles launched an

intense debate within the faculties of the various service schools. Whether the authors were arguing for a greater focus on military-specific training and education or for a more university-like experience, there was a clear desire to ensure the nation's military officers receive an education that best prepares them for the jobs they would perform upon graduation. Disagreement was largely found in how to achieve this undertaking.

In their vision and guidance statement, the Joint Chiefs of Staff wrote, "Our collective aim is the development of strategically minded joint warfighters, who think critically and can creatively apply military power to inform national strategy, conduct globally integrated operations, and fight under conditions of disruptive change."

It is hard to disagree with this aim, even if the need for creative strategic thinkers is not a new problem. The Officer Professional Military

Creative thinking is needed to stay ahead of our adversaries — a point the Chinese officers to whom we spoke made clear. It is something they understood well. Professional military education plays an important role in preparing American officers for success.

Education Policy, in describing desired outcomes, states that graduates should “[d]emonstrate critical and creative thinking skills, interpersonal skills, and effective written, verbal, and visual communications skills to support the development and implementation of strategies and complex operations.”

While we agree with Lacey that a faculty can more effectively use historical case studies, wargaming, and other tools to introduce creativity into the classroom, our view of professional military education’s challenges and their solutions differs from his. In many respects, we draw from past debates and our own experience to formulate solutions. As such, we implore senior leaders in professional military education institutions to work to realize a mindset of creativity in their students. To do so, three structural reforms are needed.

First, it is time to eliminate the current approach to curriculum development whereby each course is developed by a “course director” to be taught by a faculty member — be they a military officer, historian, political scientist, or education leadership specialist. Instead, we suggest a model where each faculty member is given a basic set of course requirements and then allowed to design the course they teach. Additionally, faculty expertise ought to match the course, which is unfortunately not currently the case.

Second, it is time to open the leadership ranks of service schools to career academics, many of whom have spent their careers educating military officers. Creating a more expansive and diverse approach to problem-solving and leadership will lend itself to building the types of officers described in both the Joint Chiefs’ vision and guidance statement and

the Officer Professional Military Education Policy.

Third, there is a need for diversification of faculty disciplines, which are aligned with the changing nature of great-power competition. This recommendation goes against both Lacey and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who are pushing for an intensified focus on military history. We do not view that deepened focus as necessary, simply because the professional military



The PME Pyramid; Infographic

education system and curricula are already dominated by military history.

Creativity

If creativity is best described as the use of the imagination or original ideas, then it is desirable to apply creativity to military challenges for the purpose of achieving strategic, operational, and even tactical objectives. If, as is widely suggested, America’s margin of victory is declining, creativity is certain to aid in the achievement of American objectives. The recognition of this need is clearly stated in both the Joint Chiefs’ vision and guidance statement and the Officer Professional Military Education Policy.

It is worth drawing a distinction between training and education because they are often used synonymously in the military. Training is the act of teaching a person a particular skill or type of behavior. It teaches “muscle memory” and how to use an object in an effort to automate the appropriate response at the correct time. On the other hand, education is the knowledge and development that come from the process of being educated.

Thus, the primary difference between training and education is that training teaches a person what do, whereas education teaches a person how to think. It is primarily in professional military education — not training — where we seek to instill a mindset of creativity. In an officer’s military career, time at a service school may be the only opportunity where it is possible to develop this ability for later use on a staff or in the field.

Given the ever-evolving strategic environment in which officers must operate, building a mindset disposed toward creativity provides an advantage to the nation that can see a challenge along with possible solutions in ways that adversaries cannot. By necessity, professional military education must be the primary place where officers are educated to have a mindset of creativity in responding to the world’s greatest challenges. Structuring the service schools to take this path is a must.

In Search of a Framework

Professional military education is, in part, driven by the need to comply with the Process for Accreditation of



Building a creative mindset at all levels of professional military education is important if the U.S. military intends to maintain its greatest advantage: its people. As the Joint Chiefs said, “There is more to sustaining a competitive advantage than acquiring hardware; we must gain and sustain an intellectual overmatch as well.”



Joint Education, which serves as the Joint Staff’s curriculum and program guidance for intermediate- and senior-level joint professional military education. The Joint Staff J7 seeks to guarantee that officers receive a uniform education across the service schools at the operational (senior O3–O4) and strategic (O5–O6) levels.

Each service tailors its education to focus on the primary domain(s) in which the service operates. Joint Staff direction ensures that officers from any service attending a given school receives a common core of education. The schools themselves ensure that all officers receive the same material regardless of the professor in the classroom. Moreover, individual faculty members do not necessarily teach within their areas of expertise or design their own courses, with the exception of electives.

The cultural and institutional requirements that maintain the “seminar” system of today’s joint professional military education have as much in common with military training as they do with higher education. They also lead to an overly homogenized education that is a disservice to students and diminishes the ability of the faculty to provide the highest quality education. While the Joint Staff and service school leadership’s intent is to ensure joint professional military education programs provide students with a standard level of education on identified topics, they have actually harmed the quality of education, leaving the system highly bureaucratized and bereft of creativity.

Officer training and education occur at three distinct levels: tactical, operational, and strategic. While this article focuses primarily on intermediate and

senior-level joint professional military education, it is impossible to ignore the tactical training that precedes this education.

Tactical

According to the new Officer Professional Military Education Policy, “Entry level education received at grades O1 through O3 focuses on specialized skills and tactical knowledge in Service-specific constructs with an introduction to Joint matters.” This training focuses on building a clear set of professional skills while acculturating an officer to service and unit culture. Absent the successful mastery of the tactical expertise required to perform an officer’s core duties, advancement and the opportunity to move from a focus on muscle memory to a focus on more complex problem-solving are impossible. For most officers, this training is received during their “basic” course. It is then reinforced upon their arrival at their first unit where on-the-job training and exercises build upon initial training.

At approximately the six-year mark, depending upon the service, an O3 will likely have the opportunity to attend a course that begins to shift the officer from thinking about tactical training to operational education. In the Air Force, Squadron Officer School provides a six-week program that performs this function. In the Army, the Captain’s Course performs a similar function. It is then at the 10- to 13-year mark that officers will either complete their intermediate-level education through a service command and staff college or similar program — in residence or via distance education.

Operational

It is the operational-level education that fully introduces officers (senior O3–O4) to joint professional military education and gives them an opportunity to think critically about a range of topics, analyze and synthesize information, and offer solutions to complex problems. The operational level’s focus within a command and staff college prepares students to serve as effective staff officers and field grade leaders. It is at this level that thinking creatively — not just critically — becomes important to the success of an officer.

This level is particularly important for field grade officers because they have a daily impact on junior officers. With command and staff college graduates serving in key staff positions within an Air Force squadron, Army battalion, Marine regiment, onboard ship, or on a headquarters staff, there is a clear need to think creatively about solutions to complex problems. While there are command and staff college faculty members who individually introduce opportunities for officers to think creatively, curricula across the services are fundamentally constrained for several reasons. Apart from some specialized programs at the various service schools, students generally lack clear opportunities to learn, demonstrate, and reinforce creativity.

Strategic

As the Officer Professional Military Education Policy states, “Education programs received at grades O5 or O6 prepare officers to develop and implement military strategies with an emphasis on Joint operations and some attention to Service-specific contributions.” The focus is on developing strategic thinking.

With many officers attending senior service schools at the 16- to 18-year mark in their careers, it is much harder to instill creativity in them. However, the need to think and operate creatively does not diminish at any point in an officer’s career. Accordingly, the need for creativity is no less important at this last educational opportunity in many officers’ careers than it is in earlier years.

Recommendations

While we acknowledge Tammy Schultz's admonition that every service school is different, we offer the following recommendations to better structure the professional military education system to develop a creative mindset:

First, standardized curricula — taught to multiple seminars — should be abandoned and the faculty should be given the freedom to design the courses they teach, still meeting Officer Professional Military Education Policy objectives. There are several reasons for which this approach does not occur across the joint professional military education system's core courses. Culture (comfort with standardization), military bureaucracy (ease of evaluation), and faculty members (regularly teaching outside their areas of expertise) all contribute to the problem.

In practice, an "edutocracy" focused on accreditation that uses under-qualified military instructors drives an overemphasis on standardized curriculum design, simple evaluation metrics, and other tools of the education industry. This educational model does nothing for the quality of education and is harmful to building a mindset of creativity. Though American K-12 education is not among the best in the world, American universities are. Thus, professional military education should mimic the approach of the latter and avoid mimicking that of the former.

Second, the professional military education system requires greater diversity in its leadership. With the vast majority of civilians in leadership positions drawn from the ranks of retired officers, professional military education institutions have too little diversity of experience and perspective in positions that can shape change. Avoiding confirmation bias and group-think is an important element of any good leadership team. Promoting more career academics into leadership ranks can provide greater diversity of thought and aid senior leadership in understanding the breadth of possibilities.

Many civilian leaders — retired officers — have never worked at a civilian university, which narrows the range of experience from which a service school's leadership team can draw. When military culture's lack of creativity is thrown into the mix, this homogenous group of leaders is less prepared to think and act creatively. Thus, incorporating more career academics, even with their own perceived shortcomings, can help service schools think creatively about their own challenges while teaching students to do the same.

Third, leadership across professional military education should make a concerted effort to fill open faculty positions with professors from disciplines like economics, organizational and social psychology, computer science, geography, and other fields that can aid in preparing officers for the complex operational and strategic environment in which they will find themselves. By our count, the majority of PhD civilian faculty members within the command and staff college and war college programs at the various service schools are military historians and, to a lesser degree, political scientists. Thus, curricula reflect what these disciplines know and value rather than the full range of variables that are important to the effective development of officers. Broadening the curriculum requires broadening the faculty.


By diversifying the disciplines that comprise the faculty, we can also improve creativity and expand ways of

thinking, problem-solving methodologies, and the breadth of perspectives from which students draw insights. Creativity is rarely a flash of brilliance. It is a purposeful effort to build a mindset that is open to new and innovative ideas.

Conclusion

Building a creative mindset at all levels of professional military education is important if the U.S. military intends to maintain its greatest advantage: its people. As the Joint Chiefs said, "There is more to sustaining a competitive advantage than acquiring hardware; we must gain and sustain an intellectual overmatch as well."

The recent guidance by the Joint Chiefs of Staff clearly values creativity and seeks to improve its incorporation across the professional military education system. Decentralizing the education curriculum, diversifying leadership, and building a faculty that reflects today's challenging operational and strategic environment will go a long way in building a more creative graduate.

Creative thinking is needed to stay ahead of our adversaries — a point the Chinese officers to whom we spoke made clear. It is something they understood well. Professional military education plays an important role in preparing American officers for success. Ensuring the United States maintains that advantage should always be our primary goal. 

Dr. Adam Lowther

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Dr. Brooke Mitchell

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(This article has been reproduced from 'War on the Rocks' in the larger interest of the Indian military fraternity. Views expressed are the authors own and do not reflect the editorial policy of MVI)



Professional Military Education: What Is It Good For?

The idea is that these officers need a common basis of knowledge with each other and with others in the national security community in order to operate effectively at the next level of leadership...

By Dr. Pauline Shanks Kaurin

Professional Military Education (PME) covers a wide range of activities. In one sense it refers to a plethora of training, continuing education, and other activities designed to provide development to members of the military at various points in their career and to prepare them for the next level of responsibilities. The U.S. military requires professional education for both officers and enlisted personnel and its form, content, and objective varies across rank, service, and military role. But what is its overarching purpose? Why do we invest so much in this effort?

In his 2012 White Paper on Joint Education, General Martin Dempsey argues the purpose of PME is "...to develop leaders by conveying a broad body of professional knowledge and developing the habits of mind central to the profession." In addition to critical thinking,

he lists the ability to understand the security environment, respond to uncertainty, anticipate and lead transitions through change, and operate with trust, understanding, and empathy as important skills for future military leaders.

Taking this document as a starting point, I focus here on the Staff and War College experiences in U.S. professional military education. While many of the questions raised here apply equally—if perhaps differently—to the education of others in the military and other militaries, a narrow scope allows for more precise framing of questions about the purpose of PME. While it seems, we would be able to discern the purpose and aims of military education by looking at various official military and institutional documents, they only tell part of the story.

What we find upon closer scrutiny are multiple stories about what exactly professional military education is supposed to do and how it is to be done. Some think of it as the equivalent of graduate school needing research and rigor, others think of it as training that ought to be conducted by expert practitioners, and still others a higher level initiation into the Profession of Arms. Accordingly, a closer look at PME is necessary to clarify these basic questions, which then can lead us to thinking through what the focus and content of these experiences ought to be.

A Little Something for Everyone

Even cursory discussion with military professionals about their educational programs generates a wide variety of responses. Some have good growth

experiences and appreciate the sabbatical nature and the break from deployments or other duties (especially of the War College experience) with time to study new material, build new skills, and interact with knowledgeable faculty as well as international and domestic colleagues in military and civilian circles.

Others report less positive experiences, seeing the experience as lacking rigor and enrichment, failing to prepare members for the next stage of their career, and/or frustrating in terms of the abilities (or lack thereof) in fellow students and/or faculty—sometimes to the extent of questioning whether the experience was a waste of time and the tax-payer's dollars.

From a more formal perspective, academics and other commentators have raised concerns with various aspects of professional military education that echo some of the more informal reflections above.

Journalist Tom Ricks is well known as a long-standing critic of the education provided at the academies and war colleges, questioning their rigor and the degree to which they are really valuable educational experiences. US Naval War College faculty member Dr. Joan Johnson-Freese has also written extensively on this issue, calling for better assessment, questioning the rigor of these military programs (especially in relation to counterpart civilian institutions), highlighting issues such as tenure and the ability to criticize the individual institutions and professional military education more generally.

There are others who both critique and work from the inside to improve professional military education, as evidenced by efforts like the US Army War College's reassessment of academic governance in 2012. Given the focus on metrics and assessment, it is safe to assume similar internal conversations are on-going in other related institutions and groups, thinking about how to ensure professional military education achieves its objectives.

A Little Clarity Please?

Before we can wade into and make sense of the arguments and issues raised

in the critiques above, we must ask a number of questions. What exactly is the purpose of professional military education? What should students who have been through such an education be able to do? What should they think and believe?

What becomes clear is the myriad of answers to these questions. We have already noted the idea of a break/sabbatical from military duty to reflect and study, but what should be studied? At the War College level, the curriculum focuses on strategy, critical thinking, writing and communication, diversity, and various skill sets and content on the U.S. government that officers will need as they move from leading at the tactical to the strategic level.

At this level, incoming students are presumed to have mastered tactics, but now must move into another realm with distinct realms of engagement with civilians and other constituencies. The concept and execution of joint work with these constituencies, as well as other military colleagues across different forces and international contexts, is also a significant emphasis at this level.

One prevailing view is that professional military education at this level is analogous to a civilian post-graduate degree designed to put an individual at the same level as those with whom they will work, both in terms of credentials and a basis of knowledge and expertise that will be a consistent product across institutions and cohorts. The idea is that these officers need a common basis of knowledge with each other and with others in the national security community in order to operate effectively at the next level of leadership.

Another view sees professional military education as further development in the Profession of Arms, socialisation and development of expertise, as well as networking and developing a sense of community and belonging at a higher, more elite level.

The heavy focus on strategic leadership in the military context which is part of these curricula seems to support this skill set as critical. In this view, professional military education is, at each nor level of responsibility and influence, an

initiation into a professional community of practice.

Problematic Considerations

Each of these perspectives, considered in isolation, will lead to a particular design for the professional military education curriculum, and those curricula would likely differ in their requirements for content and rigor. If no single perspective is dominant, though, and each is afforded a substantial place in the design of a curriculum, the result is a long and ambitious list for less than one year of study! This raises some important questions, though. Are all these elements really the aim of education in the military? Are they of equal importance? What are the central aims and what elements are desirable, but not essential to the PME experience?

At least in the case of the war colleges (and one suspects an analogous conclusion holds for professional military education at other levels) there is a roughly consistent curriculum with a particular content emphasis and cohorts made up of U.S. and international officers, including a wide range of educational backgrounds and abilities, which is challenging as different people are starting in different places and with different skill sets.

This raises the question of quality and how students are to be assessed as they go through these programs. Is it important that students perform at a certain level? Or is it more important that students have the experience, even if different students perform at different levels of proficiency?

The question of quality and assessment brings up the question of whether we are to view professional military education (especially at the senior levels) primarily as training, as education, or as some combination of the two. Training, by definition, is more oriented towards skills and seems a matter of completion, while education is much broader (although it can include skills) and rigor and quality assessment seems more appropriate. If professional military education is connected to promotion/advancement, that adds another level of complexity, and performance in school might be relevant.

Despite moves by the War colleges to incorporate more research projects allowing for a development of deep expertise on the part of the students (having a thesis project, professional presentation, and publication), the context, timeline, and incentives in professional military education are different from many civilian graduate schools, where there is an expectation of narrow, deep expertise in a particular area. Again, we can ask a number of questions. What is the point of research as a part of this experience? Is it to provide development of expertise and experiences? Is it to provide equality of credentials? And why should we expect or desire equality of credentials for military leaders?

Two Paths.... or a Third Way?

In my view, there is either 1) a tension between the different ways professional military education is thought of (as discussed above) and what the curriculum does in effect/practice; or 2) it is time to rethink PME, especially in terms of academic rigor.

Academic rigor would seem to require less pro forma instruction/curriculum and more freedom, flexibility, and challenge to match what graduates will find in their future positions out there, including risk taking, innovation, disciplined disobedience, and mission command. We could also consider that the reason for some of the confusion is that there are multiple aims for different kinds of students.

On one hand there are calls for more academic rigor and moves to make the senior professional military education experience more like civilian graduate schools. On the other hand, the needs of the military suggest that rather than rigor, students in professional military education need wider expertise and flexibility across a range of areas, with an ability to move between both and be competent and lead in different areas.

This is why the original question is so critical. What is the aim of professional military education? How does that match the expectations of the students? What do they think this experience is? How do these student expectations match the expectations of

the faculty and administrators at these institutions? How do these match the expectations of the senior military and civilian leaders in the military institution and the policy guidance of Congress? What do senior leaders in the military think is required and how well do they think these institutions are doing?

From these questions, at least two paths emerge. First, we could look at professional military education, even at the senior level, as primarily about building and developing skill sets required for next level of leadership, taught by those who know what is needed.

This is primarily training. The goals are to facilitate networking, enable graduates to operate in a joint environment (as it is understood when students attend the War College), and provide them credentials for entry into the community of practice as it exists now, where they will then serve as stewards for its preservation more or less as it is. If this is the intent, then the concern seems to be more oriented around finding appropriate assessment metrics to measure success and deciding how the faculty should be involved in this process.


If, however, the desire is less training and more a matter of inculcation of habits of mind (like intellectual agility and related skills) that will enable graduates to anticipate and adapt to emerging changes, then that is a very different track. For these students will need more mentoring and challenging

from those who are not a part of the community of practice, (but are familiar with it) so they can think outside of the military community, outside of the Profession of Arms.

Recent discussions around concepts like disciplined disobedience, innovation, authentic leadership (not just strategic), and mission command seem to move in a different area altogether and require different approaches, curricula, faculty and modes of assessment.

A final possibility is that both tracks are desirable for different students and different contexts. It is possible, of course, the answer is not binary and both kinds of experiences and students are needed for different types of leadership and roles in the military.

Perhaps the military needs both innovators and those capable of effectively navigating the way things are now. Perhaps the military needs military personnel to develop both narrow and deep expertise in relevant and emerging areas of interest and generalized capabilities applicable to different constituencies and contexts.

If this is a reasonable suggestion, then it will be helpful to clarify what aspects of these educational experiences are education in a strict sense, which are more oriented towards training, and which are a combination. Then, discussions can proceed about quality, the kinds of curriculum and faculty that should be involved and appropriate metrics for assessment. 



Dr. Pauline Shanks Kaurin

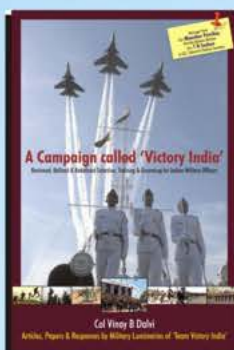
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amongst the Indian Military fraternity. Views expressed are the authors own and do not reflect the editorial policy of MVI

A Campaign called 'Victory India'

Compendium on Selection, Training and Grooming for Indian Military Officers

Books authored by **Col Vinay B Dalvi** & Published by **Pentagon Press**



A Campaign called 'Victory India'

"A trail blazing collection of over 30 well researched articles, military papers, news stories and letters by over 30 authors, analysts, scholars and professional respondents. The collective contributions of several military luminaries have comprehensively reviewed, refined and redefined the existing selection systems and training and grooming methodologies of young military officers with the sole aim and objective of enhancing the quality of Indian military leadership at all levels.

The book title - 'A Campaign called Victory India' highlights the critical importance of military officer leadership and the imminent need to strengthen this vital link with the man behind the gun to lead India's military might and country on the path of Victory India!"

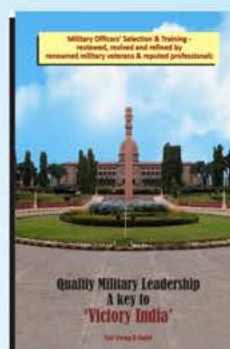
"Man behind the machine; remains a truism in spite of warfare being inundated by high technology. This book stresses on the officers who lead the soldiers, sailors and airmen and the critical need to comprehensively re-look and renew the selection and training of young officers. With over six decades of our independence and experience of wars fought, both on Indian and foreign soil, the recommendations of our military experts must be examined with urgency and acted upon"

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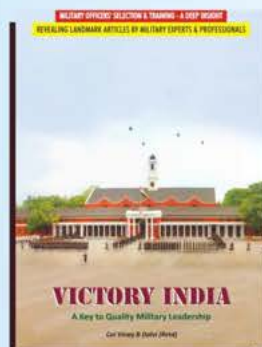
Victory India - A Key to Quality Military Leadership

First Edition - January 2013

A bold and trail blazing exposé of 65 years old selection & training system of the Indian Armed Forces Officer Cadre.

This book is a clarion call for serious introspection of all our processes; involving identification, selection and training of our dynamic youth to mould them into inspiring and effective Quality Military Leaders!

- A Campaign, A Crusade, A Commitment, An Inspiration...
- A campaign for inducting quality candidates as potential officer leaders in the Indian Armed Forces
- A crusade for a holistic review of the selection system catering to the elite officer cadre
- A commitment to objectively introspect on improving the training at our military academies
- An Inspiration to enlightened students of leadership in other spheres of life for similar initiatives
- An Informatory for candidates, guardians, selectors and mentors on military selection and training



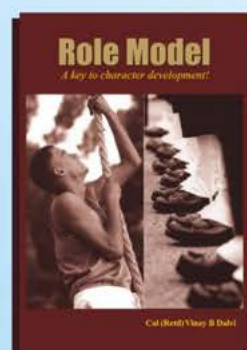
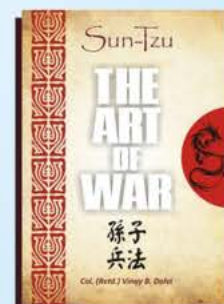
Sun-Tzu - The Art of War

First Edition - April 2012

Sun Tzu wrote 'The Art of War' in China 2500 years ago. It is the earliest known treatise on the subject of war which has never been surpassed in comprehensiveness and depth of understanding.

Even today this book is considered to be the most concentrated essence of wisdom on war and also the source of all Chinese strategic and tactical doctrines.

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Role Model - A Key to Character Development!

First Edition - March 2010

Second Edition - August 2010

The 'Role Model' is - A key to 'character development' of selected, daring and dashing young men who have chosen the Armed Forces as a career and lifestyle.

A soul searching review and introspection of present 'training concepts and methodology' of physical and recreational training with meaningful and beneficial recommendations.

A beacon for suitable and budding youngsters seeking 'information and guidance' to join the elite officer cadre of the Indian Armed Forces.



Train-Learn Balance

The Importance of professional military education cannot be overemphasised

By Ghazala Wahab

One of the fallacies of the discourse on professional military education (PME) is the delinking between the military and the political. In a country like India, where the post-independence political journey began with the distrust of the military, it was only to be expected that the military would be kept out of the policy-making loop. Perhaps, sensing the national mood, even the military, then largely the army, also voluntarily took a step back allowing the civilian leadership, including the bureaucracy to take precedence.

As a consequence of this, the military leadership, despite its stature, was seldom asked to sit at the high-table of decision-makers. Its domain remained military affairs, and even there, its decisions had to be endorsed by the civilian bureaucracy, often junior in hierarchy (perhaps intellect too) before they could be implemented. These stifling chambers of power, where authority flowed from access

to semi-literate politicians, were crucibles of mediocrity. Individual brilliance, or even initiative, was frightening, hence undesirable.

How could the military then think? Or apply itself to the wider understanding of geostrategy and geopolitics. After all, its job was not to think, but follow orders. Its advice was hardly sought. And whenever required, advice was given to it. This progressive intellectual diminution had a cascading effect on generations of military officers. Development of intellectual ability calls for a very different kind of incubatory environment. To begin with, it needs the courage of non-conformism; and then independent, individualistic retreat for reflection.

Both are anathema to the military. Nothing could be more terrifying for the hierarchy than a non-conformist or an officer with an individualistic streak. And the hierarchy is not just

the military hierarchy; but the one above it—the bureaucracy and the political class. Hence, officers, who showed streak of going beyond the routine, were either weeded out early or they quit. Over the decades, as largely mediocre rose to top, they nurtured, knowingly or unknowingly, the culture of mediocrity; creating a corpus of 'officers like them.' Perhaps, that is what they understood as best.

Conflating non-conformism or independent thinking with indiscipline is a convenient excuse. Discipline is a matter of training, which includes inculcation of values. Independent thinking is an attitude towards learning and widening one's understanding. There is no conflict between the two. In fact, an officer with evolved thinking faculties would better understand the importance of discipline and following orders in war or operations. He/ she wouldn't just follow them as a standard operating procedure.

Hence, when we talk of absence of strategic culture in India it has to be seen in context. Culture, of any kind, needs years, perhaps, centuries to evolve. It is an amalgamation of experiences, habit, beliefs, learning and self-reflection. It can neither be air-dropped on a community nor swallowed like a bitter pill. If India lacks strategic culture, then perhaps, strategic pursuits have not been a part of Indian culture. No point labouring over Kautilya after all these years. Arthashastra was composed over two centuries ago. Realities of the city-state where it was composed and present-day India, as well as the world, are very different.

The truth is, India as a nation-state is a modern entity. Barely 73 years old. And increasingly insecure in its own skin; hence the constant need to define and redefine itself in the image of what the world sees. In these 73 years, India's outreach to the world—a prerequisite for strategic thinking—has been professedly peaceful. When we did participate militarily in international operations, we did so without responsibility. We merely followed orders and SOPs under the United Nations Peacekeeping rubric. With no responsibilities, we had no liabilities. Hence, no need to think of the larger picture. Or how we could use our military power to shape our neighbourhood in a manner that would further our influence and interests.

As far as war-fighting was concerned, we operated on inherited or borrowed doctrines. Too much to expect that we would thrash-out our own, when we have not bothered to create an India-specific legal system; still following the British ordained sedition laws, official secrets law and so on. Till a few years back, we even followed the British law on forest reserves and homosexuality, unmindful of India's centuries' old history and traditions (including military history).

This historicity is necessary to understand why PME has been low priority in India. In a democracy like ours, the political leadership has to give the direction. It has to tell the military what the threats are, based on which the military evolves war-fighting doctrines. This collaborative process

should ideally form part of the education that young and middle level military officers get at various stages in their career.

Just as they read about military history and international military campaigns from World War I onwards, they must also read about the threats that India faces, the strengths and limitations of the future Indian military campaigns; and most importantly, they must learn about how emerging geopolitics of the Indian neighbourhood is altering/ determining India's geostrategic options/ choices.

This will set the ground for learning about new warfare technologies and how these technologies are shaping new doctrines. Unless young and middle level officers don't learn about these, they will neither be able to

One, to study all this, the pupil would need textbooks and reference books written on these subjects. The dearth of India-specific strategic, forget technology-specific literature, is unbelievably appalling. When no reading material is available, education is based on, at best, western literature and worst on conjectures.

Two, the political class is petrified of naming the threat. For decades, Indian political leadership told the military that it need only worry about Pakistan; that China would be taken care of through diplomacy and politics. With the focus of military thinking on Pakistan, it developed or deteriorated following the ebb and tide of Pakistan's perceived military strength. Once the nuclear weapons came out in the open, even this thinking was constricted, because the political and the



An educational visit of Japanese delegation from Japan Air Self Defence Force comprising Offrs undergoing Air Comd & Staff Course took place on 25 Sep at DSSC, Wellington; File Photo

appreciate the quantum of the military threat India faces and work on solutions to offset/ counter/ deflect those threats. And unless they interact closely with other instruments of geo-strategy—the political leadership and the diplomatic corps—they wouldn't be able to realistically assess where political/ diplomatic options stop and military begins or the vice versa.

Unfortunately, all of this is in the realm of theory and fantasy. For several reasons.

military leadership could not mutually decide where Pakistan's nuclear red lines would be. Or what the appropriate response for battlefield use of tactical nuclear weapons would be. Given the ambiguity about all this, diffidence and hedging of bets were considered the best policy. It is only understandable that this would percolate down to the level of military education.

Three, the roiling insurgency in Kashmir, aided, armed and abetted by Pakistan gradually sucked in the Indian Army totally. Half of Indian Army at any given point is engaged



The military leadership, despite its stature, was seldom asked to sit at the high-table of decision-makers. Its domain remained military affairs, and even there, its decisions had to be endorsed by the civilian bureaucracy, often junior in hierarchy (perhaps intellect too) before they could be implemented.



in some manner of counter-insurgency (CI); either directly carrying out CI operations (CI Ops) or preparing to get inducted in the CI theatre. The other half, even when not directly engaged in CI Ops is intellectually and in terms of training/ education involved in it. Giving it fancier names like Low Intensity Conflict Operations (LICO), hybrid war, fourth generation warfare doesn't take away from the fact that all of these revolve around CI Ops. And in most war-gaming the theatre remains Kashmir; the enemy Pakistan.

Underscoring the importance of PME in creating 'thinking' military officers, a Vivekananda International Foundation paper, Professional Military Education—An Indian Experience, gives the following example:

'Consider the scenario. An officer gets critically wounded while leading operations against the most wanted terrorist in the Valley. Women and Children come out on the road and prevent medical evacuation of the officer. Or while the operation is in progress a mob collects and start stone pelting and hinder the operations of the Army and help the terrorists to get away. What does the Army do? Does it open fire to evacuate the injured soldiers where women and children would be casualties? Is it time to consider use of Non-Lethal Weapons specially by forces like Rashtriya Rifles. Are we discussing such issues in our training establishments?'

Such deep-rooted is this conviction that even when India is facing one of the worst military crises in Ladakh, not only popular media but senior retired army officers are still focussed on Pakistan. Writing in an online portal on fourth generation warfare, ironically the same old variation of LICO and

hybrid, a senior officer, who is also a visiting faculty in a University says,

'In Pakistan, we have an adversary that has had the experience of fighting an offensive hybrid war in Afghanistan and winning it. From recent events in Kashmir, it is apparent that the intensity and tempo of the proxy war in Kashmir can be controlled by Pakistan'.

This article, part of a series on Pakistan Army, was being run in October.

A few days after this article appeared, The Hindu newspaper reported, quoting a former member of Parliament from Ladakh, Thupstan Chhewang, that China has encroached even further inside Indian territory in the Pangong Tso region. Talks have reached a dead-end. Since the beginning of the crisis in May, China now occupies nearly 1,000sqkm of Indian territory in Ladakh.

As of now, this occupation appears permanent. China has laid fibre optic cable in the occupied territory. It has proceeded to build permanent structures for its troops, including high-altitude specific insulated habitat. The

Indian troops, meanwhile, are currently staying in tents, according to the same Ladakhi leader, who makes this claim on the basis of information shared by the local villagers and porters that the Indian Army has employed.

No portal is running a series on Chinese military capabilities. The maximum that Indian military officers are doing is assuring the readers how Indian Army is capable of giving China a bloody nose; and how 2020 is not 1962. In doing this, none go into the specifics of Chinese military technology. Even the two-front war, and now two-and-half front war formulation is largely frozen in the time it was conceived with minor tweaking.

However, it is unfair to blame the military. It does not know because it was never told that it needed to know this. Operating in isolation from the political and diplomatic leadership, retired Indian military officers aspiring for strategic understanding feed on western literature and expound on issues like Saudi Arabia-Israel relations, Syria-Russia-Turkey triangle, Pakistan-Afghanistan-US ties. If at all they comment on India, they talk of some permutation of hybrid war. The boldest of Indian Army officers' comment on the Indian Navy's options in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) against China! With this resource pool, who will impart the knowledge and how far will it go in preparing the next generation of officers in future warfare is the moot question. Hopefully, the next few pages will help in finding the answer. 🙏



Ghazala Wahab

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Battleground Gilgit-Baltistan

The capture of Spanggur Spur by 7 Vikas (SFF) and taking 45 PLA prisoners (unconfirmed) is an example of joint Indo-Tibetan revenge against China. Liberation of Tibet movement, anticipated after India and US abandon one China policy, will be Xi's another nemesis.

By Colonel Jaipal Singh (Retd)

Most of us perceive Pakistan as the country's implacable enemy and a source of everlasting stand-off. In all our imaginations, be it Bollywood, cricket, or electoral campaigns, taking on Pakistan and making it bite the dust has been a bravery worthy of respect. Indians had not held such extreme sentiments for China despite the humiliation of losing the 1962 War. But by deceit China tried to capture Ladakh taking advantage of complacency and Corona Pandemic.

Having seen India alarmed by the Wuhan Virus pandemic and its inability to even transport migrant labourers to their homes from their places of work, China thought this was the ideal time to walk over Ladakh. Despite our unflinching trust in 'Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai'

syndrome and routine vigil on the LAC, she beat us in the battle of wits in Ladakh. Nation should be grateful to the Indian Army (Galwan Tigers) who showed them the grit of the Indian nation. Ironically sacrifices of Galwan were not pursued to a logical conclusion. An opportunity was lost to attack and push the PLA back to April 2020 positions.

It would have been a big success because of the anger and anguish in the army. Conversely the Chinese were indirectly helped for face saving by us instead of teaching them a lesson and showing our wavering resolve to the world. Turning their defeat into their victory by our failure to act in time and take advantage of fleeting opportunities has not gone down well with the armed forces.

The Disengagement process in Ladakh, despite all the media and diplomatic hype, is in the eyes of storm. Premier Modi has been virtually impervious to criticism on issues of national security. But, as of now, he is under severe attack from his domestic political critics and opposition parties because of PLA transgression.

And there is public anger against China and a dominant feeling that China has to be stopped before it succeeds in changing the status-quo on the India-China boundary. Having denied any ingress, he is certainly un-nerved on the Ladakh stand-off. Who can prevent a showdown! Is it the political leadership or the diplomats? Both are trying simultaneously. Should the efforts fail,

armed forces, as always, is the last and the lasting hope.

With the China threat becoming real than virtual, additional Army Divisions and Air Force Squadrons were inducted into Ladakh Sector. Besides boosting LAC defences, Indian Navy moved into the Indian Ocean and even South China Sea. The Air Force added 5 Rafale fighters besides many other air warfare machines in its inventory. Defence purchases were accelerated.

The visit of the prime minister and defence minister to forward areas of Ladakh meant that top political and military leadership was not willing to accept Chinese action on the LAC. No less than the status quo ante has been made clear to China. What is at stake is the principle that not an inch of Indian territory is negotiable which by extension also means that all the illegally held areas by China and Pakistan are also not negotiable. Hence if the disengagement doesn't happen, there will be a war.

When and where, is for the military strategists to decide. Suffice to say that time is ripe when China is a global eyesore. Without sounding alarmist, my hunch is that the India-China War is imminent. It may be fought on the battlegrounds of Gilgit-Baltistan because it is our land where China has plonked PLA illegally. Signals of military option by CDS, though sounded alarmist, is a reality in the Indian sub-continent to check the Dragon spewing its venom in the Himalayas and Indian Ocean. As I understand, China is eyeing at G-B while India is bogged down in Pandemic and economic slow-down.

Takeover of G-B from Pakistan is being worked out as 7,000 Sq Kms Shaksgam Valley of Baltistan, North of Karakoram, earlier given by Pakistan to China in 1963. This may be because of our continuous propaganda of liberating G-B from Pak illegal occupation soon. Such assertions from top political and military leadership have rattled both Pakistan and China.

Otherwise also China has many sinister designs in mineral rich G-B. More than an army Division of PLA is already plonked there since long for security of CPEC manpower. It has been reinforced after the Galwan incident. Pak and Chinese fighter aircrafts have been positioned at Skardu Airfield to ward off any Indian attack.

Chinese complicity in the spread of the dreaded Pandemic with Wuhan virus, affecting the US worst, has isolated China universally. American Superpower factor comes into play against China at the moment. History is repeating. Hitler challenged British and France, two great powers of the world. Similarly Xi Jinping has challenged America and India, one super power and the other a great power.



India's spec ops capabilities need to be enhanced amidst border tensions; File photo

Consequently, America deployed its Warships in the South China Sea challenging Chinese fleet. Xi is bound to meet the same fate as Hitler. History is repeating is becoming more clear. During the cold war there were two superpowers. USSR entered Afghanistan in 1979 to enter the warm waters of Arabian Sea through Afghanistan. America got an opportunity. It used Pakistan and within 10 years demolished USSR and became an exclusive

super power. China is doing the same through Pakistan.

CPEC gives it land access to the Persian Gulf. Once China takes over G-B fully, India can forget its retrieval. If China enters the Gulf, it can threaten the West's dependence on energy supply from the Gulf. Hence there is an opportunity for America and India to demolish China and scuttle its dreams of unchallenged superpower. I think both Indian and American are smart enough to scuttle Chinese dreams. That is doable by blocking China in the Himalayas and Indo-Pacific.

That can be easily done by Indo-US strategic partnership for Naval dominance of international waters and Indian military action in the Himalayas. The World knows

China has never fought an all out war whereas India has a history of wars and conquests. Indian Army is a professional army whereas the majority of the PLA is conscripted. India knows that defeat of China in the Himalayas is near certain but exercising restraint to wage a war because of obvious reasons. China also knows that any misadventure in the Himalayas will be a reverse of 1962 walk over.



PM Modi makes a surprise visit to Ladakh; File Photo

That is why standoffs will be longer. Lot has been said about Xi Jinping's nemesis. Indian resolve to checkmate China in the Himalayas & Indian Ocean and American resolve in the South China Sea is also clearer. Apart from Indian military strength, other global and regional factors go in favour of India in scuttling Chinese salami-slicing of our territory. They are:

- Tibetans are fighting for freedom under the leadership of Dalai Lama and now fighting against PLA in the Himalayas under the leadership of Modi. Capture of Spanggur Spur by 7 Vikas (SFF) and taking 45 PLA prisoners (unconfirmed) is an example of joint Indo-Tibetan revenge against China. Liberation of Tibet movement, anticipated after India and US abandon one China policy, will be Xi's another nemesis
- Baltis are being exploited and discriminated against by Pakistan. They are being denied basic human rights. They are agitating on a daily basis against PLA presence in G-B which is engineering cultural,

linguistic and demographic changes by forced matrimonial alliances. They are also fighting for liberation from Pakistan

- Baloch are fighting against CPEC through Balochistan and for liberation from Pakistan
- There is internal unrest in China and Hong Kong is also restive
- Taiwan is directly confronting China in its periphery
- Australia and Japan are also leading a regional charge against China.

- Vietnam & Philippines are fed up with persistent Chinese Naval manoeuvres in their territorial waters
- Diplomatically and financially Pakistan is at its lowest ebb
- QUAD is also ganging up strongly against China

Here is the time and opportunity to exploit these fault lines. Let illegally held Gilgit-Baltistan be our chosen battleground in the Himalayas before it is lost like Shaksgam. The US can decide on its own. As is stated, 'time and tide wait for none'. India and America should not miss, once a while, such an opportunity. 🇮🇳🇺🇸



Colonel Jaipal Singh (Retd)

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Pakistani Perfidy Repeated in Gilgit & Baltistan

Gilgit and Baltistan were amalgamated into Pakistan through British perfidy. Pakistan has consistently denied treating these areas as its provinces. These areas have been in illegal occupation by Pakistan for seven decades.

By Lieutenant General PR Shankar (Retd)

Pakistan recently declared that Gilgit and Baltistan will be its fifth province. It has announced its decision to hold the GB Assembly elections on November 15. It is an illegal step. It is a repeat act by Pakistan during Independence when it was illegal with perfidy. It has major implications for the region. It needs analysis.

Gilgit-Baltistan shares borders with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (West), Wakhan Corridor (North), Xinjiang (East and NE), Kashmir Valley (South) and Leh (SE). It is also known as Balwaristan. It encompasses an area of approximately 73,000 sq km with a population of about 2 million. Literacy rate is high. Its topography is like Leh. High wind-swept plains and snow-clad mountains.

It is in the lap of the greatest mountain ranges of the world – Hindukush,

Pamirs, Karakorams and Himalayas. Agriculture and Mountaineering Tourism dominate the economy. Skardu is connected to the Leh region through the Indus and Shyok waterways. The Karakoram highway runs from Islamabad, Gilgit, Kunjerab Pass and Kashgar.

This is the backbone of the CPEC also. The Indus collects most of its waters in Gilgit – Baltistan. In fact, water security of Pakistan hereafter will be at the expense of Gilgit and Baltistan. It is an area of significant strategic importance. It gives India a direct overland access to Afghanistan (Wakhan Corridor) and the Central Asian Republics.

Maharaja Hari Singh acceded the complete state of Kashmir including Gilgit, Baltistan, Kashmir, Jammu, Leh and Ladakh to India in 1948. These

areas were never acceded to Pakistan. Hence all this is essentially Indian Territory.

On the other hand, Pakistan signed a standstill agreement with the ruler but broke it and invaded Kashmir soon after Independence. Pakistan occupied POK by force. Gilgit and Baltistan were amalgamated into Pakistan through British perfidy. Pakistan has consistently denied treating these areas as its provinces. These areas have been in illegal occupation by Pakistan for seven decades.

Gilgit-Baltistan has been governed through extra judicial and legislative mechanisms outside the Constitution of Pakistan. People of Gilgit-Baltistan have been consistently told that they are not an integral part of Pakistan.



Gilgit-Baltistan has been governed through extra judicial and legislative mechanisms outside the Constitution of Pakistan. People of Gilgit-Baltistan have been consistently told that they are not an integral part of Pakistan.



Article 257 of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan states, "When the people of the State of Jammu and Kashmir decide to accede to Pakistan, the relationship between Pakistan and the State shall be determined in accordance with the wishes of the people of that State."

However, it does not specifically mention that the regions of the state that it presently occupies are part of its territory. In September 1994, the Supreme Court of Pakistan held that since the Gilgit-Baltistan region was not part of Pakistan, the judicial matters pertaining to it were outside the purview of the Pakistani courts.

Ipsa facto Gilgit-Baltistan is legally not part of Pakistan. POK and Gilgit-Baltistan whether they were a single territorial unit (earlier) or bifurcated (now), have been administered under special Councils headed by the Prime minister of Pakistan without representation in the Pakistan national assembly or recourse to the supreme judicial processes of the land. Simply put, Gilgit-Baltistan is not an integral part of Pakistan. It is a part of India.

Gilgit-Baltistan is a simmering cauldron of discontent. The continued deprivation of political, economic and human rights has been driving the people of this strategic area to northern end of desperation. Initially people of this area wanted to be part of Pakistan as its province. This was denied to them. In 2009, the Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order gave them some rights but were rolled back by the new Gilgit-Baltistan Order in 2018.

Deprived of constitutional rights, they are now aggrieved. It is a tribal area. The population was predominantly Shia. Though it is still a Shia majority region, a huge Sunni Influx has been encouraged, which upset the

ethnic balance and gave rise to sectarian strife. Gilgiti and Balti soldiers have sacrificed their lives for Pakistan without recognition. Poor treatment of Northern Light Infantry soldiers in the aftermath of the Kargil War is not forgotten.

The Karakoram Highway is the backbone of the CPEC and pollutes the environment. It has also brought in drugs and guns. Land acquisition for CPEC is without due compensation for the community, since it is customarily "common land". CPEC is also depriving them of livelihood due to influx of Chinese labor. There is very little for the locals in the CPEC development.



Pakistani political map claims J&K; File Photo

People are anti-CPEC and anti-Chinese. The area has been kept underdeveloped deliberately and in abject poverty. It is said that "Local wisdom dictates that when it suits Pakistan, GB is a formal part of the country; and when it suits Pakistan to show GB as a disputed territory, it is shown as that."

The disaffection rate is high. Large scale disturbances and agitations are envisaged. Overall, in this backdrop of sentimental, ethnic, legal, economic, political strife and uncertainty,

scrapping Article 370 by India has spurred people to look beyond Pakistan.

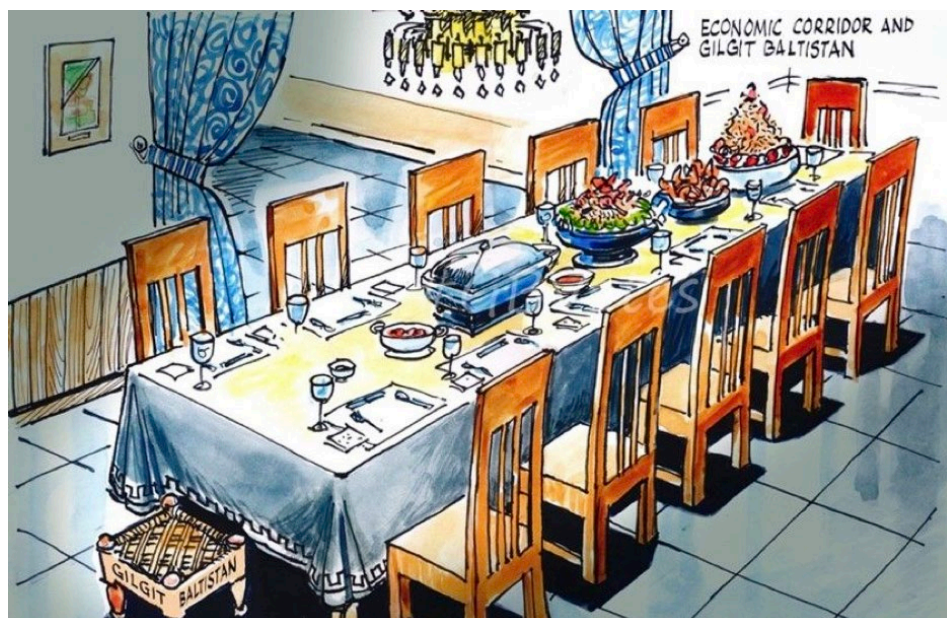
Very clearly there are indications that activists are knocking at various doors to get rid of the Pakistani yoke. The Balwaristan National front seeks Independence from Pakistan. There is even a nascent sentiment to join India.

Abrogation of Article 370 by India has irreversibly cemented J&K as an integral part of India like other states. It brought into focus the future of illegally occupied POK and Gilgit-Baltistan. At some point of time India could commence the process of retaking Gilgit and Baltistan. Commencing the process will change the narratives. Controversial and illegal projects like CPEC and illegal cessation of the Shaksgam Valley by Pakistan to China will have to be revisited.

China and Pakistan have sensed this and have taken steps to amalgamate

the area into Pakistan. Everyone thinks Pakistani actions are a retaliation to abrogation of Article 370. No. It is because of the CPEC and the Diamer Bhasha Dam. Commencement of the controversial Diamer Bhasha Dam was announced in the last week of July.

The dam is located in a high seismic zone. The weight of the large water body in the catchment area could trigger sympathetic tremors during any regional seismic activity. It will have



CPEC and GB; Graphical Representation

an ecological fallout like unseasonal rains, landslides and floods that might affect the adjacent areas in Pakistan as well as in India.

The dam faces local resistance since it will submerge about 50 villages upstream. More than 35,000 people will get displaced and sent to areas afar. There is also a dispute between local tribes over compensation. There is a domestic dispute between Gilgit Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa over claims on the royalty from the dam. There is a grouse that Punjab will be the main beneficiary.

Residents are also protesting the destruction of historical Buddhist sculptures, inscriptions, and petroglyphs in 50 villages, which will be submerged once the dam is operational.

Despite all this a joint venture between Power China (a Chinese state-run firm) and Pakistan's Frontier Works Organization (a commercial arm of Pakistan's military business empire) was formed and a contract for the Dam construction was awarded to it. The contracted original outlay is \$14 billion. 70% share is Chinese and 30% Pakistani.

The funny thing is that Frontier Works Organization is part of the Fauji Foundation network of the Army. It all boils down to lining the pockets of Pakistani Army Generals and expanding their business empires. To buttress all this Pakistan came out with a halfcocked map in the first week of

Aug with an open-ended border incorporating Gilgit Baltistan as part of Pakistan.

Now it has declared the Gilgit Baltistan area as its sixth Province and is holding elections there in a couple of days. Many perceive that the elections are being held on the point of the gun.

There are major implications of this action by Pakistan which has been carried out in collusion with China to give legality to CPEC activity. However, by declaring this area as its fifth province, Pakistan has violated all UN Conventions on J&K. It also means that it has given up all its rights on J&K forever. In any case the action is clearly expansionist in nature.

An area which it held as disputed for seven decades and which its own supreme court has ruled to be not part of Pakistan is being usurped into it as integral to its territory. The entire move caters for certain vested interests of Pakistan and China in which the people are forced to do their bidding. People have no choice to obey since the consequences could mean death or forced displacement.

The construction of the Diamer Bhasha mega dam will destabilise the area in many ways. Most importantly, all the construction activity in this area will increase Chinese presence and has major military implications for India which I have outlined in an earlier article.

Pakistan's new map to include J&K and Ladakh as part of its territory and its collusion with China to build a dam in our territory repudiates the Shimla Agreement and the Indus Water Treaty. We must therefore commence activities to retake POK as outlined in another article and pursue the water scarcity issue in Pakistan.

This action by Pakistan must be seen in the wider context of Chinese insidious machinations which I have also outlined earlier. We must make Pakistan and China look inwards and options for that are many – kinetic and non-kinetic. We need to get our act together. 🇮🇳



Lieutenant General PR Shankar (Retd)

Lt Gen PR Shankar retired as Director General of Artillery, Indian Army. Lt. Gen. Shankar has vast operational experience and has held many important command, staff, and instructional appointments in the Army. An alumnus of Defence Services Staff College Wellington, Army War College Mhow, Naval Post Graduate School Monterrey and National Defence College Delhi, he gave great impetus to the modernization of Artillery through indigenization. He has a deep understanding and experience of successful defense planning and acquisition spanning over a decade. Major 155mm Gun projects like the Dhanush, M777 ULH and k9 Vajra, Rocket and Missile projects related to Pinaka, Brahmos and, Grad BM21, surveillance projects like Swati WLR and some ammunition projects came to fruition due to his efforts. You can reach him on Twitter: @palepurshankar, Email ID: pravishankar3@gmail.com



Skardu of Gilgit-Baltistan & India's Lack of Strategic Vision!

It is yet to be decided as to whose hands were reddened with the blood of the 20 soldiers in the Galwan valley bloodshed? Was it those who cut the budget or those who signed appeasing agreements in 1993, 1996 and 2013?

By Colonel Rajinder Singh Kushwaha (Retd)

Pakistan is no more Pakistan — the so-called dreamland of South Asian Muslims. It is now for all practical purposes Pakistan Autonomous Region of China (PAR) like Xinjiang or Tibet. The People's Republic of China has mesmerising control over its Generals and politicians. They have been either 'money trapped', 'honey -trapped' or both. Pakistan, who boasts of Chinese friendship being deeper than the Indian Ocean and higher than Mount Everest, has been tamed as a virtual slave. Dawn Leak-2 had given out details of Pakistan Government's virtual sell out to China through China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

China, with the lure of the CPEC project, worth \$46-62 billion, has not only grabbed Gwadar port on the Persian Gulf but also Gilgit-Baltistan of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK).

In any ongoing or future military conflict, China would use PAR (Pakistan territory) for its offensive designs against India at will. In this scheme of things, Gilgit-Baltistan and Skardu City would play a vital role. It may be, therefore, noted that, besides the Pakistan army, China would never allow Pakistan to settle the Kashmir issue.

The Gilgit Baltistan region is very important to China because of the 3,000-kilometer-long Karakoram Highway, which is going to be China's economic life line for trade with the rest of the world. It is the new 'Silk Route' for China. Gilgit-Baltistan adjoins Xinjiang region of China and is incredibly significant for China's battle for Global supremacy. At no cost, would China allow the Indian dream of re-taking Gilgit Baltistan. This pronounced intention of India worries

China and is expressed in its recent aggression, from May 2020 onwards, on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) against India

Gilgit-Baltistan is a strategic location, from a military point of view, as it allows outflanking moves against Ladakh from the West. It is separated from China's occupied Aksai Chin by a small swathe of territory of India's Siachen Glacier, and land mass of Daulat Beg OLDI (DBO). China has been reportedly deploying some 10,000-15,000 troops in Gilgit-Baltistan since 2011. It can build up more troops from Xinjiang region by using the Karakoram Highway. What more the Skardu Airfield would be a lynchpin in an air war against India.

Reports indicate that China has also recently stationed some 40 J-10 aircrafts in Skardu, which could play

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an important role in the air war with India in Eastern Ladakh. Skardu is just 100 km from Leh town. Besides, a Chinese IL-78 has also been detected in Skardu. IL-78 is an air refueling aircraft for fighter aircrafts. There should be no doubt that Skardu would be used not only as a launching pad for land operations but also as an air base by China in any future conflict.

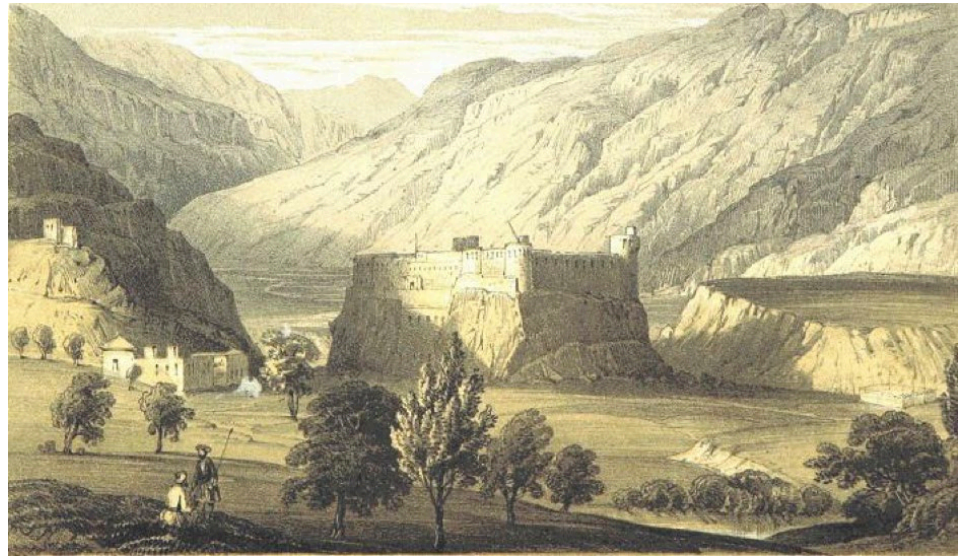
Skardu airbase could offset the Chinese disadvantage of longer distances of its air bases in Tibet and Kashgar of Xinjiang. Skardu airbase was upgraded in 2019 by Pakistan and it was used by Pakistani JF 17s on their way to the PLAAF base at Hotan for a joint exercise. China has only two air bases ie. Ngari (Gar) and Hotan in Xinjiang both, being over 300 km away from the scene of action. Kashgar is some 625 Km from Galwan. All these air bases are over 4,000 meters which could affect their payload capacity. Though Hotan airfield can maintain many combat assets. However, due to its location at an altitude higher than 4,000 feet, it is extremely tough for “fighters to take off with a full weapons load and fuel.” Herein lies the necessity and importance of Skardu airfield.

Besides the use of the airfield of Skardu, China needs water resources of Gilgit-Baltistan for its microchip industry. Earlier China imported this from Taiwan, but it has been now stopped. Therefore, it wants to start manufacturing of microchips in Xinjiang, which adjoins Gilgit-Baltistan, and microchip production needs water extensively.

In view of the needs of its microchip industry, China has also agreed to finance and build Diamer-Bhasha Dam. It is located on the Indus River in

northern Pakistan between Kohistan district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Diamer district in Gilgit Baltistan. The dam will have a gross storage capacity of 8.1 Million Acre Feet (MAF) and power generation capacity of 4,500 MW. It will be constructed at a cost of over 1400 Billion Pakistani rupees.

Unfortunately, right from the day Jammu and Kashmir's accession to India in October 1947, India's politico-military leadership did not understand the importance of Gilgit Baltistan. Though British conspiracy



CPEC and GB; Graphical Representation

allowed Gilgit to be taken over by Pakistan on 31 October 1947 through a rebellion by Gilgit scouts under British officer Major WA Brown, but Skardu Garrison of the 6th Battalion of J&K State forces held up for 10 months till 14 August 1948.

The siege of Skardu Garrison was laid by Chitral and Gilgit scouts after December 1947. Major Sher Jung Thapa, at Leh, was promoted as Lt Col and sent to Skardu on 3 December 1947. It means the route was open and

the garrison should have been reinforced in December of 1947. But it did not happen.

Lt Col Sher Jung Thapa kept requesting for reinforcements, but they never came. Three feeble attempts were made in March to April 1948. But they were not forcibly done, and the garrison was left on its own. Lt Col Sher Jung Thapa kept holding Skardu garrison till 14 August 1948, when the lack of ammunition and rations forced him to surrender.

Question arises as to why strong efforts were not made to reinforce and save the garrison. Historians say that Nehru had followed the advice of his friend and guide on Kashmir, Sheikh Abdulla. He had told that his influence was only confined to the Kashmir valley and as such no major efforts were made to strengthen Skardu or capture Gilgit Baltistan. If it was done, perhaps the history of Gilgit-Baltistan and POK would have been different.

Shaksgam valley would not have gone to China and we would have been knocking on the doors of Xinjiang region, which was occupied by China in 1949. What more, China's construction of the G219 Highway to Lhasa would have been under our observation, and we would have interfered. Today, Gilgit is the biggest launch pad for Pakistan to initiate offensive actions in Ladakh.

Again, another opportunity came in the Indo- Pak war of 1971. India had



Besides the use of the airfield of Skardu, China needs water resources of Gilgit-Baltistan for its microchip industry. Earlier China imported this from Taiwan, but it has been now stopped. Therefore, it wants to start manufacturing of microchips in Xinjiang, which adjoins Gilgit-Baltistan, and microchip production needs water extensively.



captured Turtuk in 1971. Why did it not pursue the offensive further into Gilgit-Baltistan to capture Skardu? It could have been easily done with much lesser efforts. India missed the golden opportunity due to lack of strategic vision of its leaders. By now, India's Nehruvian love affair with China was long over after the 1962 war. Capture of Gilgit would have given it an advantageous position against China's military adventure.

Then, in 1986, Operation Trident had provided a golden opportunity to annex Skardu. The operation had fizzled out on January 1 1987, when Pakistan's ambassador to India, met and cried to Rajiv Gandhi, then Indian Prime Minister. Rajiv Gandhi ordered Arun Singh, then Minister of State for Defence, to stop it. It is noteworthy that Arun Singh and Sunder jee had planned this operation along with Lt Gen Hoon. It would have succeeded because Pakistan was ill-prepared. It was in retaliation to this that Pakistan intruded into Kargil in 1999. Skardu is just West of Gultari, which was the hub of Pakistan's Kargil misadventure

Unfortunately, the youthful prime minister and his uncouth advisors from the bureaucracy did not understand the significance of Gilgit-Baltistan. Our political leadership has been the biggest failing of India since 1947. Only Indra Gandhi stands out with some strategic vision. Even Atal Bihari Vajpayee lacked this vision. He was more poetic in his approach with neighbours than being practical.

During Dr Manmohan Singh's Prime Ministership, a strange thing had happened. An ex foreign secretary of India Shyam Saran reveals in his book that in 2006, Indian Government, under Dr Manmohan Singh, had almost agreed for a deal with Pakistan on

withdrawal of troops from Siachen. However, then NSA, MK Narayan had vetoed it. As per then, Chief of Army Staff, General JJ Singh, even the Army had questioned this deal.

What a blunder it would have been, had India withdrawn? In one stroke, Pakistan would have occupied it and linked up with China in the Shaksgam valley. When would our politicians understand that China and Pakistan honour no pacts and agreements? Does one have to list those pacts and treaties here? It is the lack of strategic vision of our Political leadership and failure of the Generals to educate them to grasp the strategic advantage of the Siachen-DBO area and Gilgit-Baltistan. Siachen was being vacated due to financial effects.

In the interest of national security, financial cost is irrelevant. Such costs are the national premium of security insurance. Present regime should also understand this. Cutting the defence budget is harmful for the nation. One would like to quote what General Douglas MC Arthur, Chief of the US Army in 1931 had told President Franklin Roosevelt, who had declined to reconsider cuts in the defence budget. Gen Douglas McArthur while

leaving President's office, turned and said:

"Mr President! When in the next war, an American soldier with enemy bayonet in his abdomen, cries his last curse, I do not want the name to be Mc Arthur but Roosevelt"

It is no gain saying the fact that President Roosevelt accepted his advice and restored the cut. I hope Indian Generals understand this and muster the courage to tell the ruling political establishment that the blood of Indian soldiers in any future war would be on their hands.

It is yet to be decided as to whose hands were reddened with the blood of the 20 soldiers on the Galwan valley scuffle of 15/16 June 2020? Was it those who cut the budget or those who signed appeasing agreements in 1993, 1996 and 2013? Indian defence budget ought to be protected from the continuing evil effect of Arun Jaitley thinking. Time for Generals/Air Marshals/Admirals to stand up to bureaucracy and politicians and be counted, lest the blood of the soldiers is on their hands.

It is a fallacy that economic growth leads to military strength and peace. The economic growth and the process of peace flows out of the barrel of a gun and not through treaties and agreements. Crisis makes a nation strong and united; peace heralds many evils. To make the 'Gun' stronger, a rapid economic growth is the crying need. Rhetoric alone and appeasement of enemies would not achieve, whatever is the national objective. India must talk less and do more. 🇮🇳



Colonel Rajinder Singh Kushwaha (Retd)

Col. Rajinder Kushwaha is an ex-NDA, commissioned into 3 Bihar. He is a battle-hardened veteran of the '71 War & has served extensively in various counter insurgency environments across the country.

He is a renowned author, and a highly respected defence & national security expert and a regular contributor at the 'Fauji India' magazine, 'Defence and Security Alert' (DSA), the 'Indian Defence Review' (IDR) among others. You can reach him on Twitter: @RajeeKushwaha, Email ID: rajee749@yahoo.com



Why did Pakistan Change Gilgit Baltistan's Status?

Pakistan perceives that if it had declared Gilgit-Baltistan, PoK or both, which are only a part of the territories of J&K, as legitimate provinces of Pakistan, it would weaken its case for the entire J&K and lead to legal complications.

By Lieutenant General Syed Ata Hasnain (Retd)

On 1 Nov 2020 Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan announced that his government would give the territory of Gilgit Baltistan provisional provincial status, a far cry from the in-different status enjoyed over 70 years.

Gilgit Baltistan has been in the news over the last few years mainly because of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor, a low level local agitational movement for better rights, and recently also because of India's avowed intent to integrate that territory after the Constitutional decisions taken on J&K by the Indian Government on August 5, 2020.

Unfortunately not much attention has been paid towards understanding some of the complexities about this territory which is currently under Pakistan's control but otherwise forms

a part of the territory of J&K which was under Maharaja Hari Singh's control, pre-Partition.

It essentially forms a part of J&K to which India lays full claim, but over which it currently does not exercise physical control. Under India's Joint Parliamentary Resolution of February 22, 1994, the entire territory of J&K belongs to India and that is what Gilgit Baltistan's status should actually be; a territory in waiting, to integrate with the mainland.

The map of J&K published by India on October 1, 2019 shows GB merged with Ladakh. There are a few questions which arise while looking towards untangling some of the knots of complexity regarding Gilgit Baltistan's status.

First, why did Pakistan not merge Gilgit Baltistan with PoK to create a province and thus project that it had a full claim over J&K, but was administering only the rump territory under its control? Second, what is the geo-strategic importance of Gilgit Baltistan which makes it such a highly contentious and sought-after territory? Third, why is Pakistan now attempting to change the status of the territory by giving it provisional provincial status?

Each of these needs a brief explanation before we can ascertain what India can do to ensure the persistence of its narrative on this issue.

It needs to be known that Pakistan's administrative units consist of four provinces (Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh),

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The UN resolution for resolving the dispute called for a plebiscite once the forces of Pakistan had vacated the territories of J&K. That was never to be because Pakistan never withdrew its forces from the areas under its control.

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two autonomous territories (Pakistan Occupied Kashmir or PoK, Gilgit Baltistan) and one federal territory (Islamabad Capital Territory). Also well-known is the fact that J&K's status was temporarily set on basis of the areas under physical control at the time of the ceasefire brokered by the United Nations on December 31, 1948 after the India-Pakistan War of 1947-1948.

The UN resolution for resolving the dispute called for a plebiscite once the forces of Pakistan (as the invader) had vacated the territories of J&K.

That was never to be because Pakistan never withdrew its forces from the areas under its control. It remained hopeful of being able to either diplomatically, politically, or militarily coerce India to accept a final plebiscite.

It perceives that if it had declared Gilgit Baltistan, PoK or both, which are only a part of the territories of J&K, as legitimate provinces of Pakistan it would weaken its case for the entire J&K and lead to legal complications.

Pakistan strangely has its administrative arrangements for PoK and Gilgit Baltistan different from each other. While PoK has its own constitution that sets out its powers and their limits vis-a-vis Pakistan, Gilgit Baltistan has been ruled without any local empowerment and almost directly from Islamabad. Until 2009, the region was simply called Northern Areas.

The Northern Areas Legislative Council was an elected body, but it existed in advisory capacity to the minister for Kashmir affairs and northern areas, government of Pakistan, who ruled from Islamabad.

In 2009, Gilgit Baltistan was granted limited autonomy and renamed

as Gilgit Baltistan via the self-governance order signed by the president of Pakistan and aimed to empower the people. No one was consulted in Gilgit Baltistan, no representatives were called to Islamabad to discuss the package.

In 2018, the Pakistan government passed an order centralising even the limited powers granted to the assembly in 2009. Under this order greater control was established by the central

attitude and grant of people's rights; the reality is otherwise.

Alok Bansal in his essay, 'Gilgit-Baltistan: The Roots of Political Alienation' writes, 'Though many analysts have viewed the often-violent assertions by otherwise peaceful residents of this remote and mountainous region as occasional eruptions of the Shia-Sunni sectarian divide, a careful examination will indicate the deeper roots of alienation of the population in this long-neglected region.'

'Almost total absence of democratic rights, lack of participation in the government and economic exploitation of the region coupled with ethnic, cultural and linguistic marginalisation appear to be the main factors that have led to this alienation.'



Pak Army checkpoint in Gilgit-Baltistan; File Photo

government over land and other resources for the infrastructure projects of the CPEC.

Land had become a major issue in Gilgit Baltistan with the requirements of the CPEC and now especially after vast tracts being sunk due to the Daimer Bhasha dam to be constructed on the River Indus.

The belief with which Pakistan has lived has led it to frequently experiment with the constitutional status of both PoK and Gilgit Baltistan in an attempt to project righteousness in

In 2015 a proposal to give Gilgit Baltistan provincial status based on public demands and human rights was opposed by the PoK assembly through resolutions.

Across the LoC in Srinagar the separatists also spoke against this. Yasin Malik's view was 'This will have implications on the dispute over J&K, if Pakistan imposes its sovereign writ over Gilgit Baltistan, India will then have a political and moral right to integrate Kashmir with it.'

Thus, over a period councils and assemblies were created and

representation accorded to the people in sham efforts but with simply no empowerment, all because of the perceived wait for the improbable moment of the plebiscite.

Besides this, all the policies and decisions made by federal institutions apply to these areas, which have no representation in Pakistan's electoral system.

Pakistan could have been more prudent in handling this issue knowing fully well the geo-strategic significance of the region but the ideologically Gilgit Baltistan being predominantly Shia has come in the way of better empowerment of the people.

As long as some more sincerity had been displayed towards the opinion and voice of the people through partial empowerment the sentiments could have been better handled.

Before attempting to understand what has altered in recent times to bring about a change in Pakistani thinking with the current government and the deep state contemplating giving Gilgit Baltistan the status of fifth province of Pakistan, it may be important to briefly examine Gilgit Baltistan's geo-strategic significance.

A huge extension of the territory of Ladakh and with a sparse population of just 1.5 million GB has a border with Afghanistan and with China. It affords Pakistan a regional frontier and a land route with China, where it meets the Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

It is separated from Tajikistan by the narrow Wakhan Corridor, a legacy of the British empire designed to separate Central Asia from J&K due to Russian expansionist ambitions.

Gilgit Baltistan offers great advantage to China to secure overland access to the Indian Ocean (the China Pakistan Economic Corridor, preceded by the Karakoram Highway) and thus partially overcome the Malacca Syndrome. It is, in fact, the flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Given Gilgit Baltistan's proximity to China's Xinjiang Autonomous Region

and the current problems of China with its Islamic Uyghur populace, it is a region with which China would always like to have deep affinity. Cooperation and surveillance would ensure that Gilgit Baltistan's vastness and remoteness are not used for activities by the Uyghur against China.

It is also the territory through which China and Pakistan have a common boundary; the scope for broadening this lies in the Sino-Pak aspiration of the capture of territories in the Ladakh region under India's control. Gilgit Baltistan's large frontage with Kashmir and Ladakh across Kargil and the Siachen Glacier gives Pakistan and China the perceived scope for conduct of collusive operations against India and wrest control of the major course of the rivers Indus and Shyok; water lifelines for Pakistan.

For China the existence of the Indian presence in Ladakh, especially north

had started with the handover of the Shaqsgam Valley to China in 1963, an action as illegal as can be.

That was to facilitate the construction of the Karakoram Highway the alignment of which was used to expand the scope to convert it to the CPEC giving China access to the Pakistani port of Gwadar. The CPEC, on which China has invested \$62 billion (and rumoured to be much more than that), is the flagship project of its Belt and Road Initiative.

Besides road infrastructure, there is projection of laying of optical fibre cable, railway and energy pipelines in the future; and the construction of the Daimir Bhasha dam on the river Indus (approximately, a \$10 billion investment) for production of 4800 MW of power.

With so much at stake for Pakistan and China any potential threat to the



Pakistan PM Imran Khan alongside Chinese premier Xi Jinping during a bilateral visit; File Photo

of the Ladakh range, is a real danger to Highway 219 which connects Tibet with the restive region of Xinjiang, hence its objection to the publication of the Indian map displaying Gilgit Baltistan and Aksai Chin as parts of the Ladakh Union Territory.

Ideally China would strategically favour its control from Tibet to Ladakh (ideally north of the Ladakh Range), Gilgit Baltistan and Pakistan occupied Kashmir. Progressively over the last few years Gilgit Baltistan's strategic importance has only enhanced. It

status of Gilgit Baltistan would be a major strategic dampener. Internal unrest due to mismanagement of local sentiment, insufficiency of rights and low scale economic development are all potential issues which can become millstones.

To top that, India's steadily gaining strategic confidence over the last six years culminating in the abrogation of Article 370 and administrative reorganization of JK&L appears to have unnerved Pakistan and to some extent China. Such heavy investments made

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India does not seek military solutions to its problems as a policy. However, a strong military deterrence is necessary and readiness for unpredictable circumstances which may demand military intervention should never be ruled out.

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in CPEC infrastructure in territory strongly claimed by India would not be giving the Chinese any confidence.

To add to it, there are frequent references in the Indian media by politicians and military leaders about the intent to integrate Gilgit Baltistan with Ladakh. In the light of this, a change in attitude and strategy over Gilgit Baltistan is evident in Pakistan. The Chinese have given their nod too.

There seems more confidence in Pakistan that with India making irreversible changes to Jammu and Kashmir's Constitutional status for better integration and implementation of its historical claim, Pakistan too can afford to use some discretion to appease the local populace through a higher degree of self-rule and rights without compromising its case for a plebiscite.

Of course, it needs to be recalled that the issue of plebiscite is dead and buried, overtaken by the passage of historic events and the signing of the Shimla Agreement. However, for Pakistan it is an issue which needs to be kept alive for a variety of reasons, not the least being the provision of hope to see J&K a part of Pakistan; reason enough to pursue the 'war by a thousand cuts' against India.

Pakistan has cleverly used the term 'provisional' in its announcement of the provincial status, projecting that it is reversible and therefore no attempt to permanently alter the status quo which could affect its argument towards implementation of UN resolutions and plebiscite.

How must India respond?

Firstly, it must reiterate its J&K narrative in no uncertain terms and focus on the Instrument of Accession which

Pakistan challenges as having been signed under duress by the maharaja.

The approval of then governor general Lord Louis Mountbatten needs reiteration; we have been reticent in pushing this although with current efforts of the Government of India narratives are being revisited. Secondly, India is aware that the strategic status of Gilgit Baltistan has drastically altered bringing China into the fray. However, that should not deter pressing our legitimate claim internationally.

The illegality of ceding of the Shamsgam Valley by Pakistan to China, the construction of CPEC through a territory claimed by India and now the change of status through creation of a province need to be adequately and repeatedly placed before the international community even though India adheres to the Shimla Agreement which dwells on bilateralism and no internationalisation.

We cannot allow Pakistan to pursue internationalisation while we follow bilateralism; the latter must be applied for resolution and not prevent the cultivation of influence in a more globalised world. Third, Indian political leaders and senior government

functionaries must continue their utterances towards the commitment to integrate GB and PoK with J&K and Ladakh, as done in 2019. A consensus communication strategy towards this will be helpful.

Fourthly, the strong Indian response to Chinese coercion in Ladakh this year which was a test of our commitment must not be diluted in any way. There is no way that collusive Sino Pakistan military coercion against India can be accepted. Strong strategic partnerships must be pursued, and the support of Russia too should be garnered.

Fifthly, India must continue reminding the people of GB of their plight under Pakistan's rule where they could not even get their basic rights and how their land and resources are being bartered away for Chinese support to Pakistan.

Lastly, it is well known that GB's population is Shia and does not have any close affinity for Pakistan. We must continue playing on this sentiment and cultivate goodwill among the people of Gilgit Baltistan who must look towards integration with territories with friendlier disposition towards them and with far better economic prospects.

India does not seek military solutions to its problems as a policy. However, a strong military deterrence is necessary and readiness for unpredictable circumstances which may demand military intervention should never be ruled out. 🇮🇳



Lieutenant General Syed Ata Hasnain (Retd)

Lieutenant General Syed Ata Hasnain (Retd), PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, SM, VSM is one of India's most respected commentators on national security and a notable member at 'Mission Victory India'. The general commanded the Indian Army's 15 Army Corps in Kashmir and was known as the 'People's General' in the Kashmir Valley.

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An Anecdote From a Martyrs Life

Pakistan perceives that if it had declared Gilgit-Baltistan, PoK or both, which are only a part of the territories of J&K, as legitimate provinces of Pakistan, it would weaken its case for the entire J&K and lead to legal complications.

By Aritra Banerjee

Author's Note: Last month saw the 12th anniversary of the 2008 Mumbai attacks, an event which changed the lives of countless families, taking away a part of them, no words can ever express. This article serves as a tribute, highlighting an anecdote from the life of a young NSG commando during his time at the prestigious National Defence Academy (NDA), Khadakwasla, Pune.

"Don't come up, I'll handle them!" said Major Sandeep Unnikrishnan a few moments before he succumbed to a hail of bullets during a heroic attempt at engaging the terrorists who had besieged the iconic Taj Hotel. The young team leader, who had only moments ago saved the life of his buddy, charged upstairs to engage the terrorists, alone so that they do not pose a threat to his men.

In the ensuing gunfight Maj Unnikrishnan had managed to

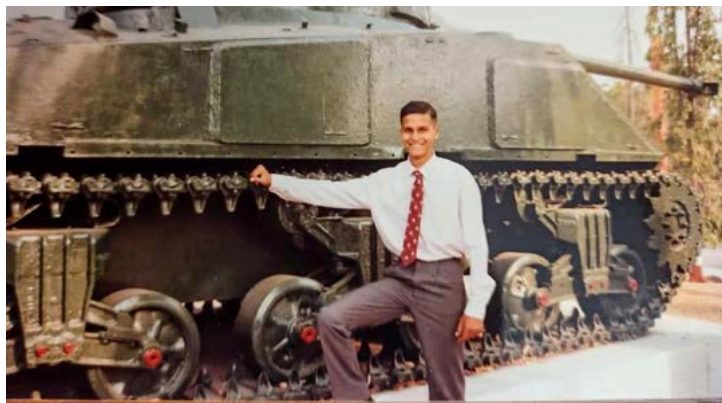
critically injure one of the terrorists, before having another terrorist creep up behind him and unload an entire magazine on his back. In his final moments, Major Unnikrishnan chose to lead from the front, displaying unflinching courage and unique character. These characteristics becoming of an officer, did not merely come out on display during the moment of truth but was a part of his core nature from an incredibly young age.

A heart-warming incident his course mates vividly remember from his academy days, gives us a glimpse of his character. Oscar squadron, as part of an outdoor exercise (a group punishment according to some accounts), had been tasked to climb up the Sinhagad Fort in Pune. The weather was terrible, and it was raining violently, the gentlemen cadets were required to hike up to the top of the fort and refill their canteens from the natural spring there.

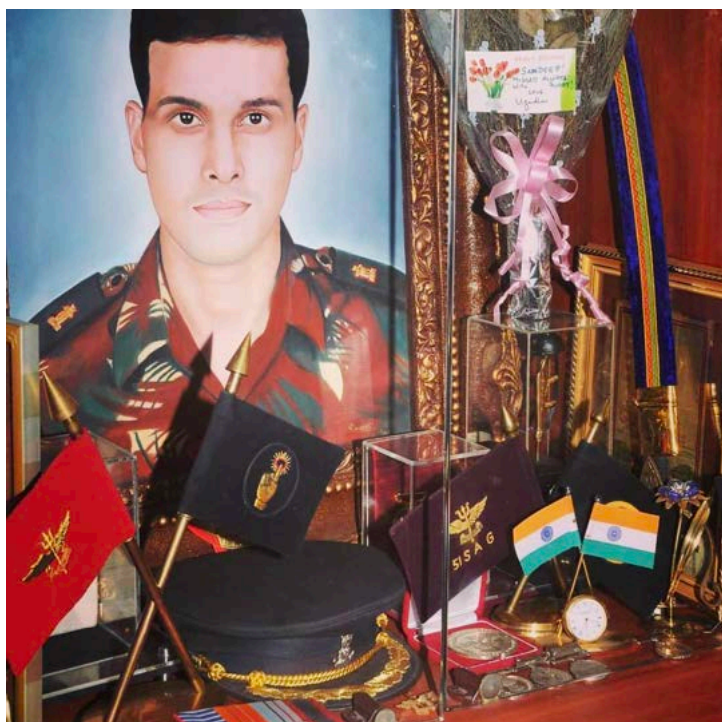
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Don't come up, I'll handle them!" said Major Sandeep Unnikrishnan a few moments before he succumbed to a hail of bullets during a heroic attempt at engaging the terrorists who had besieged the iconic Taj Hotel.

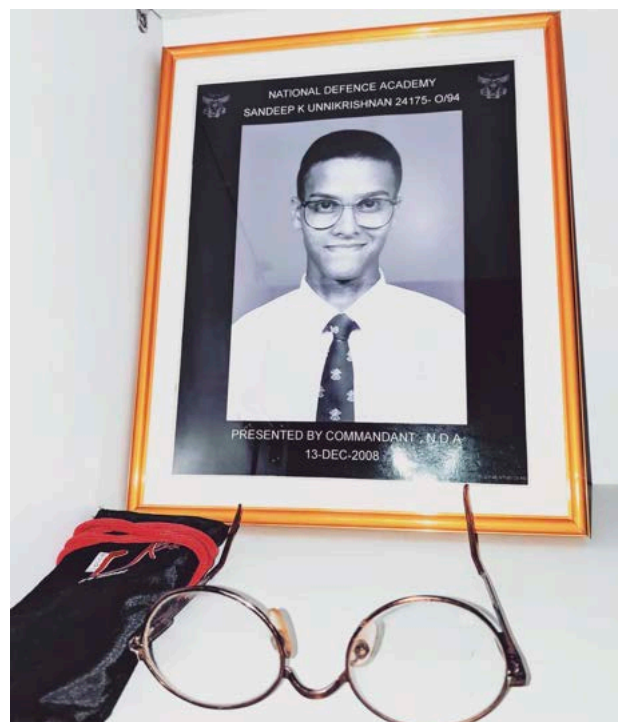
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Maj Unnikrishnan from his NDA days, posing in front of a tank; Photo Courtesy Mrinal Unnikrishnan



Regimental paraphernalia and personal artefacts of the late Major; Photo Courtesy Mrinal Unnikrishnan



Personal belongings from his NDA days; Photo Courtesy Mrinal Unnikrishnan

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In the ensuing gunfight Maj Unnikrishnan had managed to critically injure one of the terrorists, before having another terrorist creep up behind him and unload an entire magazine on his back. In his final moments, Major Unnikrishnan chose to lead from the front, displaying unflinching courage and unique character.

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Sandeep being a phenomenal physical specimen was the first to the top. Exhausted, he had bent to fill up his canteen, when the young cadet heard a tourist turn toward him to ask him if he could fill his bottle. Sandeep, despite being fatigued, nearly to the brink of collapsing, happily obliged.

Before he could get back to filling his canteen, another tourist approached him with the same request, to which he once again obliged happily. Witnessing this, the other tourists visiting the fort collected behind the young NDA cadet for water! Sandeep kept smiling and filling their bottles.

Finally, once all the tourists were done, it was time for the Squadron to move ahead or else they would risk falling behind their schedule. In this entire episode, Gentleman Cadet Sandeep never got to fill his canteen.

His course mates fondly remember how, despite being seriously exhausted and in urgent need of water, he chose to keep his comfort secondary and went on to serve the enthusiastic tourists with a youthful smile on his face. 🙏



Battle of Nuranang: Fought & Won in a Miasma of Despondency & Despair

It was in recognition of the dogged determination, steely resolve and élan shown by the Bhullas of Alpha Coy & the raw courage displayed by the troika of Trilok, Jaswant and Gopal on 17 Nov 1962 that, the 4th Garhwal Rifles was given the Battle Honour Nuranang.

By Brigadier Sarvesh D Dangwal (Retd)

The People's Republic of China, under Chairman Mao Zedong annexed Tibet in 1950 and asserted its sovereignty over it, in the years that followed. Prior to that, Sinkiang (Xinjiang) had been similarly annexed and the construction of a 2,342 km long National Highway, G 219 was commenced and completed by 1957 to join Lhatse in South Western Tibet with Kargilik up North, in Sinkiang.

In complete disregard to the Simla Agreement of 1914, between the Colonial power Britain-Tibet and China, the boundary settled by drawing a line on a quarter inch map and known as the McMahon Line (Line), which follows the crests of the Himalayan Ranges was violated; and China occupied Aksai Chin (38,000 sq km) in the Ladakh region of the

Indian State of Jammu & Kashmir (Now Union Territory).

India had in those times entrusted the security as against defense of its frontier with the Autonomous Region of Tibet to the Assam Rifles in the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) and the State Police in Ladakh. The posts were strung along the Line and were sited administratively than tactically. Therefore, these lacked defense potential. Surveillance was kept between posts by patrolling.

Taking advantage of India's political reticence and bonhomie (Hindi-Chini-Bhai-Bhai) and China's perception of the Line, the latter physically occupied territory and asserted its claim line(s) beyond the settled

understanding of the watershed principle, unchallenged.

Consequently, in the Kameng and Subansiri divisions of erstwhile NEFA and present day Arunachal Pradesh, there were incidents at Longju and Khenzeman respectively, which brought to light the earlier occupation of Aksai Chin and the subsequent incremental nibbling of Indian territory by the Chinese Border Guards. This manipulated land grab by the Chinese, held the Prime Minister accountable on the floor of the Parliament.

To redeem the loss of face and a blow to his self-obsessive image of a champion of non-alignment and an emerging Asian leader, the Prime Minister made a vain and hollow statement under girded more by braggadocio than

reality. It was in this frame of mind that, Mr Nehru said to the attendant media that, "I have asked the Army to throw out the Chinese".

More so, when the Indian Army had been made responsible for the entire frontier and the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in NEFA and Ladakh in August 1959 only. The then Army Chief General Thimmayya, was surprised by such a statement, which put the onus of defending the 4,000 km Indian Border along its eastern boundary, upon the inadequately equipped, organized and ill prepared Army.

With the escape of the Dalai Lama from Lhasa, to save himself from Chinese persecution and crossing into India at the Assam Rifle Post at Khenzemane on 17 March 1959, and the Prime Minister granting political asylum to him on 4 April; got the goat of Chairman Mao and who thereafter resolved to teach Nehru and India a lesson.

The seeds for the showdown between the two Asian countries had been sown and the subsequent unfortunate outcome for India - the war that wasn't, followed in 1962.

The comprehensive defeat of the Indian Army was ensured by its smug, complacent, vainglorious but insecure political leadership; tactically unsound, inexperienced and weak-kneed Indian Generals, and a vacillating, irresolute and out of sorts Chief of Army Staff (COAS).

However, amidst the hopelessness created by these definitive and critical determinants of the course, which any war fighting takes and lends itself to substantially decide the outcome of any conflict.

There were many incidents of sub unit/unit resilience, doggedness and valor and individual grit, gallantry and indomitable courage shown in the battles fought at Walong, Bumla, Nuranang, Nam Ka Chu, Che Dong, Rezang La, Gurkha Hill and Daulat Beg Oldi, which will forever adorn the pages of Military History for posterity to read and draw inspiration from. One such unit is Fourth Battalion the Garhwal Rifles.

One such individual and hero was Rifleman Jaswant Singh Rawat, Mahavir

Chakra (Posthumous) and one such Battle, in the Sino-India conflict of 1962; is the one fought by the brave hearts of Alpha Company, 4th Garhwal Rifles on 17th November at Nuranang (Jaswantgarh).

The first army units to come under enemy attack on 20 October 1962, in the Namka Chu valley were those of 7 Infantry Brigade. 2nd Rajputs were massacred and lost half its strength. Similarly, 1/9 Gorkha Rifles was surprised and suffered huge losses. The other two units found their defenses untenable and took to the jungles of Bhutan and Assam for dear life.

So difficult were the odds against 7 Infantry Brigade and its units that, in three days' time it completely disintegrated, and its Commander was taken into captivity.

Brigadier John Parshuram Dalvi, was hamstrung between defying a tactically bogus order of his Corps Commander Lieutenant General Bijji Kaul; to defend a river valley with its line of bridges, and an enemy overlooking the defenses from the dominating heights of Thagla ridge or else pulling back to a more tactically sound and feasible location on the slopes of Tsangdhar and being called a coward, if the Chinese did not attack and as was being constantly prophesied by the trio of Nehru-Menon-Kaul.

This was his dilemma, the price one pays to be in command and its accompanying loneliness at crucial stages of decision making. "It takes more courage to appear a coward than risk being killed". With the disintegration of the Brigade, the heights of Towang became the next line of defense to stop and fight the Chinese.

Towang assumed great significance owing to its cultural landmark, its Buddhist Monastery, as also its defensive potential and being on the Bumla-Towang-Jang-Nuranang-Sela-Senge-Dirang Zong-Bomdila axis.

When, 1st Sikh was pulled back from Bumla, it was appreciated that Towang could be bypassed and cut off by the advancing Chinese and hence Towang was evacuated without a fight.

The Army then revised its plans to occupy Sela as its new line of defense. 4 Infantry Division was now tasked to defend Sela and its Brigades were accordingly deployed to defend the shoulders and the Central Heights.

62 Infantry Brigade, of which 2nd and 4th Sikh LI, 1st Sikh, 13th Dogras and 4th Garhwal Rifles was a part of, was tasked to impose delay upon the advancing Chinese so as to allow the defenses to be prepared and coordinated at Sela.

On 29 Oct 1962, Brigadier Hoshier Singh relieved Brigadier Nandi Lal as 62 Infantry Brigade Commander. The officer was a battle-hardened soldier and was decorated for gallantry in the Second Great War. He was, in contrast to the other senior leadership in the Division and IV Corps, determined to give the Chinese a good and hard fight, no matter what.

4th Garhwal Rifles, a unit re raised on 7 December 1959 by Lieutenant Colonel S M Hasnain, and then under command of Lt Col BM Bhattacharjee was tasked to act as Covering Troops for the 4th Infantry Division Defenses at Sela. The unit was deployed astride the winding road from Jang to Nuranang ahead of Bridge 4 on the Nuranang Chu, with its Alpha Company on the left and Delta Company on the right. Bravo Company was in depth.

C Company under command Major HB Rai was tasked to demolish bridge 4 and then occupy defenses in depth. The defenses in Nuranang could not be outflanked and therefore, this made it ideal for a defensive battle. On the other hand, for the Chinese it was vital to secure Nuranang for their onward March towards Sela-Senge-Dirang Zong-Bomdila and the foothills beyond.

On the fateful morning of 17th November, the Chinese launched an attack in waves on Alpha Company and the brunt of which was taken by No 2 platoon. The attack was beaten back by the determined Bhullas (younger brother), as Garhwali soldiers are endearingly called by their officers.

Thereafter, within an hour or two followed a second attack with greater ferocity. Hand grenades were put to effective use to yet again beat back this

attack and heavy casualties were suffered by the attacking Chinese soldiers.

In near quick time followed the next and third attack at around 0910 hrs, which was once again beaten back. Second Lieutenant SN Tandon the Alpha Company Commander was in his elements, encouraging and directing the Bhullas, going from bunker to bunker with the energy of youth and the spirit of a warrior - never once looking over his shoulder for help and support.

However, the Company was fast running out of ammunition and the CO Lt Col B M Bhattacharjee got replenishments sent in double quick time, with 2nd Lt Vinod Goswami volunteering to take with him a group of Bhullas from the depth Company to Alpha Company carrying bandoliers and boxes of ammunition including grenades.

The Chinese were now getting desperate for a breakthrough and brought down one of the most intense shelling upon Alpha Company defenses. Thereafter, when the bombardment lifted, the Chinese infantry launched a three-pronged attack in an attempt to get to the exposed left flank of Alpha Company. By now they had abandoned their normal tactics of coming in waves and were instead trying to close in by crawling through the rocks.

Tandon and the platoon commander of No 2 platoon Subedar Udai Singh remained resolute and marshaled the Bhullas superbly.

During the course of the war fighting, Naik Ranjit Singh in a motivated burst of bravado came out of his bunker and started hurling grenades at the crawling enemy troops to great effect. A bullet hit Ranjit on the head and he collapsed.

The Chinese had by then managed to push forward and set up two Medium Machine Guns (MMGs) within 30 meters of the bunkers and started targeting the Alpha Company Light Machine Guns (LMGs) and resorted to once again attacking in waves. The situation soon became desperate.

Ranjit, though bleeding, continued lobbing grenades at the advancing enemy, which gave a window of opportunity to Lance Naik Trilok Singh Negi

and Riflemen Jaswant Singh Rawat and Gopal Singh Gusain to come out of their bunkers and crawl towards the MMGs with the intent to silence these. Getting to about 10 mtrs of the MMGs, they lobbed grenades at the Gun emplacement and Jaswant in a bout of daring do raced across and leapt at the crew.

He grabbed one of the MMGs and ran towards his other two comrades, when he was shot down. Trilok, while giving covering fire to Jaswant, was also killed, but Gopal, though wounded, managed to get back into his bunker with the captured MMG. The Chinese attack once again fizzled out. Had the Chinese the option of bypassing the 4th Garhwal position at Nuranang, they would have done so.

Now, under tremendous pressure to get past Alpha Company, they launched yet another determined attack at about 1500 hrs and which was supported by artillery and mortars. Once again, Sub Udai Singh and 2nd Lt Tandon and the Bhullas stood firm.

For the fifth time on that fateful day, the Chinese had to withdraw. There were about 400 to 500 Chinese who were killed and severely wounded as against 2 Bhullas, L/Nk Trilok and Rifleman Jaswant who had been killed in action.

It was one of the biggest lapses and blunder of the war that, the Indian Army's success at Nuranang was not reinforced to stop the Chinese advance along axis Sela-Bomdila but instead 4th Garhwal was ordered to up stick and withdraw to take up defenses in Sela.



Brigadier Sarvesh D Dangwal (Retd)

Brig. Sarvesh D Dangwal commissioned from IMA in 1971. Born into battle with 4 Garhwal Rifles, saw action in Jhangar, Naushera Sector in the 1971 Indo-Pak War. Served in APTC for 25 years, was Comdt AIPT & DDGPT before retirement in 2008. Was instrumental in revision of entire system of PT and Testing of Army implemented in 1992 and obtaining till date. An avid reader and writer who freelances on diverse issues that impact civil society and especially those which concern the people of the hills of Uttarakhand. Views expressed are the authors own and do not reflect the editorial policy of MVI.

It is in the fog of war that many a times faulty and strange decisions are taken by alarmist commanders, who fail to read the tea leaves as also the development of battle and which brings certain defeat when the situation could have been upended and victory ensured. The 1962 Sino-Indian war was a disaster, which could have been averted had the Generals shown the steely resolve to fight rather than flee.

It was in recognition of the dogged determination, steely resolve and élan shown by the Bhullas of Alpha Company and the raw courage displayed by the troika of Trilok, Jaswant and Gopal on 17th Nov 1962 that, the 4th Garhwal Rifles was given the Battle Honour Nuranang and Jaswant decorated with the second highest gallantry award in the face of the enemy; the Mahavir Chakra (Posthumous).

Furthermore, to keep the memory of Jaswant alive in the hearts and minds of a grateful Nation and the generations which follow hither to, Nuranang was named as Jaswantgarh and a memorial built by the government of Arunachal Pradesh and the regional Army Formation, at the scene of the historic battle.

In local folklore it is believed that the soul of Jaswant resides here and keeps a constant vigil on the wellbeing and safety of all fellow soldiers who serve in the heights of Sela and beyond. Jaswant has been deified as a guardian angel and it makes every Garhwali proud of his valorous deeds, which were built on the edifice of 4th Garhwal Rifles (Nuranang). 🇮🇳



Remembering Maj Kaustubh Rane: A Son, Father, Husband, & Gallant Officer

Over two years have gone by since the day thousands of fellow countrymen had come forth to pay their last respects to Major Kaustubh Rane, a gallant army officer serving in the Indian Army's 36 Rashtriya Rifles. Major Rane was a leader of men, a warrior who gave his all in service of the country, but more importantly, he was a son, a loving husband to a young wife, a proud father to a two-year-old son and a friend to his brothers in arms.

By Staff Correspondent

A Call to Serve...

Growing up in the Sheetal Nagar area of Mira Road, his family fondly recalls how he spent his days reading about war heroes, and the long hours spent playing Counter Strike; a popular military based video game in which soldiers engage in counter-terror operations, missions he would eventually take part in real life, years later in the unforgiving Kashmir Valley.

A young Kaustubh, upon his parent's suggestion, had applied for the National Defence Academy Examination (NDA) fresh after his 12th standard, however, was unsuccessful in his attempt to join the Triservices institution. He had not yet set

his mind to become an officer, however once in college, it all changed, he became a man possessed...and with a single-minded focus to become a commissioned officer, he had trained rigorously, before ultimately clearing the Combined Defence Services Examination (CDSE) after his graduation.

He was recommended by the selection board and received the call letter to train at the prestigious Officers Training Academy (OTA) in Chennai. For Kaustubh, this was the first step towards seizing his destiny!

After nine months of rigorous training, Kaustubh was commissioned as an infantry officer in the Garwhal Rifles,

one of the Indian Army's most decorated fighting units. He was Deployed to his first posting in Kupwara very soon transformed into a battle-hardened Infantryman! Rane was promoted to the rank of Captain in 2011 and was given a peace posting to Kolkata after serving in the insurgency prone valley.

Following his Kolkata posting the then Capt. was deployed back to field areas and was eventually deputed to the Rashtriya Rifles, the Army's premier counter-insurgency force, serving in 36 RR. It was during his stint in 36 RR that major Rane along with four of his men lost their lives in the line of duty in a bid to foil an infiltration attempt by terrorists trying to

enter from the Gurez sector of North Kashmir.

Gurez Sector Operation:

During 2018, Maj Kaustubh Rane's 36 RR battalion was deployed in the Gurez sector in J&K and was engaged in counter-insurgency operations. The Gurez sector is one of the remote parts of the valley located in Bandipora district around 125 km from Srinagar. The area is heavily militarised, and soldiers are stationed on mountain-top posts to guard the Line of Control (LoC) and prevent infiltration of militants. The Gurez sector is snow-covered even in summers and militants do not have long tracts of forest cover either to use as escape routes or to sneak inside LOC.

On 6 Aug, around 1 am about eight-odd heavily armed terrorists tried to infiltrate into the Indian territory near Govind Nullah in Bakhtor area taking advantage of darkness. The alert soldiers noticed the unusual movement and challenged the infiltrators moving from the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK). Maj Kaustubh Rane along with his troops, swung into action and engaged the militants trying to infiltrate. A fierce gun battle ensued after that in which two militants were killed. However, during the heavy exchange of fire Maj Kaustubh Rane and three other soldiers Rifleman Mandeep Singh Rawat, Rifleman Hameer Singh and Gunner Vikram Jeet Singh got severely injured. They were shifted to the 92 Base Hospital in Srinagar but latter they succumbed to their injuries and were martyred.

Maj Kaustubh Rane had been given the gallantry award, "Sena Medal" on 26 Jan 2018 and was to be felicitated by Mira Bhayandar Municipal Corporation in the later part of 2018. Maj Kaustubh Rane was a gallant and committed soldier who led from the front like a true military leader and laid down his life in the service of the nation.

Fond Memories:

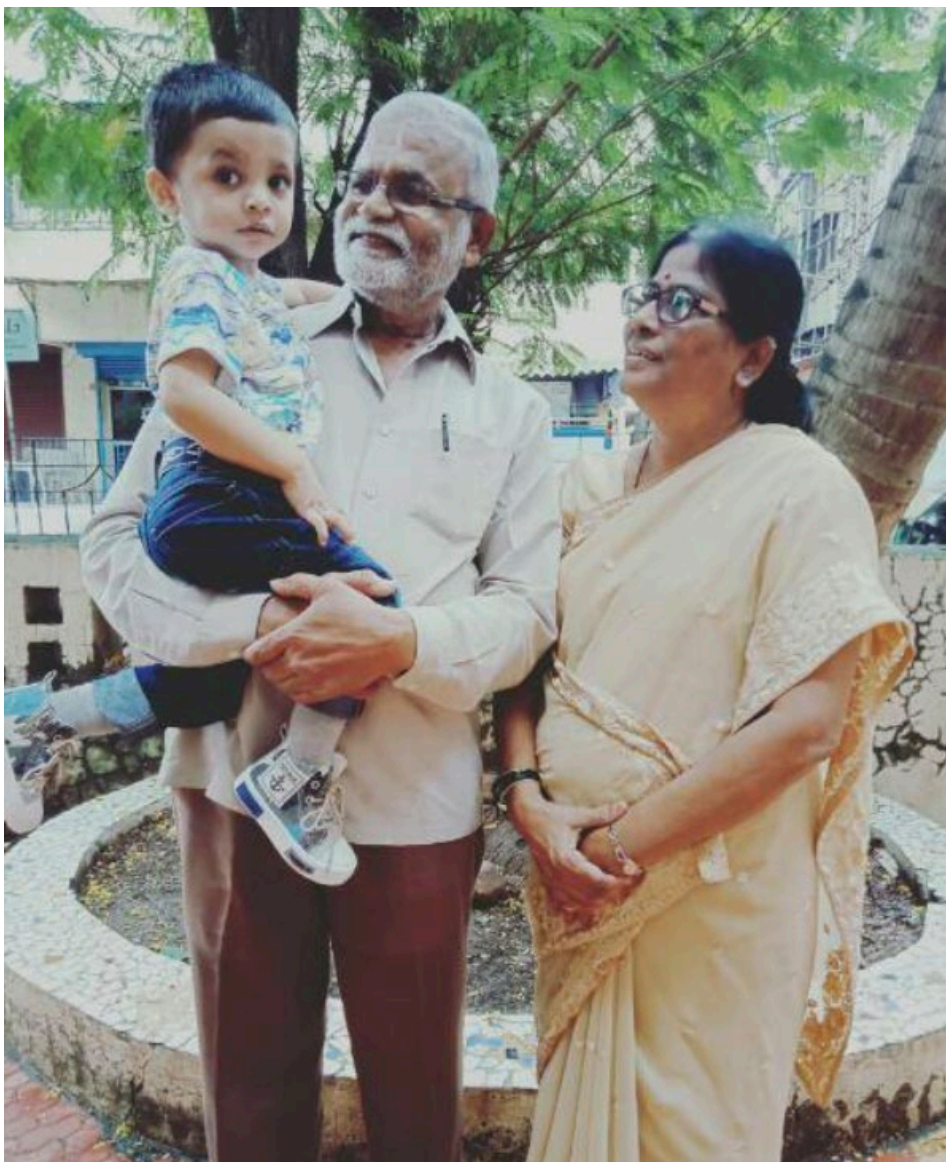
Maj. Rane has been described by his friends and family as, a kind and soft-spoken who had regularly kept in touch with his civilian friends, even

when deployed. His Course mates remember him fondly as a true leader and friend, They talk about how he inspired and pushed them all so much that had he not been there, their josh runs would have been flat and unmemorable! They vividly remember how he would crack jokes; he would smile, laugh and push them all saying "Chal yaar! Chal yaar!" he makes sure the others around him thrived!

Maj Rane was an ordinary man who lived to do extraordinary things

Singh, a security guard from Surat, conveying his gratitude for their sons service! Pictures and cards from school students and the respect of the thousands who bid him a tearful goodbye.

His grieving widow, rose up from the ashes to become an inspiration, following his footsteps to join the very organisation he dedicated his life to, having started her journey at the same institution he began his own.



Major Rane's son and parents

Legacy:

A lot has happened since the martyrdom of the brave warrior, a lot that he would have been proud of, his parents received his Sena Medal from the President of India, The Gaurav Puruskar from the Maharashtra Government, a letter from Jitendra

The country can never repay Major. Kaustubh Rane for what he gave and people he left behind, however; the gallant hero will never be forgotten, and his legacy will live on. 🇮🇳



The Liberator of Daman: Remembering Brig SJS Bhonsale, VSM, on his Birth Centenary

When operations are discussed, Daman will always be linked with Brig SJS Bhonsale. The gallant actions of this daredevil officer will forever remain in the annals of India's military history. The following is a daughter's account of her father ahead of his birth centenary on 29 Nov 2020.

By Shilpa Ghogale

On the centenary of my dearest father Brigadier SJS Bhonsale, VSM, Jay to his erstwhile colleagues and friends, I am at a loss for words. Words seem single dimensioned to encompass a unique gentleman of royal lineage and striking bearing, singularly good-looking, a brave soldier and a caring gentle father.

My father was commissioned into the British Indian Army in 1943, when the world was embroiled in a long-drawn world war. An outdoor man he hoped to see action across the borders.

He served in the Frontier Force Regiment until the war ended and joined the Maratha Light Infantry on the independence of the country. He often spoke of his days in the NWE, Landi Kotla, Landi Khana, Khyber,

Multan and Peshawar with a faraway look.

Reminiscing about his colleagues and friends he had made for life, some of whom he met more than 50 years later in UK. Of officers who moulded him and to those he looked up to. His value system well forged in his hometown Kolhapur, being from a well-established family. It all held him in good stead throughout his career and life.

Flying in to join my father for the first time in Srinagar in 1948-49, with just a single suitcase, and equipped for the winter, was my dear mother, Neela Bhonsale nee Salvi, who had forfeited completing her graduation! But she was strong and determined as time would tell. The smart intelligent lady

groomed to the hilt. Her impeccable style, inherent good taste, energy and goodwill became a shining example to admire and emulate!

My father did a long stint with The United Nations Military Group India and Pakistan, as a Liaison Officer. Earning much praise and recommendations from foreign nationals. Gen. Jacob L. Devers, USA, Retd. (Military Advisor UN, Rawalpindi, India & Pakistan) in 1951 wrote of him, "Bhonsale really doesn't need any testimonial from me, as he is highly thought of by Major General Nimmo and the UNO Staff there in Srinagar.

However, I want to say that I have known few officers of his rank anywhere in the world, during all my military career, who have appealed to me

more. He has instinctive good judgment, unquestioned character, and a sense of what is right. I asked him a good many questions which an officer with less courage and honesty than Bhonsale would have trouble to answer. He is a great credit to the Indian Army, as he would be to any army."

Reiterated by Maj. Gen. Bennet L. de Ridder, DSO. A/Chief Military Observer, "He has proven again and again to be officially of invaluable assistance, and personally an outstanding representative of his Army and Country."

Although, he had staff and regimental assignments in the east, his major commands were in Jammu and Kashmir. His command of the 1st Maratha Light Infantry, Jangi Paltan (it's nom de guerre) gave him an opportunity to prove himself an able commander. After a glorious stint in the Poonch sector, he led them to the liberation of Daman in December 1961 during the Goa Daman Diu operations.

It is recorded in detail in the regimental and other history books. From my father's memoirs, I quote, "Lt. Gen J N Chaudhuri, Army Commander, came forward and said that he had given wrong information about the enemy; yet we had accomplished the task against such a formidable enemy force. He congratulated me and the battalion for this gallant action."

Later in 'A Saga of Service', Maj. Gen. E D'Souza wrote, "When singled out for an independent operation, Op Vijay, the battalion, under his leadership, produced the goods by capturing Daman against an unexpectedly large force of the Portuguese, earning for himself a well-earned VSM. When operations are discussed, Daman will always be linked with Lt. Col. SJS Bhonsale".

Welfare activities for the jawans and their families were adhered to with genuine interest by my mother. She kept our morale high during the long separations that Army families often see. We wrote weekly letters to my father and waited eagerly for replies from c/o 56 APO! Dad's annual leaves were cheerful and festive with troops of friends and relatives visiting. He

would give us surprise visits on our birthdays; his gifts to us were treasured even after the watches stopped working or perfume bottles emptied!

In the 1960s my father was a Brigade Commander for four years, again in Jammu and Kashmir. For half of which, we, his family, stayed back in Pune. Who could assess him better than his then young BM, later Maj. Gen. Vijay K Madhok, who wrote of him in 2004, "In sum, Brig Bhonsale has what the Staff College or NDC cannot teach.

Prudence, a sense of justice and an ability for rapid decisions. Gifted with a rare common sense and a most cheerful disposition, he generated trust and lead by example. Above all he ensured that his own and his subordinates conduct was dictated by moral values".

My father's last posting was as Sub Area Commander, Pune. Retirement at 51 years was too early. He served another 25 years as the CEO of a private company, studying the workings of the civilian environment and contributing amply. A tough task for a disciplined and confirmed Fauji. His contributions there were well appreciated. He advocated thereafter to his juniors to continue being active and fruitfully busy for as long as possible.

We devoured his books, mostly autobiographies and histories. He loved books by Jim Corbett and stacks of outdoor magazines. Bal Gandharva, Vasantrao Deshpande renderings, and gazals by Jagjeet Singh and Ghulam Ali were among his favourites. His love for the Marathi stage was special but very selective. India - Pakistan cricket commentaries thrilled him.

He heard political dialogues and followed keenly which way the country

was headed. After all, he had seen the first action in Ladakh and served with the J&K Militia. He had evicted the last vestige of the Portuguese rule in Daman, India.

We still share his choice in pets usually Labradors and Golden Retrievers. 'Sussex', his first Golden was a gift from a British officer who was leaving the country after partition. Thereafter there were always retrievers in the family with fancy names like Penny, Gina and Lara!

We were unfortunate to lose our dear mother rather early. My father faced the trials and tribulations of his life with steadfast strength, spiritual and moral courage born out of a strict regime. Of physical fitness, mental activity and a very moderate indulgence in food and drink.

Between 2008 and 2010 when I was in New Delhi, I visited him as often as once a month. In October 2008, I had the privilege of joining him on his last visit to Daman where he was felicitated and honoured. He spoke extempore for an hour describing and bringing to life the Battle of Daman.

He received a standing ovation for 10 minutes from the young and old of his Regiment and their families. In the Press coverage that followed, they referred to him as Muktidata which translates into 'Liberator of Daman'.

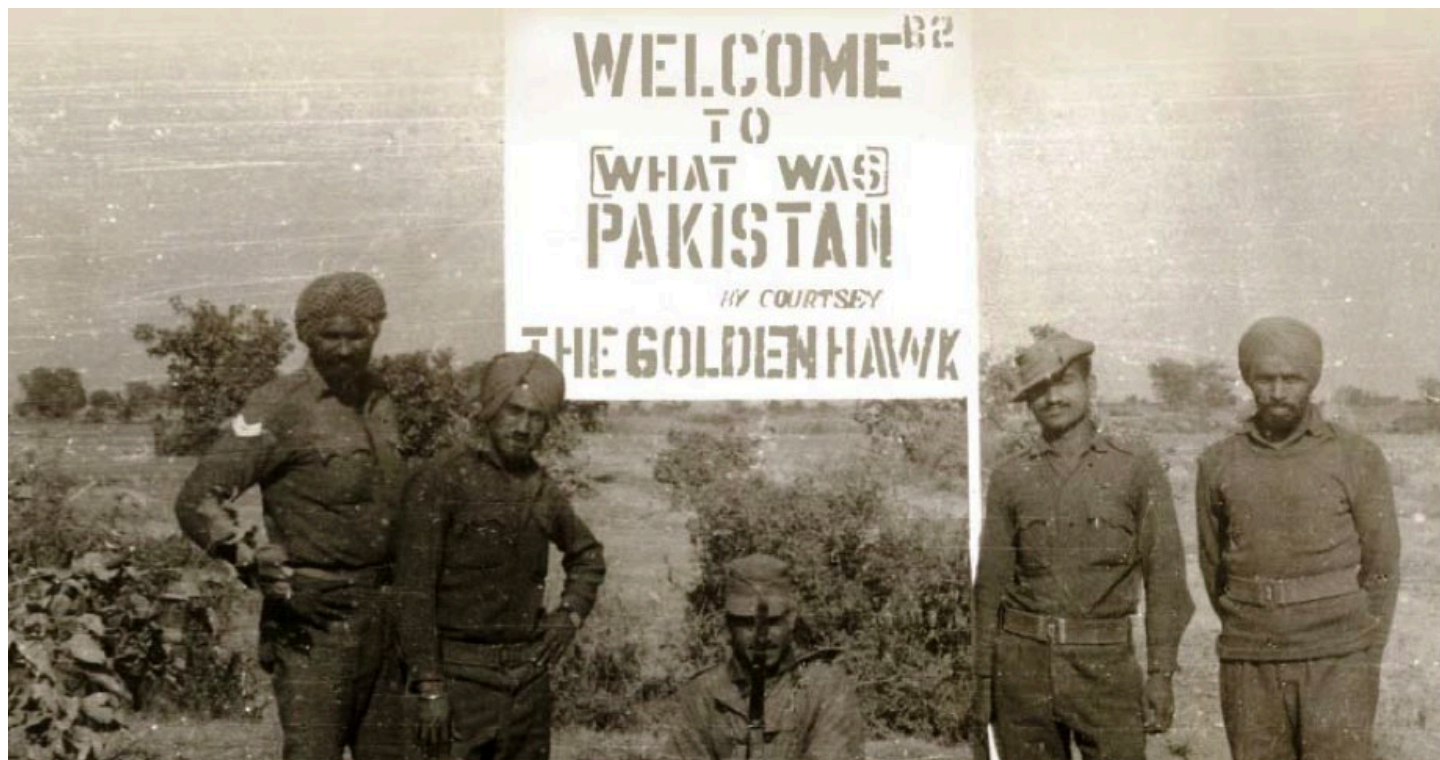
In July 2010 when he was bidding me goodbye, I said to him, "The only reason I come to Pune is to see you!" Framed by the doorway, my father was now closing in on ninety. His eyes lit up above his rosy cheeks and a characteristic wonderful smile spread on his face as he asked me, "Really?!"

It was our final exchange. 🙏



Shilpa Ghogale

Shilpa Ghogale is the daughter of late Brig SJS Bhonsale, VSM. An accomplished fine artist, she has also excelled in Ceramics and Pottery and participated in quite a few exhibitions. Amongst her many varied interests, which include gardening, is her propensity to pen a few interesting articles from time to time.



The Saragarhi Sikhs at Siramani

By Lieutenant General RS Sujana (Retd)

As the Sikh Regiment heads to complete its 175 years of service, it can look back proudly to their loyalty, gallantry and fortitude displayed on battlefields all over the world. So often the Sikh soldier has made the impossible possible, their legacy of valour boasts of audacious acts of daring and dauntlessness and it rightfully stands as the most decorated regiment of the Indian Army. Few can compare to their glorious heritage, traditions and ethos of battle, the outstanding Battle of Saragarhi, is true to the adage 'Last man, Last Round.'

Through the two world wars the Regiment has to its credit, 73 Battle Honours and 8 Theatre Honours, 983 gallantry awards including 10 Victoria Cross and 196 IOM and 89 Military Cross. Post-Independence they have 9 Battle Honours, 8 Theatre Honours, 18 COAS Unit Citations and 29 Unit Appreciations. The tally of awards both gallantry and distinguished service is 3515 which includes Two PVC,

Three Ashok Chakra, 14 Maha Vir Chakra, 12 Kirti Chakra and 68 Vir Chakra.

During the Indo-Pak War of 1971, the Battalions of the Regiment once again displayed their renowned self. Of the 13 active battalions, four were in defensive roles and low-key areas to the north, nine took active part in the War. Battle Honours were bestowed on 4 Sikh, Siramani (in erstwhile East Pakistan); 6 Sikh, Defence of Punch (J&K) and 10 Sikh, Purbut Ali (Rajasthan). Theatre Honours presented in 1971 were, East Pakistan, J&K, Punjab and Sindh.

2 Sikh and 19 Sikh were in the Amritsar Sector, 2 Sikh fought brilliantly to recapture Pulkanjri and 19 Sikh ensured the integrity of Darya Mansur Enclave held by BSF. 5 Sikh in the Defence of Chhamb and 9 Sikh has to its credit the capture of 42 Square Kms of POK in the Lipa Valley, a feat

incomparable by any other battalion on the Western Front.

Victory India has taken upon itself to honour battalions and regiments of the Indian Army by reenacting and remembering all the important battles fought so very valiantly during this War over a year long period. As a contribution to this, the Battle Honours of the Sikh Regiment are covered starting with 4 Sikh, the Saragarhi Sikhs!

The 1971 Indo-Pak War was fought on two fronts. On the Eastern Front the Indian Army entered erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) principally along four main axes. II Corps from the West, XXXIII Corps from the North-West, 101 Communication Zone Area from the North East and IV Corps from the East. In consort with the Naval Task Force, a small amphibious landing was planned in the general area of Chittagong and the Air Force was all set to rapidly gain air

superiority, provide close air support and take on offensive strategic tasks.

4th Battalion the Sikh Regiment, as a part of 350 Infantry Brigade, 9 Infantry Division was initially located at Dattaphulia and Bayra, to the NE of Kolkata and employed on internal security duties. The brigade comprised 1 JAK RIF and 26 Madras, PT -76 tanks of 45 Cavalry and a squadron of 63 Cavalry with T-55 tanks.

Capture of Makapur and Chaugacha

4 Sikh was then commanded by Lt Col DS Sidhu, the War for them started early as they conducted many deep reconnaissance patrols to gain maximum information of the terrain and enemy. The first action was the capture of Makapur Village about 4 Km inside hostile territory, this was secured in quick time by Alpha Company led by Maj BS Chahal. The Battalion thereafter built up and took up a defensive position in the area and immediately started aggressive patrolling. The enemy too started probing forward and this led to a number of clashes with the enemy but soon the very cautious enemy vacated its posts in the vicinity of the Battalion, and these were also captured.

The Battalion was soon given its next objective, Chaugacha, which lay across the Kabadak River. This position was a major pin prick as it constantly shelled Indian villages and inflicted heavy casualties on the innocent villagers. It was an enemy stronghold with a network of brick-lined pill boxes all connected with five feet deep communication trenches and held by 38 Frontier Force (FF) less two companies.

On 21st Nov, two companies, Charlie led by Maj SS Duggal and Delta by Maj (later Brig) Kanwaljit Singh with a squadron of 63 Cavalry advanced and established contact with the enemy defences at Chaugacha. The enemy responded with very effective fire by heavy machine guns (HMG), mortars and artillery, forward movement was difficult so barely 100 yds from the river line the companies dug down.

This situation prevailed through 21st and 22nd Nov; on 22 Nov, three enemy jets strafed the battalion location, the loss was not much. Sepoy Nirmal Singh shot down one of the Sabre jets with a Light Machine Gun (LMG). The pilot Flight Lieutenant Pervez Mehdi (later Air Marshal and Chief of the Pakistan Air Force) who ejected was captured by the Battalion. The other two jets were taken care of by Gnats of the Air Force.

To avoid unwanted casualties by a frontal attack, it was decided to outflank the enemy position. Two companies were launched, they crossed the Kabadak about 1500 meters upstream. The crossing was affected by utilizing a leaky country boat, which could at best take only a section (10 men) worth of troops, thus it took the two companies a long time to cross over.



Soldier from Sikh LI INF practice aiming with new small arm during Ex-MALABAR 2006; File Photo

The risks were obvious both during the crossing and in establishing a bridgehead on the enemy bank, but the Sikhs managed to achieve surprise. By the morning of 23 Nov, the enemy realised that they were being encircled and chose to withdraw rather than face the Sikhs, by 1500 hours on 23 Nov Chaugacha was captured. Major General Dalbir Singh, the General Officer Commanding (GOC) complemented the battalion for the brilliant action and remarked that, '4 Sikh was always ahead of everybody else by 24 hours!'

Capture of Burinda

The Battalion was then pulled back and after readjustments took up defences in the area of Raghunathpur, Pasapol and Daspakhia. Burinda was the next objective, a typical village with high bunds and some concrete houses. Enemy 12 Punjab was well entrenched on the high bunds and houses, with mines and an innovation of cotton slabs with trip wires laid on the likely approaches. Attacking the enemy from the west was suicidal, so to achieve surprise loud Jaikaras were raised from various directions, taking advantage of the likely confusion in the enemy, Delta Company captured Matsyaranga, the northern defences without much casualties.

On night 3/4 Dec, Alpha company was launched from the south, despite the heavy fire it captured Burinda. On 5th Dec, Bravo company pushed

ahead and faced some severe fire from the enemy in the concrete houses, several individual acts of bravery were witnessed. Charlie Company with a troop of tanks then carried out an outflanking attack to cut off the enemy's route of withdrawal. The enemy got unnerved and started withdrawing, by 6th Dec, the dogged determination of 4 Sikh was on display and the position was captured. Casualties were heavy on both sides, this included three officers wounded but none agreed to be evacuated, first aid and they continued.

The fall of Burinda broke the spine of defence of Jessore, the enemy vacated

most of the outer defences of Jessore and soon vacated Jessore and pulled back to Khulna. 4 Sikh was soon on their heels and captured Durgpur and Malanchi, the road was heavily mined but the troops mounted on T-55 tanks were comparatively safe. Here the Battalion halted for four days and 32 Infantry Brigade passed through for further operations. The Battalion casualties were; killed two JCOs and 25 other ranks, wounded 3 officers, 6 JCOs and 77 other ranks. Large number of weapons and ammunition was captured, the latter included a civilian truck loaded with ammunition.

The Battle of Shyamganj and Siramani

At Khulna the enemy defences were based on the villages of Siramani, Shyamganj and the Road-Rail axis to the rear. It was a very suitable position, to the east ran the Bhairab River with large stretches of marshy land towards the west and to the south lay the sea. The only viable direction to attack was from the north, but this would be too obvious and would lead to heavy casualties. To negate the advantages of the enemy defences it was planned to drive a wedge between his defences, for which 4 Sikh were tasked.

1 JAK Rif had crossed the Bhairab River and established itself on a narrow strip on the Western bank of the River, this was used by 4 Sikh as their firm base. The further plan was to launch the battalion in company echelons in four phases, each company was tasked to capture up to a depth of 500 yds, firm in and provide a firm base for the next company passing through for the next phase. The attack led by Bravo Company went in at 1615 hours from the ferry site supported by the entire divisional artillery. It ran into intense fire, losing one killed and 19 wounded in the first 200 yards, but undeterred they bashed on and captured their objective.

Charlie Company followed at 1800 hours and overran the depth locality. The enemy counter attack supported by M-24 Chaffee tanks failed to deter the Khalsa who held on and forced the enemy to retire. In an act of rare gallantry and utter disregard of personal


safety, Havildar Shamsheer Singh, knocked down an enemy tank with a 3.5" Rocket Launcher. After seven hours of stiff fighting, by 0100 hours on the 16th morning it was in firm control, with a haul of arms including two recoilless guns (Rcl) and one Rcl Jeep, with a 3-ton lorry loaded with ammunition.

In phase three, Delta company was launched at 0200 hours to establish a roadblock on the Main Jessore-Khulna Highway. The enemy in this area had sited their heavy automatic weapons in concrete buildings but the Sikhs charged without a breather. By 0500 hours the company had formed along the road axis and completed the mopping up by 0700 hours. Captured included Eleven prisoners of war (PsW), six HMGs, Five LMGs, 12 Rifles and four jeeps and 21 enemy dead were buried.

At this stage Lt Col Salim, CO 12 Punjab raised the White Flag. The last phase was still launched by Alpha Company under Captain SB Gawaria and Lt HS Ahluwalia to establish a block astride the railway line. Daylighted they came under intense fire but there was no stopping them, by 0930 hours they had completed their task, they lost four men and both officers were wounded. It was after some 17 hours of continuous and stiff battle that the Battalion had effectively created a wedge in the enemy defences.

Within the next 24 hours Khulna was captured and the battalion was given the honour to enter Khulna and bestowed with Battle Honour 'Siramani' to be displayed on their Colours, Nb Sub Gurcharan and L/NK Harbhajan Singh were awarded the Vir Chakra. This added to the many memorable battles fought true to the Regimental spirit and Motto, 'Nische kar Apni Jeet Karon' (May I always be sure of Victory)! The Battalion had two JCOs and 34 Other ranks killed; Six officers, Six JCOs and 155 other ranks were wounded. Post the war the Brigade Commander Brig HS Sandhu spoke of the true grit, cold courage, determination and outstanding leadership of 4 Sikh in these words,

"The unparalleled valour, courage and heroic exploits of your unit on the battlefield of Makapur, Chaugacha, Burinda and Siramani are awe inspiring events to any true soldier of the world. Every drop of blood shed on these battlefields in accomplishing such glorious heights of heroism and bravery, I am sure, would have pleased even the heroes of Saragarhi and other forefathers of the SIKH group.

No admiration or praise is sufficient to acknowledge the bravery of all ranks of your unit. I am sure that all these battles would add another glittering chapter of glory to your Sikh Regiment. My sincere prayers for the continued success of your unit. May Wahe Guru bless you and all." 

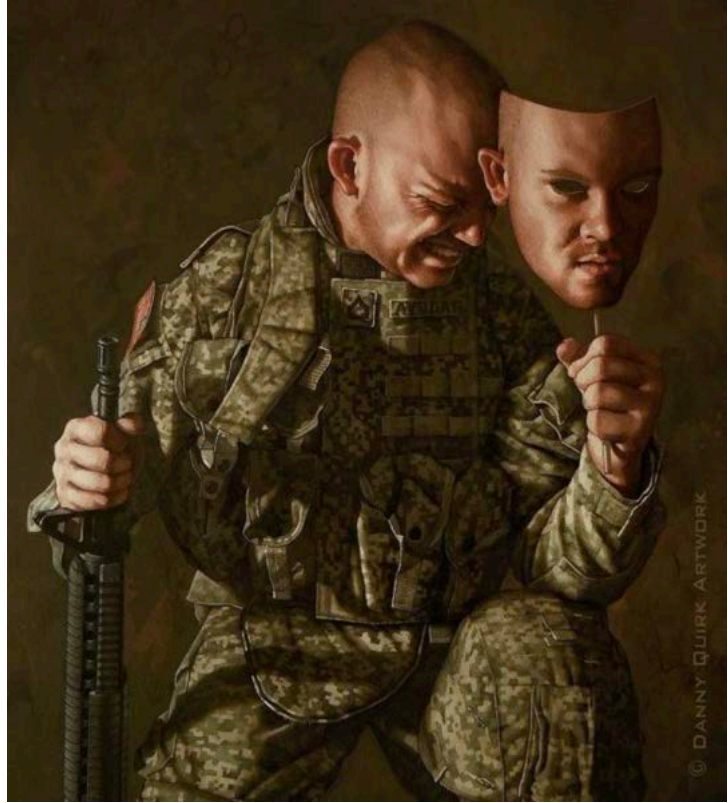


Lieutenant General RS Sujlana (Retd)

Lt Gen. RS Sujlana, PVSM, AVSM, VSM, is an ex Commandant, IMA and Chairman, Punjab Public Service Commission. He has commanded 3rd Battalion the Sikh Regt, a mountain brigade in Assam (OP RHINO) and an Infantry Division in the deserts. He has also been an Instructor at IMA, Dehradun and held various important staff appointments like Brigade Major of an Infantry Brigade, Colonel General Staff CIF (J&K), Deputy Director General (Public Information) and served as Additional Director General of Public Information, at the Army HQ and commanded 10 Corps. He has done prestigious Army Courses at the Infantry School, Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, Army War College, and the National Defence College. He was decorated with Vishisht Seva Medal on Republic Day for his role Op PARAKRAM.

Have You Ever Kissed a Soldier Goodbye?

— Osaid
Butt —



Have you ever kissed a soldier goodbye?
Not knowing whether he breathes home again.
Do you know of the uncertainty that lies in that kiss?
Heisenberg's Uncertainty principle: Unless you open
the box, the cat is both, dead and alive.
Dead and alive. Is the glass half full or half empty?
Half dead or half alive?
I sent out a brother, a soldier, a broad chested man
without fear lurking in his eyes, now I have a ghoul on
my hand.
He can only be half the man he ever was. Not what he
was. Something in him died.
Now tell me, we won the war just because all of their
soldiers died or because some of ours are only half
dead. Answer this and I will fight your wars.



Sipahi ki Diwali

Brig Neil
John, SM

I am still standing, staring into the wilderness, the barren loneliness my imminent company, the cold consumes me, my feet hurt...santri nazarein tika ke rakhna, dushman ka koi bharosa nahin... I can hear a shout through the chill of the night,

Holding the cold steel of my rifle, I can feel the shiver, the metal bites my skin, mist in my breath, no fire burning they said, gives a target to the enemy, minus 45 degrees ... inhospitable, inhuman, this is my country, won't let anyone destroy the peace, shoulders up, chaati bahar, seena tan ke, I am ready to fight.

Somewhere I can see someone in a village still burst crackers left over after the Festival of Lights, kya kar rahen honge ghar par, mata, pita, biwi, bacche, I saw the pictures and the diyas, khubsurat lag rahe the, rang birangi kapdon mein bacche aur biwi ke kamsin honth, sundar bindi aur baal...

Papa kyun nahin aaye, I had heard my toddler say, kaise bataun usko, ki desh ki raksha sarva pratham hai, duty hai meri, nahin yahan rahunga toh in darindon ko mil jayega mauka ... kar dene ka mere desh ko khun se laal.

Santari tagda raho, I hear another shout, I strain my eyes to see through the darkness, my ears to hear even the slightest of sound,

The night is full of a million threats, the enemy, wild animals, mostly the cold, my eyes want to close in sleep, I pinch myself until I bleed, to be awake for my country, I am by honour duty bound.


Shiraz Amin ko goli lagi hai, sniper alert, can hear the commotion, the howling in pain, the night suddenly turns deadly, rifle fire here, rifle fire there, the night glows with sounds deafening, IS THIS DIWALI.... stretcher le kar aao, khun bahut hai, I hear the Company Sargent Major scream,

Shiraz Amin darna nahin, tere ko kuch nahin hoga, hum hain na, bhole nath, Bhawani maa ki kasam, I can hear Shiraz in pain, yet scream, bole soniyar ... hai allah! ... and the scream died midway.... end of an innocent dream.

If only you could see the unit react, every gun, every rifle, every weapon drawn, every Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Isai, shouting Allah tala ki kasam, Har Har Mahadeo, nahin chodengey and they let lose the fury wild.

My country men as you celebrated your Diwali I lost my friend, my buddy, my companion, my soldier, MY BLOOD... every soldier moans a comrade, cause as we stand protecting the nation as you sleep, remember Shiraz too has a family, wife and child.

To every soldier that wears a uniform, his nation comes first always and everytime and that's a solemn oath he takes...

Atleast let us feel the pride, protecting a nation of worthy and ungrateful, we want nothing in return, just respect for the soldier and the sacrifice he makes 

The Quiet Professionals

— Spandan
Dash —

This poem is a tribute to our nation's quiet professionals, the unnamed and unsung heroes from R&AW



I don't have any batch,
I don't have any band,
I don't have any designation,
I don't have any stupefaction,
Because I am a spy- an unknown soldier.
My name is a code,
My posting is in abroad,
My work is broad,
I sacrifice like a lord,
Because I am a spy- an unknown soldier.
I live for the nation,
I die for the nation,
But everything done in suppression,
I never rewarded for any intelligence information,
Because I am a spy- an unknown soldier.
Media never shows,
public never bows,
No salute,
no guard-of-honour,
No bouquet, no tears,
Because I am a spy- an unknown soldier.
I don't have identity,
I don't have integrity,
I am a paid broker in enemy road.
If I die on duty there is no sympathy,
If I arrested by demon
There is no devastation,
Because I am a spy- an unknown soldier.
But I am happy with my Position,
Because I am a spy- an unknown soldier.

